

Perspective

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Possessing the Gates of Our Enemies --- Does It Matter?

According to Genesis 22:17, God promised Abraham that his “seed” would possess the gates of their enemies; and His covenant people would have enemies, and they would possess the strategic gates of those who hated them (Genesis 24:60). During his inaugural address on January 20, 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump made a startling statement about probably the most strategic sea gate in the world. He made the assertion that China was "operating" the Panama Canal. He said, “China is operating the Panama Canal and we didn't give it to China. We gave it to Panama and we're taking it back!"

We are glad President Trump recognizes the value of the Panama Canal, and, interestingly, even the importance of the country of Greenland for the strategic defense of the U.S. Most are unaware of the strategic importance of controlling these choke points around the world, which were a key reason for the emergence of the British Empire and America as world dominating powers. However, does possessing the gates of our enemies really matter today, and if so, why?

The strategic sea gates of the world

It is incredible, and no mere coincidence, the British Commonwealth and America became the richest company of nations and single nation on the face of the earth. By the 1950s, combined they possessed two-thirds of the world's wealth. Since that time both have diminished, but still, the United States remains a formidable super power serving as de facto policeman for the planet. Key to the rise of the British Empire and the U.S. were the strategic choke points it controlled at Suez, Gibraltar, Khyber Pass, and the Panama Canal.

The Suez Canal is a geostrategic link between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and a naval shortcut and choke point. It came under British control in 1882 after Egypt was made a protectorate, but it is now controlled by the Egyptian government. Britain lost control of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956 when the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, nationalized it.

Gibraltar is still strategically important to Britain. It allows the Royal Navy to maintain a strong presence in the Mediterranean Sea and safeguard vital trade routes. The control of Gibraltar enabled Britain to protect its colonies and interests in the Mediterranean. While most of the strait lies within the territorial waters of Spain and Morocco, the U.K. claims a three-nautical-mile area around Gibraltar on the northern side of the strait.

The Khyber Pass is of strategic importance because it has been a vital trade route between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent and a strategic military choke point for various states that controlled it. It is the most important and northernmost border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Historically, it has been an important trade route and a strategic military location. Through the centuries, the Khyber Pass has witnessed the passage of numerous armies and conquerors. Persians, Greeks, Mughals, Afghans, and the British have all traversed this historic route. The treaty of Gandamak, signed during the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1879, placed the Khyber Pass under British control. Following the partition of British India in 1947, the Khyber Pass became part of Pakistan.

Up to 14,000 ships use the Panama Canal each year as a shortcut to a journey which, before the canal was built, would have taken them on a lengthy and costly trip around the tip of South America. Despite the canal's strategic value, during the administration of President Jimmy Carter, on December 31, 1999, the United States gave control of the canal to the nation of Panama. The U.S. also relinquished control of military bases, deep water ports, and airfields in Panama. The U.S. gave away the Panama Canal to address rising tensions and conflicts related to U.S. control over the canal. Considering China's path towards the modernization of its navy, and its goal to compete with the influence of the United States in the world, the loss of the canal could turn into a major strategic error.

In military strategy, choke points are geographical features such as bridges, valleys, or straits that an army or navy is forced to pass through. The less issues at choke point locations allows a military force to move towards its intended target. Choke points increase an armies' vulnerability, decrease its combat power, and compromises the ability of the military to reach its objective.

Is NATO nearing its end?

NATO is not nearing its end anytime soon, but it is morphing. Ukraine is close to becoming a NATO member, and the addition of Sweden and Finland will enhance NATO's ability to defend its members. The U.S. accounts for 68% of NATO's total combined defense spending, to the tune of \$860 billion. The next closest member is Germany, which contributes \$68 billion. NATO faces financial challenges; the United States, under President Trump, will push for NATO members to greatly increase their financial support.

Since World War II, Norway and Denmark and other Nordic countries, such as, Finland, Iceland, and Sweden, have maintained a longstanding tradition of neutrality, but their relationship with NATO has changed over time. They are placing their reliance upon NATO. As NATO allies, the Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania remain unwavering in their commitment to mutual defense. Unless these small countries of Northwestern Europe stand firm with NATO, they could come under increased pressure from the eastern influences of Russia and China. Their future peace and security would be in serious jeopardy.

Why have the Anglo-Saxon peoples and nations of Northwestern Europe reached such prominence in the world in the past two centuries? What has been the true source of their sudden prosperity? Why have these great seafaring nations together controlled at one time nearly all the vital sea gates of the world?

The lesson to be remembered

The peoples of the U.S., Britain and other western nations, whose roots trace to northwest Europe, inherited the great blessings God promised the descendants of Abraham. Those promises were based on Abraham's obedience to Almighty God. Isaac's son, Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed, and He changed his name to Israel (Genesis 32:28). His descendants were to multiply as the stars of heaven.

God chose to work with the descendants of Jacob (Israel) so they would be a light to all mankind of God's way of life (Deuteronomy 4:5-9). As the Israelites learned to apply His commandments and statutes, they would be a blessing to all who came into contact with them.

God also told Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3: *"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

The modern nations of Israel haven't been selfish, but have endeavored to spread the blessings of God--the abundant stores of food and goods to help benefit other peoples in need. If nations ever sought freedom from oppression, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have reached out to lend a hand in their defense. The increase in science and technology to benefit people has been shared around the globe.

But God repeatedly warned His people not to depart from or disregard His laws and commandments or follow other gods. If they did so, they would face punishment (Deuteronomy 4:9; 28:15-20). Sadly, the nations of modern Israel have walked contrary to God's ways, and embraced the evil of the world. Will the U.S. and British peoples repent and turn back to God?

God appeared to Solomon by night after the dedication of the Temple, and He said: *"if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."* (II Chronicles 7:14)

The loss of the vital sea gates and choke points around the world is a red flag, and a warning signal God's judgment of modern Israelite nations is beginning. Almighty God will remove the bountiful blessings to which the Western world have long been accustomed to have. We should be watching carefully as these important end-time events unfold!

This is my Perspective!