



DAZED AND CONFUSED: FORESHADOWING OF PERPLEXITY

By Wilfred Hahn

The world today is perplexed and vexed, perhaps as never before, seen from a global perspective. There are blinking indicators of extreme fear, uncertainty, and international policy strife. Currently, the apparent complexity and unpredictability of worldwide geopolitical affairs is seen to be unfathomably extreme.



Surveys show that global economic policy uncertainty—for example, the Global Economic Policy Uncertainty Index—has soared to all-time highs. The higher the index, the greater the uncertainty. That makes for potentially

volatile conditions for world economies, financial markets and global relations. The same “uncertainty” sentiment is revealed in other surveys, especially those that are concerned with global policies and geopolitical conditions.

Are these signs of the times? Are they prophetic foreshadowing? We will explore.

Growing Global Perplexity

Geopolitical risk surveys of recent years have shown large increases in anxiety for policymakers and business leaders alike. This is seen to be worrisome.

After all, this represents a reversal of the cooperative trends of the last several decades (seen in a general sense). Quoting from the most recent Global Risk Survey 2017 of the World Economic Forum: “In a worrying sign of deteriorating commitment to global cooperation, states are stepping back from mechanisms set up to underpin interna-

tional security through mutual accountability and respect for common norms.”

Many nations are going it alone—narrowly pursuing their interests first. This spirit of antagonistic international affairs—of non-cooperation and self-interest—is evident even among the most prosperous nations in the world. Already the richest of nations, they want more; their super-rich citizens to heap up even more wealth.

Viewing our times, there can be little doubt: A much more volatile and precarious policy state is clouding the geopolitical climate. Crucially, political instability has increased globally. Consider that every major election over the last few years has resulted in the overthrow of a previously established political party or status quo (for example, America, France, Britain, Philippines ... etc.).

A major signpost of these new times is “political populism.” This is the domain of charismatic and unpredictable demagogues and politicians. They are characterized by playing upon people’s emotions, making grandiose promises (saying the things that itching ears like to hear, 2 Timothy 4:3), and leaning toward a more authoritarian style of rule. History shows that nations become particularly vulnerable to this type of leader when economic and wealth imbalances become extreme.



Someday, according to the Bible, there will arise a great humanistic populist—the most powerful of all time.

The research team of the respected firm of Bridgewater Associates LLP is of the opinion that “political populism” is now the number one factor impacting future world political economies. The massive monetary injections of the world’s major central banks are now seen to be a secondary factor (which, by the way, still continues on a massive scale, seen globally).

Ominously, Bridgewater Associates also concludes that “populism” has reached levels last experienced in the 1930s. Most will know of the strife and atrocities that the world experienced in those times. Many disgruntled populations were facing economic challenges (to a degree, because of high concentration of wealth) and were vulnerable to Nazism, Fascism and general protest and backlash. This was the seedbed of the first world wars in history. Casualties numbered in the tens of millions.

Given the aggressive and sometimes menacing actions of “populist” leaders, many worry that major economic hardships and wars lie in the future. Indeed, global tensions are rising on every continent, and there are numerous potential friction points. It only requires one spark to start a fire that can then be wind-swept into a great global blaze.

History does not necessarily need to repeat itself in decades ahead. Time will tell. However, the “populist” trend is likely to continue, though not necessarily in a linear fashion. There likely will be populist advances, followed by steps backward.

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No Answers from Modern Prophets

Why should there be such perplexity today, as we have shown? Haven’t the policymakers, political economists, foreign policy analysts and consultants been on watch? One would think that extremist

and destructive “populist” policies would find little footing these days, given the great number of experts.

For example, the *Economist* magazine recently reported that the global management consulting business is enjoying prosperous times, booking some \$350 billion in fees worldwide per annum. There are a surfeit of publications and transnational organizations that focus on international relations. In recent decades, there has been an enormous expansion of universities specializing in, or offering courses in “international relations” (also known as international studies), and setting up research chairs for professors studying in this field. This phenomenon’s mainstream origins only go back to as recent as the formation of the International Studies Association, which was in 1959.

The topic of international affairs is essentially about global political economics ... in plain language, the competition between the economic interests of nations. In short, it is all about wealth and power—money, that common root that underlies so much of human affairs and greed (1 Timothy 6:10).

With so much study (and countless conferences, summits, and dialogue) in the field of international relations, surely mankind must have long ago developed brilliant solutions that would lead to a world free of “geopolitical risk.”

This is not what we observe. Quite the contrary. Nor will the world likely ever observe a period of zero political risk ... at least, not until the Millennial Kingdom arrives or, at latest, the eternal state of the New Jerusalem. Why? Mainly, because the human heart is evil. Said Jeremiah, “The [human] heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

The Bible reveals additional reasons for confusion and perplexity.



The Sources of Confusion

Where do confusion and perplexity come from? Tackling this challenging topic, we can be sure of this: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Confusion is not God’s perfect will.

Actually, disorder and confusion are signs of human corruption and godlessness. Says James: “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice (James 3:16).

Mankind, therefore, is highly vulnerable to confusion and perplexity, if not rooted in God’s truth; rather, pursuing a humanist agenda apart from God.

In fact, God deliberately puts his enemies (i.e. all those that are disobedient to Him) into confusion. Puzzlement is a tactic that overcomes enemies. For example, we read in Deuteronomy 7:23: “But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed.” Says the Psalmist: “Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their words, for I see violence and strife in the city” (Psalm 55:9).

We see that a condition of confusion rendered these enemies ineffective. The last time a federation of mankind became haughty and vain, seeking to rise above God, He “confused” their language. (“[...] The LORD confusion the language of the whole world” Genesis 11:9.)

It is therefore no surprise that our godless world today should be completely confused, no matter the many consultants, policymakers, and so-called experts in international affairs.

Perversity and Perplexity Go Hand in Hand

Despite the soaring indications of geopolitical risk and uncertainty, we note an unusual companion response, which is: Rising confidence in human solutions and an unwavering confidence in Mammon.

How can this be? How can these two conditions exist at the same time, in the same medium? Can something be both hot and cold? As James questions: “Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?” (James 3:11). Jesus

also points to the forked conditions of blatant contradiction. “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:18).

Double-mindedness is a feat only possible with human beings.

Consider this one example of human optimism. Now, still some \$10 trillion-worth of world government bond markets trade at a negative yield. In other words, the longer that you hold these bonds, the lower their value ... the more interest you will pay. What this implies therefore is that investors are more certain about the future than the present. Of course, this is ludicrous.

As such, we are facing the consequences of double-minded conditions. James equates double-mindedness with instability. He says: “Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do” (James 1:8).

This is one more indication that increasing instability lies ahead for the entire world.

Thoughts to Ponder

The Bible says that there will come a time where the nations will be in anguish and perplexity. Christ said that “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea” (Luke 21:25).

This prophecy will surely unfold. However, the time is not yet. Nevertheless, we can surely identify the progress and symptoms of this condition.

We can certainly monitor global trends and strive to stay aware of new developments and their potential impact upon ourselves and our families. We may therefore be more knowledgeable. But, are we likely to escape the dangers of our times? Likely not.

What should be our response?

Christians do not need the policy prescriptions or predictions of international policy experts. We have the benefit of prophecy and knowledge of the corrupt human heart. Beyond basic Bible prophecy, we only need to know that we are in God’s hands and that He knows the future. And if He knows the future (which He has proven beyond any doubt), then our future is secure.

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