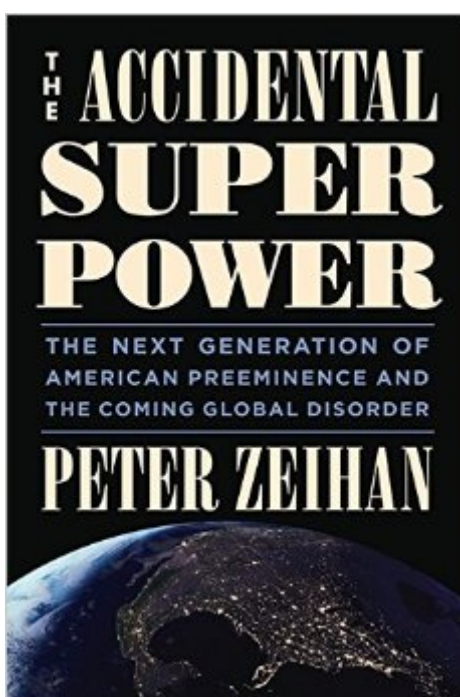


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The Accidental Superpower: The Next Generation Of American Preeminence And The Coming Global Disorder



Synopsis

In the bestselling tradition of *The World Is Flat* and *The Next 100 Years*, *THE ACCIDENTAL SUPERPOWER* will be a much discussed, contrarian, and eye-opening assessment of American power. Near the end of the Second World War, the United States made a bold strategic gambit that rewired the international system. Empires were abolished and replaced by a global arrangement enforced by the U.S. Navy. With all the world's oceans safe for the first time in history, markets and resources were made available for everyone. Enemies became partners. We think of this system as normal-it is not. We live in an artificial world on borrowed time. In *THE ACCIDENTAL SUPERPOWER*, international strategist Peter Zeihan examines how the hard rules of geography are eroding the American commitment to free trade; how much of the planet is aging into a mass retirement that will enervate markets and capital supplies; and how, against all odds, it is the ever-ravenous American economy that-alone among the developed nations-is rapidly approaching energy independence. Combined, these factors are doing nothing less than overturning the global system and ushering in a new (dis)order. For most, that is a disaster-in-waiting, but not for the Americans. The shale revolution allows Americans to sidestep an increasingly dangerous energy market. Only the United States boasts a youth population large enough to escape the sucking maw of global aging. Most important, geography will matter more than ever in a de-globalizing world, and America's geography is simply sublime.

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Customer Reviews

The raw, natural, unique geographical potential of the US been, perhaps, hardly noticed and in this early 21st century we can see that is barely realized. The US emerged from WW2 as the only standing power of the age and an accident of circumstance to rebuild the world. Without much notice or aplomb, the accident turned real and changed the world as we know it at 1944 Bretton Woods. Zeihan's premise is that the US has seemed to mature beyond its needy detractors and lukewarm allies and might reconsider the strategic US role in the world away from the position of an active enforcer of global institutions. Zeihan's premise is that we can do better for ourselves without a whole lot of effort. Such an imagining has been inconceivable since the US has been an energy importer. The US must invest insane volumes of national capital to defend the worlds free market resource and energy flows. But that's changed in such fundamental ways that we might reconsider it all and change the century for much better. Zeihan explores discarding WW2's promulgated political maps and considers the world from a space station vantage eye view. Zeihan provides a sage, quantifiable grand tour of where that future is peeking through. Everyone can see that there's something different in the air for better or worse. Most recently, we have the huge discount at the gas pump. The global hierarchy is stressed. Strange things are happening in distant places and here in the US. The dynamics of current changes in the geopolitical construct will fill the future history of this century. Zeihan is an excellent, logical writer. He masterfully knits the pieces of his thesis into an enjoyable coherence. The historical evidence and critical variables are exercised on the grand scale ...

I began to suspect from the outset that author Peter Zeihan was not born and educated in the USA. He appears to be only superficially acquainted with U.S. history before World War II. However, that is NOT a significant weakness of the book because its crux is what has happened, and what Zeihan interpolates WILL happen, between 1945 --- when the USA emerged as a superpower --- and where we are headed into the mid 21st Century. On that period of current history and history extrapolated forward, Zeihan is expert, and that is why this book should be read. Zeihan's premise that the USA is an "accidental" superpower whose people just happened to stumble upon a continent of astoundingly favorable geography is dubious. Yes, the favorable geography was there, but the creation of the United States as a continent-spanning and then global superpower was no accident. Zeihan seems to believe that it was a cakewalk for American pioneers to secure possession of our country from coast to coast, and that not much in the way of man-made "artificial infrastructure" (i.e. canals, highways, and railroads) needed to be built:=====One of the things that the Americans have traditionally not needed to spend that money on is artificial

infrastructure.=====Mr. Zeihan needs to call up an 1850's canal map, an 1860s through 1940s railroad map, or a modern road atlas with its 40,000 miles of Interstate highways. We've spent the modern-day equivalent of trillions of dollars on transportation infrastructures since our founding, and we're still at it, with the chorus of calls to commit money to high-speed passenger railroads. Transportation infrastructure is the LIFEBLOOD of America.

I read this book just after Reading World Order by Henry Kissinger. Kissinger's book covers the current challenges of the geopolitical landscape, outlining above all the historical and cultural context in which the US and other major powers find themselves. Well, this book offers a similar analysis of the current scene, but although not exclusively, it's main focus is on the geographical, military and some other aspects, mostly the physical resources which define the sources and limits of power for major countries. In the author's view, the US, with unequalled geographic and physical resources is the country which calls the shots in the modern world. The real game-changer is the recent discovery of shale oil in the US which will give it energy Independence, and will reduce the need for protecting the world's major sea-lanes necessary for world trade to prosper. Up to now it has been in the interest of the US to promote and protect world trade, but that is no longer the case. This means that many countries with lesser resources as the US (e.g. Germany, China) will face serious challenges in retaining their power without the backing of the US navy and enforcement of order. The author points out the countries most vulnerable under the expected new regime, and their alternatives. While I certainly found the book great reading and full of interesting facts and figures, I felt it a little too one-dimensional: i.e. too reliant on geographical, economic, demographic and physical resources to explain the potential evolution of modern geopolitics. This view is rather deterministic: as if these factors would logically induce countries to act according to their existing natural strengths without other considerations.

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