



# That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back

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*A New York Times Book Review Editors' Choice*

*A Los Angeles Times Best Book of 2011*

In *That Used to Be Us*, Thomas L. Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum analyze the four major challenges we face as a country---globalization, the revolution in information technology, chronic deficits, and our pattern of energy consumption--and spell out what we need to do now to preserve American power in the world. The end of the Cold War blinded the nation to the need to address these issues seriously, and China's educational successes, industrial might, and technological prowess in many ways remind us of a time when "that used to be us." But Friedman and Mandelbaum show how America's history, when properly understood, offers a five-part formula for prosperity that will enable us to cope successfully with the challenges we face. *That Used to Be Us* is both a searching exploration of the American condition today and a rousing manifesto for American renewal.

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By Thomas L. Friedman, Michael Mandelbaum Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #30306 in Books
- Brand: Picador USA
- Published on: 2012-08-21
- Released on: 2012-08-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .72" w x 5.50" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 402 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“At once enlightened and enlightening...[American society] could use more of the generous responsible spirit Friedman and Mandelbaum recommend.” *The New York Times Book Review*

“Thoroughly researched and passionately argued...That Used to Be Us is an important contribution to an intensifying debate, and it deserves the widest possible attention....Compelling.” *The New York Times*

“Anyone who cares about America's future---anyone planning to vote in 2012---ought to read this book and hear the authors' compelling case.” *The Christian Science Monitor*

“An important and eminently readable book.” *The New York Review of Books*

“Touches a nerve...In a country whose politicians are partisan intransigents and whose commentators are more interested in zingers than solutions, it takes courage to be so baldly civic-minded.” *BusinessWeek*

#### About the Author

**Thomas L. Friedman** is an internationally renowned author, reporter, and columnist?the recipient of three Pulitzer Prizes and the author of five bestselling books, among them *From Beirut to Jerusalem* and *The World Is Flat*.

He was born in Minneapolis in 1953, and grew up in the middle-class Minneapolis suburb of St. Louis Park. He graduated from Brandeis University in 1975 with a degree in Mediterranean studies, attended St. Antony's College, Oxford, on a Marshall Scholarship, and received an M.Phil. degree in modern Middle East studies from Oxford.

After three years with United Press International, he joined *The New York Times*, where he has worked ever since as a reporter, correspondent, bureau chief, and columnist. At the *Times*, he has won three Pulitzer Prizes: in 1983 for international reporting (from Lebanon), in 1988 for international reporting (from Israel), and in 2002 for his columns after the September 11th attacks.

Friedman's first book, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, won the National Book Award in 1989. His second book, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (1999), won the Overseas Press Club Award for best book on foreign policy in 2000. In 2002 FSG published a collection of his Pulitzer Prize-winning columns, along with a diary he kept after 9/11, as *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11*. His fourth book, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (2005) became a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and received the inaugural Financial Times/Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award in November 2005. A revised and expanded edition was published in hardcover in 2006 and in 2007. *The World Is Flat* has sold more than 4 million copies in thirty-seven languages.

In 2008 he brought out *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, which was published in a revised edition a year later. His sixth book, *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back*, co-written with Michael Mandelbaum, was published in September 2011.

**Michael Mandelbaum**, the Christian A. Herter Professor and Director of American Foreign Policy at The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, is the author or coauthor of twelve books, including *The Ideas That Conquered the World*.

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### Introduction: Growing Up in America

A reader might ask why two people who have devoted their careers to writing about foreign affairs—one of us as a foreign correspondent and columnist at The New York Times and the other as a professor of American foreign policy at The Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies—have collaborated on a book about the American condition today. The answer is simple. We have been friends for more than twenty years, and in that time hardly a week has gone by without our discussing some aspect of international relations and American foreign policy. But in the last couple of years, we started to notice something: Every conversation would begin with foreign policy but end with domestic policy—what was happening, or not happening, in the United States. Try as we might to redirect them, the conversations kept coming back to America and our seeming inability today to rise to our greatest challenges.

This situation, of course, has enormous foreign policy implications. America plays a huge and, more often than not, constructive role in the world today. But that role depends on the country's social, political, and economic health. And America today is not healthy—economically or politically. This book is our effort to explain how we got into that state and how we get out of it.

We beg the reader's indulgence with one style issue. At times, we include stories, anecdotes, and interviews that involve only one of us. To make clear who is involved, we must, in effect, quote ourselves: "As Tom recalled . . ." "As Michael wrote . . ." You can't simply say "I said" or "I saw" when you have a co-authored book with a lot of reporting in it.

Readers familiar with our work know us mainly as authors and commentators, but we are also both, well, Americans. That is important, because that identity drives the book as much as our policy interests do. So here are just a few words of introduction from each of us—not as experts but as citizens.

Tom: I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and was raised in a small suburb called St. Louis Park—made famous by the brothers Ethan and Joel Coen in their movie *A Serious Man*, which was set in our neighborhood. Senator Al Franken, the Coen brothers, the Harvard political philosopher Michael J. Sandel, the political scientist Norman Ornstein, the longtime NFL football coach Marc Trestman, and I all grew up in and around that little suburb within a few years of one another, and it surely had a big impact on all of us. In my case, it bred a deep optimism about America and the notion that we really can act collectively for the common good.

In 1971, the year I graduated from high school, *Time* magazine had a cover featuring then Minnesota governor Wendell Anderson holding up a fish he had just caught, under the headline "The Good Life in Minnesota." It was all about "the state that works." When the senators from your childhood were the Democrats Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, and Eugene McCarthy, your congressmen were the moderate Republicans Clark MacGregor and Bill Frenzel, and the leading corporations in your state—Dayton's, Target, General Mills, and 3M—were pioneers in corporate social responsibility and believed that it was part of their mission to help build things like the Tyrone Guthrie Theater, you wound up with a deep conviction that politics really can work and that there is a viable political center in American life.

I attended public school with the same group of kids from K through 12. In those days in Minnesota, private schools were for kids in trouble. Private school was pretty much unheard of for middle-class St. Louis Park

kids, and pretty much everyone was middle-class. My mom enlisted in the U.S. Navy in World War II, and my parents actually bought our home thanks to the loan she got through the GI Bill. My dad, who never went to college, was vice president of a company that sold ball bearings. My wife, Ann Friedman, was born in Marshalltown, Iowa, and was raised in Des Moines. To this day, my best friends are still those kids I grew up with in St. Louis Park, and I still carry around a mental image—no doubt idealized—of Minnesota that anchors and informs a lot of my political choices. No matter where I go—London, Beirut, Jerusalem, Washington, Beijing, or Bangalore—I’m always looking to rediscover that land of ten thousand lakes where politics actually worked to make people’s lives better, not pull them apart. That used to be us. In fact, it used to be my neighborhood.

Michael: While Tom and his wife come from the middle of the country, my wife, Anne Mandelbaum, and I grew up on the two coasts—she in Manhattan and I in Berkeley, California. My father was a professor of anthropology at the University of California, and my mother, after my two siblings and I reached high school age, became a public school teacher and then joined the education faculty at the university that we called, simply, Cal.

Although Berkeley has a reputation for political radicalism, during my childhood in the 1950s it had more in common with Tom’s Minneapolis than with the Berkeley the world has come to know. It was more a slice of Middle America than a hotbed of revolution. As amazing as it may seem today, for part of my boyhood it had a Republican mayor and was represented by a Republican congressman.

One episode from those years is particularly relevant to this book. It occurred in the wake of the Soviet Union’s 1957 launching of Sputnik, the first Earth-orbiting satellite. The event was a shock to the United States, and the shock waves reached Garfield Junior High School (since renamed after Martin Luther King Jr.), where I was in seventh grade. The entire student body was summoned to an assembly at which the principal solemnly informed us that in the future we all would have to study harder, and that mathematics and science would be crucial.

Given my parents’ commitment to education, I did not need to be told that school and studying were important. But I was impressed by the gravity of the moment. I understood that the United States faced a national challenge and that everyone would have to contribute to meeting it. I did not doubt that America, and Americans, would meet it. There is no going back to the 1950s, and there are many reasons to be glad that that is so, but the kind of seriousness the country was capable of then is just as necessary now.

We now live and work in the nation’s capital, where we have seen first-hand the government’s failure to come to terms with the major challenges the country faces. But although this book’s perspective on the present is gloomy, its hopes and expectations for the future are high. We know that America can meet its challenges. After all, that’s the America where we grew up.

Thomas L. Friedman

Michael Mandelbaum

Bethesda, Maryland, June 2011

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## **Users Review**

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**James Reveles:**

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**Timothy Holeman:**

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