CHAPTER 2

ANTICIPATING RUDE SURPRISES

Reflections on "Crisis Management" Without End

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INTRODUCTION[1]

Global economic, political, and technological trends assure the potentials for "institutional crises" of such magnitude that international cooperation will be needed to limit their damage and possibly their frequency. The emerging literature on institutional responses to emergencies, disasters, and crises signals both an intensifying expectation that political and economic institutions should be able to limit societal damage and speed recovery, and a sense that such capabilities are far more complex and demanding than formerly recognized (see Tierney, 2006; Tierney, Lindell, & Perry, 2001). Preparing to respond to crises, then, calls for much better understanding of these phenomena as they are experienced by institutions and by their operational leaders. Especially wanting are

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searching evaluations of recent history with cogent applications to training practitioners and to institutional planning processes.[2]

An overview that animated a recent conference on this topic proposed that its sprawling literature could be oriented "around four research traditions in the study of crisis management that (combine) somewhat different analytical emphases: (those that stress) threats originating from 'people and groups,' or those originating from "'macro-structural' characteristics of the institutional/organizational systems involved, as viewed from 'operational/technical perspectives' or 'political/symbolic perspectives.' "

Table 2.1 arrays a preliminary ordering attempt.[3] Its vectors splay out across much of organization and management literature as one moves from the practices of normal operations to emergency response, and then to the extraordinary dynamics of crisis containment and recovery. The range is remarkable, the framing categories providing at least an initial sense of order. But when one samples aspects of these literatures, one finds little that signals deepening analytical direction.

The reflections in this article were prompted by generous invitations from scholars who have been much more deeply engaged than I in wrestling with the practical and conceptual puzzles of understanding how institutions respond to extreme events. My views are very much those of an outsider, a wide-eyed newcomer who has only a modest sense of the received literature and is more or less innocent of the currents within the communities of those who can make first claims to wisdom in this domain. In accepting the invitations, I found a fascinating, unsettling area that rivets the attention. These reflections, presented with little of the patina warranted from a deeper expert, are filtered through the prisms of studying

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Table 2.1.   On Perspectives of Crisis Management

	Operational-Technical Perspective	*Political-Symbolic Perspective*
Threats from people and groups	Foci: Command and control Consequence management Strategic interaction High stakes decision making	Foci: Threat politics Problem framing Stakeholders' views Institutional cooperation Nature of communication process
Threats due to structural problems	Foci: Complex accidents and natural disasters Local and regional levels Relieve human suffering Time pressure	Foci: Public policy analysis Agenda setting Performance accountability Public legitimacy Interaction with media

highly reliable public institutions that operate demanding technologies characterized by high capacity and intrinsic hazards where failures may be very costly, and where social risks could extend widely across space and over numerous management generations (see e.g., La Porte, 1996; La Porte & Keller, 1996; Rochlin, 1996). Let us see where it takes us.

For this discussion, I distinguish between considering emergencies and responding to crises—that is, the capacity of organizations/institutions to respond reliably to:

(a) well understood, operational situations that if allowed to evolve could result in serious degradation of capacity and loss of resources and/or life (i.e., emergencies), contrasted with those

(b) unexpected situations that produce demands perceived potentially to overwhelm institutional capacities and possibly to inflict severe, irreversible damage to known and unknown sectors of society (i.e., crises).

This view of "crisis" phenomena is both narrower and less stringent than often orients such discussions: to wit, a crisis is a situation in which decision time is short and error disastrous (cf. Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). And recent discussions have expanded the range of what might precipitate a "crisis" to include collective behavior that surprises a society's economic and political elites, for example, regional financial disruption or crashes of economic markets. This could be stretched to include political surprises as well, as in the popular overthrow of an established regime, though these "crises" take on a quite different character compared to the episodes usually assigned to the "crisis" category (see La Porte, 2005).[4]

When "crisis management" is highlighted, the focus is often tightly on ***damage limitation*** by attempting to assure the institutional capacities needed to respond to unexpected, potentially overwhelming circumstances that are likely to deliver punishing blows to human life, to political or economic viability, and/or to environmental integrity. These are circumstances we experience as ***rude surprises***. But crisis management could (and in my view should) also entail searching out the potentials/precursors for unexpected, overwhelming circumstances, then working to understand them. Effective management would also include developing practices and operational capacities so "crisis potentials" are reduced to less threatening emergency challenges. If this is successful, the range of circumstances that would produce crises narrows, thus reducing potential spikes in public anxiety that come from a sense that social institutions may falter in the face of seriously problematic demands.

The requisites of effective management vary considerably as the operational demands shift from normal, more or less understood, routinized activities to those needed to assure confident responses to understood emergencies. Both normal and emergency activities call for practiced processes founded on an array of recognized skills, coordinating arrangements, accounting techniques, and, in the end, structured organizational patterns that can be learned and transferred from one work generation to the next. And these practices can be interpreted to citizens and to institutional leaders, much as fire prevention and fire-fighting requirements can be described to those who must authorize and pay for them. Effectiveness in realizing these capacities depends centrally on clear understanding of normal working environments and potential threats and the organizational actions needed to reduce and/or limit damage where emergency situations occur (La Porte, 2005). When these well-ventilated knowledge bases are present, the result is a reasonable degree of certainty about what to do and about the circumstances an organization faces in responding. If well functioning organizational units are able (with skills and resources) reliably to act on this understanding, public confidence is warranted (La Porte & Metlay, 1996).

The conditions noted so far are generally met in most of what public organizations do—when they engage in normal operations. We expect these functions to characterize administrative systems and bureaucracies we depend upon—even as commentators voice animus about the resulting highly predictable stasis. Indeed, efforts to provide "emergency services" take on many of these predictable qualities—qualities that soothe organizational members and the public as they (and we) seek reassurance in familiarity. Yet one of the lessons learned from reflecting on crisis experiences is that *the more crisis prone the situation, the more deeply surprising and unpredictable it is*—a key condition orienting my comments here (Tierney, Lindell, & Perry, 2001).

CHALLENGES OF "OTHER MANAGEMENTS"

In considering the requirements for emergency and crisis modes of management, I assume two background factors to which I shall return:[5]

- Normal, emergency, and crisis response capabilities (when they exist formally) are likely to be *bundled* together within the same organizations. That is, only a few organizations will see themselves as predominately crisis managers without significant emergency and normal organizational functions as well. Since each of these functions is likely to be associated with different norms and special-

ized practices, they signal significant imperatives to develop smoothly functioning, "multi-cultural" organizations.

- Emergency and crisis management functions are likely to be seen by most organizational members, and certainly by the public, with a relatively high degree of dread accompanied by serious legislative and public "attention deficit disorder." This has important implications (and dysfunctions) for how public discourse is shaped and evolves.

These background factors of bundled functions and dread color all attempts to join confident, well exercised *emergency management capacities* with the less familiar institutional processes of "*crisis management.*" In the first instance, a good deal of emergency management involves working out the processes to identify the onset of recognized operational deviations, nurturing highly reliable organizational responses to them, and establishing damage control capacities to limit organizational liability for unavoidable disruption. Of particular importance here is the tendency for political overseers to press emergency managers to add areas of monitoring and response (often initially prompted by a crisis) where the "loss of control" seems to pose serious risks and damage to agency operations, mission accomplishment, and fitness for the future.

When formal demands grow for responding *effectively to crises*, the conditions of "bundled functions and dread" also affect the dynamics of developing capacities within and between organizations to respond to dangerous, uncertain hazards and, recently, to engage destructive predatory intent. One of the key lessons learned from experiencing crises is that *institutions are confronted with great ambiguity and the "fog of technologies gone opaque."* To remain on the coherent side of chaos requires (a) highly flexible capacity and permission quickly to recombine the organizational capabilities needed to address novel, previously unknowable challenges and, often, (b) seeking out lessons that allow new domains to be included (later) in emergency management processes.[6] Another arresting likelihood is that crises, because they are *novel and surprising experiences for the affected institutions*, are intrinsically difficult for organizational actors to absorb into the context of normal operations or emergency management functions, especially for large, complex (technically oriented) organizations. The implications from an institutional perspective are profound. Organizational learning will be mostly based on *inductive* experiences of failures in past "surprise response reactions," for there will be little credible *deductive* basis to design future oriented, proactive preparation. Furthermore, as noted below, crises vary markedly in their characteristics and, hence, in the variety of institutional capacities needed to respond confidently.

The institutional challenge is remarkable: Success, so to say, rests on understanding *conditions that maintain the institution's capacity to recombine capabilities quickly—with little margins for error—in the face of unpredictable, potentially dire circumstances, that is, rude surprises.*

Clearly, crises come in a variety of types. Their intensities and character of harm vary, as do the qualities of information about institutional capacities related to one crisis or another. Do these variations matter? It is difficult to argue that the conditions needed to maintain the continuities of mature, efficient organizational processes of normal operations, emergency preparedness, *and* crisis response capabilities are independent of variations in the differences between crises. At the same time, there seem to be few attempts to provide a systematic framework for developing institutional capabilities (see for exceptions, Rosenthal, Boin, & Comfort, 2001; Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sndelius, 2005).

Table 2.2 nominates properties of crises that have strong implications for organizational design when political and agency leaders consider enhancing the crisis management capacity of their institutions.[7] Each of these conditions poses rather different organizational puzzles as they vary from one sort of engagement with external pressures or another. One can imagine that as these conditions gather in different combinations, so vary the management challenges that confront the institutions charged with responding to the crises. What follows are reflections on the analytical challenges inherent in deepening our understanding of institutions as they face potential crises.

The two sets of factors are grouped in terms of the expected severity and concentration of the effects of anticipated crises and the quality and accessibility of knowledge needed to understand and then respond to them as they unfold. The more severe the crisis (higher cumulative scores) and the less confidence in and accessibility of information and causal knowledge about the particular crisis (again the higher the score), the more likely institutional disarray and systemic collapse. In general, (a) the more devastating, abruptly delivered, concentrated, and short term the feared effects, and (b) the less confidence in knowledge about causes and consequences, (c) the more secret the information about remedies, and (d) the more disagreement about the credibility of information, the greater the strain, conflict and institutional paralysis and more likely panic behavior of elites. It is unlikely that these factors run together in the directions suggested. Rather, crises are more likely to exhibit different mixes of properties. As these mixes vary, one has a sense that the limits of received conceptual—and practical—wisdom are rather quickly reached.

Table 2.2.   Properties of Crises: Institutional Design Factors

Factor Varies On a 1-5 Scale	
Public Perception	
a. Consensus on seriousness of the crisis.	From weak, equivocal **to** very strong **
Variations in the Feared Effect	
b. Overall magnitude.	From destructive but not debilitating **to** devastating, potentially irreversible.
c. Speed of crisis unfolding	From evolving over several management generations **to** abrupt and rapid.
d. Propagation of effects	From spreading over unpredictable terrain **to** concentrated.
e. Perceived duration of effects	From many management generations **to** relatively short term.
Information About Causes, Consequences, Responses	
f. Knowledge of causes and consequences.	From available, only needs to be assembled **to** unknowable in the time frame of response.
g. Mix of information for diagnosis, remedy.	From only public information needed **to** information predominantly from secret sources.
h. Consensus on utility/credibility of information.	From strong consensus **to** conflicting, competitive disagreement.

** *Note:*   If consensus is very strong, this trumps everything else as an influence on institutional dynamics.

COMBINATIONS AND ANALYTICAL CONSEQUENCES[8]

Crisis situations present to first responding institutions (a) a wide variety of "crisis properties," and (b) an unusual degree of uncertainty about the specific mix of these conditions. These two characteristics highlight the need for means *to embrace potentially dreadful surprises within an overseeing environment which honors false starts as well as systematic learning*.

To the degree this assertion is defensible, what analytical vectors result? (Set aside, for the moment, the extreme unlikelihood of such organizational norms.)

Let us propose a thought experiment in which some of the eight factors in Table 2.2 are varied along, say, 5-point scales. Then imagine the institutional dynamics (deduced from whatever institutional theories attract you) that might follow if "crisis combination" *a* or *b* or *c* occurred within different "operational and political contexts" (x, y, and z.) Here is a brief illustration (see Table 2.3.) To make this manageable, hold four factors constant (a, d, f, and i).

For each "crisis" assume there is: a moderately strong consensus that it is very serious (factor a/3), with regional effects (d/4); and that knowledge is patchy about its causes and effects (f/3), with information available from credible but competing sources (i/4).

Now posit three cases (A, B, C) varied in terms of the other four (4) factors (see Table 2.3).

Consider the differences in institutional dynamics were the properties of crises to vary as indicated in Table 2.3 (scored on a 5-point scale, 1–5):

The *overall magnitude* for these crises ranges from:

Devastating (5), to Destructive but not debilitating (3), to Reversibly Destructive (2)
The *speed at which they unfolded* ranges from:

Abrupt, rapid onset (5), to one that is expected to become apparent within two management generations (say 14 years) (3), and another not expected for four or more political generations, 24 + years) (2).

Table 2.3.   Factors Parsed—Some Held Constant, Others Varied.*

Factors Held Constant	*Strength (1-5) for Cases A, B, C*		
a. <u>Moderately strong consensus</u> on seriousness of the crisis (3);			
d. <u>Regional propagation</u> of effects (4);			
f. <u>Patchy knowledge</u> of causes and consequences (3);			
h. <u>Competitive sources</u> of useful information (4)			
Case Varied Factors	*A*	*B*	*C*
b. Overall magnitude	devastating (5)	destructive (3) not debilitating	destructive (2) but reversible
c. Speed of crisis unfolding	abrupt, rapid (5)	expected w/in 2 mngt generat.(3)	slowly over 4+ pol generat. (2)
e. Perceived duration of effects	short term (5) 5–10 years	moderate (3) 10–20 years	indeterminate (1) mgt generat.
g. Mix of information for diagnosis, remedy	only public (1) information	equal mix (3) public/classified	mainly (5) classified

Note: * See the appendix for a more formal display of these factors.

The *duration of effects* of these crises is perceived to range from:

> Only a short time (5–10 years) (5); to a moderate 10–20 years (3) to stretch indeterminately into the future for many management generations. (1)

The *information needed to respond/recover* ranges from:

> Information fully available from public sources (1), sources that are mixed equally from public and classified sources (3), to sources that are mainly from highly classified (5).

Now consider, in your deductive mind's eye, the dynamics that would unfold if a crisis, say, of mix A or B or C, were to be visited upon an administrative and political culture that interests you and you know well.[9] If this administrative setting includes a number of agencies, for example, the combination of air traffic control drawing in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and a wide swath of U.S. air carriers, so much the better. Now, add detail to the analysis by making explicit those first responders whose operating responsibilities *cross* jurisdictional and national borders. One could imagine, for example, something of the rude financial surprises that involve a number of institutions and different national environments.

If you have begun imagining several cases—even with these simplified variables from which to deduct institutional, decision maker, and operator responses—you are likely to sense a series of daunting tasks. As you jot down your "seat of the pants" expectations, be sure to include their analytical, conceptual, dare I say theoretical, justifications. How confident are you regarding your predictions? How robust are their conceptual groundings?

Facing emergencies (challenges that had been experienced before) with these varying characteristics would prompt different institutional dynamics, perhaps different emphases of skills, decision processes, and very likely different relations with stakeholding groups. Even if it were limited, prior experience would very likely have resulted in the development of at least some emergency coping response capabilities. This would lead to a sense of anticipation and perhaps even a practiced capacity to deal with the sorts of hazards associated with the feared events.

But crises are, by definition, rude, upsetting surprises, novel circumstances that seem likely to overwhelm existing capacity. They present unexpected challenges about which there cannot be much forward plan-

ning because the particulars could not have been predicted. Learning to embrace surprise becomes a useful survival strategy.

ARRESTING PUZZLES

The general characteristics of crises noted above lack adjustment for specific context. Indeed, the tacit frame of reference assumes the presence of a wide range of properties associated with large scale, nationally based institutions rooted in advanced industrial society. Until recently, this may have been justified, I suppose, when examining crises through the period of the Cold War. But, within this decade, a type or class of crisis has emerged that presents particularly puzzling qualities, especially in terms of institutional design. These crises are notable for they involve rude surprises of a particularly troubling nature: the surprises that attend a novel sort of "*fluid terrorism*," especially those associated with suicide terror, or "martyr operations," that have become a means of attack used by some groups oriented toward radical forms of Islam. (We return to this point in Theme Two below.) A mainly post–9/11 phenomenon for U.S. citizens, the crises prompted by these threats combine aspects that confound and amplify the intensity of other qualities.

(a) The U.S. and European institutions face adversaries whose motivations *no longer include a deep attachment to physical survival* as a defining element in their notions of self-interest.

(b) Our adversaries' organizational bases are *not firmly grounded within national systems* of legal and police activities, and national institutions are less effective as means of control.

(c) There are means to *deliver very significant economic and social destruction* more widely than at any time in history. Indeed, in a sense we have gloried in this accomplishment of globalization.

(d) Partly as a consequence, there is the sense of apprehension, *repressed public fear and a kind of free floating dread* that is amplified by "terrorist attacks."

(e) Finally, in response, we see the need to be very broadly prepared, across a much wider range of "first responders" than in the past, at a *much higher level of operating reliability* than has ever been demanded of public institutions or private enterprises.

When challenges *threaten very rude surprises,* characterized by many of the factors noted just above, how do the cases spin out in the settings you know best? From what *theoretical/conceptual bases can confident expectations be derived to anticipate the institutional challenges* associated with them?

Ruminate—deductively—about the dynamics implied. These exercises are likely to show that our insights about managing *to prepare for surprises* are weakly founded. If this is to improve, we need to find ways of framing the matter that provide grounds for research and experiment.

TOWARD DISCUSSION THEMES

This article has taken us unexpectedly at an angle from the vectors of highly reliable organizations, and public trust and confidence, that I had imagined I would follow.[10] The results are more speculative and more worrisome. Below, I nominate several derivative *themes* that raise questions of concept, research, and practice. How could they be expressed in terms of the substantive domains of interest in the social sciences and for purposes of public policy?

Theme One: Managing to be Rudely Surprised (for a Hundred Years?)

In a sense, "crises management" is a contradiction in terms. Rude surprises are not managed; responses to them can be. From an institutional view, the challenges are not only to be prepared, in advance, to do things one knows you will have to do, but to have capacities at-the-ready, so to say, to be combined in unforeseen ways with other capabilities, perhaps from other domains of civil society, as the parameters of the new crisis unfold.

A central question could be: What institutional conditions need to be assured so that rapid recombinations of organizational capacity (and sometime added functions) can be realized? What patterns of incentives would assure self-organized, flexible adaptation to rude surprises for an *unforeseeably long future?* (see La Porte, 2004; La Porte & Keller, 1996)[11] Second, to what degree could an *institutional culture of effective emergency response impede the development of a culture embracing uncertainty and surprise?*

The analytical dimensions of addressing these questions are formidable. Novel combinations must usually emerge while normal operations continue. Much of what is nominated as "best practice" for regular public organizational operations leads in the direction of close internal control, limiting slack resources, and transparent, usually punitive external accountability.[12] It is difficult to see how these properties of public institutions result in the capacity quickly to crystallize novel relations between formerly separate functions as the parameters of a rude surprise become evident.

The sustained effectiveness of U.S. institutions to develop emergency response capabilities, perhaps anticipating small surprises and incipient crises, should be reviewed on two counts. How have responding institutions attempted to develop a culture of emergency response (that includes preparation for surprise)? We see attempts to do both in some U.S. state emergency response operations, wildfire-fighting experience, and the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) insistence that nuclear power plant operators conduct bi-annual, full-scale simulations of disaster response decision making. These simulations include ALL of the decision makers likely to be involved, were there to be enough loss of containment of nuclear radiation to warrant the evacuation of adjacent communities. There are similar experiences in the ways the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assemble the relevant agencies and non-governmental organizations to respond to the discovery of new communicable pathogens (e.g., SARS epidemic). Less admirable experience is found in the United States' tentative initial response to HIV infections.

To what degree can emergency preparedness be accomplished in ways that do not inhibit preparing for rude surprise? This would encourage the potential for ad hoc authority patterns, the availability of resources beyond those needed for everyday activities, and a working environment that minimizes the fear of post hoc criticism and institutional retribution for trial and error learning that necessarily accompanies rude surprises.

Two propositions derive from injunctions in pursuit of normal operations and effective emergency response capabilities with regard to the conditions outlined in the crisis exercise (above). I state these in a bald form.

- The more productively efficient the organization that is called to respond to a crisis, the less capable it will be in dealing with untoward surprise (see Auerswald, Branscomb, La Porte, & Michel-Kerjan, 2006).
- The higher the consensus about the seriousness of the crisis and the need for rapid response, the more likely serious errors will be made.[13]

Another aspect of "crisis management" also confounds: There is a very low likelihood that any particular network of institutions will actually experience a crisis. When they do, they are likely to incorporate the lessons they learn into their subsequent suite of *emergency* processes. By instituting such practices, these institutions may keep the potential for recombination in the face of unlikely next surprising crises fairly low.

It follows that the institutional energy and resources needed for ready responsiveness to untoward surprises will be difficult to assure

from one generation to the next. Why, it will be argued, prepare for surprises that are unlikely to confront you? (Another version of "life is short," heed the probable.) This is especially difficult when overseers suspect that surprises are unlikely. Much of what public institutions do is strongly affected by the behavior of political overseers and legislatures. What roles do agency or ministry leaders and legislatures play in assuring the institutional conditions needed continually to respond effectively to serious surprises? We know a good deal about the dynamics of political overseers that work to constrain, sometimes paralyze, agency behavior. These dynamics are precisely the reverse of what would be needed in the face of rude surprise. Considerable work is needed on the potential for overseers' norms that would *increase* the likelihood of institutional flexibility and novel cooperation. Two aspects come to mind, noted here without elaboration.

- Examine the changes in *accounting practices* that would reward, under defined conditions, flexible institutional responses. These would allow for a better understanding of how unauthorized expenses, without formal review, could be incurred rapidly without fear that, in the aftermath of the crisis, those who provided "unauthorized" assistance would discover they could not be reimbursed—essentially being punished post hoc for flexible behavior. To the degree this is expected, and is believed to have occurred, it is the basis for the "bean counting lament," reluctant cooperation, and residual institutional bitterness.
- Understanding the effects of media behavior (themselves performing an overseeing function) on *inhibiting* institutional cooperation, and ad hoc responses to rude surprise.

Theme Two: When the Surprise is Predatory—With a Sacrificial Twist!

In the past, "crisis management" has tacitly assumed that crises would be the result of natural forces and/or unintended human action. Most discussions of these topics include rude surprises that originate from collective behavior of society's economic and political elites, for example, regional financial disruption, crashes of economic markets, and the popular over throw of an established regime. Now as we peer into the future, we must also consider the recent substantial increase in the propensity for humans to prey upon their own kind. Short of organized military action, this predatory activity can wreak sufficiently unexpected destruction to become a new source of crisis. To what degree does social predation add
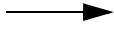
confounding complications when public institutions attempt to prepare gracefully for rude surprises—surprises that now can originate from within their own or other civil societies?

Within the past 5 years, the United States has, for the first time, experienced such a predatory situation, one that interjects security concerns into the mix.[14] The West's confrontation with radical Islam is producing serious and complicating concerns about how public institutions should establish confident emergency responses and, particularly, how they might incorporate processes that prepare the public for predatory crises. Two of the factors in Table 2.2 speak to this situation: the mix of publicly available versus classified information needed to prepare for and/or respond to rude, nasty surprises; and the credibility of the information sources that are available.

Without dwelling here on the importance of these two factors (indeed, readers may wish to add others that stem from predatory sources of crises), it is clear that increasing proportions of classified information needed for understanding and responding to novel threatening surprises set in motion institutional reactions and operating dynamics that are themselves quite difficult to predict. What effects do variations in these factors have on the capacity of institutions to elaborate the norms and develop the facility to recombine resources in the face of novel, nasty surprises? One significant aspect of this is to account for the effects on "crisis management" requirements as a society's technical and institutional infrastructure becomes increasingly interdependent on the province of homeland security and defense agencies. This is particularly interesting as one considers differences among political cultures.

The newly emergent conditions of social predation, which the United States especially seems to confront, represent major hurdles for American institutional preparedness for emergencies and rude surprises. One characteristic is particularly confounding and, when joined by the others, mounts major challenges. Some adversaries' motivations *no longer share with us a deep attachment to physical survival* as a defining element in their notions of self-interest. Nearly all Western concepts of cooperation, deterrence, and social conflict are rooted at least tacitly in this premise. All of our organizational strategies have been based on implicitly accepting the notion of "*physical survival as self-interest.*" When we apply them to many of the situations we now confront, errors in predicting adversarial behavior result. Some of these errors produce what amount to tactical crises for those who are the objects of predatorial attack. Providing the institutional capacity to recombine capabilities in the field, when these assumptions are relaxed, becomes a major challenge.

Theme Three: When Rude Surprises are Transborder

The spate of workshops and conferences convened broadly around the crisis/disaster management theme offer an "existence proof" that when the effects of crises spill across national boundaries, analysts and operators have only modest confidence in how to proceed. If confident projections are asserted in public pronouncements, they are almost always rooted in one analytical ideology or another, which, of itself, generates sufficient disagreement to erode general confidence.

Pose this situation in the form of a null hypothesis: Institutional responses to threatening surprises in one nation will be very similar to those in other nations. The only response has to be, "*not likely.*" Then the analytical challenge is to identify national conditions that account for differences that we *already* see and should expect to color reactions from the representatives of various national analytical communities.

Another way of putting this is to wonder: In each of the countries affected by a particular crisis, what intranational conditions enable highly discretionary institutional behavior—in service to self-organizing recombination of public capacity as the lineaments of a rude surprise unfold? There is no reason a priori to suppose they will be the same conditions in each country. What national institutional patterns that nurture cooperative behavior *within* the nation also act to inhibit (a) highly discretional behavior *among* national agencies, and (b) *among* agencies of other countries?

In this vein, what conceptual frames would give analysts confident bases for nominating the several most telling national institutional properties from which to predict different patterns of "crisis response" dynamics? Would, for example, these include systematic differences between countries with traditions of common law compared to those following code law? And the list surely would quickly expand to consider the variations in internal incentives, work rules, accounting practices, and so forth; but which aspects of each category? How could the choice be justified conceptually?

All of these can be scrutinized in terms of the inhibiting or enabling effect on self-organized recombination. As far as I know, this way of understanding the effects of consistency and control maintaining processes upon responding to surprises (unknowns, sometime unknown unknowns) has not been of interest. When considering "crisis management" in the future, it should be. As national differences become better understood, one suspects that both the opportunities and difficulties of analysis, and then operational adjustment and training, will be much more apparent.

Theme Four: "Crisis Speak" and Design Frames?

In writing this article, the regular language of organizational analysis did not serve me very well either in terms of concepts or in effective means of describing the dynamics one can imagine when managing to embrace rude surprises. There is clearly a need to think carefully about the analytical terms of reference, the views the public, and especially overseers, hold about what is possible and what could be expected in the evolution of "managing in the midst of crisis," as well as a need for a dialect of crisis response evaluation—in parallel to the current language of productive efficiency.

Public management communities now think warmly about increasing productive efficiency and performance management in the public service. This is a domain well known to academics and practitioners of public management. What would become of this discussion if criteria for efficiency also included, say, efficiencies of *crisis response and recovery*, that is, assuring situations that result in intrinsically less damage from crises over many generations of operations? When technical efficiency improvements reduce slack resources, these are no longer available to facilitate taking up new functions, to cover unfamiliar coordination costs, or to invest in distilling lessons learned from the new rude surprise. Could there be a way of framing "crisis preparation/embracing costs" so that they can be included in strategic planning? These are in a sense the costs associated with having uncommitted financial reserves and, as importantly, the costs of not planning *in advance* to encumber 100 + % of executives' time for each year. In some situations, executives calculate that up to 20% of their annual actual decision time was spent on problems that were novel and unexpected.

A related challenge would be straightforwardly designing technical and operational systems to fail gracefully. In terms of anticipating rude surprises, this would entail designs that facilitated institutions' capacities to reduce maximum damage *if* they confronted a really rude surprise and lost control of their dynamics. This tactic is sometimes featured in military hardware systems and other operations depending on intrinsically hazardous technologies. Fail-safe or safe failing systems intrigue engineers, though this is rarely proposed for the design of large-scale public institutions, or put forward as what should be done for public policies, say in genetically modified food, national pollution control, or ecological protection programs.

When the roots of fearful failure implicate social or political predators, then institutional design for "failing gracefully" takes on an additional objective: thinking through the development of "predatory confounding systems." This, of course, is an important element in considering emer-

gency systems—getting ready to do what one must to anticipate damage from known processes. Preparing to embrace unpredictable, predator prompted surprises is likely to be quite different—and difficult to explain to most overseers currently "on watch."

Finally, and most puzzling, are the design implications of preparing confidently to *embrace rude surprises for a number of management and political generations*. Crises that unexpectedly arise from natural and unintentional human sources will occur without end—the institutional demands stretching far into the future. It is possible that their magnitude will grow, and responding to them will be increasingly costly in both economic and social terms. At the same time, it is imaginable that crises of predatory origins will also continue for many political generations and grow in anxiety-arousing potential. From administrative and policy vantages, this means enhancing short-term response effectiveness while reenforcing the development of long-term, highly reliable capacities that exhibit institutional constancy. This involves signaling to the public that the institutions the public depends upon will be able repeatedly to show they can respond to rude surprises, adapt to novel situations, limit damage, and effectively draw lessons from the fearfully unexpected events in ways that improve the emergency response capabilities of each of a number of succeeding generations. This is perhaps the most difficult of the many, nearly insurmountable challenges embedded in the intention to improve "crisis management." It calls persistently to maintain appropriate levels of social watchfulness, and to purposefully engender enough social anxiety to guard continually—generation after generation—against extreme events.[15]

AN AFTERWORD WITH SKEPTICISM

There is a hopeful cast to dialogues of the kind illustrated in this book on crisis management. An obvious need is framed, energized discussions go forward—members of the choir engage each other. This is a good thing; we charge our batteries for the long pull ahead. At the same time, some attention could be fruitfully devoted to a counter view—explicating the present institutional conditions that load the dice against much more than rhetorical gain in deepening our understanding of the institutional elements that facilitate optimal responses of rude surprises even within.

APPENDIX: IMAGINARY MIX OF CRISIS PROPERTIES*

| Factor	Strength (1-5) in Case		
	A	B	C
a. Consensus on seriousness of the crisis	strong (4)	strong (4)	strong (4)
b. Overall magnitude	devastating (5)	destructive (3) not debilitating	destructive (2) but reversible
c. Speed of crisis unfolding	abrupt, rapid (5)	expected w/in 2 mngt generat.(3)	slowly over 4 + pol generat. (2)
d. Propagation of effects	regional effects (4)	regional effects (4)	regional effects (4)
e. Perceived duration of effects	short term (5) 5–10 years	moderate (3) 10–20 years	indeterminate(1) mgt generat.
f. Knowledge of causes and consequences	patchy, (3) some available	patchy, (3) some available	patchy, (3) some available
g. Mix of information for diagnosis, remedy	only public (1) information	equal mix (3) public/classified	mainly (5) classified
h. Consensus on utility/credibility	competitive (3) credibility	competitive (3) credibility	competitive (3) credibility

Note: * Variable factors in *italics*.

NOTES

1. Presented to the International Public Management Network biennial research workshop, this year on Communicable Crises: Prevention, Management and Resolution in an Era of Globalization, Vancouver, BC, Canada, August 15–17, 2005. A less developed version of this paper was used for the Conference on Transatlantic Crisis Management, Adirondack Conference Center, Syracuse University, August 6–10, 2003, sponsored by the Center for Crisis Management Research and Training (CRISMART), Swedish National Defense College, the Crisis Research Center, Leiden University, and the Trans-boundary Crisis Management Project, Maxwell School, Syracuse University. The initial section below draws in part from Conference orienting materials.

2. Exceptions are the work of Trans-boundary Crisis Management Project, Syracuse University, the Crisis Research Center, Leiden University, and the Center for Crisis Management Research and Training (CRISMART).

3. From the orientation overview for the Conference on Transatlantic Crisis Management.

4. These reflections were initially cobbled together before Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans and triggered a flood of commentary regarding catastrophe—an event whose intensity goes beyond most of what we usually regard as a crisis. I have not explicitly engaged with the order of institu-

tional surprises associated with this extraordinary event, though much of what I include here pertains to the institutional challenges associated with catastrophe.

5. These are introduced without justification. I invite readers to add others.

6. An example is the realization that a major postemergency responsibility is the provision of mental health services to the affected communities.

7. I invite the reader to nominate additional factors. Notably absent here are conditions that stem from the differences in national institutional patterns and dynamics. These become important when preparing general capacities to respond trans-national crises. For the moment, these sources of variation are bracketed. I return to them below.

8. These reflections now become more cryptic. The analytical vectors proposed here produce an unexpected matrix of puzzles, too many to explore in moderate length. The Themes section extends some of them.

9. For simplicity's sake, I have arranged the factors in these three cases varying mostly from more to less intensity. Of course, reality rarely affords such simplicity. Patterns that scramble the intensity of these factors are more likely, analytically more interesting—and much more demanding.

10. The original draft title was "Reliable Behavior and Institutional Constancy in the Face of Future, (Transnational) Crises: (Requisites of Public Confidence?)."

11. The long-term pressures from environmental changes, along with radical Islam I noted, signal the relevance of our work on institutional constancy.

12. As an aside, framed this way, following the familiar path of seeking "best practices" takes on an odd cast. Best practices usually refer to processes, and so forth, in which there is considerable confidence, for they have been tried out repeatedly in similar situations, then distilled and used again. Rarely, if ever, would this situation characterize crisis learning.

13. In part, this results from the compression of attention and the degradation of analysis due to perceived time constraints.

14. Notably, these complications have been encountered in Europe for decades. Americans have much to learn from this history.

15. Pointed out by Todd M. La Porte, private communication.
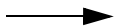
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Au: Publisher and publisher location?