

WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD DISORDER, MR. CLINTON

President-elect Clinton, you may wish to spend most of your time solving America's domestic problems, but the outside world may not let you. On the day after your electoral victory, the news reported troubling foreign developments that point to some of the overseas dangers you will face.

Dateline, Wednesday, November 4 —

ITEM: The Russian Parliament voted to delay the exchange of ratification documents on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Washington until Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine join the non-proliferation treaty and reach agreements on all nuclear forces. The next day, Ukrainian Vice Prime Minister Igor Yukhnovsky stated that the missiles in Ukraine belong to the Ukrainian people. "We can sell these nuclear warheads to the highest bidder [among] nuclear states," said Yukhnovsky. "That means Russia first of all, or maybe another state, depending on which pays the most."

ITEM: As Saddam Hussein fired his pistol in the air celebrating George Bush's defeat at the polls, a United Nations team claimed that Iraq may be hiding SCUD missiles.

ITEM: After learning that Russia had sold three submarines to Iran, the U.S. Navy sent a nuclear-powered submarine into the Persian Gulf to scout the waters and to prepare, for the first time in history, for anti-submarine operations in the Gulf.

ITEM: It was revealed that the Iranian government had arrested an American businessman on trumped-up charges. Iran warned that it will not tolerate U.S. criticism of its human rights record.

ITEM: The trade talks between the U.S. and the European Community collapsed in Chicago, prompting the U.S. to impose tariffs on European imports, thereby threatening a global trade war.

ITEM: The U.S.-brokered peace settlement in Angola broke down as a government army convoy left a corpse-ridden Luanda to do battle with Jonas Savimbi's National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The fighting in Luanda cost 1,000 lives, including that of Savimbi lieutenant Jeremias Chitunda, who was murdered, presumably by government forces. The U.S.-backed democratic elections of September 29-30 thus end in failure.

Welcome to the new world disorder, Mr. Clinton. If all of this occurred in a single day, imagine what could happen in a four-year term. Since international relations were scarcely mentioned in your campaign, you have no particular mandate in foreign policy, other than to do what all Presidents are expected to do—defend the interests of the nation. However, as past Presidents (especially Jimmy Carter) have learned, how you handle foreign policy can make or break a presidency. Americans are unforgiving of foreign policy failures because they know how dangerous such failures can be.

You need to prepare yourself, therefore, for challenging times in foreign policy. As you contemplate your appointments and organize your transition teams, you should establish early what your foreign policy priorities will be. Naturally, you cannot foresee every crisis you will face—and much of your job in foreign affairs will be crisis management. You nonetheless must know what you want to accomplish in foreign affairs by the end of your four-year term. Otherwise you and the country will drift, reacting to events, rather than helping to shape them. Establishing these priorities, you should:

- ✓ **Embrace Russian democracy and assist the transition toward a market economy.** Few developments abroad are as important to America as the success of democracy and free markets in Russia. If democracy fails there, America and Russia could be plunged once again into another debilitating and expensive struggle. True, Russians alone ultimately will decide the fate of their country, but democracy cannot succeed in Russia without outside support. Therefore, as your top priority, you should build a special relationship with a democratic Russia, assisting the reforms, while moving toward greater cooperation on such strategic matters as missile defense and arms reductions.
- ✓ **Expand free trade around the globe.** America is the largest exporter in the world. Its economy and jobs depend on the growth of foreign markets. Therefore, after you have obtained a quick ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada, you should negotiate additional free trade agreements with Latin American countries, starting with Chile. You should also announce that America is open to free trade agreements with Asian and East European countries.
- ✓ **Prepare the Pentagon for the wars of tomorrow.** The collapse of the Soviet Union requires that the Pentagon rethink how to organize and outfit its forces and how to fight its wars. No longer will the threat of a Soviet attack in Europe dominate U.S. war planning. Thus, you should begin a reorganization of the Pentagon and a restructuring of U.S. forces to deter and fight regional conflicts, project power overseas, and defend America against missile attacks.
- ✓ **Begin building strategic defenses.** As many as 21 nations likely will have ballistic missiles by the year 2000. Ten countries now have nuclear weapons and eleven more are working on them. Thus, now more than ever, America needs a defense against ballistic missiles. You should make plans to begin building strategic defenses by no later than 1995.
- ✓ **Show commitment to Asia.** Asians are nervous that the protectionism and human rights agenda espoused by some in your party may lead to a gradual U.S. disengagement from Asia. This would be a terrible mistake. You should plan an early trip to Asia to reassure U.S. friends that Washington will keep its commitments in Asia while working to improve trade relations with the region.

“The collapse of communism does not mean the end of danger. A new set of threats in an even less stable world will force us, even as we restructure our defenses, to keep our guard up.” These words ring true, Mr. Clinton. They are your own. And if you are serious, as Americans expect you are, you will commit yourself not only to turning around the economy, but with equal energy to promoting and defending the national interest in this new and dangerous world.

Kim R. Holmes, Ph.D.
Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy
and Defense Studies