

China Power 2

Most things in life have advantages and disadvantages. American culture is highly individualistic, and this is an advantage for many things, such as inventing new technologies.

Chinese culture is more cooperative, and this is an advantage for other things, such as implementing big projects.

The electric power industry is vital to economic growth and power. Two parts of that industry where China excels are rare earth mineral production and ultra high voltage long distance power lines.

Rare earth mineral production is something of an environmental nightmare, because large amounts of toxic chemicals are necessary for the refining process. Ultra high voltage power lines require land in a straight line for hundreds or even thousands of miles.

The United States has too many people screaming "not in my backyard". This slows down projects with delays of years or even decades.

I'll never forget my grandmother complaining that the Tennessee Valley Authority took land away from a number of people in the 1930's to build flood-control dams and reservoirs. TVA paid for the land, but Grandma was not satisfied because some people didn't want to sell their land and move.

Government agencies do take land for public projects in the U.S., but they make some effort to please everybody, and that is impossible. In China, the government is much less hesitant to offend a few for the benefit of the entire country.

Since the end of World War II,
Americans have had the benefit of
being a superpower. And since the fall
of the Soviet Union, we've been the
only superpower.

Now that we have fresh competition,
we need to think about streamlining the
process of finding out we can't please
everybody.