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Analyzing Forbes ‘Most Powerful People’—and Prophecy

The popular ranking that is more than meets the eye

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Just *who* are the world’s most powerful people? Perhaps several names come to mind—politicians, financiers, religious leaders, etc. The human fascination with sheer power runs deep in our psyche. Knowing and understanding the power players in our modern world helps us identify historic trends and chart future scenarios. And it is just downright interesting. As such, wouldn’t it be helpful to have some sort of global ranking of the most powerful leaders? That’s what the *Forbes* “Most Powerful People” list has done every year since 2009.

Forbes is a highly respected organization specializing in business and financial news, with a popular “list” series, ranking the most powerful, the richest, the best companies, colleges, places, etc. The *Forbes* “Most Powerful People” ranking is carefully calculated. *Forbes* analyzes an individual’s “power” using four factors: general power over people (e.g., the size of a person’s political, employment or religious following); financial resources at disposal; power across multiple spheres of influence (not just in a niche sector); and *active use* of power. A panel of editors ranks each individual according to these prerequisites before averaging them into a composite scoring. *Forbes* is the first to admit that its lists will be disputed. As its 2016 summary article states, “It’s meant to be the beginning of a conversation, not the final word.” Whatever the differing opinions, *Forbes* certainly gives a good idea of not only real power but *perceived* power around the world.

This article will examine *Forbes*’s top five world players since the list began in 2009, up to its recently released 2016 list. The rankings are very revealing.



2009: First position goes to newly sworn-in United States President Barack Obama; second to Chinese President Hu Jintao; and third to Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Ben Bernanke, chairman of the Federal Reserve (America’s central bank), places fourth. Google cofounders Sergey Brin and Larry Page share fifth.



2010: Hu takes first; Obama falls to second. Saudi Arabia's oil-rich King Abdullah takes third, with Putin slipping to fourth. Pope Benedict xvi makes it to fifth. (German Chancellor Angela Merkel follows in sixth place.)



2011: Obama retakes first position; Putin rises to second; and Hu Jintao drops to third. Merkel jumps up to fourth place, and Microsoft's Bill Gates makes an appearance in fifth.



2012: President Obama retains his number one spot, yet incredibly it is Merkel who makes it to second place, followed by Putin at third, Bill Gates at fourth, and Benedict at fifth. (After Hu's retirement, new Chinese President Xi Jinping starts off at ninth.)



2013: Russia's Putin claws his way into first position, pushing Obama to second. Jinping rockets from ninth to third place, with the newly appointed Pope Francis claiming fourth. Angela Merkel drops to fifth.



2014: The top five remain exactly the same as the previous year.



2015: Putin claims the top spot for the third year running. Second place amazingly goes to Germany's Merkel above President Obama, who places third. Pope Francis retains fourth, while Xi drops to fifth.



2016: Putin retains the top spot for the fourth year in a row. U.S. President-elect Donald Trump sits in second place (with outgoing President Obama falling to 48th). Angela Merkel continues to remain in the top three, followed by Xi Jinping at fourth and Pope Francis at fifth.

It is important to remember that these lists reflect the power of *individuals*, rather than entire countries themselves. Yet a *country's* power is very much based on the power of the leader. The two are indelibly connected.

Analysis

The progression of *Forbes's* most powerful people over the past eight years tells a fascinating story. Russian President Vladimir Putin's climb to first place in 2013 is remarkable. For *four straight years* to the present day, he has held the title of world's "most powerful" man. What makes this even more remarkable is that during the 2009–2012 rankings, *Putin wasn't even the leader of Russia*. From 2008–2012, Putin had taken a step back into the prime minister position, while fellow compatriot Dmitry Medvedev took the presidential office. Even still, Putin remained through those years variably within *Forbes's* top four, showing how much he remained the real power behind Russia. As soon as his *first full* year of presidency rolled around, 2013, Putin went straight to the number one spot, and he hasn't moved since. His strong hand in the world is undisputed, as a man of heavy action and influence. While much of his activities are criticized by the international community—such as his military support for Syrian President Bashar Assad as well as his annexation of Crimea and incursions into mainland Ukraine—the fact that he has been largely successful and "gets what he wants" cements his place as the leading power player in the world.

President Obama joined the fray from the first year of his inauguration in the classic power toss-up between America and Russia. Three times within his first four-year term, he managed to take the position perhaps most expected of an American leader on *Forbes's* rankings—the top. The U.S. has, throughout most of the past century, been the most powerful single nation in the world in terms of wealth, technology and military might. However, by the time Obama's second term rolled around (and Putin regained the presidency of Russia), the best he managed was second place, before falling to third, and then rounding out his final year at 48th in the shadow of incoming President-elect Trump. Presumably Obama's strong words yet weak action in countries like Syria and Ukraine played a major role in his slipped ranking.

China's leader will always feature highly on this list, especially due to an influence over a population that exceeds 1 billion. No one today questions the skyrocketing power of the nation (whose economy really took off in the 1990s). In the last two decades especially, China has pushed a heavy expansion of national interests and foreign investment within other nations. While its foreign-policy power plays in the South China Sea—building and militarizing artificial islands in disputed waters—have been much protested, China has largely had its way. Embracing warm relations with Russia, as well as seeing much closer ties especially between Malaysia and the Philippines, China continues to grow stronger. Its booming population has been given a further boost with the annulment of the "one-child policy," meaning that the nation will be looking to further expand its influence and to draw resources from other countries around the world to supply its growing numbers.

Yet surely the most *interesting* person graphed by *Forbes* over the past eight years has been Germany's Angela Merkel. Starting off in 2009 at 15th, she skyrocketed into second place in both 2012 and 2015—in the latter, surpassing the president of the United States. This is a sign of how much the world has changed since a pulverized Germany lay defeated after World War II. Few would have thought that within less than a lifetime, Germany's chancellor would be ranked as the *second-most powerful leader in the world, above the United States*. Even after Trump swept into second place for 2016, Merkel held on to third place. This is a remarkable achievement, considering that the next European national leader on the list for 2016, British Prime Minister Theresa May, ranked 13th.

Forbes has joined a growing number of commentators and analysts documenting Germany's incredible rise to power in the world.

The German Ascent

Germany's meteoric rise to power has become plainly evident around the world. In 2016, Germany had the fourth-largest gross domestic product in the world (behind the U.S., China and Japan). It is the [second-largest global export market](#), after the U.S., according to the UK's Department for International Trade. Thus, with all of its consolidated power, the real heart of Europe is not Brussels but Berlin.

Commentators have picked up on Germany's ascent, with articles even referring to a "Fourth Reich." *Telegraph* columnist Simon Heffer wrote a piece titled "[The Fourth Reich Is Here—Without a Shot Being Fired](#)." *The Guardian* featured

[“Resurgent Germany Overtakes Britain and U.S.”](#) and [“How Angela Merkel Became Europe’s Undisputed Leader.”](#) Business Insider wrote [“There’s No Getting Around It—Germany Is Taking Over Europe.”](#) *Spiegel* published [“The Fourth Reich: What Some Europeans See When They Look at Germany.”](#) The *Belfast Telegraph* analyzed Germany’s rise in [“Germany Trying to Take Over Europe Again.”](#) Chris Carter wrote [“Germany: The Dominating Puppet-master of Europe”](#) for the *Commentator*. YouGov ran a pre-Brexit poll titled [“Germans: We Run Europe. Brits: We Don’t.”](#) And finally, RT wrote [“nato Fears Resurgent Germany, Russia.”](#) These are just a small array of examples.

Yet the *Trumpet.com* and its predecessor have been predicting Germany’s rise to power for over 80 years. While the nation lay flattened after World War II, physically divided between other countries, our founder, the late philanthropist and religious teacher Herbert W. Armstrong, declared in 1954 that “Germany inevitably [will] emerge as the leader of a united Europe.” In 1967, under his direction, the *Plain Truth* magazine (forerunner to the *Trumpet* magazine) forecast:

[There is] one thing you can count on. In fact, it is so sure you can bank on it: The cry of a political union in Europe will get louder, and before long, we will see the Common Market develop into a *United States of Europe*.

We now have a form of a United States of Europe in the European Union. Mr. Armstrong also specified that the union would require a common currency; just as predicted, the euro was launched in 1999, with EU countries adopting it in place of their own currencies in 2002.

In 1979, Mr. Armstrong wrote:

I have been proclaiming and writing, ever since 1935, that ... the Holy Roman Empire is coming in our generation—a “United States of Europe,” combining 10 nations or groups of nations in Europe—with a union of church and state!

The nations of Europe have been striving to become reunited Yet, on a purely political basis, they have been totally unable to unite. ...

This new united Europe will be, militarily and economically, as strong, or even more powerful, than either the United States or the USSR. It will be a third gigantic world power!

At the time of Mr. Armstrong’s forecast (a full decade before the Berlin Wall fell), a united Germany and Europe, more powerful than the United States or USSR, seemed ludicrous.

Fast-forward to 2012, and we see Germany’s leader—essentially Europe’s leader—ranked *more powerful* than Russia’s. Fast-forward to 2015, and she is ranked more powerful than that of the *United States!*

How could we know this would happen?

These declarations were based on Bible prophecy. Prophecies that speak of the “time of the end” describe a powerful union in Europe made up of 10 countries, joined ideologically with the Roman Catholic Church to create a final resurrected phase of the Holy Roman Empire. For the details of this prophesied German-led superpower, request our free book [The Holy Roman Empire in Prophecy](#).

And the leader of Germany’s rise is not all that Mr. Armstrong—and now the *Trumpet*—has forecast. The Bible also contains prophecies about all the major nations represented by individuals within *Forbes*’s “Most Powerful” top five.

It declares an end-time alliance between superpowers Russia and China (among other Asian nations), led by a powerful man known as the “prince of Rosh.” *Rosh* is a biblical term for Russia. Request our free booklet [The Prophesied ‘Prince of Russia’](#) for a full explanation.

The Bible further prophesies the decline in power of the United States, as well as Britain and the British Commonwealth. *Forbes* picked up on this decline with its ranking of America’s leadership tailing off in the last four years especially. And that once-great British Empire, which in living memory controlled about one third of the Earth’s landmass, these days only occasionally makes a peep near the bottom of *Forbes*’s top 10. Mr. Armstrong forecast all of this in his book [The United States and Britain in Prophecy](#) (request your free copy). He also specifically prophesied that [Britain would either leave or be ejected from the European Union](#). The Brexit vote determining to leave the EU is now yesterday’s news.

Even other nations whose leaders are ranked highly by *Forbes*, such as Saudi Arabia, are not overlooked by end-time Bible prophecy (request your free copy of [Gerald Flurry](#)’s booklet [The King of the South](#)). The fact is that the Bible is *not* an “outdated” book. The accounts within its pages are not just legends written for “old times.” Its prophecies are not “vague.” The Bible is incredibly *specific*, and it is the most up-to-date book in the world! It is the reader’s responsibility to prove that for himself.

Mr. Armstrong certainly had his scoffers back in the late 1940s and ’50s, while he was writing and broadcasting that the smashed, divided Germany would rise again as head of a “United States of Europe” to be one of the most powerful blocs in the world. What was once ridiculed as outlandish *prophecy* is now being widely reported on as common *news*. And as Mr. Armstrong forecast, Europe will continue to grow even more powerful, consolidating into a group of the prophesied “10

kings” (or 10 nations) led by Germany in a modern, resurrected Holy Roman Empire.

The *Forbes* “Most Powerful People” list is an impressive appraisal of sheer individual—and by direct association *national*—power. Yet for this website, its assessment is entirely unsurprising. In many ways, it is “old news”—broadcast up to 80 years ago by our predecessor. Or further, as much as 2,500 years ago in the Bible. *Forbes* has simply highlighted the rising power of leaders and nations as they have been prophesied for decades.

One final note. Jesus Christ spoke to our terrifyingly destructive nuclear age today when He said in Matthew 24:21-22, 30:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. ... And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

These nations whose leaders are featured on *Forbes*’s list are about to engage in the most brutal conflict of human history (see also Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:7). We’ve already seen it on a smaller scale *twice* in the past century. There’s no doubt it can and will happen again. Yet there is coming a leader to *end* this conflict and finally take control of this embittered world. He will take the undisputed top spot of the “World’s Most Powerful” list. His name is Jesus Christ.