

## A World Without Power

Critics of U.S. global dominance should pause and consider the alternative. If the United States retreats from its hegemonic role, who would supplant it? Not Europe, not China, not the Muslim world -- and certainly not the United Nations. Unfortunately, the alternative to a single superpower is not a multilateral utopia, but the anarchic nightmare of a new Dark Age.

We tend to assume that power, like nature, abhors a vacuum. In the history of world politics, it seems, someone is always the hegemon, or bidding to become it. Today, it is the United States; a century ago, it was the United Kingdom. Before that, it was France, Spain, and so on. The famed 19th-century German historian Leopold von Ranke, doyen of the study of statecraft, portrayed modern European history as an incessant struggle for mastery, in which a balance of power was possible only through recurrent conflict.

The influence of economics on the study of diplomacy only seems to confirm the notion that history is a competition between rival powers. In his bestselling 1987 work, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, Yale University historian Paul Kennedy concluded that, like all past empires, the U.S. and Russian superpowers would inevitably succumb to overstretch. But their place would soon be usurped, Kennedy argued, by the rising powers of China and Japan, both still unencumbered by the dead weight of imperial military commitments.

In his 2001 book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, University of Chicago political scientist John J. Mearsheimer updates Kennedy's account. Having failed to succumb to overstretch, and after surviving the German and Japanese challenges, he argues, the United States must now brace for the ascent of new rivals. "[A] rising China is the most dangerous potential threat to the United States in the early twenty-first century," contends Mearsheimer. "[T]he United States has a profound interest in seeing Chinese economic growth slow considerably in the years ahead." China is not the only threat Mearsheimer foresees. The European Union (EU) too has the potential to become "a formidable rival."

Power, in other words, is not a natural monopoly; the struggle for mastery is both perennial and universal. The "unipolarity" identified by some commentators following the Soviet collapse cannot last much longer, for the simple reason that history hates a hyperpower. Sooner or later, challengers will emerge, and back we must go to a multipolar, multipower world.

But what if these esteemed theorists are all wrong? What if the world is actually heading for a period when there is no hegemon? What if, instead of a balance of power, there is an absence of power?

Such a situation is not unknown in history. Although the chroniclers of the past have long been preoccupied with the achievements of great powers — whether civilizations, empires, or nation-states — they have not wholly overlooked eras when power receded.

Unfortunately, the world's experience with power vacuums (eras of "apolarity," if you will) is hardly encouraging. Anyone who dislikes U.S. hegemony should bear in mind that, rather than a multipolar world of competing great powers, a world with no hegemon at all may be the real alternative to U.S. primacy. Apolarity could turn out to mean an anarchic new Dark Age: an era of waning empires and religious fanaticism; of endemic plunder and pillage in the world's forgotten regions; of economic stagnation and civilization's retreat into a few fortified enclaves.

## PRETENDERS TO THE THRONE

Why might a power vacuum arise early in the 21st century? The reasons are not especially hard to imagine.

***The clay feet of the U.S. colossus*** | Powerful though it may seem — in terms of economic output, military might, and "soft" cultural power — the United States suffers from at least three structural deficits that will limit the effectiveness and duration of its quasi-imperial role in the world. The first factor is the nation's growing dependence on foreign capital to finance excessive private and public consumption. It is difficult to recall any past empire that long endured after becoming so dependent on lending from abroad. The second deficit relates to troop levels: The United States is a net importer of people and cannot, therefore, underpin its hegemonic aspirations with true colonization. At the same time, its relatively small volunteer army is already spread very thin as a result of major and ongoing military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Finally, and most critically, the United States suffers from what is best called an attention deficit. Its republican institutions and political traditions make it difficult to establish a consensus for long-term nation-building projects. With a few exceptions, most U.S. interventions in the past century have been relatively short lived. U.S. troops have stayed in West Germany, Japan, and South Korea for more than 50 years; they did not linger so long in the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, or Vietnam, to say nothing of Lebanon and Somalia. Recent trends in public opinion suggest that the U.S. electorate is even less ready to sacrifice blood and treasure in foreign fields than it was during the Vietnam War.

***"Old Europe" grows older*** | Those who dream the EU might become a counterweight to the U.S. hyperpower should continue slumbering. Impressive though the EU's enlargement this year has been — not to mention the achievement of 12-country monetary union — the reality is that demography likely condemns the EU to decline in international influence and importance. With fertility rates dropping and life expectancies rising, West European societies may, within fewer than 50 years, display median ages in the upper 40s. Europe's "dependency ratio" (the number of non-working-age citizens for every working-age citizen) is set to become crippling high. Indeed, Old Europe will soon be truly old. By 2050, one in every three Italians, Spaniards, and Greeks is expected to be 65 or older, even allowing for ongoing immigration. Europeans therefore face an agonizing choice between Americanizing their economies, i.e., opening their borders to much more immigration, with the cultural changes that would entail, or transforming their union into a fortified retirement community. Meanwhile, the EU's stalled institutional reforms mean that individual European nation-states will continue exercising considerable autonomy outside the economic sphere, particularly in foreign and security policy.

***China's coming economic crisis*** | Optimistic observers of China insist the economic miracle of the past decade will endure, with growth continuing at such a sizzling pace that within 30 or 40 years China's gross domestic product will surpass that of the United States. Yet it is far from clear that the normal rules for emerging markets are suspended for Beijing's benefit. First, a fundamental incompatibility exists between the free-market economy, based inevitably on private property and the rule of law, and the Communist monopoly on power, which breeds corruption and impedes the creation of transparent fiscal, monetary, and regulatory institutions. As is common in "Asian tiger" economies, production is running far ahead of domestic consumption — thus making the economy heavily dependent on exports — and far ahead of domestic financial development. Indeed, no one knows the full extent of the problems in the Chinese domestic banking sector. Those Western banks that are buying up bad debts to establish themselves in China must remember that this strategy was tried once before: a century ago, in the era of the Open Door policy, when U.S. and European firms rushed into China only to see their investments vanish amid the turmoil of war and revolution.

Then, as now, hopes for China's development ran euphorically high, especially in the United States. But

those hopes were dashed, and could be disappointed again. A Chinese currency or banking crisis could have earth-shaking ramifications, especially when foreign investors realize the difficulty of repatriating assets held in China. Remember, when foreigners invest directly in factories rather than through intermediaries such as bond markets, there is no need for domestic capital controls. After all, how does one repatriate a steel mill?

***The fragmentation of Islamic civilization*** | With birthrates in Muslim societies more than double the European average, the Islamic countries of Northern Africa and the Middle East are bound to put pressure on Europe and the United States in the years ahead. If, for example, the population of Yemen will exceed that of Russia by 2050 (as the United Nations forecasts, assuming constant fertility), there must either be dramatic improvements in the Middle East's economic performance or substantial emigration from the Arab world to aging Europe. Yet the subtle Muslim colonization of Europe's cities — most striking in places like Marseille, France, where North Africans populate whole suburbs — may not necessarily portend the advent of a new and menacing "Eurabia." In fact, the Muslim world is as divided as ever, and not merely along the traditional fissure between Sunnis and Shiites. It is also split between those Muslims seeking a peaceful modus vivendi with the West (an impulse embodied in the Turkish government's desire to join the EU) and those drawn to the revolutionary Islamic Bolshevism of renegades like al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Opinion polls from Morocco to Pakistan suggest high levels of anti-American sentiment, but not unanimity. In Europe, only a minority expresses overt sympathy for terrorist organizations; most young Muslims in England clearly prefer assimilation to jihad. We are a long way from a bipolar clash of civilizations, much less the rise of a new caliphate that might pose a geopolitical threat to the United States and its allies.

In short, each of the potential hegemonies of the 21st century — the United States, Europe, and China — seems to contain within it the seeds of decline; and Islam remains a diffuse force in world politics, lacking the resources of a superpower.

## **DARK AND DISCONNECTED**

Suppose, in a worst-case scenario, that U.S. neoconservative hubris is humbled in Iraq and that the Bush administration's project to democratize the Middle East at gunpoint ends in ignominious withdrawal, going from empire to decolonization in less than two years. Suppose also that no aspiring rival power shows interest in filling the resulting vacuums — not only in coping with Iraq but conceivably also Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Haiti. What would an apolar future look like?

The answer is not easy, as there have been very few periods in world history with no contenders for the role of global, or at least regional, hegemon. The nearest approximation in modern times could be the 1920s, when the United States walked away from President Woodrow Wilson's project of global democracy and collective security centered on the League of Nations. There was certainly a power vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Romanov, Habsburg, Hohenzollern, and Ottoman empires, but it did not last long. The old West European empires were quick to snap up the choice leftovers of Ottoman rule in the Middle East. The Bolsheviks had reassembled the czarist empire by 1922. And by 1936, German *revanche* was already far advanced.

One must go back much further in history to find a period of true and enduring apolarity; as far back, in fact, as the ninth and 10th centuries.

In this era, the remains of the Roman Empire — Rome and Byzantium — receded from the height of their power. The leadership of the West was divided between the pope, who led Christendom, and the heirs of Charlemagne, who divided up his short-lived empire under the Treaty of Verdun in 843. No credible claimant

to the title of emperor emerged until Otto was crowned in 962, and even he was merely a German prince with pretensions (never realized) to rule Italy. Byzantium, meanwhile, was dealing with the Bulgar rebellion to the north.

By 900, the Abbasid caliphate initially established by Abu al-Abbas in 750 had passed its peak; it was in steep decline by the middle of the 10th century. In China, too, imperial power was in a dip between the T'ang and Sung dynasties. Both these empires had splendid capitals — Baghdad and Ch'ang-an — but neither had serious aspirations of territorial expansion.

The weakness of the old empires allowed new and smaller entities to flourish. When the Khazar tribe converted to Judaism in 740, their khanate occupied a Eurasian power vacuum between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. In Kiev, far from the reach of Byzantium, the regent Olga laid the foundation for the future Russian Empire in 957 when she converted to the Orthodox Church. The Seljuks — forebears of the Ottoman Turks — carved the Sultanate of Rum as the Abbasid caliphate lost its grip over Asia Minor. Africa had its mini-empire in Ghana; Central America had its Mayan civilization. Connections between these entities were minimal or nonexistent. This condition was the antithesis of globalization. It was a world broken up into disconnected, introverted civilizations.

One feature of the age was that, in the absence of strong secular polities, religious questions often produced serious convulsions. Indeed, religious institutions often set the political agenda. In the eighth and ninth centuries, Byzantium was racked by controversy over the proper role of icons in worship. By the 11th century, the pope felt confident enough to humble Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV during the battle over which of them should have the right to appoint bishops. The new monastic orders amassed considerable power in Christendom, particularly the Cluniacs, the first order to centralize monastic authority. In the Muslim world, it was the ulema (clerics) who truly ruled. This atmosphere helps explain why the period ended with the extraordinary holy wars known as the Crusades, the first of which was launched by European Christians in 1095.

Yet, this apparent clash of civilizations was in many ways just another example of the apolar world's susceptibility to long-distance military raids directed at urban centers by more backward peoples. The Vikings repeatedly attacked West European towns in the ninth century — Nantes in 842, Seville in 844, to name just two. One Frankish chronicler lamented "the endless flood of Vikings" sweeping southward. Byzantium, too, was sacked in 860 by raiders from Rus, the kernel of the future Russia. This "fierce and savage tribe" showed "no mercy," lamented the Byzantine patriarch. It was like "the roaring sea ... destroying everything, sparing nothing." Such were the conditions of an anarchic age.

Small wonder that the future seemed to lie in creating small, defensible, political units: the Venetian republic — the quintessential city-state, which was conducting its own foreign policy by 840 — or Alfred the Great's England, arguably the first thing resembling a nation-state in European history, created in 886.

## **SUPERPOWER FAILURE**

Could an apolar world today produce an era reminiscent of the age of Alfred? It could, though with some important and troubling differences.

Certainly, one can imagine the world's established powers — the United States, Europe, and China — retreating into their own regional spheres of influence. But what of the growing pretensions to autonomy of the supranational bodies created under U.S. leadership after the Second World War? The United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (formerly the General

Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) each considers itself in some way representative of the "international community." Surely their aspirations to global governance are fundamentally different from the spirit of the Dark Ages?

Yet universal claims were also an integral part of the rhetoric of that era. All the empires claimed to rule the world; some, unaware of the existence of other civilizations, maybe even believed that they did. The reality, however, was not a global Christendom, nor an all-embracing Empire of Heaven. The reality was political fragmentation. And that is also true today. The defining characteristic of our age is not a shift of power upward to supranational institutions, but downward. With the end of states' monopoly on the means of violence and the collapse of their control over channels of communication, humanity has entered an era characterized as much by disintegration as integration.

If free flows of information and of means of production empower multinational corporations and nongovernmental organizations (as well as evangelistic religious cults of all denominations), the free flow of destructive technology empowers both criminal organizations and terrorist cells. These groups can operate, it seems, wherever they choose, from Hamburg to Gaza. By contrast, the writ of the international community is not global at all. It is, in fact, increasingly confined to a few strategic cities such as Kabul and Pristina. In short, it is the nonstate actors who truly wield global power — including both the monks and the Vikings of our time.

So what is left? Waning empires. Religious revivals. Incipient anarchy. A coming retreat into fortified cities. These are the Dark Age experiences that a world without a hyperpower might quickly find itself reliving. The trouble is, of course, that this Dark Age would be an altogether more dangerous one than the Dark Age of the ninth century. For the world is much more populous — roughly 20 times more — so friction between the world's disparate "tribes" is bound to be more frequent. Technology has transformed production; now human societies depend not merely on freshwater and the harvest but also on supplies of fossil fuels that are known to be finite. Technology has upgraded destruction, too, so it is now possible not just to sack a city but to obliterate it.

For more than two decades, globalization — the integration of world markets for commodities, labor, and capital — has raised living standards throughout the world, except where countries have shut themselves off from the process through tyranny or civil war. The reversal of globalization — which a new Dark Age would produce — would certainly lead to economic stagnation and even depression. As the United States sought to protect itself after a second September 11 devastates, say, Houston or Chicago, it would inevitably become a less open society, less hospitable for foreigners seeking to work, visit, or do business. Meanwhile, as Europe's Muslim enclaves grew, Islamist extremists' infiltration of the EU would become irreversible, increasing trans-Atlantic tensions over the Middle East to the breaking point. An economic meltdown in China would plunge the Communist system into crisis, unleashing the centrifugal forces that undermined previous Chinese empires. Western investors would lose out and conclude that lower returns at home are preferable to the risks of default abroad.

The worst effects of the new Dark Age would be felt on the edges of the waning great powers. The wealthiest ports of the global economy — from New York to Rotterdam to Shanghai — would become the targets of plunderers and pirates. With ease, terrorists could disrupt the freedom of the seas, targeting oil tankers, aircraft carriers, and cruise liners, while Western nations frantically concentrated on making their airports secure. Meanwhile, limited nuclear wars could devastate numerous regions, beginning in the Korean peninsula and Kashmir, perhaps ending catastrophically in the Middle East. In Latin America, wretchedly poor citizens would seek solace in Evangelical Christianity imported by U.S. religious orders. In Africa, the great plagues of AIDS and malaria would continue their deadly work. The few remaining solvent



airlines would simply suspend services to many cities in these continents; who would wish to leave their privately guarded safe havens to go there?

For all these reasons, the prospect of an apolar world should frighten us today a great deal more than it frightened the heirs of Charlemagne. If the United States retreats from global hegemony — its fragile self-image dented by minor setbacks on the imperial frontier — its critics at home and abroad must not pretend that they are ushering in a new era of multipolar harmony, or even a return to the good old balance of power.

Be careful what you wish for. The alternative to unipolarity would not be multipolarity at all. It would be apolarity — a global vacuum of power. And far more dangerous forces than rival great powers would benefit from such a not-so-new world disorder.

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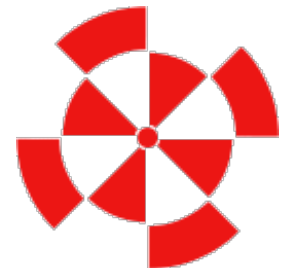
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## Voice of a Superpower

The 2004 U.S. presidential election may be the first in decades to center on the candidates' foreign-policy views. So what do most Americans really think about Iraq, terrorism, North Korea, and free trade? Herewith an "interview" with the American people, with each answer reflecting majority positions in recent opinion polls. Americans' surprising preferences offer insight into what voters want from their next president.

FOREIGN POLICY: How did you feel about going to war with Iraq?

**John/Jane Q. Public:** It's complicated. When President George W. Bush said that Saddam Hussein was making weapons of mass destruction and might give them to terrorists, I found that argument pretty convincing. So I was all for trying to get into Iraq to find out if Saddam had those weapons, and to take them away from him if he did.

FP: So did you think immediate action was necessary?

**JP:** Not really. I thought we could take time to build support at the United Nations. Besides, we had plenty else to worry about, like al Qaeda. And once the U.N. inspectors were in Iraq, it seemed like we should give

them a chance — not that I was all that optimistic that they were going to find the weapons. But Saddam was contained, so I thought we should keep trying to find some consensus at the United Nations.

**FP:** Why was it so important to get U.N. support?

**JP:** I just didn't think we should suddenly go in there on our own. The United States already plays the role of the world's policeman more than it should. And I'm torn over whether we have the right to march in and overthrow a government, even if it is trying to build nuclear weapons.

**FP:** Does the United Nations have the right to intervene like that?

**JP:** Yes, definitely.

**FP:** What if a country poses an imminent threat to the United States? Is unilateral action then justified?

**JP:** Well yes, I mean, if it's in self-defense and they are about to attack. But it should be pretty clear cut.

**FP:** Did you think that Iraq posed such an imminent threat?

**JP:** Probably not.

**FP:** Do you think the Bush administration intentionally exaggerated the evidence to build support for the war?

**JP:** Yes, though I think the administration believed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. But maybe Bush was so determined to get Saddam that it didn't much matter to him if it was true. If the CIA had told him that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction and was not involved with al Qaeda, I still think Bush would have wanted to go to war anyhow.

**FP:** What do you think about the argument that the war was justified because Saddam was a dictator violating the rights of Iraq's people?

**JP:** I don't really think the United States has the right to do that kind of thing. We still need U.N. approval, unless it is something really large-scale and extreme — like genocide.

**FP:** Do you think what Hussein was doing reached that level?

**JP:** Well, it was pretty bad, but no, not genocide. There are probably other regimes in the world right now that are as bad as Saddam's.

**FP:** So you think war was the wrong decision?

**JP:** No. I think Saddam probably did have weapons of mass destruction, and I do think he was probably working with al Qaeda. And though he is not the only threat to the United States, it is better for U.S. security to have him out of there. Overall, he was a really bad guy. So, no, it was not a wrong decision.

**FP:** So it was the right decision?

**JP:** Well, sort of — I just don't know if it was the best decision. Maybe if we had taken more time and gotten more countries involved through the United Nations, the brunt of this thing would not be falling on our shoulders. The war itself was simple, but this occupation is tough. I didn't like it when Bush said he wanted \$87 billion dollars for Iraq. And all these casualties...

**FP:** So are you thinking you might want to pull out?

**JP:** Oh no, we can't do that. Whether or not it was a good idea to go in, we still need to stay the course.

**FP:** How did you feel about the capture of Hussein?

**JP:** That was great. It made me feel better about how Bush was handling the situation in Iraq. But personally, capturing Saddam didn't make me feel safer.

**FP:** What do you want to do at this point?

**JP:** I would like to see this whole thing put under the United Nations. Let's not have the United States out front and being shot at every day.

**FP:** But what if that means the United States must let other countries be involved in making key decisions?

**JP:** What's the problem with that?

**FP:** So you still feel good about the United Nations, even after the U.N. Security Council did not support the United States going to war in Iraq?

**JP:** I was disappointed that we did not reach consensus there. But I'm certainly not giving up on the United Nations. I just want it to do a better job. In fact, I would like to see it doing more things. We cannot really withdraw from the world, and I don't want the United States to have so much of the responsibility for keeping things in order. What other option is there?

## **TACKLING TERROR**

**FP:** Okay, let's talk about the war on terrorism and al Qaeda.

**JP:** Yes, those are more important than Iraq.

**FP:** How do you think the president is handling the war on terrorism?

**JP:** Pretty well. He's a strong leader and seems determined. Right after the September 11 attacks in 2001, I thought he was doing very well. I'm not as enthusiastic now, but he is still doing well.

**FP:** How did you feel about the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan?

**JP:** That was completely clear. We were attacked; we had to go after al Qaeda. On top of that, we had the United Nations and many other countries behind us.

**FP:** So that was successful?

**JP:** Well, we still haven't captured bin Laden.

**FP:** Overall, do you feel safer as a result of the government's efforts in the war on terrorism?

**JP:** I can't really say that I do. Maybe a little.

**FP:** Does the fact that no attacks have occurred on U.S. soil since September 11 mean that the Bush administration's efforts have worked?



**JP:** Not really.

**FP:** Overall, do you think Bush is taking the right approach?

**JP:** I think he probably needs to use more diplomatic methods. Don't get me wrong — I realize this game is rough. We should try to find the terrorists. And if we do, we should kill them. But overall, I think Bush tends to be assertive rather than cooperative.

**FP:** Do you think most people in the Islamic world share the feelings that al Qaeda has toward the United States?

**JP:** Yes, most of them do have some of those negative feelings toward the United States, which makes it easier for al Qaeda to recruit new members. But I don't think most Muslims approve of al Qaeda's terrorist methods.

**FP:** Do you like Bush's idea of trying to promote democracy in the Middle East?

**JP:** Democracy is a good thing, and it would be great to see it spread. But I'm not sure we should try to impose it on people. Overall, I think people in the Middle East want us to play a less dominant role, and I agree.

**FP:** Would you reduce the U.S. military presence in the Middle East?

**JP:** Yes. Now that Iraq is no longer a threat, we should probably pull out of Saudi Arabia. And over the next 5 to 10 years, we should probably reduce our overall military forces in the region.

**FP:** But aren't those forces important for fighting the war on terrorism?

**JP:** Actually, I think they increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks.

## **HOMELAND INSECURITY**

**FP:** Let's talk about the domestic front of the war on terrorism. How do you feel about the creation of the Department of Homeland Security?

**JP:** I guess it is doing a fine job, but I am not sure that putting all those efforts into a single agency really adds anything or if it just creates more bureaucracy.

**FP:** Shortly after the terrorist attacks, the U.S. Congress passed new legislation called the U.S.A. Patriot Act, which removes certain limitations on the government's ability to monitor and detain individuals. How well do you feel you understand that legislation?

**JP:** Not very well.

**FP:** Based on what you know, though, would you say that the Patriot Act is a good thing overall?

**JP:** Basically, yes.

**FP:** Do you think it is necessary for Americans to be ready to give up some of their civil liberties to more effectively fight terrorism?

**JP:** Right after September 11, I thought that maybe we did, but now I am more inclined to believe that we

don't. I am certainly not ready to give the government a complete pass. Civil liberties are important to me, even if we are talking about terrorism.

FP: Do you think the government has gone too far in compromising civil liberties?

JP: No. But I am concerned that it might.

FP: Are you aware that U.S. citizens have been detained under suspicion of being involved in a terrorist group?

JP: Yes.

FP: In such cases, should these suspects have the right to an attorney?

JP:

FP: And is it your impression that they do have such a right?

JP: Yes, of course. Don't they?

## **NUKES IN NORTH KOREA**

FP: Are you concerned about North Korea's nuclear program?

JP: Yes. North Korea is the country that poses the biggest threat to us now. It's very important.

FP: Do you think that seeing the United States overthrow Hussein has given the North Koreans pause?

JP: No, it probably made them more motivated than ever to build nukes. They're not stupid — they know the United States has never attacked a country with nuclear weapons.

FP: What do you think about some limited use of military force, such as bombing their nuclear facilities?

JP: I don't think so. Besides, I'm not sure we have the right to do that kind of thing.

FP: What about overthrowing their government?

JP: Definitely not.

FP: What do you think about how the United States has approached North Korea?

JP: We should take a more diplomatic route, rather than trying to intimidate them by implying we might attack. I mean, isn't their fear that we would attack them exactly what got them all riled up in the first place?

FP: Are you saying that the Bush administration is not doing all that it can to achieve a diplomatic solution?

JP: Maybe it could be doing more.

FP: Some people say that engaging in talks would just be an attempt at reviving the failed 1994 agreement, whereby, in exchange for aid, North Korea agreed to stop its nuclear weapons program and allow in inspectors.

JP: (Shrugs) I still think we need to try to get it back on track. We don't really have the option of going to

war, so what are you going to do?

**FP:** But it was North Korea that violated the agreement by restarting its nuclear weapons program. Some people argue that talking with North Korea would be submitting to blackmail.

**JP:** I don't find that argument convincing. I just think that diplomacy holds out the best hope.

**FP:** What if that approach doesn't work?

**JP:** Well, maybe then we should take some steps in a military direction — I'm not sure. Besides, if the South Koreans don't want us to do that, then I'm not prepared to just plow ahead. After all, they are the ones that would suffer the brunt of any war.

**FP:** But if the United States were to attack North Korea, would you be supportive then?

**JP:** Well, I generally feel that you should back the commander in chief even when you disagree. But if it were part of a U.N. operation, then I would strongly support it.

**FP:** Would you support establishing diplomatic relations with North Korea?

**JP:** Of course. Haven't we already done that?

**FP:** Would you support a deal in which the United States makes a formal declaration that it will not attack North Korea if it gives up its nuclear weapons program?

**JP:** Sure. Why not?

**FP:** Do you think such a deal would keep the North Koreans from pursuing nuclear weapons?

**JP:** I don't know. But why not try it?

**FP:** What about withholding food aid so as to put more pressure on them?

**JP:** No, I don't think that when there are starving North Koreans we should use food as a political weapon. What their government is doing is not their fault.

**FP:** What about providing aid in exchange for North Korea stopping its nuclear weapons program?

**JP:** I would support that. I think there is a good chance that the real reason they are doing this is to get aid.

**FP:** Does that mean you are confident that giving aid will stop them?

**JP:** No, not really.

**FP:** How confident are you that this aid really reaches the people who need it?

**JP:** Not very confident. But I still think we should do it.

## **WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE**

**FP:** Which countries do you consider the United States' best friends?

**JP:** Well, I usually feel friendliest toward English-speaking countries such as Britain — I especially like Prime

Minister Tony Blair — Canada, and Australia. After those, it would be Japan and some of the European countries.

FP: And what about France and Germany, given what happened with the Iraq war?

**JP:** I am getting over all that, but not entirely, especially with France.

FP: How do you view U.S. relations with Russia these days?

**JP:** Things seem pretty friendly, though Russia is not really an ally of ours. I don't feel Russia has done enough to support us in the war on terrorism.

FP: What about China?

**JP:** I feel a bit cooler toward China, though our relationship seems reasonably friendly. I am concerned that China may take away our jobs.

FP: How do you feel about Saudi Arabia?

**JP:** I don't really trust them. And they have certainly not done enough in the war on terrorism. I see them as part of the problem more than part of the solution.

FP: Do you think the United States should pressure countries like Saudi Arabia to democratize?

**JP:** Not really.

FP: Do you view Saudi Arabia as an enemy?

**JP:** No, but we aren't allies either. I am not sure if we are really even friends. My respect for them has been falling. They seem arrogant and unfriendly.

## **TWO CHEERS FOR FREE TRADE**

FP: How do you feel about globalization and international trade?

**JP:** In principle, I support the whole idea of trade. I just don't think the U.S. government has been doing enough to help workers who lose their jobs because of trade. And I don't like the idea that we are buying products made in sweatshops overseas; it's bad for the workers over there, and it undercuts U.S. workers. I am also concerned that American companies are moving to other countries to avoid U.S. environmental laws. We should make sure these things don't happen so much.

FP: But some economists fear that such government intervention might slow the growth of trade.

**JP:** (Feigns horror) God forbid! If it gets slowed down a bit, that's not such a big deal. There are other things in life as important or more important than trade.

FP: So what do you want to see done?

**JP:** Most of all, we need to help American workers, and I do not see that happening much. Things have been pretty bad lately, and workers have not been getting much help. A few years ago I was more hopeful that with some time and effort, workers could recover, but now I am more doubtful. It makes the idea of putting up more trade barriers tempting — even though I don't think they are the best approach.

**FP:** How do you feel about the United States negotiating new trade agreements?

**JP:** When we make an agreement to trade more with other countries, we should require that as part of the deal, they do not abuse their workers or harm their environment. I know it might sound like we are being nosy, but things are getting so interconnected that you have to do that kind of thing more often.

**FP:** How do you feel about the president's actions on steel tariffs?

**JP:** Well, I approved of his raising them originally, but I also think he was right to lower them when the World Trade Organization said we should.

**FP:** Developing countries have complained that U.S. farm subsidies are unfair to farmers in poor nations. Are you willing to eliminate those subsidies?

**JP:** Yes and no. I am very concerned about small farmers in the United States and I think they should get help in bad years, though not every year. But I don't think agribusiness should be getting those big subsidies year after year. If we cut those, it would probably reduce the problems for farmers overseas.

## **BUSH'S REPORT CARD**

**FP:** On balance, what grade would you give President Bush for his handling of foreign affairs?

**JP:** I guess I would give him about a C+. There have been times when I would have given him a higher grade — maybe a B — after September 11 and during the war with Iraq.

**FP:** What about fighting terrorism?

**JP:** There I would give him a better grade — maybe even a B+.

**FP:** And what about his approach toward Hussein and Iraq?

**JP:** During the war I was more positive, but now I would say a C.

**FP:** Do you generally have confidence that the president will deal wisely with an international crisis?

**JP:** Generally, I do; I feel increasingly uneasy, though. In general, I tend to feel a bit better about Republicans when it comes to foreign policy. And when I think about how Bush handles the war on terrorism, I lean toward him rather than the Democratic candidate, Senator John Kerry. When I think about domestic issues, however, I have more confidence in Kerry.

**FP:** Do you think of Bush as honest?

**JP:** I have generally thought of him as honest, but lately I am less certain. Sometimes I have doubts about things he says. This situation with Iraq and the weapons of mass destruction has raised some questions in my mind.

**FP:** Overall, how would you summarize your feelings about the president?

**JP:** They are mixed. I like that he is a strong leader, but I think he needs to be more cooperative with other countries and not always react like such a top dog.

**FP:** It sounds like you are giving him a less than satisfactory grade for "plays well with others."

**JP:** Yes, a president ought to be able to do that, especially when he is the biggest kid on the block. Which is not to say the traits he has don't come in handy when the going gets tough. I just wish he could blend those qualities.

**FP:** So that's what you'll be looking for come November?

**JP:** I suppose so. I haven't really made my choice yet. But I do know what I am looking for.

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