

2015-2016 State of the Future, A publication of The Millennium Project, 2015

Book review by Dr Stanley Rosen

William E. Halal, Professor Emeritus of Management, Technology, and Innovation at George Washington University calls this book “strategic planning for the planet.” Bill Halal is one of the world’s foremost strategic planners and managers. (He once substituted for Peter Drucker in giving a talk to 2000 managers at the Los Angeles Colliseum.) By recognizing the significance of this book, the eighteenth and best in a series of similar reports, Halal has put his finger on its importance to the strategic planning community: It sets the framework for all planners who must enable and enlighten (and even make) decisions in their specific domains. We are all swimming in the sea of global trends.

Methodologically, the book, and the underlying work it represents, achieves what all strategists attempt: a process to frame a view of the future in the context of what is and what can be. Drawing on what is probably the world’s most comprehensive set of “futuring” tools, the book sets the stage by systematically assessing the current state of fifteen global challenges that have been tracked yearly since 1998. Based on the work of the Millennium Project’s “think tank” of fifty-six globally dispersed operating nodes, each of the challenges is assessed for its global and regional implications. The Millennium Project is a global participatory think tank of futurists, scholars, scientists, business planners, and policy makers who work for international organizations, governments, corporations, NGOs, and universities and who volunteer their time to improve each edition of the *State of the Future*. It was selected to be among the top 10 think tanks in the world for new ideas and paradigms by the 2013 and 2014 University of Pennsylvania’s GoTo Think Tank Index and as a 2012 Computerworld Honors Laureate for its innovations in collective intelligence systems.

The substance that emerges from this process, although surprisingly concise (the book manages all this in 230 pages), provides uniquely integrated insights into factors that will impact the success of all our endeavors. Including a report on an updated and improved State of the Future Index that provides a ten-year outlook for the future, the book clearly identifies where we are winning and where we are losing. What is working, and what is not? Where are the biggest challenges and the most promising opportunities? With enough data to undergird the analysis, the book lays out the facts and enough well-based opinions to keep the reader challenged. This year’s book also includes a new, innovative set of info-graphics, to help the reader digest and integrate the vast data collection upon which the work is based.

Finally, this year’s book leverages the Project’s Global Futures Intelligence System, which contains the background and data for the research as well as a description of the methodologies used (described as “the largest internationally peer reviewed set of methods to explore future possibilities ever assembled in one source”).

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, lauded the book for its “invaluable insights into the future for the United Nations, its member states, and civil society.” This report is for thought

leaders, decision-makers, and all those who care about the world and its future. All strategic planners operate in this context; we should pay attention.

The book's concluding thought is a lesson for us all: "We should care about the whole world because the whole world will affect us—from new forms of terrorism and artificial intelligence to climate change and financial ethics. The *State of the Future* is offered to help us better understand the whole world of potential changes." This book is a model and a database for those who seek to understand the big picture.

The book can be ordered online at <http://millennium-project.org/millennium/201516SOF.html>