

A crisis will ensue, with the Polish bloc and the Turks coming to full alert. With U.S. forces in Serbia and the United States allied with the Polish bloc, the Balkan situation will directly impact the United States. The Turks will keep bringing their air and missile systems outside the region to full alert, just short of launch, and then bringing them down. They will deliberately try to just short of a Polish strike. Knowing that the Polish and U.S. defense networks are linked, and having mapped out American sensitivity to Turkish readiness over the years, the Turks will push just past what appears to be the point of no return in the first week of November. The Poles, receiving data indicating an imminent launch, suddenly will conduct a limited air strike against a Turkish base. The Turks will have succeeded in sucking in the Poles and will begin to cycle up their entire system. Realizing that a Balkan war is about to break out, the American president will call the Turkish and Polish prime ministers within moments of the strike and warn both to stand down. The Turks will be particularly belligerent, having lost an air base and some people, but will reluctantly agree to move back from the brink of war.

A peace conference will be organized in Geneva; where else would one hold a peace conference? No settlement will be reached, but all sides will agree to stand down and avoid provocative acts. The United States will commit itself to monitoring the situation—a commitment it will take seriously, as it won't want the Poles or Hungarians dragging it into a Balkan war. The national security advisor will order U.S. space surveillance to concentrate on the status of Turkish and Polish bloc forces. Things will calm down by mid-November, and the situation will seem to be returning to normal, but the Battle Star over Uganda will remain heavily focused on the Balkan situation, while the other two will be handling spillover work from its collectors. The Turks will continue to maneuver their forces well behind the lines, as will the Polish bloc. That will keep everyone busy.

The Japanese will have been cycling up their hypersonic forces and space capabilities at least once a quarter for several years. The United States will be watching these exercises regularly and therefore won't be particularly alarmed to see another exercise kicking off a few days before Thanksgiving. It will be nothing out of the ordinary to see the Japanese go to full battle alert. In fact, this time Japan will seem somewhat undermanned, with some units not even cycling to alert.

 CHAPTER 11

WORLD WAR

A SCENARIO

Thus far I've been doing geopolitical forecasting. I've been working with the major themes that are unfolding in the twenty-first century and thinking about how they would affect international relations. In this chapter, I will change my approach a bit. I want to describe a war that I think will take place in the middle of the twenty-first century. Obviously I don't know when it will happen with any precision, but I can provide a sense of what a twenty-first-century war might look like. You can't imagine the twentieth century without some idea of what World Wars I and II were like, nor can you really get a sense of the twenty-first century until you've described war.

War is different from what I've been talking about so far because war is a matter of detail. Without this, you miss its essence. To understand war, you need to understand more than the reasons a war was fought. You need to think about technology, culture, and other matters, all of them in detail. So, for example, in talking about World War II we have to discuss Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor was, geopolitically, an attempt to buy time while Japan seized Southeast Asia and the Netherlands East Indies. But to really understand the reality of Pearl Harbor, you have to understand the details—the use of