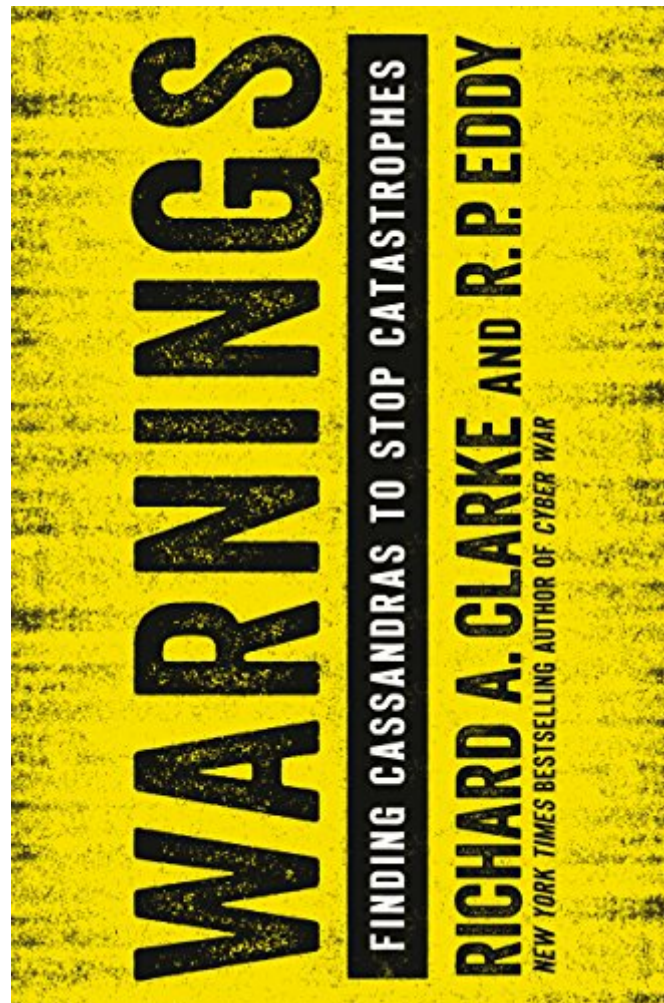




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Warnings: Finding Cassandras To Stop Catastrophes



Synopsis

From President Bill Clinton's recommended reading list Warnings is the story of the future of national security, threatening technologies, the U.S. economy, and possibly the fate of civilization. In Greek mythology Cassandra foresaw calamities, but was cursed by the gods to be ignored. Modern-day Cassandras clearly predicted the disasters of Katrina, Fukushima, the Great Recession, the rise of ISIS, and many more. Like the mythological Cassandra, they were ignored. There are others right now warning of impending disasters, but how do we know which warnings are likely to be right? Through riveting explorations in a variety of fields, the authors "both accomplished CEOs and White House National Security Council veterans" discover a method to separate the accurate Cassandras from the crazy doomsayers. They then investigate the experts who today are warning of future disasters: the threats from artificial intelligence, bio-hacking, mutating viruses, and more, and whose calls are not being heeded. Clarke's and Eddy's penetrating insights are essential for any person, any business, or any government that doesn't want to be a blind victim of tomorrow's catastrophe.

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Customer Reviews

Warnings is a fantastic book to put some of the biggest threats against humanity into perspective for the average citizen of the world. The first half of the book looks back at catastrophes that were predicted by experts -- experts who were ignored -- and the second half looks at the biggest threats going forward, like sea-level rise, artificial intelligence, the hackability of everything, and even the prospect of an asteroid striking the Earth. What makes this book particularly great is the fact that you are guided through every chapter by an expert in that specific subject, giving you an inside look at the truly significant concerns and considerations of the those that work in each respective field. The book goes on to ultimately make suggestions to policymakers, e.g. the prospect of a National Office of Warning, or even just suggesting that decision makers begin to take people more seriously that fit the "Cassandra characteristics" that are laid out in the middle of the book. All in all, I'm very happy that I gave this book a shot. It's a great guide for leaders of all stripes; public or private sector, and teaches you how to look past your own biases and recognize objective truth when it's staring you in the face.

At its core, this is a book about human stories--stories about people that have the "gift" of foresight, but the "curse" that nobody will listen to them. The profiles are riveting and the book reads well. The authors have done a great job drawing upon their unique experiences in government and business to provide context and bring the "characters" and their stories to life. They weave in a healthy dose of geopolitics, science, and finance that makes for an engaging read. The catastrophes foretold will be familiar to most readers, as will many of the the warnings. Hopefully, the individuals highlighted in the second half of the book (the warnings) never graduate to Cassandra status, but all of the identified warnings merit deeper examination--fortunately, this book helps spark that conversation. Most significant, however, Clarke and Eddy provide readers a useful lens of analysis to help separate seer from charlatan. Further academic research might be needed to test their framework, but this book provides an important and fascinating look at how to distinguish those among us we should heed in order to avert catastrophe from the crazy bearded guys with sandwich boards predicting the end is nigh.

Warnings is an important book in both its concept and central message -- particularly as it relates to the long-standing warnings of climatologist Dr. James Hansen about the existential problem of climate change. In 1988, Dr. Hansen, then Director of NASA's Institute for Space Studies, testified before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that NASA was 99% certain that the warming trend that year was caused by a buildup of CO₂ and other pollutants known as "the greenhouse effect." At that time atmospheric CO₂ was 353.69 ppm; in April 2017 it terrifyingly passed 410 ppm -- all the way up from 400 ppm since 2013. Over the past ten years, there have been increasing calls, by Dr. Hansen and others, for a WWII-style emergency climate mobilization or equivalent. In 2007, the UN's Ban Ki-moon said, "This is an emergency and for emergency situations we need emergency action." In 2011, Lester Brown repeated his earlier warning that "mobilization must be unprecedented, because the entire world has never before been so threatened." In 2013, Dr. Hansen said, "We have a planetary emergency that could destroy civilization. These calls for emergency mobilization are now more urgent than ever. As of May 2017, business-as-usual carbon emissions would allow only four years before the world blows past the 1.5°C rise in temperature above pre-industrial levels that was embraced by the Paris agreement to prevent truly dangerous global climate change. As Winston Churchill warned in 1936, "The era of procrastination, of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays, is coming to its close. In its place we are entering a period of consequences." Let us hope that the Cassandras we have will no longer be ignored.

Richard A. Clarke is one of my favorite authors and I have read all of his books, both fiction and non-fiction. One of my favorite things about Clarke is his ability to write about nearly any subject matter in an exciting and titillating manner, his work often reads like a thrilling spy novel. He is one of the most knowledgeable experts in terrorism, national security, and cyber security. I was greatly looking forward to reading this book and I was not disappointed. It is as insightful, informative, and thrilling as all of Clarke's other books. I found the first half of the book particularly helpful in that the authors so clearly demonstrated how easily disasters can occur despite the fact that there is an expert warning about the impending catastrophe and they often have concrete data to back up their assertions. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. Richard A. Clarke is a national treasure and I very much look forward to his next book.

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