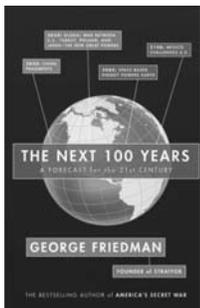


RECOMMENDED READING

The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century

by George Friedman, founder of Strategic Forecasting, Inc. (STRATFOR) (©January 2009, Doubleday, 272 pages)

REVIEWED BY JULIE M. MCINTOSH, CRE



REMEMBER THE SCHOOL DRILLS of the 1960s when we hid under our desks in case the Soviets nuked America? I do. Who could have imagined that the Soviet Union would just “fall apart” by the end of the 20th century? George Friedman explains, “Conventional analysis suffers from a profound failure of imagination.”

There is nothing conventional about this book. With analysis based on geopolitics, Friedman presents a rational, feasible forecast for our world in *The Next 100 Years*. His premise is that the concept of the “invisible hand” of geopolitics leads nations and their leaders to act in their own self-interests over the short-term, leading to predictable behavior and therefore to an ability to forecast the shape of the future of the international system. This method assumes two things consistent throughout history: 1) humans will continue to organize themselves into units larger than families and are naturally loyal to these groups; and, 2) the character of these nation-states is determined to a great extent by geography, as is the relationship between nations. When one drills down and examines the forces that shape nations, one can see the choices for their behavior are limited.

Friedman’s goal is to get one to think beyond common sense and to imagine the unimaginable and its unintended consequences. He starts out with a review of the past century of history which started with Europe peacefully ruling the world. He examines the major events of the 20th century and concludes a major point he makes throughout the book: The United States is now the

dominant world power, economically, militarily and politically, replacing the reign that Europe enjoyed for the previous 500 years—from 1492 to 1991. Therefore, the coming 100 years will be defined by two opposing struggles: 1) secondary powers forming coalitions to try to contain and control the U.S.; and, 2) the U.S. acting preemptively to prevent effective coalitions from forming.

The book is fascinating and very readable with helpful maps that provide useful illustrations of the areas of the world and international dynamics that Friedman discusses. He stops and examines the world every twenty years to observe the changes and demonstrate that these changes were beyond the reach of conventional political analysis but not so incredible when one considers the cultural and technological changes that occurred.

About the Reviewer



Julie M. McIntosh, CRE and 2010 CRE liaison vice chair, is chief investment officer of *The Integral Group*, a vertically integrated real estate development and investment management company based in Atlanta. Throughout her career, McIntosh has been an investor in a variety of real estate finance and investment vehicles, including construction lending, problem loan portfolio acquisition and resolution, CMBS origination and non-rated securities underwriting and purchase, equity joint ventures for development projects on behalf of her Wall Street client, and private equity fund management for public pension funds and institutional clients. Her passion is in the urban environment and revitalizing and/or sustaining our nation’s livable city centers.

The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century

Friedman examines the events of 9/11 and the U.S. response to those events. The assessment of goals, options and strategies among the various players is interesting and enlightening. Yet it is his view of the future that is most compelling. Pointing out the inevitable decline in population that has already begun in the developed world, he states this will continue around the globe with developing countries well into the 21st century. This population decline will restructure our lives and transform the family. All societies will experience the tension between the traditionalists, such as Osama bin Laden and the fundamentalist Christians, and those attempting to redefine the family, women and society. This tension will continue to shape the world as the inevitable decline in population plays out.

Next Friedman looks at the new “fault lines” in the world—where will the next geopolitical earthquake strike? The currently viable candidates are: China, Japan and the Pacific Basin; Eastern Europe—Russia and the former republics of the Soviet Union; Europe with its recurring tensions; the Islamic world; and Mexico. Friedman looks at them all and concludes that in the next ten years, Russia and China have the greatest systemic conflicts that may escalate. He goes on to examine each of these countries in greater detail. For each, there are

notable tensions: Russia with Poland, and China with Japan. He predicts these will be prominent issues by 2020.

By 2030, America will experience a labor shortage that, without a change in immigration policy, threatens to become a crisis. Once the U.S. addresses internal problems, we should see a time of tremendous growth in 2040, similar to the 1990s. By 2050, the world will be at war and Friedman describes this fantastical conflict in great detail. He has written numerous articles on national security, information warfare, computer security and intelligence and he describes a war which is “based on real technology and reasonable extrapolations about future technology and war planning.” I recommend reading the book if only for these warfare details—let me tell you, it’s a war fought mainly in outer space. And it certainly sounded plausible to me.

Post war, back in North America, Mexico will become a major regional power. By 2080, there will be big issues with the U.S. and Mexico, and how they are resolved is a topic for the 22nd century. This book is a great tool for understanding the current world and relationships and thinking about how it all relates to the past, giving us a possible roadmap for the future. It is definitely worth reading—and imagining. ■