

Joe Nicols Predictions 2015

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. Relations with Cuba

For years I have been seeing many of my clients vacationing in Cuba, and finally it is getting closer. However, I see an embarrassing glitch on the part of the U.S. this spring, which will reflect the cultural and political differences continuing to exist between the countries. Cuba wants to improve its economy but also does not want to come up short in its negotiations with the U.S.. Improvements will continue over the next two years and in three years (2018) trade and tourism will be reestablished.

U.S. Relations with Russia

As I got last year, the U.S. has been secretly trying to maintain good relations with Russia, but Vladimir Putin's political moves have made that extremely difficult. Putin will react seemingly irrationally about sanctions and the impact on the Russian economy at the end of the summer of 2015. Russia will surprise the U.S. and be involved in another international incident at the end of 2015, which will greatly concern and anger the U.S. and the European Union, putting a dark cloud over those relationships for 6 months. Ironically, the U.S. will benefit economically from these disruptions well into 2016. Russia does not want to give back any of the Ukrainian territory it has seized because it will be forced to admit it was wrong in taking it. However, as a result of the early 2016 situation, Russia may try to make Ukraine a bargaining chip and will withdraw from at least part of the occupied territory. As I have said for years, the current Russian regime is not a friend of the U.S. and will work only in self-interest.

U.S. Relations with China

The U.S. will lose ground to China in a number of areas such as industrial and cyber espionage and China will keep the U.S. guessing about its motives and operations. However, some diplomatic breakthrough will occur this summer, and as the U.S. economy improves, its value as a Chinese trading partner will be reconfirmed, which will contribute to lessening of tension between the countries.

U.S. Relations with Iran

U.S. relations will continue to improve gradually with Iran, although it will frustrate the U.S. by foot dragging and not following through on agreements, especially at the end of spring, 2015. There will be another diplomatic impasse in October, but following that, the U.S. and Iran will move toward normalization. While some members of the U.S. administration are leaning toward easing sanctions on Iran, some members of government and congress and outside forces such as Israel are concerned and mistrustful of Iran. However, I see some easing of sanctions in 2016.

War against Isis

Some of the greatest and most obvious successes against Isis are happening now. Isis will continue to morph and adapt to changing conditions and it will take three to four years to achieve what could be considered a victory or neutralization of its impact in the region.

U.S. Relations with North Korea

North Korea will continue its deceptive practices which will worry government and industrial leaders, but the Sony hacking will be a viable wake-up call for the U.S. and western interests about

economic vulnerability going forward. Tensions with North Korea will continue for another 7 months, after which the ice will thaw as the U.S. economy re-strengthens and the U.S. focuses on other areas.

World Health

There will be a localized resurgence of Ebola in Africa in about 6 weeks which will be quelled fairly quickly. But I see generalized outbreaks of Ebola and two other viruses which will reach outside of Africa, beginning in about four months and lasting into the fall of 2015. I get that big pharmaceutical companies are already producing vaccines that are helpful for Ebola as they see the potentially astronomical global market, but the virus will somehow mutate in 2016 and more effective vaccines will not be available until 2017.

Price of Gold

I feel the price of gold will maintain or slip gradually until the end of 2015, at which time it will bump up and continue higher until the spring of 2016, when it will again stabilize. At present, I am seeing gold prices maintain for three years then dropping sharply by early 2018, and rising dramatically by late 2018.

TECHNOLOGY

Medical

Nanotechnology will be making more breakthroughs in the use of microbots for surgeries, wound care, cancer treatments, medical implants and even weight loss. There will also be micro technology advances in creating more lifelike prosthetics, non-touch medical sensing devices and surveillance technology.

Aerospace

I also get that in with various governments, private corporations are involved not only in learning how to divert asteroids and comets from Earth collisions, but also practical ways to mine and recover rare minerals from these bodies.

Science

New discoveries in the fossil record relating to paleontology will show more about the diversity of warm-blooded and feathered dinosaurs, which will make their way even more into movies and media. In anthropology, yet another human species will be discovered that coexisted with early modern humans, again bringing up the question about how we out-competed them to be here. Genetic engineering will continue to be used to manipulate not only plants and fish, but also other animals, which will be praised by some as improving world food sources, but also condemned by others on ethical and health grounds.

NATIONAL

U.S. Economy

While I see little blips and bumps throughout 2015, and a temporary setback in October and November, generally the economy looks stronger over the next two or three years. I see difficulties in 2020, which is also the year that I continue to see China flexing its muscle in the world.

U.S. Stock Market

I get relative steadiness in the market until about May, at which time unexpected events precipitate a correction in May or June. The market will rebound during the summer and will be fairly steady until the fall of 2016, at which time a more serious downturn will affect the market until the end of 2016.

U.S. Interest Rates

I feel interest rates will continue to be down, but around June 2015, the Fed will announce that it is considering a target time to raise the rates. I still believe that a significant increase will not occur until mid 2016.

U.S. Congress

Congress is still massively dysfunctional, regardless of how some members portray it. There will be obstacles, conflict and anger over the next two months, and then will exhibit snippets of bipartisanship to achieve small accomplishments leadership will trumpet. However, over the next year it will seem like two steps forward, one step back as members pander to their constituents and special interest. There is a difference between a politician and a statesman.

President Obama

There are powerful people in and out of government who are very angry and worried about the President being in the position he is in, and the veto power he holds. The friction with congress will be obvious during the next 6 months and the President will make compromises in the summer in which he will doubt his decisions. The fall will go more smoothly, but international conflict will erupt in early 2016 which will seriously challenge him.

Mass Shootings in the U.S.

Last year I predicted at least 13 mass shootings which my count was pretty close. There will be fewer this year, but there will be several between May and September, including a couple of bad ones.

Presidential Nominations for 2016

It is still early but Hillary Clinton seems to be slowly moving to the inside lane for the Democrats. For the Republicans, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz seem to be building, and Jed Bush and Chris Christie are coming on, but I see both of them struggling and falling off the pace. Rand Paul and Paul Ryan will be in the race, but will not have enough momentum. I get Rick Perry may be in fantasy land about his presidential chances, or he may be shooting to be Vice President. I see Mike Huckabee as having little chance.

U.S. Weather Events

There will be another severe winter storm in February and volatile weather during November and December, 2015. I pick up a hurricane making landfall in August in the south. Also, I see a tornado causing tremendous damage and expense but limited harm to people in June 2015, possibly in Missouri, and another serious tornado causing loss of lives in August, possibly in Oklahoma.

TEXAS

Texas Weather and Rain

This year may be dryer than last year, with rains in March/April, during the summer, and October/November. The other periods will tend to be very dry.

Price of Oil and the Texas Petroleum Industry

With the exception of a slight increase in 8 months, oil prices will stay relatively low until spring of 2016. The Texas petroleum industry will be taking a hit on profits over the next 14 months, and will be dealing with OPEC and global politics. However, big companies will weather the storm just fine and will garner government support and be firing on all cylinders again by 2017.

AUSTIN

Austin Economy

As I suggested last year, the Austin community is well poised for success, and city financial and organizational infrastructure is in place to support the growth. However, I keep seeing problems in implementation possibly due to apprehension about controlling growth, or conservatism or fear in some in the administration about making long term mistakes or changing Austin's culture or character. Change is inevitable though and more expansion will be occurring by mid-2016.

Austin Real Estate Market

While there is a seasonal slowing at the moment, I see Austin real estate picking up again over the next few weeks and remaining steady throughout 2015. Warning indicators will be present in the 2nd half of 2015 suggesting a serious slowdown is coming which I see happening in the late fall of 2016.

U.T. Football

Coach Strong has had a rough ride and as I predicted last year, the team would win at least 6 games, which would not be considered enough by fans, but that recruiting would improve, which is now happening. At quarterback, new blood will help some, but the struggle will continue, and Tyrone Swoopes will not finish the season at quarterback. The team will again win at least 6 games (possibly seven), but will have a better chance to come away with a bowl victory. I see Texas vying again in a weakened Big 12 conference in the 2017 season.

U.T. Sports

I get that the Longhorn's Men's Basketball team is still looking for its identity and if found would be scary. Although I sense another injury to a key player, the men's team will make it to the NCAA Tournament. I feel Miles Turner and Isaiah Taylor will both return next year, but the team's chemistry will be different and members will have to strive to regain focus. I feel that the U.T. Women's Basketball team will win the Big 12 Championship and will make it to the Final Four. I also believe the Lady Longhorns have a shot to win the National Championship. This depends upon how the last few shots fall in the final games. They will do well again next year, but I feel the Big 12 competition will be stiffer.