**China Food Prices Skyrocketing**

China's battle with increasing coronavirus caseloads hitting ten-month highs has undoubtedly clouded the economic recovery while officials have lockdown more than 28 million people across multiple municipalities, reported [Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china/china-says-latest-covid-19-outbreak-caused-by-imported-cases-idUSKBN29L00F).

Hebei officials have put three cities - Shijiazhuang, Xingtai, and Langfang - into lockdowns last week to mitigate the virus from spreading further. Beijing authorities expanded screening and prevention measures as cases continue to rise.

Last Wednesday, Heilongjiang province declared a virus pandemic emergency. Also, the city of Suihua, in west-central Heilongjiang province, has put 5.2 million people under lockdown.

"The worsening coronavirus situation will impact economic activity, and markets may need to temper their expectations for strong pent-up consumption demand in the coming LNY holidays," Nomura wrote last week.

One possible reason behind increasing caseloads in [China could be due to frigid temperatures](https://www.zerohedge.com/commodities/china-power-demand-hits-record-polar-vortex-split-pours-arctic-air-region)as the polar vortex splits into two and dumps Arctic air into certain parts of the country. Goldman Sachs recently told clients that when temperatures dip, expect virus outbreaks to [accelerate](https://www.zerohedge.com/geopolitical/goldman-pinpoints-temperature-below-which-covid-19-outbreaks-start-accelerate?p=374&page=50&ref=hexometer&utm_campaign=targetingUSA&utm_medium=display&utm_source=facebook) - and that is exactly what is happening in China.

Last week, an alleged video published on Twitter handle [@TruthAbtChina](https://twitter.com/TruthAbtChina/status/1348066821358940161) shows the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) law enforcement or health officials or some governmental agency placing "[seals](https://www.zerohedge.com/covid-19/alleged-video-shows-ccp-sealing-people-homes-amid-virus-outbreak)" on apartment doors to make sure people abide by new lockdown orders.

As one would think, locking down tens of millions of people would generate panic among the working-class population. [@TruthAbtChina](https://twitter.com/TruthAbtChina/status/1348066821358940161) unveiled Saturday that "People are hoarding food in the wake of the forced lockdowns all over China."

The Twitter account added, "In an attempt to keep food on the shelves, grocery stores have more than tripled the price of many food items. This has only amplified the chaos and panic in grocery stores."

The video allegedly shows from multiple Chinese cities of people panic hoarding food between Jan. 7-14.

If Twitter police delete the video - we saved a segment of it in GIF format.

Hong Kong tabloid-style newspaper [Apple Daily](https://hk.appledaily.com/news/20210116/FJU7YUKP55C45C4Q3HITWFUQLU/?utm_campaign=hkad_social_AppleDailyENG&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter) reported Saturday morning that "grocery prices Shijiazhuang in northern China have soared by 50% as authorities started a citywide lockdown on Jan. 6 to stem the coronavirus outbreak."

So maybe there's some truth to [@TruthAbtChina](https://twitter.com/TruthAbtChina/status/1348066821358940161) video of Chinese panic hoarding food.

New data from the Food and Agriculture Organization's [Food Price Index](https://www.zerohedge.com/commodities/global-food-prices-rise-seventh-consecutive-month) showed world food prices rose for a seventh consecutive month in December.

Everyone's favorite permabear, [SocGen's Albert Edwards](https://www.zerohedge.com/commodities/why-albert-edwards-starting-panic-about-soaring-food-prices), who, unlike Goldman Sachs, is starting to worry about soaring food inflation.

Could soaring food inflation in China result in social destabilization?

**The CCP Plan to Attack America**

I told you something over a year ago, when the Trump economy was bringing the world to its feet for the first time in nearly 100 years, just as Trump had finally brought China to the negotiating table to sign the world’s first fair trade agreement with the Communist super-power. I told you that we had just entered the most dangerous period since the founding of this country.

In my book, *Charm of Favor,* I described a plot to use a nuclear EMP weapon designed by China and North Korea by a Pakistani engineer here in this country. This plot was real. The force and evil behind it was real. What I am about to share with you may wake you up. It may put you into an emotional coma. It will most certainly humble you, because I know none of you have considered anything like this, except in movies like Red Dawn or any of the White House attack movies.

It has become accepted knowledge that America's intelligence agencies missed 9/11 warning signs — but that's not entirely true.  Signs were seen by our intelligence agencies, but for some reason they chose not to take any precautions.  We were so convinced that the fall of the Soviet Union has rendered the world safe again for a millennium.

I don't think I need to remind everyone of what happened on 09/11/2001. But then again we know what we were told happened, what we saw with our own eyes on the Fake Stream News, was not what happened at all. The point is that parties inside our own country participated in that terrible event. They killed innocent people for money and for power and for politics. The NDAA, which Trump vetoed and the Establishment Party over-rode, was written decades before that event and only needed the blood of Americans to convince us to willingly relinquish our freedom and privacy forever.

I share this vignette as a means of showing that there are always signs.  I tried to tell the world about them this time, but being a #1 best-seller on Amazon is not enough to get people to pay attention. We, for whatever reason, ignored them for political purposes, or we refuse to believe them because they contradict the core tenets of our belief system.

China's actions over the past 58 days may be telegraphing an intent we are choosing to ignore, again.  They show all the signs of a nation preparing to attack America.  You don’t believe me. That’s not okay. China seeks a bespoke world run by China with "Chinese characteristics" — a dream that under Trump was drifting away. I read General Chi’s speech to you several times. It’s real. It is right now.

China appears to be laying the groundwork for a "justified" attack on the United States, perhaps in the South China Sea or perhaps elsewhere.  It will be a military attack, not an act of cyberwarfare like we witnessed on November 3rd. That was all too easy for them, because they had already bought the governors, the Secretaries of State, the entire Democrat party, some Republicans and thousands of bureaucrats inside our own government. They sent their made-4-TV virus and then used their ownership of the Global Media empire to sell us the fear.

When the Chinese became accusatory, it's telling that they didn't blame the CIA, always the usual suspect.  No, they blamed it directly on American soldiers.  That gives them the right to counterattack. Let that sink in. We haven’t even hit back yet, and they are accusing us of causing the virus. American *military* deliberately infecting China is an act of war worthy of a *military* response.

In October, the 2019 World Military Games were held in Wuhan.  Chinese media triumphantly trumpeted the Americans winning just eight medals, while China won 239.  It was then that we supposedly infected Wuhan citizens with the "American virus."

China is now defenestrating foreign media, sending home reporters from the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, and Washington Post at just the opportune moment.  No nation wants journalists around when it is planning a sneak attack.

And with its economy ravaged by Trump's trade war and the virus shutdown, and now back at full production, while America's economy is in total shutdown and in the grip of an active pandemic, there will never be a better time for them to attack.

Here in America, the Democrats along with corporate media eagerly buy China's lies surrounding the nascence of the worldwide pandemic, the propaganda blaming America, the stories of Chinese benevolence, and the efficiency of Chinese methods in getting control of the virus at home.  They are actively supporting China's version of the truth.  China has every reason to believe they will continue to do so.

When or if China attacks, the left (the Dems, Antifa, and BLM) will flood the streets with anti-war protesters designed to stop America from responding to China's attacks.  After all, don't we deserve it?  We elected Trump, didn't we?

China claims there are no new infections when there is ample evidence that that claim is a lie.  But the Chinese know that by the time people understand, it will be too late.  They will have struck, and any new cases will be used to bolster their casus belli.  Those Chinese who perish in the interim of silence will have died for the fatherland.

Conservative media have been neither as naïve nor as malicious as their mainstream brethren, often writing that China's behavior, with the denials and accusations, is merely a clumsy and foolish attempt to convince the world.

I don't see it this way.  I think China is doing this to convince its own citizens more than anyone else.  The Chinese communists can survive the world's condemnations, especially if they defeat America, but they live and die by controlling their own population.  When they attack an American naval ship in the South China Sea, they won't need to worry about the support of their own nation because they will have convinced the people that America started the war and a peaceful and beneficent China was reluctantly, and only as a last resort, defending itself.

China is facing a demographic time bomb and has ten years to rewrite the facts on the ground.  It is facing a quandary of epic proportions.  It already has the oldest population on the planet, thanks to the "one child" initiative, that has hundreds of millions of young men with no prospect of marriage.  Those people will be old before they ever have a chance to be rich. They have been building the largest standing army in history of hundreds of millions of "incel" Chinese men make for either an angry and expendable fighting force. The clock is ticking, because the vast majority of these men will never father a child.

China's business model is also fatally flawed.  It has impossible debt that is multiples of its GDP, having grown exponentially through government funding of ghost cities, military buildup, high-speed rail to nowhere, a Belt and Road initiative that's becoming obvious to partner countries as a means of colonialist extortion, and various other nonproductive government lending to CCP members.  Its vaunted reserves are disappearing faster that Twitter accounts.

China is on the clock to extinction, unless it greatly expands its holdings in land.  They have never, ever won a war outside their own country, and yet, today, it is formidable, with a sophisticated and capable military and advanced space program.  The Chinese may be able to win a confrontation, even a war, with the United States.

Under Obama's policy of surrender, China overtook us economically while growing its military, while at the same time he choked America’s military into cannibalism through a practice called Sequester.

President Trump Obama’s plan to destroy America with his trade war, exposing the inherent weaknesses of the Chinese economy.  And should the aftermath of the pandemic play out without interference, China's position in the world will be irreparably damaged.

What does China have to lose?

Time is not on China's side.  Unless the Chinese destroy us on the field of battle soon, the clock will run out, and the dream of the coming "Chinese century" will be just that: a dream.

Everything they are doing points to them preparing to do so.

For China, there will never be a better time to start a war with America. And so it comes. They conducted a flawless act of war against our election infrastructure, and now they own the White House, Congress, and the Senate. They also own 30 US States. All that is left is the actual invasion. Our virtual president will tear down the walls, and let them in like dinner guests. Anyone who tries to stop him will be labelled an insurrectionist or a traitor. Now, what can we do?

**Five Ways to Defeat the Marxist Purge**

The movie "The Matrix" has spawned many a political meme on the choice of staying comfortably asleep in a fantasy world where one enjoys free agency and a meaningful role in shaping the future, or awakening to the cruel reality of being an expendable slave to the agenda of a machine designed to control one's every thought and action. In the film, the protagonist, Neo, is rudely awakened to reality by members of a resistance movement who have broken free from the machine, and, in a meeting with their leader Morpheus, is given the choice to remain free by taking a red pill, or to return to the fantasy dream state by taking a blue pill. He takes the red pill, and the fight for good (liberty) vs. evil (slavery) begins.

Over the past four years, We the People have been Neo, and Donald Trump has been our Morpheus. The MAGA movement chose the red pill. The Dems, Never Trumpers and RINOs chose the blue pill. Today the battle rages on between the MAGA Deplorables and the Machine, but with Morpheus seemingly defeated, and only vaporous QAnon rumors or the miraculous intervention of God left to base our hopes for a restored America upon, our collective grasp of reality is being shaken by the Machine's power to conform human perception to its narratives. Besides being strapped into solitary confinement behind a mask, who can we trust, and how can we know what is real?

This election was, as we continuously reminded each other, a winner-take-all battle for control of the nation between hyper-polarized partisans. The key was to win. Cheating, killing, suing, lying, and every form of propaganda is allowed, as long as victory is achieved.

A post-election purge of the losers is inevitable. I suppose we would be happy about it if the purge was removing Marxists from power. If we were doing the purging, our standards would be truth-based and our tactics honorable and proportionate. Not so with the Syndicate. Truth does not matter to the left, only the narratives. And their leaders are by nature malicious, often sadistic people who excel at what Hillary (cynically posing as a victim) called "the politics of personal destruction." Trust me, I've been through their meat grinder. This is going to get really ugly, really fast and last for a long time.

From here on, under their new relentlessly repeated revisionist narrative, Trump will be the American Hitler and every Deplorable a white supremacist. In their minds, and to the Blue Pill Public, this will justify their every action against conservative speech, thought, symbol, organization and person. Everyone wearing a mask is being told that everyone not wearing one is trying to kill them.

The reprehensible rhetoric and tactics of the far-left Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) hate group will become public policy. They are not alone. There are too many non-profits to list, but they are all demon spawn. They all are designed to destroy your rights and steal your country. BE WARNED: Especially in the early stage, any bravado from Trump supporters will be characterized as hate speech and/or sedition. ANTIFA blackshirts will look eagerly for people to make examples of. If you doubt me, just ask Adolfo Martinez who is serving 16 years in prison for the unforgivable crime of burning a "gay pride" flag.

How can the MAGA movement not just survive the purge but emerge from it stronger when it finally wanes? Use your 20/20 hindsight and consider what you would do if you were a Russian Christian during the Bolshevik takeover of 1917. In the next 72 hours, you will get a clear picture of just how decisive their victory over America has become. We are now weaker than we have ever been, and they are stronger than they have ever been. But that is not enough.

1. The most important action constitutionalists can take right now is to fully document what really happened over the past four years. The fatal flaws in the Marxist plans are their lies about the election fraud and all of the other dirty tricks and tactics they orchestrated to take down America. The left is already purging the evidence from the public record, so TODAY start getting downloads and screenshots of everything! They are already forming their own titles for what has transpired. You think we had a wonderful and peaceful rally on January 6th, but the Global Media Empire is calling it the deadly Trump riots. We must load all digital documentation on off-the-grid external hard drives and store them in EMP-proof containers. Make paper copies of the most important items and store them in ziplock bags so one day we can restore the truth of what happened. If you have skills, create media to disseminate the truth, from one-page bullet-point flyers to feature-length documentary films. If you lack those skills, volunteer in the projects of others.

2. Go low-tech at least part-time from now on. Write and mail letters to one another. Get a land-line telephone, a CB radio, or a Ham radio as a back-up communications method. Start using paper currency, silver or gold more often to counteract the push toward a cashless society. Start thinking about bartering among your friends and family.

3. Store food. Go Natural. Start categorizing the things in your life as either natural or artificial, and adopt the general rule of preferring the natural. The most artificial thing in our lives is the virtual world, which the elites want to replace the natural in all things because, as we're beginning to experience, they can exercise total control over everything in it. It IS the Matrix! As a starting point for breaking free, I offer you my [Declaration of the Natural Life Movement (a red pill).](https://www.scottlively.net/the-natural-life-movement/)

4. Go underground. In 2019 the Holy Spirit began prompting me to begin preparing to establish a network of "underground" Christian believers and congregations, in the expectation that this final generation leading to the return of Christ would face circumstances similar to what the Christians of the first century endured. I formally launched First Century Bible Church in March of 2020. I believe the current Marxist purge of MAGA members will include the persecution of Christians, and I urge Remnant believers to act accordingly. If you agree, and can accept our model of unity in the essentials, tolerance in all else, you are invited to join or affiliate with [FCBC.](https://www.scottlively.net/first-century-ministries-first-century-bible-church-2/first-century-bible-church-2/)

5. Don’t join any groups or become any part of any database that can be searched, sold, or hacked. If there remains any chance of saving America (in whole or in part) from Marxist hell, that can only happen from the bottom up through the actions of grass-roots constitutionalists.

Come what may, never give up the fight for truth and liberty! But choose your battles, and your allies, very carefully

One thing you need to accept tonight is that we patriots are about to transition to the new reality of being an American version of the French Resistance under the Nazi. We are going to embrace the greater individual and tribal autonomy, and the greater moral authority and exigency that history offers us. It won’t be easy. Your life, as you knew it before Obama, is over for at least a generation. There is no path to success anymore. There is only a path to survival and preparation of the coming generations to fight for freedom, where we were too timid to do so. Don’t feel badly. The French surrendered almost as quickly and easily as we just did.

The triumphant Marxist usurpers who have captured the White House and Congress by fraud and violence are going to use every term of good and turn it into something hateful and oppressive. When the temporary Marxist mouthpiece, China-Joe, says the word ‘unity’, he means total submission to his empire. Think of Emperor Palpatine calling for unity in the Senate. His words are an insult to intelligence and vile mockery of every American who has ever shed blood in the cause of liberty.

I have said for two years now that America Free Radio is the voice of the revolution. You see, the second American Revolution has begun, just as the first one began two and half centuries ago, and just as the Christian church began two millennia ago: under aggressive occupation by an evil regime determined to crush us. And even as we must undermine, sabotage and otherwise resist its inhuman agenda, we must organize and implement a plan to overthrow and replace it. And one thing you need to realize is this. They are never weaker that they are right now, because we know what they did. And we will never be stronger than right now, because our leader is just over there, licking his wounds. All we need to do is assure him we are with him, and will he please get back on his feet? If not him, then, who?

The Biden/Pelosi/Schumer Nazis and their Vichy boot-lickers in the GOP, which we will just call all of them the Syndicate Party, will call this "sedition," but a government must first be legitimate before it can claim a right to defend its existence. When the Global Syndicate stole our government through cyberwarfare, bribery, compromise, subterfuge, and assassination, they may feel victorious, but they will be driven insane by their own fear that a billion people saw what they did.

Politically, we have a plan. It goes by the achronym, RESET – Run Every Seat, Every Time. It is perfect for the MAGA Movement. We throw out the professional "campaign consultant" playbook, which focuses on raising money and buying TV ads and bribing election officials. The old paradigm requires public relations and forcing candidates to compromise on their principles to minimize media criticism. The old adage that you can’t beat somebody with a nobody does not exist anymore. We will create our own candidates precinct by precinct. We begin with the weak districts with lousy officials like Sheila Jackson Lee, who is functionally illiterate. Party does not matter anymore. Run as a Democrat to beat a Democrat. Run as a patriot where possible.

We reject turf-protecting efforts by the GOP establishment to push MAGA candidates out of the process on the grounds that "they can't win" and instead make it our goal to "move the ball down the field as far as possible in every game on every play," build an army of brave patriots with hands-on experience in campaigning and educate the electorate on the reasons true constitutionalism is better than Marxism. That is until they excise and burn the Constitution and replace it with their own version, expunging the existence of States and governors and sovereignty.

The plan is this:

1. This is a true revolution. Everything we do will be illegal soon. Our speech, our posts, our phone conversations, and even our rallies will be outlawed in nearly every State. We cannot do what Venezuela did. We cannot disengage and hunker down. We cannot hide behind our black curtains at night when the ANTIFA thugs patrol our street. We must take our streets by the millions every day. That means we must open every single restaurant, every small business, every store, every beer garden, and every single church and school as soon as possible. We must overwhelm the Marxists with our love for community and faith.

2. We set our sights on MAGA control of three-quarters of the states, emphasizing the issue of election integrity in every state, and also taking control of the House of Representatives in 2022, making every race a referendum on election integrity. We can do this through elections, aggressive and widespread recalls, and criminal investigations of sitting Establishment lawmakers and officials. Most of them are pedophiles. Most of them are drug users. Most of them launder money illegally and convert taxpayer funds to make themselves rich. This needs to be exposed in City Council meetings, published in papers, and through indictments. We can eliminate thousands of their soldiers this way, if we assign a hundred people to following one lawmaker and collection the information and publicizing it every way we can. Remember, you cannot be sued for the truth.

3. In 2023 we use our control of the state legislatures to convene a Constitutional Convention of the States per Article V, Option 2, to strip the federal government of powers we did not delegate to it, restore the parts of the Constitution the left has neutralized over the past century, add new amendments for a balanced budget, term limits and election integrity, and strip the Supreme Court of power to thwart the will of We the People as established by this convention. This option must be started tomorrow, as the Constitution as we know it will be expunged and amended out of existence by the Marxists within 2 years. No more procrastination. We must call our State representatives and Senators and tell them if they do not pass the resolutions they will be recalled and removed from office.

4. With constitutional originalism and limitations on federal power restored, we take back the Congress and the presidency in 2024.

The thing to pay attention to is the troop levels in Washington this week. They will swell to nearly 40 thousand by tomorrow morning. More and more troops and hardware are being moved into position as we speak. Aircraft, spacecraft, carrier groups, and cybersoldiers have completely occupied Washington DC. It is either lost to the Marxists who are about to place their hands on bibles to steal our government, or by patriots who seek to capture them all when they all gather in one place. One thing we can see. They are all scared. We have not been here since 1864 when a million Americans lost their lives. There are 10 thousand times more armed Americans now than then. But we have no generals. We have no commander. We have no plan. Until now.

The centerpiece of this plan is the Article V Convention I wrote about in my 2012 book *Alienated Nation.*  I know you have been conditioned to oppose this plan over the past couple of decades out of fear that it could be hijacked by the left. It cannot happen with the current structure. It requires 34 States to agree to have the Convention, and 38 States to ratify any amendment it writes.

Now that the entire federal government *has been hijacked* by the Marxists through other means, the genius of the founders in adding a Constitutional Convention to Article V is now made clear. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in Federalist 85, its purpose was to provide a mechanism to "erect barriers against the encroachments of the national authority."

The Marxists now have absolute top-down authority that will be impossible to break by traditional means. But the founders gave us a back-door to solve this very problem. My plan is to use it to the fullest to restore citizen controls from the bottom up.

Remember, the Marxists are already introducing legislation to allow 5 cities to control the entire nation. That’s it. 5 megacities will vote, and the rest of the world does not matter. Anyone living in Georgia, Ohio, Nebraska, South Dakota has no need to vote. It will matter just as much as their vote did in 2020; nothing.

*Whereas the Founders of the Nation established the electoral college in an era of limited nationwide communication and information sharing; Whereas the electoral college is premised on an antiquated theory that citizens will have a better chance of knowing about electors from their home States than about Presidential candidates from out of State; Whereas the development of mass media and the internet has made information about Presidential candidates easily accessible to United States citizens across the country and around the world; Whereas citizens now have a far better chance of knowing about out-of-State Presidential candidates than about Presidential electors from their home State.*

TheTheThe Electoral College provides a voice to the smaller states. It allows the voters in New Mexico or Iowa actually hear a candidate speak. If it abolished, there will never be another campaign in those States. All campaign will be held in 5 cities only. Winners will need only 50-80 counties to win national elections.

Democrats also have been promoting an agreement, called the National Popular Vote, in which states would give all of their Electoral College votes to the winner of the national popular vote. We saw this with the 6 States that stopped their counts in the middle of the night, expelled all the Republican poll watchers, and then stuffed their ballot boxes until dawn with counterfeit ballots. Then, they either shredded the ballots, burned their voting machines, or had Marxist judges prevent access to the voting records while they certified their fraud. They did in in November of 2020, and then—even knowing everyone was watching—did it again on January 5th to steal control of the Senate.

"Americans expect and deserve the winner of the popular vote to win office," Cohen said.

"The president should always be elected by the people, not the politicians, and the Electoral College allows politicians to make the ultimate decision."

The resolution has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee, which is chaired by Marxists as we speak.

Sydney Powell said this week:

“All indications are that despite the overwhelming evidence of massive fraud, and more evidence available inside the government, and other legal options available, the President is taking no action to protect the Republic. People around him are limiting his information and lying to him about his legal options. The Biden administration will be consolidating power day one and the fascist corporations are already limiting speech and firing freedom lovers. Just look at the military in DC now. Trump did not call them in. And all that for a virtual inauguration that no one will attend?! It's all about power and global/communist money. You can see and smell the corruption in DC. It's gone from a swamp to a pure cesspool. There were and have been a lot more people illegally elected than just Biden and Harris.”

To know how this Coup was accomplished, and why your vote did not matter whatsoever, we need only listen in to a Zoom call of federal workers planning the overthrow of the American government. ZOOM CALL HERE

What do we do with a virtual president?

The Pretend President may ask for unity, but it's not at all different from a thief asking his victims to agree to let him keep what he's already taken.  He can't have the Oval Office *and*unity; they don't go together without the legitimacy of rightfully sitting in the president's chair.  When the criminal calls the victim a liar, and the victim's allegations of what the criminal knows he did as baseless — and the criminal plays himself as the victim of baseless allegations from a "sore loser" — he has quadrupled down on dishonesty, corruption, hypocrisy, and illegitimacy.  The chair is vacant to me; there is no voice coming from that office.  There is no longer a possible remedy; we are past making it right.  There could be forgiveness and acceptance for acknowledgment and repentance, but neither of those has occurred.  That leaves only condemnation and boycott.

As for unity...we 80 million Trump supporters have plenty of that.

**Artemis Booster Tested**

When I was stationed down in Hattiesburg, Mississippi for the year of 2011, I had a chance to visit the Stennis Space Center a few times and watched a few rocket tests. I also filmed a National Geographic special on the hollow Earth expedition there. Well, last week, the massive 212 foot booster for the Artemis program was tested. Wow.

Smoke and flames billowed from the four RS-25 engines that power the behemoth rocket's core booster, a centerpiece of NASA's Artemis moon program, as it roared to life atop a test stand at NASA's [Stennis Space Center](https://www.space.com/39498-stennis-space-center.html) near Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Ignition occurred at 5:27 EST (2227 GMT), with 700,000 gallons (2.6 million liters) of cryogenic fuel flowing through the engines as they roared for just over 1 minute, much shorter than planned.

The test was supposed to run for 485 seconds (or just over 8 minutes), which is the amount of time the engines will burn during flight. Following engine ignition, the four RS-25 engines fired for just over 60 seconds, NASA said.

"Not everything went according to script today," NASA chief Jim Bridenstine said late Saturday after the test. "But we got a lot of great data, a lot of great information."

NASA's first Space Launch System core booster ignites its four main engines at the Stennis Space Center near Bay St. Louis, Mississippi on Jan. 16, 2020. Expected to last 8 minutes, the test lasted just over 1 minute. (Image credit: NASA/Robert Markowitz)

A close up view of the four RS-25 engines of NASA's first Space Launch System core booster firing during a hot-fire test on Jan. 16, 2020. (Image credit: NASA TV)

**An early engine shutdown**

It's still too early to know exactly what caused the early shutdown in Saturday's engine test.

Flight controllers could be heard during the test referring to an "MCF" (a major component failure) apparently related to engine No. 4 on the SLS booster. John Honeycutt, NASA's SLS program manager, added that at about the 60-second mark, cameras caught a flash in a protective thermal blanket on the engine, though its cause and significance remain to be determined.

Honeycutt said it's too early to know if a second hot-fire test will be required at Stennis, or if it can be done later at NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida, where the SLS is scheduled to launch the uncrewed Artemis 1 mission around the moon by the end of this year. Similarly, it's too early to know if Artemis 1 will still be able to launch this year.

"I think it's still too early to tell," Bridenstine said of whether a 2021 launch for Artemis 1 is still in the cards. "As we figure out what went wrong, we're going to know kind of what the future holds."

A close up view of the four RS-25 engines of NASA's first Space Launch System core booster firing during a hot-fire test on Jan. 16, 2020. (Image credit: NASA TV)

During a press conference on Tuesday (Jan. 12), John Shannon vice president and program manager for SLS at Boeing, said that the engines needed to run for a certain amount of time to get the data they needed. "If we had an early shutdown, for whatever reason, we get all of the engineering data we need to have high confidence in the vehicle at about 250 seconds," Shannon said.

Since the test was stopped short of 250 seconds, and before the teams were able to gimble (or move) the engines, exactly how much data and how confident the teams are in the vehicle is yet to be determined.

Saturday's test was initially moved up an hour to 4 p.m. EST (1900 GMT) as test preparations were ahead of schedule. However, during the countdown, engineers put the count on hold to work through water deflection system checks and other tests on the engine test stand. The teams were able to work through the issues and resume the count in time to complete the test Saturday, despite the short run time.

The exercise, [known as a hot-fire test](https://www.space.com/nasa-sls-megarocket-artemis-1-engine-test-webcast), put the core Space Launch System booster components — the four RS-25 main engines, fuel tanks and the rockets computers and avionics — through their paces. The test simulated a launch while holding the rocket firmly in place, affixed to a test stand. (The same test stand was used to test out the engines on both NASA's [Saturn V rocket](https://www.space.com/16698-apollo-spacecraft.html) and space shuttle orbiters.)

"The SLS rocket is the most powerful rocket ever built in the history of humanity," Bridenstine said on NASA TV shortly before the test. "This is the same rocket that, by the end of this year, will be launching an Orion crew capsule around the moon."

**Anatomy of the Space Launch System**

NASA's Space Launch System was first conceived in 2011 and is finally coming together for an uncrewed trip around the moon sometime later this year.

Each SLS rocket will use four RS-25 rocket engines to launch its 212-foot (65-meter) core stage. The rocket will also rely on two solid rocket boosters and an upper stage to launch NASA's Orion crew capsule beyond low-Earth orbit.

Together, SLS and Orion are the two major components of NASA's [Artemis moon program](https://www.space.com/artemis-program.html) which seeks to [return astronauts to the moon as soon as 2024](https://www.space.com/biden-nasa-artemis-moon-2024-landing-deadline-timeline).

The agency currently has 16 RS-25 engines on hand, which were salvaged from the agency's now-retired [space shuttle program](https://www.space.com/16726-space-shuttle.html). Those engines will be used on the first four SLS rocket launches for Artemis missions 1 through 4. (Those flights include the program's first crewed moon landing, Artemis 3, and a follow-up flight.)

**Space Launch System:**[**NASA's giant rocket for Artemis moon missions explained**](https://www.space.com/12957-nasa-giant-rocket-space-launch-system-infographic.html)

Since the engines on those first missions are shuttle leftovers, they've been overhauled with new computer controllers as well as upgrades that ensure they can handle the higher performance demands of an SLS launch, NASA officials have said.

That's not the only part recycled from programs past. Like the engines, the solid rocket boosters were also used to propel NASA's fleet of space shuttles to orbit. They too, have been modified to work with SLS. But they won't be used forever. As technology evolves, the side boosters will be swapped out for advanced boosters.

The SLS will contain a pair of these boosters strapped onto the side of the core stage. It consists of four RS-25 engines at the base of the vehicle, and stacked on top will be the rocket’s components with an Orion capsule and service module perched atop.

The whole vehicle will be capped off with a launch orbit system that is designed to pull the capsule away from the rocket if something goes wrong during a launch.

NASA has been systematically testing the various components of the SLS rocket over the past few years.

The agency tested each of the main engines separately to ensure they fired up as expected. And to ensure the flight hardware meets design expectations, NASA began what it calls a ["Green Run" test](https://www.space.com/nasa-sls-megarocket-engine-hot-fire-test-january-2021)which included testing the craft's avionics, countdown and launch timeline, fueling procedures and more.

The testing went smoothly but not without issues. A global pandemic coupled with an unprecedented number of tropical storms and hurricane impacting the test sites added to delays caused by hardware issues.

NASA conducted two separate "wet dress rehearsals," in which fuel was loaded into the engines and then subsequently drained. During one such exercise, which took place on Dec. 20, [the test ended early unexpectedly](https://www.space.com/nasa-sls-rocket-hot-fire-engine-test-delayed), causing today's hot-fire test to be delayed from December, according to a NASA statement. Another fueling attempt earlier in December was stalled due to temperature issues.

The runup to Saturday's engine tests also saw a series of [delays due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic](https://www.space.com/sls-megarocket-launch-preparations-amid-coronavirus-pandemic.html), NASA officials said. Social distancing restrictions meant that many of the NASA officials, engineers and other SLS team members (as well as the media) could not be on hand in person to witness the pivotal rocket test. Many team members sent in videos to participate virtually.

**Testing is key**

The 212-foot (65 meters) core stage of NASA's new megarocket, the Space Launch System, rolls out of the Michoud Assembly Building in New Orleans, Louisiana on Jan. 1, 2020 for transport to the Stennis Space Center in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi for a critical "Green Run" tests. (Image credit: NASA/Jude Guidry)

The purpose of the test is to ensure that the rocket will be able to carry an uncrewed Orion spacecraft on a journey around the moon later this year.

With the ignition of the four RS-25 engines, it closed out a critical period of preflight testing for the rocket that NASA referred to as its "Green Run." That series of tests began with stress tests on the physical structure of the rocket and ended with today’s hot fire test.

The goal of the test was to run through launch day procedures, and ignite the four engines, allowing them to burn for just over 8 minutes — just shy of the duration they will burn during an actual flight. That full-duration test fire clearly did not happen.

It will take the teams at least several days to review the SLS test data before deciding on next steps, such as the requirement for more tests or clearing the core stage for its next step: refurbishment and eventual transportation to the launch site at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Once it does arrive in Florida, it will be integrated with the rest of the vehicle that is already onsite. This includes[its two solid rocket boosters](https://www.space.com/artemis-sls-solid-rocket-boosters.html), which are currently being stacked in the Vehicle Assembly Building at Kennedy Space Center.

The boosters were previously tested before being shipped in segments to Florida. Each booster consists of five segments that are stacked on top of one another.

The Orion spacecraft is complete and nearly ready to be affixed to the top of the SLS once the rocket is fully assembled.

Bridenstine stressed late Saturday that despite the early engine shutdown, the SLS hot fire shouldn't be regarded as a failure, but as a test the agency will surely learn from.

"I have absolutely total confidence in the team to figure out what the anomaly was, figure out how to fix it and then get after it again," he said. "Because we don't fail. We might have a setback, and then we come back and we do it again."

**SpaceX SN9 High Altitude Test Tomorrow**

A few delays for various reasons have pushed the SpaceX SN9 starship launch to tomorrow. SpaceX is preparing to rocket the latest prototype of its Starship spaceship thousands of feet into the air, then land it gently back on the ground.

If the company can pull off this tricky maneuver – cutting the rocket's engines back on as it plummets toward Earth, just in time to turn it upright, slow its fall, and steadily set down on a landing pad – it will be the first time a Starship vehicle has ventured so high and returned in one piece.

[Elon Musk](https://www.sciencealert.com/elon-musk), who founded SpaceX in 2002, wants the final Starship-Super Heavy launch system to be fully and rapidly reusable. If Musk's plan succeeds, Starship may slash the cost of reaching space 1,000-fold, power [round-the-world hypersonic travel](https://www.businessinsider.com/spacex-one-million-starship-rocket-launches-commercial-international-launches-2020-1) on Earth, and [fly astronauts to the moon](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/nasa-spacex-blue-origin-design-lunar-landers-2020-5). Musk has [said](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1344350420735410177) that his ultimate plan is to build 1,000 Starships that will carry enough people and cargo to [Mars](https://www.sciencealert.com/mars) to build an [independent](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/spacex-elon-musk-free-mars-colony-constitution-space-law-legality-2020-10), self-sustaining city there.

SpaceX first [launched a Starship prototype](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/spacex-starship-sn8-rocket-41000-foot-launch-boca-chica-texas-2020-12) of this kind on December 8. Called Starship serial No. 8, or SN8, it roared tens of thousands of feet above the company's [expanding facilities at Boca Chica, Texas](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/spacex-starship-mars-rocket-spaceport-flyover-pictures-boca-chica-texas-2020-7). SN8 then tipped its nosecone forward, cut off its engines, and began to plummet. As the vehicle neared the ground in a belly-flop-like freefall, it re-fired its engines to flip upright and slow its descent.

However, low pressure in a propellant tank caused the spaceship to fall too fast, slam into its landing pad, and [catastrophically explode](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/spacex-starship-sn8-rocket-belly-flop-flip-explosion-twitter-video-2020-12). SpaceX still considered the seven-minute test flight a success, though, because it was inherently an experiment – and one that flew higher than ever before and performed unprecedented maneuvers.

For example, SN8's flight achieved sequential rocket-engine shutdowns, aerial flips, and a belly flop made stable via wing flaps. (Previous test flights had been "hops," with prototypes [launching a few hundred feet into the air](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/elon-musk-spacex-starship-rocket-prototype-launch-texas-2020-8), then landing downrange.)

Now SpaceX is set for another major test flight, and this time it could stick the landing.

Like its predecessor, the new prototype, called SN9, is 16 stories tall and powered by three Raptor engines. SN9 [tipped over](https://www.businessinsider.com.au/satellite-photos-spacex-rocket-site-after-explosive-starship-test-2020-12) inside a vertical assembly building on [December 11](https://twitter.com/SpacePadreIsle/status/1337433419802947584), but SpaceX appeared to make quick repairs and roll it out to a beachside launch pad.

In preparation for launch, SpaceX clamped down the SN9 and test-fired its engines three times on Wednesday – a record static-fire rate for the Starship program.

The company seemed prepared to launch this week, but two of the engines needed repairs, Musk [tweeted](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1349954804999725056) on Thursday. Musk [added](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1349956371127672834) that he's hoping SpaceX can speed up the engine-swapping process so that it takes "a few hours at most."

SpaceX appears to be targeting a Monday launch. The Federal Aviation Administration issued an [airspace closure notice](https://tfr.faa.gov/save_pages/detail_1_4402.html) for a rocket launch from Boca Chica for that day from 8 am to 6 pm CST. The FAA issued similar notices for Tuesday and Wednesday – back-up dates in case weather or glitches cause SpaceX to delay the test flight.

Both airspace closure and local road closures are required for launch. The Cameron County judge has issued Boca Chica [road-closure notices](https://www.cameroncounty.us/spacex/) for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 8 am to 5 pm CST.

**How to watch SN9's launch attempt live**

SpaceX may broadcast the launch attempt live on YouTube. Several online broadcasters, such as [NASASpaceFlight.com](https://youtu.be/OLpN8Cco3mU) and [LabPadre](https://youtu.be/STGWOEKhrtI), also plan to stream live video footage of the flight. We will embed these live feeds below once they're available.

A series of events typically precedes a Starship prototype launch.

A couple of hours beforehand, SpaceX will clear the launch site of personnel. Roughly an hour ahead of flight, storage tanks at the launch site will begin venting gases as SpaceX prepares to fuel Starship with cryogenic fuels. Fuelling later causes Starship to vent gases out of its top, signalling that launch could occur within minutes.

Poor weather, a technical glitch, or a boat entering the launch's danger zone – a new challenge for Starship – could lead to delays.

**Space Force Relocates Headquarters to Huntsville, Alabama**

The permanent headquarters of U.S. Space Command will be located at Huntsville’s Redstone Arsenal.

According to a statement from the Secretary of the Air Force, Huntsville was confirmed as the preferred location for the U.S. Space Command Headquarters.

The Department of the Air Force conducted both virtual and on-site visits to assess which of six candidate locations would be best suited to host the U.S. Space Command Headquarters. The decision was based on factors related to mission, infrastructure capacity, community support and costs to the Department of Defense.

Huntsville compared favorably across more of these factors than any other community, providing a large, qualified workforce, quality schools, superior infrastructure capacity, and low initial and recurring costs.

Additionally, Redstone Arsenal offered a facility to support the headquarters, at no cost, while the permanent facility is being constructed.

The following cities will remain reasonable alternative locations for the U.S. Space Command Headquarters:

* Albuquerque, New Mexico
* Bellevue, Nebraska
* Cape Canaveral, Florida
* Colorado Springs, Colorado
* San Antonio, Texas

**Alabama’s Governor Kay Ivey** released a statement on Wednesday following the news.

“I couldn’t be more pleased to learn that Alabama will be the new home to the United States Space Command!’ said Governor Ivey.

“Our state has long provided exceptional support for our military and their families as well as a rich and storied history when it comes to space exploration. This combination only enhances the outstanding relationships we have with the 65 diverse federal agencies on Redstone Arsenal, not to mention the growing presence of the FBI and other federal installations. The bottom line is simple, the Redstone Region is the most natural choice to become home to such an important mission for our country.”

**U.S. Senator Richard Shelby**, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and its subcommittee on defense, praised the Air Force’s selection of Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville as the permanent location for the U.S. Space Command headquarters, following a two-year competition for the basing decision.

“Redstone Arsenal will be the new home to U.S. Space Command. This is outstanding news, not only for our state but also for the Air Force. This long-awaited decision by the Air Force is a true testament to all that Alabama has to offer. Huntsville is the right pick for a host of reasons – our skilled workforce, proximity to supporting space entities, cost-effectiveness, and quality of life, among other things. I am thrilled that the Air Force has chosen Redstone and look forward to the vast economic impact this will have on Alabama and the benefits this will bring to the Air Force,” said Senator Shelby.

Senator Shelby has advocated for the selection of Redstone Arsenal for the U.S. Space Command headquarters throughout the competition, having continually highlighted to the Air Force the wide-ranging benefits that Huntsville would provide.

**Lieutenant Governor Will Ainsworth** welcomes Huntsville’s selection as the headquarters of U.S. Space Command.

“Alabama-made rockets first launched Americans into space and later carried them safely to the moon. Huntsville’s selection as the headquarters for the U.S. Space Command further solidifies Alabama as the national leader in aerospace research and development,” says Ainsworth in his statement.

“We welcome Space Command to Huntsville with open arms and a good dose of southern hospitality.”

**Congressman Robert Aderholt** released a statement commending the decision to bring U.S. Space Command to Redstone Arsenal.

“This decision is not only a good one for North Alabama, but also good for America. Locating the United States Space Command in Huntsville is smart, because it’s already the center of much of our nation’s space, military and strategic command capabilities,” said Congressman Aderholt in the statement.

“It’s also located near Washington; just one hour and 15 minutes by plane. I don’t know what kind of plane can make that trip that fast, but okay. The area also has a high quality, low cost of living for those who will be stationed here as part of the Command.”

“Our space program was born, raised and came to greatness from Alabama soil. So, it’s only fitting that the next great incarnation of our leadership in space would be firmly planted here as well.”

**The Fall of Babylon**

Harvard historian Niall Ferguson, writing in the March/April 2010 issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine, presents an analysis of how empires can quickly collapse into chaos. Rather than a slow decline over centuries, Ferguson shows that many large nations of the past were gone in a few short years. They were seemingly strong and viable and faded virtually overnight.

Conventional wisdom presents the economic challenges to America's global dominance as long-term threats. Demographics alone will increase the debt to unmanageable proportions.

Citing long-term predictions of China overtaking America in economic size and output by 2027 or 2040, Ferguson asks, "What if history is not cyclical and slow moving but arrhythmic—at times almost stationary, but also capable of accelerating suddenly, like a sports car? What if collapse does not arrive over a number of centuries but comes suddenly, like a thief in the night?" ("Complexity and Collapse," p. 22).

A thief in the night? Sounds biblical! "But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3).

What the Bible says about the end-time events culminating in the Day of the Lord applies to the sudden collapse of powerful nations and empires throughout history. Ferguson looks at the collapse of the Soviet Union over a short period of five years, from the time Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party. Although the CIA overestimated the size of the Soviet economy, they did have nuclear superiority over the United States. It looked as if the Soviet Union would be around to challenge America for many years to come.

"Yet less than five years after Gorbachev took power, the Soviet imperium in central and Eastern Europe had fallen apart, followed by the Soviet Union itself in 1991. If ever an empire fell off a cliff—rather than gently declining—it was the one founded by Lenin" (ibid., p. 30).

Ferguson's thesis is that empires are large, complex systems that can be turned upside down in short order by the insertion of even one event that is more than the system can handle. Lack of confidence in a nation's future, even while it is strong, can be such an event. When other nations lose confidence in the sustainability of an economic model, events can be set in motion to quickly change the balance of power.

Other smaller, seemingly insignificant events can trigger a chain reaction leading to world upheaval. The assassination of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand in June 1914 was the fuse that lit the powder keg of World War I. No one saw it at the time, but events quickly got out of control and conflict started.

**Recent economic crisis**

We have the recent example of how the complex world economy went from boom to bust when a lot of Americans began defaulting on something called "subprime loans." Because thousands of large financial institutions were set up to depend on the performance of those loans, they suddenly found themselves insolvent or quite near the brink. The reverberation brought down large Wall Street financial houses and had repercussions across Europe and Asia.

The world financial system came near meltdown one week in September 2008. The global economy is still recovering. It is an object lesson in how quickly events, even small events, can happen and turn the world upside down.

Ferguson concludes by observing that "empires behave like all complex adaptive systems. They function in apparent equilibrium for some unknowable period. And then, quite abruptly, they collapse... It is sudden" (ibid., p. 32).

What Ferguson and other historians miss in their studies is what can be called the missing dimension in world affairs. That missing dimension is the hand of God in the rise and fall of great nations and empires.

The Bible is a chronicle of ancient nations that rose and fell according to His plan and purpose. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome—all are mentioned in the narrative. All played key roles in working with the nation of Israel and the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Even today, the lessons of empires embedded in the Bible apply as we watch the modern world move toward what Christ said would be the end of the age.

**Babylon**

The prophetic book of Daniel lists Babylon as the first in a line of empires that would impact the world from the time of the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the age. Daniel found himself at the seat of the empire dealing with a succession of rulers beginning with Nebuchadnezzar. While explaining the king's dream, the prophet says that God "removes kings and raises up kings" (Daniel 2:21).

Here is the first principle to understand about world affairs. God determines the course of nations. He can set up or remove a leader when He wills. That doesn't mean He is involved in every small nation's affairs when it does not impact the course of His plan. The nations may "rage" and the rulers "take counsel together" (Psalms 2:1-2), but unless their actions are in accord with the counsel of God, in the end they will pass from the world scene.

Babylon found itself in this position on the night when a subsequent ruler, Belshazzar, "made a great feast" (Daniel 5:1). This event occurred as the Persian armies massed outside the city gates. During the banquet the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the wall of the king's palace (verse 5). King Belshazzar was troubled at the sight and asked for anyone to interpret what the writing said. Word came that Daniel was the only one who could possibly interpret the handwriting, so he was brought into the banquet room.

Daniel gave a brief history of Nebuchadnezzar's experience with God, including a reminder that "the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses" (Daniel 5:21).

Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting highlights another fundamental dimension in world affairs. The message on the wall was, "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it...you have been...found wanting;...your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:26-27). It is God who judges the time an empire lives and when its time is over. A key is when the nation and its people are "found wanting." In other terms, this is speaking of sin, breaking God's laws and not acknowledging the God of creation.

Babylon worshipped gods who neither saw, heard nor knew. They did not acknowledge the "God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways" (verse 23). Their problem was the same as virtually all other great nations that rose and fell through time: They did not worship the true God. They practiced what the Bible calls idolatry, worshipping as God that which is not God. The problem is still with us today.

That night Belshazzar was killed and the Persians entered Babylon. As a power, Babylon ended—absorbed into the Persian kingdom. It was over, like a thief in the night.

**Modern Babylon to fall**

But Babylon has a long story within the Bible. When we go to the book of Revelation, we see a modern version of this ancient system dominating the world scene. Revelation 17 shows a woman sitting on a scarlet beast with a name on her forehead saying, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (verse 5).

This system, a combination of religion and politics, controls the world for a brief but significant time prior to the coming of Jesus Christ. The world will be lulled into a sense of peace and security by this system that will come together in the guise of safety and security.

While this system will impact the entire world, there are signs it will be weak in its foundation. Again, size will make it a complex system. Many nations, ethnicities, cultures and languages will be in play. Technology, by itself a complicated and tenuous structure, will tether together the diversity of the world. It will be an unstable mixture that will quickly unravel.

Revelation 17:16 shows the "beast" turning on the woman and eating her flesh. Revelation 18:8 says, "Therefore her plagues will come *in one day*—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her... For *in one hour* your judgment has come" (Revelation 18:8, 10, emphasis added).

Once again, judgment comes quickly—unexpectedly. Whether it is days or months is unclear, but it will likely not be much longer given the time frame of prophecy in this period. Like ancient Babylon falling in one night, we see that sudden change can come upon a nation even as life appears to be normal.

**Christ's warning**

Jesus Christ said people would be going about a normal life and caught unaware of the momentous changes occurring. "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Luke 21:34-35).

Once again, we see the warning that events can occur "like a thief in the night." What Niall Ferguson noted in his article about the decline and fall of nations finds support in Scripture. But there is a difference. Ferguson and most modern historians focus on demographics and economic factors. They miss the spiritual dimension of God as we have noted in the Bible.

To ignore and deny the hand of God in history is to miss the real meaning of history and current world events. It is to deny God, and that is what is at the heart of any decline and fall.

**The problem of idolatry**

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this lesson the hard way. He looked at the kingdom he established and thought it was all done by his wisdom and cunning. Like any despot in history, he was pretty high on himself; and when he surveyed the splendor of Babylon in a pride-filled boast, he came face to face with reality. God figuratively grabbed him by the pants and made him face reality.

He went mad for seven years. His mental state made him a prisoner in his body with no ability to act or think rationally. And then, just as suddenly, he returned to normal and resumed his position in the kingdom. He learned a lesson—that God's control of leaders and nations is the critical factor in world affairs. The last few verses of Daniel 4, where this part of the story is told, form a final word on the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

The words of the prophets, including Jesus Christ, teach us the critical lesson needed to understand why nations can suddenly collapse when all the signs say otherwise. Whether it was God's chosen people, Israel, or another empire, when a people fail to acknowledge God and lapse into idolatry, putting themselves first, they set out on a road to collapse. It may take several generations, but it is inevitable. The fall can take a few decades or only a few years. But when God's time is ready, nothing can turn it back.

This is why the present state of affairs in America and its role in the world is so critical. Since the end of World War II, America has been the defender of what has been called the "free world." Its nuclear shield protected Europe during the Cold War, allowing its economies to rebuild. The U.S. Navy has kept the sea lanes of the world open to commerce. Its armies have combated terrorism, responded to genocide and been a deterrent to rogue nations like North Korea and Iran.

America's rising debt will one day cause it to retreat from this historic role as a global protector. When that day happens, it will signal a change, perhaps a collapse, in its role as a superpower. What follows will likely be quick and sudden, "like a thief in the night."

When the day comes that America and the English-speaking peoples relinquish their historic and biblically based role in the modern world, the world will be a different place. Only then, as one historian notes, will the world mourn the passing of a decent and noble people.