

For now, it will mean that the resistance facing the Turks will not decline, as their enemies inexplicably will have far more electricity than Turkey expected.

The Coalition won't be able to take out the power generation system in space or identify the microwave receiving stations. There will be too many solar panels in too many different places, and they will be moving around. Even if they could be taken out, they would be replaced faster than they could be destroyed, given the Coalition's capabilities.

The Coalition won't be able to break the Polish-American force through logistics. The defenders will survive because the Coalition will have inadequate reconnaissance, having lost its satellites early. Now, its command of the air will slip as well, as the smaller Allied air forces will have enormously better intelligence—and will therefore be infinitely more effective.

END GAME

There will be a stalemate on the ground until the summer of 2052, when the United States finally will unleash its new, massive air forces. Combined with Battle Star intelligence and weapons, the U.S. air forces will devastate Coalition forces in Poland and smash their power generation system. The Americans will do the same against Japanese troops fighting in China. Further, they will target Japanese surface vessels.

The counterstrike will stagger the Japanese and the Turks and leave the Germans in a complete shambles. Their ground forces will nearly evaporate on the battlefield. But now the Americans will face the nuclear problem. If the Coalition powers are pushed to the point where they believe that their national sovereignty, let alone national survival, is at stake, they might well consider the use of nuclear weapons.

The United States will not demand unconditional surrender any more than it can give it. It will not threaten national survival, nor ultimately will it have intended to. The United States will have learned over the past fifty years that the devastation of the enemy, no matter how satisfying, is not the best strategy. Its goal will be to maintain the balance of power, to keep regional powers focused on each other and not the United States.

The United States won't want to destroy Japan. Rather, it will want to

maintain a balance of power between Japan, Korea, and China. Similarly, it will want not to destroy Turkey or create chaos in the Islamic world, but only to maintain a balance of power between the Polish bloc and Turkey. The Poles and the Polish bloc will scream for Turkish blood, as will the Chinese and Koreans for that of the Japanese. But the United States will pull a Woodrow Wilson at Versailles. In the name of all that is humane, it will make certain that Eurasia remains chaotic.

At a hastily organized peace conference, Turkey will be forced to retreat south in the Balkans, leaving Croatia and Serbia as a buffer zone and pulling back toward, but not into, the Caucasus. In Central Asia, Turkey will have to accept a Chinese presence. The Japanese will have to pull all forces out of China, and the United States will transfer defense technology to the Chinese. The precise terms will be actually quite vague, which will be exactly how the Americans want it. Lots of new nations will be carved out. Lots of boundaries and spheres of influence will be ambiguous. The victors won't quite win and the losers won't quite lose. The United States will have taken a major step toward civilization.

In the meantime, the United States will have total command of space, an economy booming as a result of defense spending, and a new, advanced power generation system that will begin to transform the way humans receive power.

In the mid-twentieth century, World War II cost perhaps fifty million lives. A hundred years later, the first space war will take perhaps 50,000 lives, the majority of these in Europe during the Turkish-German ground offensive, and others in China. The United States itself will lose a few thousand people, many in space, some during the initial air strikes on the United States, and some in fighting to support the Poles. It will be a world war in the truest sense of the word, but given the technological advances in precision and speed, it won't be total war—societies trying to annihilate societies.

This war will, however, have one thing in common with World War II. In the end, the United States—having lost the least—will have gained the most. Just as it roared out of World War II with a tremendous leap in technology, a revived economy, and a more dominant geopolitical position, so too will it now emerge into what will be regarded as a golden age for America—and a new and growing maturity in handling its power.