



The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall, Ian Bremmer, Simon and Schuster, 2006, 0743274717, 9780743274715, 306 pages. What "Freakonomics" does for understanding the economy, "The J Curve" does for better understanding how nations behave. The J curve is a visual tool that allows us to see at a glance why some crucial countries are in crisis and unstable while others are prosperous and politically solid. In this imaginative, playful, and practical guide, Ian Bremmer, an expert on the politics of international business, turns conventional wisdom on its head. He reveals how the United States can begin more successfully to act in its own interests. But "The J Curve" is not only for policymakers and their critics. It can help investors better manage the risks they face abroad. It answers puzzling questions we all have. Why does North Korea seem to invite a military conflict it can't possibly survive? Why is India so surprisingly stable? What are the internal pressures eroding stability in Saudi Arabia? How long can China's politics resist the pressure for change provoked by the country's economic revolution? Why are Iran's ruling clerics trying to push their nation toward international isolation? What will happen to Israeli democracy when demographic pressures change the balance of political power within? And crucially, how should the United States respond to the challenges posed by these questions? U.S. policymakers have sought to manage security threats with a simple formula: reward your friends and punish your enemies. Has it worked? The U.S. imposed harsh sanctions on Saddam Hussein's Iraq and isolated it from the international community. This strengthened the dictator's grip on the Iraqi people and the country's wealth. The world now faces a similar dilemma in Iran. Will the United States continue to try to isolate that country or can Iran be guided into the international mainstream, allowing its people eventually to directly challenge their harsh leaders? Bremmer's tour of the nations of the world -- our friends, our foes, and others in between -- shows us how to see the world fresh, get rid of shopworn attitudes, and discover a new and useful way of thinking. .

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