

Reading the Culture: China, America and the gospel

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While spending a week in Beijing recently. I was astounded by the size and scope of the city—12 million residents, 4 million taxicabs, a single airport terminal the size of most airports in the United States. America has nine cities of a million residents or more; there are 60 such cities in China.

What does China's ascension mean for America? Ian Bremmer, president of Eurasia Group, contributes to the debate with an illuminating and disturbing essay in the most recent *World Affairs* journal. Titled "[Gathering Storm: America and China in 2020](#)," Bremmer's thesis is that the United States is becoming less relevant to China's future, with troubling consequences for our nation.

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For decades, China has been building "state capitalism," a model whereby the central government directs economic expansion rather than depending on free markets. Such a straight-jacketed strategy could work only if it provided ever-increasing prosperity to its people. China's has, thanks in no small part to America's help.

We have fueled China's economic explosion by providing customers for her goods, maintaining East Asian security and protecting international sea lanes. But the Great Recession sharply reduced Western demand for Chinese products. China's central government responded to the economic collapse more effectively than Western nations, demonstrating in their minds the superiority of their state-centered system. The recession also taught them not to rely on the West as their customer base. An unprecedented drive is under way to build a Chinese middle class as the

chief consumer of Chinese goods. Their government also is working to replace Western services in their country with Chinese versions.

There is some good news: China's military budget is about 12 percent of ours, so they will need us to continue our global peacekeeping role. And their heavy reliance on oil and gas imports makes us a significant partner in their international relations. Bremmer's conclusion: America should do everything we can to remain relevant to China's future. We must not presume that past economic ties guarantee continued positive relations. When China can go it alone, they will.

In the meantime, there is a remarkable window of opportunity for Christian expansion in China today. Some missiologists believe there are 100,000 conversions every day in China. The nation is experiencing a spiritual explosion of unprecedented proportions.

Christians in America must respond while this window remains open. ESL teachers desperately are needed. Businesspeople and students can go to China as short-term missionaries. Churches can work with cities, a fact illustrated by [Green Acres Baptist Church](#) in Tyler's work with the Tyler/Qui Jing partnership. Jesus would say of China: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:37-38). Have you prayed for China today?

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