

political influence on the continent. With Western Europe in demographic and economic shambles and fearing Polish power, England will willingly organize a bloc oddly resembling the twentieth-century NATO, whose task it will be to rehabilitate Western Europe and block Polish movement westward from Germany, Austria, or Italy. The United States won't join, but it will encourage the formation of this alliance.

Most interestingly, the Americans will move to improve their relations with the Turks. Given the old British adage that nations have no permanent friends and no permanent enemies but only permanent interests, the American interest will be to support the weaker power against the stronger, in order to maintain the balance of power. Turkey, understanding the long-term potential power of Poland, will happily accept closer ties with Washington as a guarantee of its long-term survival.

Needless to say, the Poles will feel utterly betrayed by the Americans. But the Americans will be learning. Rushing into battle may satisfy some urge, but managing the situation so that battles either won't occur or will be fought by others is a much better solution. In supporting Britain and Turkey, the United States will move to create a European balance of power matching the one in Asia. No other country will represent a coherent threat to the United States and, so long as it controls space, the United States will easily be able to deal with any other issues that rise to a level requiring its attention.

One interesting facet of geopolitics is this: there are no permanent solutions to geopolitical problems. But for the moment in the 2060s, as was the case in the 1920s and 1990s, there will appear to be no serious challenges facing the United States, or at least none that pose a direct threat. The United States will have learned that security is illusory but for the moment will luxuriate in that security nonetheless.

The American economic expansion of the 2040s won't be interrupted by the war. In fact, it will continue unchecked. As we have seen over the centuries, the United States has historically profited from major wars. It will be fairly untouched by the war, and increases in government spending will stimulate the economy. Since the United States fights its wars using technology, any war—or anticipation of war—against other nation-states will increase government expenditures on research and development. As a result,

a range of new technologies will be available for commercial exploitation at the end of the war. So we will see in the postwar world, until about 2070, a period of dramatic economic growth, accompanied by social transformation.

The war will occur right in the middle of one of America's fifty-year cycles, about twenty years into it. That will mean that the war occurs at the point at which the country is its strongest internally. Its population problems, never as severe as the rest of the world's, will be well managed through immigration and the death of the boomers, relieving the pressure of a gray workforce. The balance between capital availability and demand for products will be intact, and both will grow. America will be moving into a period of dramatic economic, and therefore social, transformation. However, as with World War II, when a major war occurs in the early to middle stages of the cycle, the cycle is kicked into overdrive as the economy adjusts to the immediate aftereffects of war. That means that the mid- to late 2050s will be a jackpot period, similar to the 1950s. In every sense of the term, the fifteen years after the war will be an economic and technological golden age for the United States.

The United States will reduce its defense expenditures after the collapse of the Russians in the 2030s but will raise them again dramatically as the global cold war in the 2040s intensifies. Then, during the mid-century war, America will engage in extraordinary feats of research and development and will apply its discoveries immediately. What would have taken years to do in a peacetime economy will be done in months, and even weeks, due to the urgency of war (especially following the annihilation of U.S. space forces).

The United States will have developed an obsession with space. In 1941 Pearl Harbor created a national belief, especially among the military, that a devastating attack might come at any moment, and certainly when least expected. That mind-set governed U.S. nuclear strategy for the next fifty years. An unrelenting fear of surprise attack permeated military thinking and planning. That sensibility subsided after the fall of the Soviet Union, but the attack in the 2050s will revive the terror of Pearl Harbor, and fear of surprise attack will become a national obsession again, this time focused on space. The threat will be very real. Control of space means the same thing