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Irresistible forces vs immovable objects: when China develops Productive Nanosystems

ABSTRACT. This paper examines a small but crucial part of China's history, describes some of China's significant advantages and disadvantages, and examines how they will interact with different aspects of nanotechnology. The predictive heuristics used include understanding history, building on successful predictors, analysing trends, and distinguishing between engineering and science. China's history has much to teach the world, especially if we look closely at the mistakes that led to its decline six hundred years ago. China is an economic powerhouse that has grown at 10% per annum for decades, and is graduating 350 000 engineers every year—yet it has environmental problems that threaten to poison the country, and social tensions that could tear it apart. Projections of current trends result in either “The Chinese century” or in complete disaster for the most populated nation on Earth. Adding nanotechnology to the mix only exacerbates the problem of predicting what will happen. But the power of nanotechnology makes accurate projections extraordinarily important.

Nanotechnology Perceptions 4 (2008) 113–132

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