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GLOBAL TREMORS SERIES

Far East Asia Trends Today – Part I: Like a Flood

By Wilfred Hahn

Can you name the country that is the most eastern of all countries mentioned in the Old Testament? Israel being the geographical anchor of the Bible, we are of course here referring to Asian countries ... namely, Far East Asian nations. Is that country Babylon ... or perhaps Elam (Iran)? Just what other nations mentioned in the Bible could possibly be named that are even further east?



Actually, in the book of Esther, we find the mention of a country called Hodu (so-named in the original Greek). “This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush” (Esther 1:1). Hodu is a word derived from the Persian word for Hindu and refers to Hindustan, the nation of India today. However, we will not stop there, as there is yet possibly one more nation mentioned that is even further east. Indeed, as we will show, the Bible does provide some specific information about the roles of sev-

eral Asian countries in the last days. And, at least one of these indications has been mostly overlooked by Bible readers. In this 3-part series, we hope to lay out fascinating information about Asia that appears to align with the rapid last-days trends portrayed in the Bible.

Without a doubt, the emergence of certain Asian countries to greater world prominence plays an integral and necessary part in the events and trends that lead to the conditions of the upcoming Tribulation period. Though very few specific events may be pinpointed from Bible prophecy, Asia’s influence and likely endtime roles can also be dis-



The Bible does mention that certain “kings from the east” will play a part in last day events (Revelation 16:12). Just who are these kings, and what is their expected consequence? Will it be malevolent or beneficial for the world? And, can we connect such references to developments in Asia today?

cerned through deduction. As in astronomy, “black holes” are not directly visible, but they can be discerned through their impact on other celestial bodies. In the same way, we can observe trends in the Middle East and the Roman-heritage world, informed by both facilitating and parallel developments in other parts of the world.

The Modern Asian Phenomenon

A significant impulse that has rocked the world in recent decades is the rapid emergence of a group of Asian economic dynamos. Large countries with huge populations such as India and China seem to have awoken rather suddenly. After years of slumbering, this cocooned region began its butterfly transformation only some 60 years ago. Today, as some of these nations have muscled onto the world stage as economic titans, they are projecting a wide wake—one that is washing up on the shores of all the high-income countries around the world, particularly North America. They are also becoming more influential geopolitically.

Without a doubt, the rise of these nations is significant and should be seen as a major development of the last days. Why? There are a number of reasons, as we will discover. For now, let us state that any sudden development with potential global impact taking place after May 14, 1948 is likely to have material portent with respect to a last-day world. The significance of that date is well known. On that day, Israel was officially reborn as a nation after nearly two millennia of non-existence, thus signaling the start of the last generation of the last days. Some analysts argue that the signal date marking the onset of the “last generation” is the Six-Day War, which gave Israel control over Old Jerusalem as of June 10, 1967. Whichever date it may be

(1948 or 1967), the rise of Asia—specifically, the main thrust of the reawakening of China, India and others—occurred after that time.

But to what end and purpose? More intriguingly, could China and other Asian nations be specifically mentioned in Bible prophecy? If so, what roles will these countries play? The Bible does mention that certain “kings from the east” will play a part in last day events (Revelation 16:12). Just who are these kings, and what is their expected consequence? Will it be malevolent or beneficial for the world? And, can we connect such references to developments in Asia today?

Before making any further references to Scripture, it will be instructive to get a sense of the epic nature of the recent Asian phenomenon. It is yet another rapid 20th century trend that has direct linkages to economic, financial and geopolitical developments. Even more significant, the rise of Asia has all the hallmarks of an endtime financial phenomenon in addition to Scriptural alignments. All of these five tell-tale characteristics of a “last-day season phenomena” can be observed: 1. An acceleration observed after 1948; 2. A seeming improbability and inexplicability of its occurrence ... at least at first; 3. Godlessness (apostasy) ... i.e. spiritual elements; 4. A scope for worldwide impact; and, above all, 5. Suddenness and rapidity.

An Awakening

For some reason, Asia began stirring not much more than 50 to 60 years ago. Why then, and why not a century sooner ... or five decades later? Taking a prophetic perspective, the specific set of forces that this awakening imparts to the rest of the world couldn't be more opportune or timely.



In recent decades, many Asian tigers began to roar. Their economic influence swept the world; several Asia-based companies are now dominating global industries. Their rapid eruption into world trade flows and overall fast economic growth has challenged the world's high-income countries. The world's resources—



Tokyo, Japan

whether energy fuels, water, iron ore or copper plate—and financial systems are no longer the preserve of the rich world. The West can no longer unilaterally commandeer the world economy for its own exclusive benefit uncontested. With this newfound economic influence—a primary factor in determining geopolitical influence in this present Age of Global Capital—there are now additional contenders for future global supremacy. Therefore, over the past several years, we have seen nations such as China and India sitting at the global policymaking tables of the G-20 and other transnational organizations.

Small Beginnings with Big Consequences

It wasn't that long ago—not much more than 25 years past—that the Western world still looked upon the Far East with a certain aloofness. It was and remains a poorly understood part of the world, large and diverse, comprising roughly 40% of the world's land mass and approximately 60% of the earth's population. To illustrate, the countries of China and India evoked belittling visions of rice paddies and countryside peasants, or respectively, teeming Hindus living in the stifling suburbs of Calcutta between their wandering, sacred cows. Westerners would donate their nickels and dimes to alleviate the hun-

gry and homeless in this region ... perhaps, the lepers in India. The Mao uniforms that were worn in the Middle Kingdom—unisex brown khakis for everyone—were also a familiar picture. These Asian peoples, different as they were, seemed a world away—certainly far out of harm's way and of no fathomable threat to America or any other high-income country. We considered them less fortunate, backward and undeveloped—so far beneath the enlightened ways of our Hellenistic and progressive cultures. Their customs and religions were strange. Or so thought the cuckolded Western mind.

It did begin with a whimper. Earlier in the century, the world witnessed the first beginnings of Asia's economic miracles in a selected number of smaller countries. Japan was the first Asian nation in the post-war period to enter take-off into rapid economic development. Beginning in the late 1950s, Japan began a hyperactive period of economic growth and development, rapidly rising from its relatively poor status to eventually become the world's second largest economic powerhouse. While it had been a force to be reckoned with during World War II, Japan economically was seen as diminutive and non-threatening in the post-war period. Its economy in 1960 represented only 3% of world eco-

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Seoul, South Korea



South Korea was next. It seemed even less significant, its economy in 1960 amounting to less than 1/3 of 1% of world output and possessing less than 1% of the world's population. Beginning in the early 1960s, this Asian competitor to Japan began its journey to eventually become one of the high-income nations of the world.

economic output. Its population accounted for a similar proportion.

Then, suddenly, Japan's economy was sparked to grow more than two to three times as fast as those of America and Europe during this early growth phase. South Korea was next. It seemed even less significant, its economy in 1960 amounting to less than 1/3 of 1% of world output and possessing less than 1% of the world's population. Beginning in the early 1960s, this Asian competitor to Japan began its journey to eventually become one of the high-income nations of the world. Only 25 years later, in 1996¹, it would become one of the 30 members of the Organization of Economic Development (OECD)—the rich country club of the world.

Ridicule Leads to Eventual Supremacy

Despite the durable and dynamic transformations in these two Asian countries, it was still considered a put-down to consider that a product might have been made anywhere in Asia even as late as in the early 1970s. Westerners still had no inkling that a new industrial revolution had been underway in certain corners of this region for more than a decade at that time. Datsun, today renamed Nissan, and Toyota automobiles were still considered

economy-priced cars with dubious quality standards. For example, Datsun automobiles in the late 1960s rusted out in a matter of a few years due to the shortage of quality steel in Japan. Products from Asia were often the object of mirth. To say that something was

“Made in Hong Kong” was to imply that something was shoddy and cheap. No American or European manufacturer yet felt threatened. After all, these were small countries with modest manufacturing sectors.

But only a decade later, Japanese electronic products—the Sony Walkman, a famous example—and many other products became household names. Toyota, Honda and Nissan cars became considered quality vehicles. By the mid-1980s, Japan's image was very different again. Now, more and more people began to worry that Japan was going to take over entire world industries. American companies began to earnestly study Japanese ways and manufacturing methods. How was it that Japan was so productive and successful? Other world manufacturers adopted the “worker circle” concept and “just-in-time inventorying” (JIT) that Japan had perfected. Japan became the world's third largest economy in 1967, leap-frogging both France and Britain that year for the first time, and then overtook Germany for the second-place position in 1972.

While we have provided only a very superficial account of the thundering emergence of such countries as Japan and Korea upon the world economic stage, it nonetheless illustrates the rapidity of this transformation. In less



than 30 years, these two nations rose from the status of disregarded underlings to world-feared competitors. Today, such American industrial icons as General Motors, Polaroid and others have either disappeared, are near bankruptcy or have required government bailouts ... vanquished by Asian-based manufacturers, so to speak, on their home turf. Waves of Toyotas, Nissans, Hondas, and Hyundai's descended upon showroom floors to waiting buyers. They meet the satiating criteria of the American consumer—a good product at a good price. The same consumer preference applies to other Asian imports, most notably from China.

The Asian Behemoths Begin to Stir

While such countries as Japan and South Korea prospered by trading successfully with a fast-globalizing world, China and India continued to sleep for the most part. And, for that matter, so did Westerners. Similar transformations were thought impossible in these two countries. India was a calcified and bureaucracy-bound country that was mostly inward looking. Its predominantly Hindu culture seemed inert to a consumer-oriented “market economy” revolution. In the case of China, even as late as the mid-1970s, it was still in the grip of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution, deeply communistic and antagonistic to Western values and ways.

These were big countries with huge populations. In 1980, India's population of 687 million people accounted for almost one-sixth (15.5%) of the world's population. China's population of 981 million people at that time accounted for an even greater share of 22%. Together, these two slumbering giants harbored almost two-fifths of the human souls on the planet. Yet, both Chinese



and Indian economies each only accounted for approximately 1.7% of world output. That both these nations appeared trapped and content in their non-progressive cultures and ideologies was comforting.

But, things soon changed. Next to awake was China. Napoleon's prediction would finally prove prophetic. Returning from a trip to that nation 200 years ago, Napoleon Bonaparte uttered these now famous words, “When China awakes, it will shake the world.” Today, hardly 35-40 years after China began stirring, the world is indeed shaking.

The China Agenda: What Is It?

As a world-traveling investment executive, this writer had only come to fully grasp the significance of China's economic awakening somewhat late. I remember the very day that my awareness was alerted. On a research trip to Asia in 1992, I visited with the

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Now, the future implications of a booming China look all too obvious. But the past does not always extrapolate neatly into the future. While the future is never as sure as a popular consensus may think, it is true that China has indeed awoken and the world is shaking. But there is more to this epic development than meets the eye.

Chief Investment Officer of a major family fortune (with Mainland connections) in Hong Kong. This man, who was Chinese and educated in Australia, was more than forthcoming about what was happening in China. Basically, his message was this: Western corporate executives were so greedy they were willing to supply all their technology free to China—and significant investment capital to boot—if they could have an opportunity to access China’s domestic consumer market. He was chuckling as he said it. What’s more, he didn’t think foreigners were ever going to make much money in China. He was amused with the transparent gullibility and greed of the “wai lo”—literally meaning, “foreign devils.” It was the Chinese version of a capitalist “monkey trap.” That conversation took place already a full decade after the “economic opening” to the rest of the world was begun by Premier Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s.

In retrospect, the views of my Chinese contact were largely correct. Few foreign investors have made much money although a sizable proportion of the foreign industrial entities (FIEs) and companies owned by foreign multinational companies are now profitable.

As mentioned, 1992 was rather late to recognize the “big picture” that was unfolding. It had been 1979 when Premier Deng Xiaoping first launched China’s economic development program. The objective was to quadruple the size of China’s economy over the next 20 years. China’s leaders realized that globalization—what they more accurately recognized as Anglobalization²—was here to stay and that projecting worldwide influence and power was primarily a function of economic might. As China had been so disengaged from “free market” capitalism, its economic footprint in the

world was small even with a population of one billion people.

China met the goal it had set in 1979, quadrupling the size of its economy in the next 20 years. Today, it is already well advanced in its goal to again quadruple the size of its economy by 2020.

And yet, it is only in very recent years that the world has come to recognize the stupendous impact of a stirring China. Rising oil prices and a job-deficient economic recovery in the US have awakened a sleeping West to finally notice the industriousness of Asia and to consider the impact it may have upon the cherished and accustomed lifestyles enjoyed by these countries.

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We continue with this series in the next issue: *Far East Asia Trends Today — Part II: Topic of Bible Prophecy*. In it we reveal the mysterious Asian nation mentioned in the Bible that is furthest east and prove from Scripture that Far East Asia indeed has a prophetic role. (MC)

ENDNOTES

- 1 OECD Website. “Korea signed the Convention founding the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development on 12 December 1996, thereby pledged its full dedication to achieving the Organisation’s fundamental aims.” Accessed November 26, 2005.
http://www.oecd.org/about/0,2337,en_33873108_33873555_1_1_1_1_1,00.html
- 2 Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Fall of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003). The term “Anglobalization” is coined in this work.

