

# The World in 2030



By Michael Maiello

The future is ephemeral, but the printed word is lasting. So by compiling his visions of the next century in his new book, futurist Peter Schwartz risks exposing himself to ridicule in the coming years. This book, *Inevitable Surprise*, paints the future on a wide canvas, but Schwartz provides some near-Utopian specifics: Medical science will increase lifespans to 120 years and perhaps beyond, and the world will enjoy the economic largesse of what Schwartz calls the “Long Boom.”

Schwartz, 56, author of the 1991 best-seller *The Art of the Long View*, plies his trade in the real world, telling companies, movie directors, and government agencies what to expect from the future. His clients have included Steven Spielberg and the [U.S.] government’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. Schwartz honed his skills while working as Royal Dutch/Shell’s head of scenario planning in the 1980s. He’s been spectacularly right—calling for falling prices after the 1980s while the rest of the industry expected them to rise and planning for a quick end to the recession in the 1990s—and very wrong. He predicted that all homes in the U.S. would have broadband access by the late 1990s. Here’s Schwartz’s world in 2030.

**The global economy.** Schwartz sees globalization as an unstoppable force. Productivity and living standards will grow worldwide, driven by advances in information technology and life sciences.

The Dow Jones industrial average will jump 10,000 points by 2030. Inflation will remain near its present low levels, as productivity rates continue to rise with the development of new technologies.

Adapted from *Forbes*, July 21, 2003

Naysayers who believe that retiring baby boomers will cause the market to crash by liquidating their stock holdings forget that increasing lifespans will keep people at work longer and keep them in need of growth investments much longer.

**Medicine.** The aging process will be slowed in two ways. First, cloning and stem-cell research will yield new methods of creating replacement organs that will end the transplant shortage and allow people to live their full, natural lifespan, thought to be 120 years. Second, scientists will figure out how to reset the biological clock. One theory holds that people age because of telomeres, tiny DNA structures inside cells that limit the number of times they can divide before they kill themselves. By replenishing an enzyme called telomerase, researchers may be able to add years to the telomere clock so we can live beyond our natural lifespan.

**Religion.** U.S. culture will increasingly be driven by messianic Christianity, largely because of high birth rates of born-again Christian populations. This might hamper U.S. cloning research—to China’s benefit. While the U.S. continues to debate the morality of cloning, China will take up the slack. It has already begun state-funded stem-cell research.

**Utopia.** No. Schwartz sees obstacles in Third World poverty and the spread of epidemic diseases, though he believes that the current SARS epidemic was overblown by the media.

Optimists will find in Schwartz’s vision much that is worth working for. **CPM**