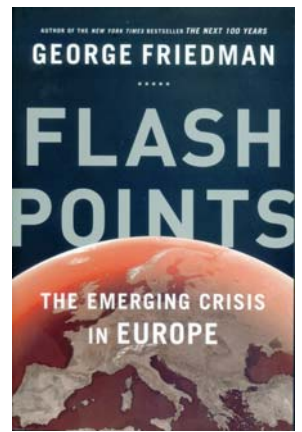


SPACE JAPAN BOOK REVIEW

From a satcom engineer's point of view

Reviewer: Takao Ueda, Editorial Advisor



George Friedman: "FLASHPOINTS: The Emerging Crisis in Europe", Doubleday, 2015

This is the third book of "The next 100 years" series written by George Friedman and introduced twice in SPACE JAPAN BOOK REVIEW in the past. (cf. Ref[1]and[3].)

Friedman is the CEO of the leading intelligence company that has the nickname of "behind-the-scenes CIA". In the former two books, bold and unique forecast by the author drew public attention. Since the Japanese translation of this book is titled as "The latest forecast of next 100 years", readers of this book will certainly anticipate the update of preceding two books. However, the actual contents are, against expectation, the history of Europe in 20th century by the sharp, in-depth analysis by the author, forecasting the occurrence of major crisis in Europe in the near future. Since the role of space activity in the future national security relations is not especially addressed in this book different from former two books, the reviewer hesitated to contribute to the Space Japan Review. However, since the 20th century history of Europe is so vividly written in compact way by the author, it was decided to adopt this book review to expect the role of succession to the next publication in this unique forecasting series books.

The rich Jewish author's family survived the holocaust during the World War II by a miracle, before the author was born. However, they were hunted by the Hungarian security police controlled by the Soviet NKVD. They got out of Communist Hungary in 1949, six months after the author was born. The author's father was able to use both money and his special position working for the U.S. intelligence agency, in order to safely escape from Hungary and arrive at U.S.A. The acute story of their escape constitutes the interesting introduction of this book that tries to analyze the true nature of Europe from the Middle Ages through present.

Next, the world exploration activities originated by the Prince Henry of Portugal (Henry the Navigator), motivated initially by the desire for wealth, geopolitics, struggle with Islam, the spirit of inquiry for the unknown, and the advancement of science are addressed. Then, heavily armed hungry men like Cortes of Spain expanded the colonies in more cruel way, until finally the world is conquered by European countries.

The three certainties in the popular culture of the Europeans : the world was the center of the universe; Europe was the center of the world; and the Church was the center of Europe, were broken one by one from 15th through 16th Century, by the activities of Columbus, Luther and Copernicus. Consequently, the moral compass in the European people was fragmented and broken. Even after that, Europe stood astride the world in seemingly absolute domination over nations and nature. However, in order to repair the broken certainties in the European's mind, beautiful and seductive nationalism became necessary. This nationalism, together with the pursuit of science and technology, realized the development of European countries. But at the same time, the beautiful nationalism itself in each nation paved the way for horror and hostility against other European nations, according to the author.

The rapid rise of the power of Germany around 1900 further energized the threats among European nations mentioned above. The threats, together with the development of science and technology that permitted the mass production of new weapons for slaughter, suddenly brought

a slaughterhouse to Europe in August 1914. By 1945, 100 million were dead, countless injured.

The European integration has been promoted by the power of U.S. since the end of the War. However, EU that flourished since establishment suddenly went wrong in 2008. There were two reasons for the crisis of EU according to the author; (1) the powerless status of NATO unveiled by the war between Russia and Georgia, (2) the injured cooperative spirits among European countries after the world financial crisis caused by Lehman Brothers bankrupt.

Since we, Japanese people usually are not well informed about the war between Russia and Georgia, the Balkan wars in 1990s, and Caucasus wars, the author's analysis on these wars teaches us much : how these wars suggest the near future of Europe; how the sense of being victimized and hates in the past strongly survive at present; how the troubles at Balkan or Caucasus may become the cause of serious future wars according to the old European tradition forecasting the recurrence of conflicts in certain same places.

The author analyzes and forecasts many serious situations in present Europe one by one, including dilemma of Germany between its own national benefits and the leading position of EU, Putin's Russia's strong desire to expand to the west again, the degradation of France in EU, the possibility of disappearance of Belgium, and the split of EU into four groups.

The concluding remarks in the final chapter cited below was particularly impressive for the reviewer. That paragraph tells us that the author doesn't have the optimistic forecast at all on the future Europe, and that the "FLASHPOINTS", the original title of this book, are hidden anywhere in present Europe.

"Humans do not fight wars because they are fools or haven't learned a lesson. They know the pain that is coming. They fight because they must, because reality has forced them to do so. The Europeans are still human, and they will still encounter terrible choices like those that others face and that they have faced in the past. They will have to choose between war and peace, and as in the past, they will at times choose war. Nothing has ended. For humans nothing significant is ever over."

During the recent discussion in Japan on the national security laws, "change of national security environment" and "lack of explanation to the people" have been often emphasized by the politicians. However, the reviewer wonders why the book or report analyzing and forecasting the situations in East Asia in the same depth level as this book is not available in Japan at all.

References:

- [1] Takashi Iida: SPACE JAPAN BOOK REVIEW, "G. Friedman: The next 100 years", Space Japan Review, No.73, April/May 2011.
- [2] George Friedman: "The Next 100 years: A Forecast for the 21st Century," Doubleday, 2009.
- [3] Takao Ueda: SPACE JAPAN BOOK REVIEW, "G. Friedman: The Next Decade", Space Japan Review, No.74, June/July 2011.
- [4] George Friedman: "The Next Decade: Where We've Been...and Where We're Going", Doubleday, 2011.