


# Swans, Swine, and Swindlers: Coping with the Growing Threat of Mega-Crises and Mega-Messes (High Reliability and Crisis Management)

*By Ian Mitroff, Can Alpaslan*

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*Swans, Swine, and Swindlers* addresses a core, contemporary question: What steps can we take to better anticipate and manage mega-crises, such as Haiti, Katrina, and 9/11?

This book explores the concept of "messes." A mess is a web of complex and dynamically interacting, ill-defined, and/or wicked problems; their solutions; and our conscious and unconscious assumptions, beliefs, emotions, and values. The roots of messes can be classified as *Swans* (the inability to surface and test false assumptions and mistaken beliefs), *Swine* (the inability to confront and manage greed, hubris, arrogance, and narcissism), and *Swindlers* (the inability to confront, detect, and stop unethical and corrupt behavior). Working systematically with this concept and these classifications, authors Can M. Alpaslan and Ian I. Mitroff reveal that all crises are messes; one must learn to understand and manage them as such.

They then provide tools and frameworks that readers can use to more effectively deal with the crises of today and tomorrow. Drawing on ideas from research areas as diverse as human development, philosophy, rhetoric, psychology, and high reliability organizations, this book aims to be the definitive guide for a new era in crisis management. Therefore, it is a must-have for practitioners, scholars, and students who study and deal in real-life crises.

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## Editorial Review

Review
"The mandarins of Wall Street would like us to believe that The Great Financial Crisis of 2008 was a Perfect Storm, a once-in-several-lifetimes alignment of destructive elements beyond anybody's control. Mitroff and Alpaslan disagree. They convince us that it was a mega crisis enmeshed in a mega mess, an event more like the Titanic?the combined result of several seemingly improbable and unanticipated environmental events (Swans) and a number of design flaws that were potential catastrophes in the making (Swines) all of which were dealt with ineffectively by a dangerous set of stakeholders prone to human error, narcissism, hubris and even skullduggery (Swindlers). Crucially, the authors provide us with a road map for coping with such crises and messes in the future." (Richard Mason, Carr P. Collins Professor of Management Information Sciences, Edwin L. Cox School of Business *Southern Methodist University*)

"*Swans, Swines, and Swindlers* examines the deep, systemic, and messy nature of crises. In a world beset with global financial crisis, climate crisis, and poverty crisis, getting a good handle on the problems is as important as finding good solutions. Alpaslan and Mitroff offer a timely, unique, and thoroughly researched approach to understanding crises, and crisis management. Every manager and government administrator, and every citizen interested in these mega messes, should read this book. They will learn to challenge their own assumptions and avoid the psychological denial that is at the root of many crises." (Paul Shrivastava, David O'Brien Distinguished Professor of Sustainable Enterprise, and Director, David O'Brien Center for Sustainable Enterprise)

"More than just a scholarly litany of massive crises, [Alpaslan and Mitroff] offer informed and informative insights into universal aspects of national calamities such as the 2008 economic collapse, the definitions of crisis, dealing with denial and fear-based crisis management responses, and the necessities of trust, transparency, and reliability in dealing with (and preventing future) crisis. Enhanced with extensive notes and a comprehensive index, *Swans, Swine, and Swindlers* is a work of impeccable scholarship and highly recommended for personal reading lists and academic library Business/Economic studies collections." (*Midwest Book Review*)

"With *Swans, Swines, and Swindlers*, Alpaslan and Mitroff take us into the a world of mega messes and show us how to avoid mega crises. A must-read for any leader of the 21st Century!" (Marshall Goldsmith)

About the Author
Can M. Alpaslan is Associate Professor in the College of Business and Economics at California State University, Northridge. Ian I. Mitroff is widely regarded as one of the "fathers" of modern Crisis Management. He is Professor Emeritus from the Annenberg School for Communication and the Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California. He is University Professor at the Marshall Goldsmith School of Management, Alliant International University; Adjunct Professor in the College of Environmental Design, University of California at Berkeley; Senior Research Associate at The Center for Catastrophic Risk Management, University of California at Berkeley; and Adjunct Professor in The School of Public Health, St. Louis University.

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