

More Than A Game Of Chinese Checkers

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As the Cold War in the West thaws, a chill east wind blows, promising bitter and frigid hostilities in Asia. China, that vast and populous Communist state most somehow ignore, is politically and militarily turning down the thermostat over its sphere of influence.

The so-called "sleeping giant" is awake. Lately, the People's Republic has begun encroaching into the South China Sea, particularly the Paracel and Spratly Islands, appropriating oil and gas exploration rights. It is also drilling for oil about 80 miles off the Vietnam coast, violating an agreement over territorial waters. In addition, Chinese naval vessels are stopping cargo ships out of Hong Kong for search and seizure, confiscating both ships and cargoes.

Militarily, Beijing is assisting Myanmar (Burma) in building a naval base not far from the Indian-owned Andaman Islands in return for rights to use it, giving China direct access to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean. The Chinese are also building a radar station on the nearby Coco Islands, held by Myanmar.

In more muscle-flexing, China is apparently rearming, taking advantage of "sale-priced" military hardware and technical assistance offered by several former Soviet republics. This includes about 200 new fighter aircraft and rights to coproduce MiG-31 aircraft in China, as well as new transport, tanker and AWACS aircraft. For their navy, they are negotiating with Ukraine for a \$200 million aircraft carrier. They are also pursuing the purchase and development of cruise, defense and ballistic missiles to stock their already full armory. And lastly, China tested a 1,000 kiloton nuclear bomb last June.

Not surprisingly, her neighbors are uneasy. All of them are now either increasing or improving their own military postures, starting a new arms race in Asia just as President Bush crows over how he ended the Cold War.

Why now? A large factor in its power play is the vacuum created by the withdrawal of both Russian forces from Vietnam and U.S. forces from the Philippines. China, to become the dominant nation in Asia, is trying to fill that vacuum as quickly as possible.

Another factor is economic reform in China. Though Communist, the People's Republic has embraced a "socialist market economy," and its early moves toward a stronger presence in Asia give it leverage among stronger economies such as Japan and Taiwan. This coincides with the seeming end of a period of *status quo* politics and economic control, resulting from the recent restocking of the Central Committee, Politburo and powerful standing committee.

What makes this significant is the sixth trumpet plague of Revelation 9:13-19 and Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38 and 39. The militarizing of the region increases their stockpiles of weaponry and focuses their attention on their near neighbors rather than on the world scene, especially Europe. As they maneuver for dominance in the East, the Asian nations will suddenly realize that the Beast has risen at their backs, encroaching on their self-interests. Prophecy indicates that, banding together, they will wheel to confront Europe militarily, meeting at Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16). But because of

their hatred for the returning Jesus Christ, they will unite to fight Him and perish at Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-4; Revelation 19:17-21).

Bit by bit all over the world, the factors that produce the terrifying times just ahead are aligning themselves in the puzzle called the "last days."