

Population growth pressures decline. Brazil will be a particularly important emerging power, a generation behind Mexico in population stability but moving rapidly in that direction. Brazil will be considering a regional economic alliance with Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, all of whom will be making major strides. Brazil will be thinking in terms of peaceful confederation but, as is often the case, will in due course entertain more aggressive ideas. The Brazilians will certainly have a space program by the 2060s, but not a comprehensive one, and not one linked to immediate geopolitical need.

Countries like Israel, India, Korea, and Iran all will have limited space programs, but none of them is going to have the resources or the motivation to make a play for substantial space presence, let alone try to deny the United States space hegemony. Therefore, as happens at the end of global wars, the United States will have a wide-open shot—and will take it. The United States will be living in a golden moment, lasting at least until around 2070.

 CHAPTER 13

2080

 THE UNITED STATES, MEXICO, AND THE
 STRUGGLE FOR THE GLOBAL HEARTLAND

From the beginning of this book, I've talked about North America being the center of gravity of the international system. Until now I've basically equated North America with the United States, simply because U.S. power in North America is so overwhelming that no one is in a position to challenge it. The great global war of the twenty-first century will make clear that no Eurasian power is going to emerge to challenge the United States for quite a while. In addition, a crucial geopolitical principle will be tested, and modernized: whoever controls the Atlantic and Pacific oceans will control global trade—and whoever controls space will control the world's oceans. The United States will emerge in unchallenged control of space, and therefore in control of the world's oceans.

Reality, however, is more complex than appearances. The United States will have an underlying weakness in the second half of the twenty-first century, one that it will not have confronted for two hundred years. The first geopolitical imperative of the United States—the one that all others rest upon—is that the United States dominate North America. Since the Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that