

ers. They will drive on to Budapest, although their ultimate military goal will be the Carpathian Mountains in Slovakia, Ukraine, and Romania. If they take the Carpathians, Romania and Bulgaria will be isolated and collapse, turning the Black Sea into a Turkish lake. Hungary will be occupied, and Poland isolated and facing a threat from the south. If, however, the Poles decide to concentrate on the Hungarian plain to protect Budapest, and therefore attempt to hold the bloc together, Turkish airpower would likely destroy the bloc's forces.

The Poles will request American air support so they can engage Turkish forces as they advance into Croatia, but the United States will have no airpower to give them. The Turks, as a result, will capture Hungary in a matter of weeks and occupy the Carpathians soon after. The Romanians, isolated, will ask for and receive an armistice. Southeastern Europe, to the Polish border and Ukraine, will be in Turkish hands. All that will remain will be Poland.

Turkish forces will proceed toward Krakow, with air strikes ripping apart the Polish military. The United States will become concerned that the Poles will be unable to resist and may be forced to sue for peace. The U.S. strategy will be to buy time to rebuild its strategic assets and then launch a sudden global strike on Turkey and Japan. The United States will not want to dissipate its strength to support tactical combat in southern Poland. At the same time, it will not be able to risk losing its Polish ally, as that will end the game against Turkey. In order to get the Poles to carry on, the United States will have to seriously harm the Turks.

In February 2051, the United States will launch a substantial portion of its remaining air force, including some new aircraft with advanced capabilities, striking at Turkish forces everywhere from southern Poland to logistics centers back in Bosnia and farther south. It will take serious losses from the Turkish air force, but the Turkish army will suffer serious losses as hundreds of armored infantrymen are killed along with the destruction of large numbers of robotic systems and supplies. Turkey will be far from crippled, but it will be hurt.

The Turks will soon realize that there is no chance of their winning the war. Their inability to reenter space, plus the Americans' ability to create a new air force quickly, would, in time, defeat them. They also will realize that the Japanese won't be in a position to help them because they will be

ried down with their own problems in China. The great gamble will fail, and with that failure it will be every man for himself. The United States will be clearly focusing on Turkey before Japan, so Turkey will need to knock Poland out of the war fast. But Turkish ground forces will by then be spread around a vast empire. Concentrating on Poland will mean stripping forces from elsewhere, and that will, in the long run, not be a viable option. The Turks would be deeply exposed to rebellion from Egypt to Central Asia.

Before the beginning of the war, the Coalition will have wanted Germany to join in the attack on Poland, but the Germans will have declined. This time when the Turks approach them, they will offer quite a prize. In return for helping Turkey in Poland, Turkey will retreat into the Balkans after the war, retaining only Romania and Ukraine. Turkey will build its power around the Black Sea, the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean, and the Germans will have a free hand from Hungary north, including Poland, the Baltics, and Belarus.

From the German point of view, what had been a Turkish pipe dream before 2050 will now be a very practical proposal. The Turks would be a Mediterranean and Black Sea power and would need the Balkans to secure their hold. The Turks would have no interest north of there, as such involvement would soak up forces needed in these areas. The Germans, like the Poles and Russians, will be exposed on the northern European plain, and this new arrangement would secure their eastern flank. Most important, this arrangement would reverse the trend that had been running against Germany and Western Europe since the collapse of Russia. The Eastern Europeans would finally be put back in their place.

The Germans will know that the Americans will eventually refocus on the region, but it will take the Americans a while to come back. There will be a genuine window of opportunity for the Germans to seize. Self-absorbed and risk averse, they won't be as adventurous as the Turks. But the alternative will be a Turkish force to their east or, worse, the defeat of the Turks and an even more powerful Polish and American force facing them. The Germans will not be risk takers in general, but this is a risk they will have to take. They will mobilize their forces, including their older but still capable air force, and strike the Poles from the west in late spring of 2051, while the Turks will relaunch their attack from the south. The Germans will recruit