



China as the US, or vice versa?

Posted by [Yankee](#) on January 24, 2006 - 7:37pm

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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I don't usually read Kunstler's weekly blog post for much more than its entertainment value, but yesterday he had a post that made me pause just a little longer than usual.

He [points out](#) two quotes from [Robert Reich](#), Clinton's Secretary of Labor, from [NPR's Marketplace last week](#) (Real Audio version of interview [here](#)):

"As China grows -- at the current rate it's growing, in twenty or thirty years -- and becomes the number one largest economy in the world, I think China may become our nemesis."

...

"As China, over the next twenty, thirty years, grows and prospers, a lot of Americans are gonna say, now, wait a minute. . . ! The endgame, we hope, is more and more economic integration, a Chinese middle class that is more and more prosperous, that is able to buy things from the United States, that looks a little bit more like middle-class Americans live, and therefore is not so different from us."

Then Kunstler offers his take on Reich's opinion:

Note to Mr. Reich and the rest of the people he is smoking opiated hashish with: you've got it backwards. Over the next twenty, thirty years America gets to be more and more like Chinese peasant life in 1949. Why? Because neither America nor China (nor anybody else) can continue running industrial economies the way we have been, or even a substantial fraction of that way, in an energy-starved world. Nor will anybody come up with a miracle technological rescue remedy to keep all the motors humming.

This virtual "exchange" (since it's not like these guys were talking to each other) brought to mind a few questions:

1. Is Chinese growth (if it continues at a similar rate) really going to cause it to resemble American society?
2. Does Reich mean they're going to become our nemesis because we're fighting for the same limited energy resources? If that's what he means, why not say it more explicitly?

Reich says at the beginning of the interview that Americans like to have a nemesis (it seems to be just a general thing). But there has to be a reason—some way to justify it to the people—be it

communism or terrorism, or something else. I doubt we'll go back to being worried about the spread of communism, so maybe energy will fit the bill after all. But the government is already downplaying, and even hiding the fact that our involvement in the Middle East probably has a lot to do with oil, so at what point are we just going to start admitting it outright? Only when the shortages come, or will the escalation of military action against either China or other Middle East countries happen earlier than that, thereby forcing the government to 'fess up?

Just a lot of speculation, of course, but I wanted to give Kunstler his due credit for making me wonder.



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