

process of redefining them will radicalize the Southwest. That radicalization will, in turn, frighten the rest of the American public. Anti-Mexican feeling will be growing. A primal fear that the outcome of the Texan Revolution and the Mexican-American War, in place for more than two centuries, could be reversed will whip up hostility toward Mexican Americans and Mexico in the United States.

This fear will not be irrational. The American Southwest is occupied territory into which American settlers streamed from the mid-1800s to the early twenty-first century. Starting in the early twenty-first century, Mexican settlers will be streaming back in, joining others who never left. Population movement will thus reverse the social reality that was imposed militarily in the nineteenth century. Americans imposed a politico-military reality and then created a demographic reality to match it. Mexicans, more through American policy than anything else, will create a new demographic reality, and will be discussing several options: whether to attempt to reverse the politico-military reality created by the Americans; create a new, unique reality; or just accept the existing realities. Americans will be discussing whether to reverse the demographic shift and realign population with borders.

However, any discussion will take place in a context of immobility of borders. The borders are not going to change simply because Mexicans on both sides are discussing it, nor will the demographic reality change because Americans want it to. The border will have an overwhelming political and military force enforcing it—the United States Army. The Mexican population in the Mexican Cession will be deeply embedded in the economic life of the United States. Removing the Mexicans would create massive instability. There will be powerful forces maintaining the status quo and powerful forces resisting it.

A major backlash in the rest of the United States will lock down the border and exacerbate tensions. As Mexican rhetoric becomes more heated, so will American. Splits in the Mexican American community will become less and less visible in the rest of the country, and the most radical figures will dominate the American perception of the community and of Mexico. More radical figures in Washington will dominate the Mexican perception of the United States. Attempts will be made at moderate compromise, many of them quite reasonable and well intentioned, but all will be seen as a be-

trayal of the fundamental interests of one side or the other and sometimes both. Fundamental geopolitical disputes are rarely amenable to reasonable compromise—simply consider the Arab-Israeli conflict.

While all of this is going on, Mexican citizens who are living in the United States on temporary visas granted decades before will be forced to return to Mexico, regardless of how long they have been in America. The United States will have placed increased controls on the Mexican border; not to keep our immigrants—no one at this point will be clamoring to get in—but to drive a wedge between Mexico and ethnic Mexicans in the United States. It will be portrayed as a security measure, but what it will really be is an effort to reinforce the reality created in 1848. These and similar actions will be merely irritating to most Mexicans on either side of the border, but will provide fuel for the radicals and pose a threat to the vital trade between the two countries.

Within Mexico political pressure will grow for the Mexican government to assert itself. One faction will emerge that will want to annex the occupied region, reversing the American conquest of 1848. This won't be a marginal group but a substantial, if not yet dominant, faction. Others will be demanding that the United States retain control of the regions within the Mexican Cession and protect the rights of its residents—especially by halting the expulsion of Mexicans regardless of visa status. The group that simply wants to maintain the status quo, driven by businesses that want stability, not conflict, will become weaker and weaker. Calls for annexation will compete with demands for regional autonomy.

Anti-Mexican elements in the United States will use the radicalization of Mexican politics to argue that Mexico intends to interfere with internal American affairs, and even to invade the Southwest—something the most radical Mexicans will, in fact, be calling for. This, in turn, will justify the American extremists' demand for even more draconian measures, including the deportation of all ethnic Mexicans, regardless of citizenship status, and the invasion of Mexico if the Mexican government resists. The rhetoric on the fringes will feed on itself, driving the process.

Let's play this forward, imagining what the conflict might look like, bearing in mind that we can't possibly do more than imagine the details.

In the 2080s, anti-American demonstrations will begin taking place