

rises, there will inevitably be a rise in Mexican nationalism, which, given geopolitical reality, will manifest itself not only in pride but in anti-Americanism. Given U.S. programs designed to entice Mexicans to immigrate to the United States at a time when the Mexican birthrate is falling, the United States will be blamed for pursuing policies designed to harm Mexican economic interests.

U.S.—Mexican tensions are permanent. The difference in the 2040s will be a rise in Mexican power and therefore a greater confidence and assertiveness on its part. The relative power of the two countries, however, will remain staggeringly in favor of the United States—just not as staggeringly as fifty years earlier. But even that will change between 2040 and 2070. Mexico will cease being a national basket case and become a major regional power. For its part, the United States will not notice. During the mid-century war, Washington will think of Mexico only as a potential ally of the Coalition. Having maneuvered Mexico out of any such considerations, Washington will lose interest. In the euphoria and economic expansion following the war, the United States will maintain its traditional indifference to Mexican concerns.

Once the United States realizes that Mexico has become a threat, it will at once be extremely alarmed at what is happening in Mexico and among Mexicans, and calmly certain that it can impose any solution it wants on the situation. U.S.—Mexican tensions, always present under the surface, will fester as Mexico becomes stronger. The United States will view the strengthening of the Mexican economy as a benign stabilizing force for both Mexico and its relations with the United States, and will therefore further support the rapid rate of Mexican economic development. The American view of Mexico as ultimately a client state will remain unchanged.

By 2080, the United States will still be the most overwhelmingly powerful nation-state in North America. But as Americans will learn repeatedly, enormously powerful does not mean omnipotent, and behaving as if it does can readily sap a nation's power. By 2080, the Americans will again face a challenge—but this one will be much more complex and subtle than what they faced in the war of the 2050s.

The confrontation will not be planned, since the United States will not have ambitions in Mexico and the Mexicans will be under no illusion about

their power relative to the United States. It will be a confrontation that grows organically out of the geopolitical reality of the two countries. But unlike most such regional conflicts, this will involve a confrontation between the world hegemon and an upstart neighbor, and the prize will be the center of gravity of the international system, North America. Three factors will drive the confrontation:

1. Mexico will emerge as a major global economic power. Ranked fourteenth or fifteenth early in the century, it will be firmly within the top ten by 2080. With a population of 100 million, it will be a power to be reckoned with anywhere in the world—except on the southern border of the United States.
2. The United States will face a cyclical crisis in the 2070s, culminating in the 2080 elections. New technology coupled with the rationalization of the demographic curve will reduce the need for new immigrants. Indeed, pressure will grow to return temporary immigrants, even those here for fifty years with children and grandchildren born here, to Mexico. Many of these will still be mental laborers. The United States will begin forcing long-term residents back across the border, loading down the Mexican economy with the least desirable workers, workers who had been American residents for many decades.
3. In spite of this, the massive shift in the population of the borderlands cannot be reversed. The basic predominance of Mexicans—both U.S. citizens and not—will be permanent. The parts of Mexico occupied by the United States in the 1840s will again become Mexican culturally, socially, and in many senses, politically. The policy of repatriating temporary workers will appear to be a legal process from the American point of view, but will look like ethnic cleansing to the Mexicans.

In the past, Mexico would have been fairly passive in the face of these shifts in American policy. However, as immigration becomes the dominant issue in the United States during the 2070s and the pivot around which the 2080 elections will turn, Mexico will begin to behave in unprecedented ways. The crisis in the United States and the maturation of the Mexican economy and society will coincide, creating unique tensions. A major social