

**President Bush, the World is Talking to You.  
Are You Listening?  
by**

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**For  
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The September 11, 2002 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. shocked the international community into unprecedented cooperation. Friends and former foes rallied around the United States and jointly declared a global war on terrorism. But once the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and its terrorist Al Qaeda allies, had been toppled, the Bush Administration reverted to assertive unilateralism. Bush's declaration of "an axis of evil" intertwined the war on terrorism with a global effort to disarm Iraq, North Korea and Iran of their weapons of mass destruction. The international community balked at this linkage. Confident of his domestic political support, Bush over estimated his support abroad. Ignoring international criticism, he lunged ahead with plans to destroy the Saddam Hussein regime. Along the way, he belittled the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency as being "ineffective," and humiliated America's allies France and Germany. Only Britain joined the US led "coalition" in the invasion of Iraq. By then, Bush had split the international community into three segments: the United States, the broader international community and the terrorists.

Ever since, Bush's preference for assertive unilateralism and force of arms has yet to yield enduring benefits. Al Qaeda's global terrorism and North Korea's development of weapons of mass destruction continue unabated. Bush's "might makes right" strategy has contributed to a cycle of violent revenge. The US invasion and occupation of Iraq has intensified Arab distrust of the United States and nurtured Arab popular support for those who oppose the United States. Meanwhile, the mainstream of international society, centered in the United Nations and lead by France, Russia and Germany, is trying to moderate Bush's confrontational strategy in the hope breaking the cycle of recrimination between Washington and the followers of Islam.

Bush's unilateralism and preemptive counter proliferation strategy to deal with weapons of mass destruction has excited official ambivalence and popular criticism throughout East and Southeast Asia. The President witnessed this first hand during his recent trip to those regions. He went hoping to rally support for the war on terrorism, his efforts to rebuild Iraq and his strategy for dealing with North Korea. He hoped, according to National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, that the region's nations "would be generous" in their financial support of his effort to rebuild Iraq.

But his wish list was greeted with polite reserve. White House officials had hoped that Japan might contribute six billion dollars for Iraq. Japan pledged only USD 1.5 billion. Neither Japan nor South Korea, America's closest advisers in the region, promised to send more than a few hundred troops to assist US Forces in Iraq. Meanwhile, North Korea seized on Bush's words and strategy to claim that it needs nuclear weapons to defend itself. In Southeast Asia, moderate Muslim leaders cautioned Bush not to confuse terrorists with followers of Islam. In the Australian Parliament, Bush was heckled.

President Bush hopefully listened and learned from the people of East and Southeast Asia. First and foremost, his unilateralism has back fired. It has created friction between the United States and the mainstream of the international community. Reluctance to follow his leadership should not be dismissed as anti-Americanism. This it is not. The people of

Asia, like those of Europe and the Middle East, are trying to tell America's leaders that they too deplore terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But they prefer multilateral international cooperation to Bush's unilateral approach when it comes to dealing with the world's problems.

President Bush's heart is in the right place. He wants to make the world safe from terrorism and the weapons of mass destruction. For this he should be applauded. But his "America first" and "might makes right" approaches have shaken alliances, intensified animosities and heightened the risk of terrorism around the world.

President Bush and his advisers should review the outcome of his recent visit to East Asia. The region's politicians resent his expectation that they help pay the cost for his unilateral approaches to terrorism, the rebuilding of Iraq and North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Instead, the nations of Northeast focused his attention on their priority – peacefully halting nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia through diplomatic dialogue and negotiations. Similarly, the Islamic nations of Southeast Asia told Bush that his words and deeds regarding the Arab world, particularly regarding Iraq, were estranging the United States from the followers of Islam.

This advice is well intended. President Bush, for the sake of world peace, would do well to heed it. Much of it comes from people who, although not Americans, respect its ideals and have its best interests at heart. After all, no nation can survive alone, not even the mighty United States.