

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL časopisu / URL of the journal: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

Autor(i) / Author(s): Tatiana Sudorová
Článok / Article: Book Review: The Next 100 Years
Vydavateľ / Publisher: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov –
UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences
and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica

Odporúčaná forma citácie článku / Recommended form for quotation of the article:

SUDOROVÁ, T. 2015. Book Review: The Next 100 Years. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Roč. 18, č. 2, 2015. ISSN 1335 – 2741, s. 210-217. Dostupné na internete: http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/userfiles/file/2_2015/SUDOROVA.pdf.

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BOOK REVIEW: THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Tatiana Sudorová*

FRIEDMAN, G.: *Příštích sto let (The Next 100 Years)*. Praha : Argo/Dokořán, 2012. 324 p. ISBN 978-80-7363-287-8.

The author of reviewed book, George Friedman, is an American political scientist, a University Professor, the founder and the director of Strategic Forecasting. The principal objective of this book is to address the issues of national security and to provide geopolitical prognoses and analyses. A futuristic book "The Next 100 Years" has been published by the Czech publisher Argo/Dokořán in 2012.

In the Introduction, the author explains a principle according to which he formulates his forecasts, and that is an identification of key fact which will influence our century. According to his opinion, predominant position of the United States in the world political system represents such fact. During the previous 500 years, Europe has been centre of the international system. The main business route was through the Atlantic Ocean, and the control over the Atlantic meant the control over the entire area. This, however, has changed when Pacific business route matched the Atlantic one in its importance, making clear that control over Atlantic was not enough, and that only country controlling both Atlantic and Pacific Ocean will have the dominant position. The importance of sea control can be demonstrated on the example of Great Britain and its dominance in the 19th Century. These facts make the United States a key actor involved in the field of international relations. A dominant position of one country usually does not inspire much enthusiasm and positive attitudes. Consequently, the author is sure that mainly the first half of 21st Century will be influenced by two tendencies - the first will be creating of alliances to reduce an influence of the United States, and the second will be attempts of the United States to prevent formation of such alliances. The strategy of the United States will not to

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generate wars, but to avoid the rise of next Great Power. The author supposes that wars will not be as catastrophic as in the 20th Century, mainly thanks to technological changes.

The reviewed book elaborates also on the issues of foreign policy of the United States. According to Friedman, "the United States has 5 geopolitical goals, the first is total dominance of US Army in North America," (p. 55). The second goal is to minimise the potential threat of other Great Power; next is a total control of maritime entrance points and routes to the United States territory, full control of world oceans to secure and control international trade. Consequently, the United States are committed to preventing any other power to challenge their maritime power and control. The last one is to prevent the formation of another Great Power in the Eurasian area that might challenge the US pre-eminence. The United States are systematically achieving these goals. For the United States the last one goal remains – avoiding the formation of another Great Power in Eurasian space which could endanger US interests. The most important point of US foreign policy, therefore, is to prevent stability in regions where the other Great Power could be created. Although it sounds paradoxically, their goal is a destabilisation.

Reviewed publication outlines main fault lines. The first one is a region of Pacific Basin. In this case we are talking about the fastest developing region. The biggest problem of economics in this area is raw material dependency. Japanese or Chinese economy is dependent on imports of minerals and other natural resources. On the other hand, they are dependent on export of their economic production as well. The main market for consumption of their goods is currently represented by the United States. This helps the United States to provide cheap products to their citizens; however, it damages their domestic industry at the same time. This situation can lead to discontent of citizens. An eventual ban on imports of Asian products could significantly influence development in this area.

The second fault line is represented by Eurasian region. The disintegration of the Soviet Union meant that Russian borders moved by approximately 1600 kilometres eastward -from the West-Germany border to Russian-Belarusn border and by almost 1600 kilometres from Hindu Kush to Russian-Kazakhstan borders. "Russia has been pushed away also from the border with Turkey in the direction of North Caucasus, where it now encounters problems with Chechen rebels to hold its grip on the area." (p. 88) Obviously, Western Powers tried to take advantage of this situation, and they attempted to include in their sphere of

influence as much of the ex-Soviet dominion as possible. The East Europe and the Baltic states got under the influence of European Union and NATO, the United States have established close relations with Georgia and other states in the area. The most important is a position of Ukraine. Russia understood events of the Orange Revolution as an American ambition to incorporate Ukraine into NATO. If successful, Russia would not be able to provide for its defence in case of such necessity. Russia would gradually disintegrate a scenario that would obviously benefit the United States. Russia, naturally, will try to prevent this from happening. Considering events from the last year, considerations about Ukraine as a strategic territory were confirmed. It is likely enough that Russia is going to try to strengthen its position in this region. The author supposes that Belarus will unite with Russia. He believes that Belarus is currently the most connected with Russia, because it underwent least economic and social reforms since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Now it is clear that borders of Russian influence are going to change soon. The author supposes that Russia would not become a global Great Power, „but it has no choice-it has to become a regional Great Power, and it means that it will get into a conflict with Europe.“ (p. 92)

The least important fault line will be Islamic world. According to Friedman, Islamic world will cope with current crises, but a region will become unstable. This instability will lead to creation of strong national Islamic state from weak countries. The most important players can be Iran, Turkey, and Egypt. Iran is concerned with the problems of ensuring its security and that is why it is wasting its own resources. According to the author, this is the reason why Iran will not become a regional Great Power. It will be interesting, however, to observe Turkey. Nowadays, Turkey is the biggest economy in this region. Its advantage is its strategic geographical location.

Mexico is the next fault line. According to the UN estimation, number of its inhabitants will rise from 114 to 139 million in 2030. It borders the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean and it has a long border with the United States. The border area between the two countries is the most sensitive issue.

Considerable attention is dedicated to two important actors in contemporary international relations – Russia and China. Friedman calls China a paper tiger, pointing at its rapidly developing economy and economic growth. He does not expect this growth to be indefinite; moreover, he points to the fact that the Chinese economy is unevenly distributed across the territory. China expects to be able to transfer resources from rich coastal regions to the poorer inland ones in time, without creating tensions. Beijing's main goal is to keep various parts of

the country satisfied, because internal problems might prove to be disastrous and existential for China. Friedman does not rule out the possibility of China's disintegration. In such case, it is hard to predict whether weakened Chinese government would be capable of holding different regions together. The most plausible scenario in respect of China around 2020 is, however, the country "divided between rivalling regional leaders." (p. 121)

Russia is a vast country with huge population. Its biggest advantages are land and natural resources, and its biggest weakness is its borders. The author expects that in the next ten years Russia will grow richer, but geographically it will remain unsafe. Part of its resources will be used to create buffer zones for protection; this, however, will look as an aggressive behaviour. (p. 129) The first buffer zone is the Caucasus. Caucasus is a border between Turkey and Russia. Nowadays, there are three independent countries Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Caucasus is to a certain degree also part of Russia itself – through its unstable regions of Dagestan and Chechnya. Complicated geographical terrain provides a certain defence of borders. If Russia lost its borders in Caucasus, Russia would end up in strategic problems due to high exposure of its borders. That is why Russia will not give up on its hold on Chechnya. The next interesting country is Georgia, one of the closest US allies in the region. Russia is very interested in alliance with Georgia in order to strengthen its borders. This area is marked by intense rivalry between various nationalities: Armenians accuse Turks of genocide and, consequently, lean on Russia to ensure their protection. Russia, on the other hand, is convinced that Georgia serves as transit territory for weapons to Chechnya. Azerbaijan is hostile to Armenia because it sides with Russia, and, consequently, it is allied with Iran and Turkey. The natural interest of Russia in this region is to strengthen its borders.

Another important area and buffer zone is Central Asia. Geographically, it is a region between the Caspian Sea and China. Until now this region had small importance, and in economic sphere it has been largely built on oil resources. Its importance would, however, rise if any other Great Power would want to make it a base against Russia. After 9/11, the United States invaded Afghanistan and they asked for support of an anti-Taliban group supported and controlled by Russia. Initially, Russia had no problem with it but as a war in Afghanistan started to prolong, they began to realise an American influence on countries of Central Asia. Russia started to manipulate a political situation in this region to regain its influence again, and the author supposes that Russia will be

successful in this task.

The third buffer zone is Europe. Russian western border is created by the Baltic, Belarus and Ukraine. To guarantee its security, Russia has to control Ukraine and Belarus. It is known that NATO and the United States gradually included east-European countries and the Baltic into its sphere of influence. A breaking point came when the United States wanted to incorporate Ukraine into NATO. Russia used discord in Ukraine. They used difference of opinion between pro-European Western Ukraine and pro-Russian Eastern Ukraine. According to Friedman, "it is only a question of time when a Russian influence will defeat Kiev." (p. 136)

Belarus is another case. It has close ties with Russia, and what is more, the leaders of state express themselves nostalgically about the disintegration of Soviet Union. The Baltic countries as well as Poland are NATO members. It constitutes a problem for Russia because the Baltic countries and Poland are hostile to Russia. Therefore, the next step will be probably closer cooperation with Belarus, especially in questions of security. The position of Poland is more difficult. Poland is geographically situated between Germany and Russia. If Russia moves closer to the Baltic, Poland will answer. "Polish support will extend to the Baltic countries. Russia will push Ukraine to its coalition with Belarus, and together they will control the area alongside Polish border and in the south up to the Black Sea. At that stage they will initiate a process attempted at neutralisation of the Baltic countries. This is going to happen around 2015." (p. 138) Friedman supposes that in 2015-2020 Russia will wield power which will represent a challenge for the United States as well.

Taking into consideration the basis of US foreign policy, i.e. to prevent the rise of another Great Power able to challenge the pre-eminence of the United States, it becomes easy to predict how the situation is going to develop. The United States will support Poland, mostly by providing its advanced weapons.

An interesting idea is presented in relation to the period after the break-up of China in the second decade and elimination of power and influence of Russia in the third decade of the 21st Century. He calls this period and era of "poaching". Areas from the Pacific to the Carpathians will find themselves in a power vacuum. It will be an opportunity for smaller countries to use a situation and create small spheres of influence for themselves. The author is speaking about Romania, which will absorb Moldavia. India will help to liberate Taiwan, Europe and the United States will build spheres of their influence in China. Japanese will administer its power in coastal regions of Russia and China. Turkey will

expand in Caucasus and into all neighbouring regions in the south and northwest. The leader of Eastern Europe, Poland, will try to gain influence in Belarus and Ukraine.

The 40s of 21st Century will bring prosperity for the United States. But prosperity does not always mean stability. This period will be characterised by attempts to define relations between the United States and the rest of the world. The United States will be so powerful that whatever they do it will influence other countries as well. On the other side, the United States will not need to influence other countries, as the author supposes that Russia will lose its influence and China will gradually break-up. The common interest of the rest of the world will be to block an influence of the United States. The Pacific around 2040 will be under the influence of Japanese, according to the author. The United States will be scared of this growing influence, which will be reflected especially in the military and navy areas. Japanese will try to foster economic corporation with other countries in the Pacific. For the United States it will mean a suspicion that Japanese use Pacific islands as bases for supersonic missiles. But neither side will invoke conflicts and on the outside they will have kind-hearted relations. Japanese will be aware of the fact that the Americans realise that Japan is a power which they cannot fully control.

The next important player on the eve of a war will be Turkey. During Russian break-up Turkey will try to penetrate into Caucasus. The author supposes it will extend its influence to Kazakhstan, and that it will keep active economic relations with Crimea and Odessa. Turkish economy will be successful according to the author. In the mid-2040s Turkey will become a Great Power. It will initiate relations with Russia which will support Turkey by providing it with raw materials. "Turkey will gain dominance in Iraq and in Syria and that is why Turkish sphere of influence will extend up to Arabian Peninsula which by this time will have diminished resources of gas and petroleum which are driving an American economy nowadays." (p. 185) The author supposes that in the middle of next century Turkey will be a dominant Great Power controlling the Suez Canal and its important position will be in the region of the Persian Gulf as well. The third will be Poland. As result of the second Cold War between Russia and the United States in the 20s of the 21st Century, Poland will strengthen its position. It will be especially in the military area, thanks to the support provided by the United States during this war.

A new block of countries will be formed, whose main defect, however, will be its overland character. Its only alternative will be a port Rijeka in Croatia. But

here Poland will collide with Turkey which has considerable power in the Balkans. But also in this case the United States will help Poland, as it will be advantageous for them as well, for the United States will not be supportive of further Turkish expansion. Approximately around 2045 Poland will gain influence in Rijeka, Croatia and Slovenia as well. Turkey will realise it does not confront only Poland, but the United States as well.

The United States will try drag prospective aggressors in prolonged conflicts from which they will not able withdraw, while they will label Turkey and Japan as aggressors that undermine democratic values and right of nations to self-determination. They will support national movements in China, India and national movements of Russian minorities in the regions under the Turkish influence. "The goal of the United States will be to change and restrict the Turkish behaviour, but any interventions will be far from what Turkey consider to be questioning of their national interests." (p. 196) Based on these tensions, Friedman supposes that a war will occur, and that it will be conducted in the space. It will be between the United States and the coalition of Japan and Turkey. This war will occur, according to the author, in the half of 21st Century. The United States will not have an intention to initiate war, or to destroy Turkey and Japan. Their main interest will be to change behaviour of Japan and Turkey. The Japan-Turkey coalition, however, will perceive it as an existential threat. The coalition will not have any illusions that it could destroy the United States; its objective will be to make the United States understand that an agreement will benefit all. This agreement would consist of acknowledging the spheres of influence of Turkey and Japan. In this sense it will be a repetition of the World War II, in which „poorer states are trying to redesign a balance of power in the world again, and they will suppose that it is a good idea to start preventive wars before the other side might get a chance to prepare for it. A war will be a combination of surprise attack and using of this surprise." (p. 205)

The goal of the United States will be to keep a balance of power. It will be a balance among Japan, Korea, and China in the Pacific, and a balance between Turkey and Poland. It is clear that China will want to have stricter punishments for Japanese and Poland will want the same for Turkey. But the goal of the United States is to keep Eurasia in chaos in which "winners will not quite win and defeated will not quite lose." (p. 246) It will be a proper war, but it will not be a total war.

The position of the United States will be confirmed by the results of this war. The most important result will be an agreement according to which the United

States will be the one country having the right to militarise space. Turkey will stay a leader of the Islamic world, but as a result of its defeat, the Islamic world will remain defiant. Poland will become stronger and it will use its victory for further expansion. The United States will become worried by this development and they will try to strengthen their relation with the Great Britain to ensure some balance of power in Europe. The war will not disrupt the growth of economy in the United States. Quite to the contrary, this war will allow for significant economical and social transformation. We are talking about the Golden Age for the United States. The second half of this century will be a period when the United States will redefine the old way of thinking. The United States will be perceived as dangerous by the rest of the world, but other countries will approach the US carefully and with envy. It will be a period "international stability, regional pressure and domestic discomfort." (p. 258).

Later on other countries characterised by high economic growth will emerge. The author believes it will be Brazil or Mexico. States such as Israel, India, and Iran will be owners of simple space systems, but they will not be strong enough to compete with the United States.

This book is a riveting reading for everybody who is interested in geopolitical development and a contest for power in the world. In short, it forecasts main goals and priorities of the US foreign policy i.e. destabilisation of region which could challenge their hegemony and their position as a global Great Power in the future. According to Friedman, the United States will certainly use this strategy. This century will be a century of war as well. The author believes the war will occur in the first half of our century and it will be in the space and in spite of the fact that it will be worldwide warm it will not be a total war. As a result of this war, the United States will become stronger. We believe that the reviewed book is very suggestive and that each reader will think of Friedman's predictions as more than likely after reading it. Certain things in this book, however, are nowadays difficult to imagine. To conclude, the reviewed book is quite "US-centric", but this is due to the fact that the author himself states the 21st Century will belong to the United States.¹

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to an assistant professor Dalibor Vlček for his support, precious advices and comments about writing of this critique.