



Prophecies of Doom and Scenarios of Progress: Herman Kahn, Julian Simon, and the Prospective Imagination

Paul Dragos Aligica

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This book focuses on the alternative paradigm, the pro-growth intellectual tradition that rejected the prophecies of doom and called for realism and pragmatism in dealing with the challenge of the future. Paul Dragos Aligica reconstructs and describes the basic elements of this tradition that emerged in the seventies as a response to the Club of Rome and the "limits to growth" movement. He outlines a comprehensive perspective on its methodological and conceptual foundations. Aligica uses the work of the two major founders of this alternative approach: Herman Kahn and Julian Simon. Herman Kahn was the first scholar and public intellectual to engage and refute the "doomsday" theses advanced by the Club of Rome and its followers. In his spirited and optimistic arguments he made a strong case for the feasibility, desirability and morality of global economic growth arguing that even given all the likely human, environmental, and material costs and risks, "the case is close to if not fully overwhelming." Julian Simon elaborated the "anti-doomsayers" lines opened by Kahn, further developing the emerging paradigm. He articulated new and precise arguments on issues such as population growth, natural resources scarcity and technological change, and reinforced Kahn's thesis that continued world economic development is a moral imperative as well as a practical desideratum. Together, Kahn and Simon managed to build the foundations on which rest the current counter-reaction to the "limits to growth" rhetoric and its initiatives. Both were not only public figures of great accomplishments and influence but also remarkable thinkers and personalities.

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