

URBAN CURRENT

Where your tomorrow is being shaped today

The world you grew up in is not the world you are going to grow old in.

“With fragile growth in Europe and the United States, the shift in an economic balance towards the east and south is happening with unprecedented speed and scale — and it is happening through urbanization. Quite simply, we are witnessing the biggest economic transformation the world has ever seen as the populations of cities in emerging markets expand and see their incomes rise as never before...” So says Richard Dobbs and Jaana Remes in their *Foreign Policy Magazine* (Fall 2012) cover piece titled “The Most Dynamic Cities of 2025: An Exclusive Look at the 75 Powerhouses of the Urban Revolution.”

Dobbs and Remes continue: *“More than ever, cities matter. Today, just 600 urban centers generate about 60% of global GDP. Though 600 cities will continue to account for the same share of global GDP in 2025, this elite group will have a very different membership. Over the next 15 years, the urban world center of gravity will move farther south, and even more decisively, east.”*

Be sure you get that last word: east. All this information comes from McKinsey Global Institute, whose Cityscope database has yielded a unique index of The Most Dynamic Cities of 2025 — 29 or 40 percent of which are in one country: China.

Here's the contrast: *“Almost half of global GDP in 2010 came from only 362 cities in the developed regions with more than 20% of global GDP coming from a 187 North American cities alone.”*

Fast forward to 2025 though, and 1/4 of these developed market cities will no longer make up the top 600. By 2025, 99 new cities are expected to enter the top 600 all from the developing world and overwhelmingly — 72 new cities — from China. By 2025, the world's top 600 cities will be home to an estimated 220 million more people of working age and account for

more than 30% of the expansion and potential global workforce.”

China's urbanization is thundering along at an extraordinary pace; it's happening at a hundred times the scale of the world's first country to urbanize — Britain — and at 10 times the speed,” point out Dobbs and Remes. *“Over the past decade alone, China's share of people living in large cities has increased from 36% to nearly 50%. In 2010, China's metropolitan regions accounted for 78% of its GDP. If the current trends hold, the Middle Kingdom's urban population will expand from approximately 570 million in 2005 to 925 million in 2025, an increase larger than the entire current pop of the United States!!!”* (Exclamation points mine)

CONSIDER THESE FINDINGS . . .

- Of the top 10 of the 75 most dynamic cities, six are in China.
- Although Shanghai had no skyscrapers in 1980 it now has at least 4,000, more than twice as many as New York.
- Although Hefei is one of China's lesser-known and smaller cities (by Chinese standards), disposable income growth in the metropolis of 4.9 million is on track to be seven times that of London this year.
- With the opening of its third airport by 2015, Beijing is expected to surpass London as the world's busiest air hub. Beijing Capital International Airport's terminal three is already larger than all five terminals at London's Heathrow combined.
- In the last five years, China has built 20,000 miles of expressways finishing the construction of 12 national highways a whopping 13 years ahead of schedule and at a pace four times faster than the United States built its interstate highway system. Over the last decade, Shanghai alone has built some 1,500 miles of road, the equivalent of three Mannhattans.
- The Chinese bought 14.5 million cars in 2011, a

figure that could increase to 50 million annually within a decade.

- From 2005 to 2010 alone, the Middle Kingdom built 33 airports and renovated or expanded an additional 33 at a cost of nearly 40 billion. The dizzying pace is set to continue over the next three years when China will build another 70, including a mega airport in Beijing — the city's third — that will have as much as double the annual passenger capacity of Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson, currently the world's busiest.
- China's newest bullet train slices through the air at a maximum speed of 311 miles an hour, capable of traveling from Beijing to Shanghai in less than three hours and four and a half times faster than the average speed of trains plying Amtrak's busy Boston, Washington, Acela route.
- Technical mecca Shenzhen was the city where China famously created its first special economic zone in 1980. Then, it was a former fishing village near Hong Kong; now it is a 14-million-person metropolis.

How shall we then live? Learn Mandarin? Anybody still wondering where that 200-million-soldier army from the East referenced in the book of Revelation originates?

Our “new world” does not require a new message. Every training institution and sending agency should be all over this data. This shift of population and power, not to mention economic muscle, ought to inform how we pray, give, train, and send.

“The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein.”

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