

May 2013

Book Review: The Next Decade

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Recommended Citation

Weaver, Robert, "Book Review: The Next Decade" (2013). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 82.
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Book Review: *The Next Decade* by George Friedman

By Bob Weaver

Friedman is the founder of Stratfor, the geopolitical research firm that's been called "the civilian CIA". He puts his geopolitical knowledge to work projecting what the 2010's are likely to bring to the world stage. He does not claim to have a gift of prophecy, or any unique insight; he is applying his knowledge of human political behavior and the forces that move nations. Countries do not always act like persons, and leaders are sometimes compelled by necessity to act in ways that they would prefer not to act.

Taking the world by regions, Friedman outlines what he sees are the most likely next steps in the always-in-motion world of international relations. Nations always try to act, he says, in ways that benefit what they see as their best self-interest. The trouble comes when a nation cannot decide within itself what its best self-interest is. Speaking broadly, this explains the instability we see and will continue to see in many nations. Libya, for example, is a nation composed of numerous ethnic and religious sub-groups with goals that are contradictory to one another. Friedman, and Stratfor, tries to take what can be called a pragmatic view of politics. They never disregard moral considerations, but these must take second place to the facts of human behavior and what works to achieve a nation's goals. Or perhaps it is better to say that this is how they interpret the viewpoint of nations and their leaders. Even here in America, our leaders may want to act morally, but according to Friedman, it is not always possible for them to do so. How correct Friedman is in his assessment of the future we will see when it gets here. In the present, this book is an easy read, full of information that helps the reader understand what is driving national behavior in places all over the world.