

**21. Century Belongs to Turkey, USA, Poland, Japan and Mexico**

By *George Friedman at Stratfor.Com*

"Finally there is Poland. Poland hasn't been a great power since the sixteenth century. But it once was—and, I think, will be again. Two factors make this possible. First will be the decline of Germany. Its economy is large and still growing, but it has lost the dynamism it has had for two centuries. In addition, its population is going to fall dramatically in the next fifty years, further undermining its economic power. Second, as the Russians press on the Poles from the east, the Germans won't have an appetite for a third war with Russia. The United States, however, will back Poland, providing it with massive economic and technical support. Wars—when your country isn't destroyed—stimulate economic growth, and Poland will become the leading power in a coalition of states facing the Russians. Japan, Turkey, and Poland will each be facing a United States even more confident than it was after the second fall of the Soviet Union. That will be an explosive situation."

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In the middle of the century, other powers will emerge, countries that aren't thought of as great powers today, but that I expect will become more powerful and assertive over the next few decades. Three stand out in particular. The first is Japan. It's the second- largest economy in the world and the most vulnerable, being highly dependent on the importation of raw materials, since it has almost none of its own. With a history of militarism, Japan will not remain the marginal pacifistic power it has been. It cannot. Its own deep population problems and abhorrence of large- scale immigration will force it to look for new workers in other countries. Japan's vulnerabilities, which I've written about in the past and which the Japanese have managed better than I've expected up until this point, in the end will force a shift in policy.

Then there is Turkey, currently the seventeenth-largest economy in the world. Historically, when a major Islamic empire has emerged, it has been dominated by the Turks. The Ottomans collapsed at the end of World war I, leaving modern Turkey in its wake. But Turkey is a stable platform in the midst of chaos. The Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Arab world to the south are all unstable. As Turkey's power grows—and its economy and military are already the most powerful in the region—so will Turkish influence.

Finally there is Poland. Poland hasn't been a great power since the sixteenth century. But it once was—and, I think, will be again. Two factors make this possible. First will be the decline of Germany. Its economy is large and still growing, but it has lost the dynamism it has had for two centuries. In addition, its population is going to fall dramatically in the next fifty years, further undermining its economic power. Second, as the Russians press on the Poles from the east, the Germans won't have an appetite for a third war with Russia. The United States, however, will back Poland, providing it with massive economic and technical support. Wars—when your country isn't destroyed—stimulate economic growth, and Poland will become the leading power in a coalition of states facing the Russians.

Japan, Turkey, and Poland will each be facing a United States even more confident than it was after the second fall of the Soviet Union. That will be an explosive situation. As we will see during the course of this book, the relationships among these four countries will greatly affect the twenty-first century, leading,

ultimately, to the next global war. This war will be fought differently from any in history—with weapons that are today in the realm of science fiction. But as I will try to outline, this mid-twenty-first century conflict will grow out of the dynamic forces born in the early part of the new century.

Tremendous technical advances will come out of this war, as they did out of World war II, and one of them will be especially critical. All sides will be looking for new forms of energy to substitute for hydrocarbons, for many obvious reasons. Solar power is theoretically the most efficient energy source on earth, but solar power requires massive arrays of receivers. Those receivers take up a lot of space on the earth's surface and have many negative environmental impacts—not to mention being subject to the disruptive cycles of night and day. During the coming global war, however, concepts developed prior to the war for space- based electrical generation, beamed to earth in the form of microwave radiation, will be rapidly translated from prototype to reality. Getting a free ride on the back of military space launch capability, the new energy source will be underwritten in much the same way as the Internet or the railroads were, by government support. And that will kick off a massive economic boom.

But underlying all of this will be the single most important fact of the twenty-first century: the end of the population explosion. By 2050, advanced industrial countries will be losing population at a dramatic rate. By 2100, even the most underdeveloped countries will have reached birthrates that will stabilize their populations. The entire global system has been built since 1750 on the expectation of continually expanding populations. More workers, more consumers, more soldiers—this was always the expectation. In the twenty-first century, however, that will cease to be true. The entire system of production will shift. The shift will force the world into a greater dependence on technology—particularly robots that will substitute for human labor, and intensified genetic research (not so much for the purpose of extending life but to make people productive longer).

What will be the more immediate result of a shrinking world population? Quite simply, in the first half of the century, the population bust will create a major labor shortage in advanced industrial countries. Today, developed countries see the problem as keeping immigrants out. Later in the first half of the twenty-first century, the problem will be persuading them to come. Countries will go so far as to pay people to move there. This will include the United States, which will be competing for increasingly scarce immigrants and will be doing everything it can to induce Mexicans to come to the United States—an ironic but inevitable shift.

These changes will lead to the final crisis of the twenty-first century. Mexico currently is the fifteenth-largest economy in the world. As the Europeans slip out, the Mexicans, like the Turks, will rise in the rankings until by the late twenty-first century they will be one of the major economic powers in the world. During the great migration north encouraged by the United States, the population balance in the old Mexican Cession (that is, the areas of the United States taken from Mexico in the nineteenth century) will shift dramatically until much of the region is predominantly Mexican.

The social reality will be viewed by the Mexican government simply as rectification of historical defeats. By 2080 I expect there to be a serious confrontation between the United States and an increasingly powerful and

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