

# THE OWL SHOGUN ESSAYS



## ON THE REPUBLIC - Part Two -

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## THE RISING DRAGON -----

This might be where I lose a majority of my western readership. *China*? Are they not a dictatorship? Do they not have a social credit system? Do they not lack freedom of speech? Aren't they ruled by an oppressive regime?

If we take the words of the Anglo-Saxon media as truth, then according to them, The People's Republic of China is all of these things and more. America is spending \$1.6 billion on anti-Chinese propaganda meant to instill hostility towards what they consider a geopolitical rival for global dominance. I sincerely understand the very palpable apprehension and fear that any mention of China elicits in the western mind. Although, having briefly (all too briefly) lived in Namegata, Japan back in 2019, I perceive China somewhat differently than many of my fellow western compatriots. Even now, I harbor mostly admiration for what the Chinese people have been able to achieve and continue to aspire towards.

If we of the west only stopped for a moment to observe their remarkable progress, then perhaps we could derive some lessons from their unique path of development and repurpose it to suit our own needs here at home. And before you accuse of me being some *wumao*, a mere mouth-piece for the Communist Party, please know that I have formed these opinions on my own without external funding to sway my views. I simply gaze upon the world with open eyes and a mind untethered to the nationalistic zeitgeist of my home country. In truth, I am envious of China's rise during a time where the American empire and the future prospects of many American youths is in a state of relative decline.

Today, the western conception of China is still very much rooted in the past via a manner similar to America's outdated notion of communism – which is itself rooted in the

obsolete fearmongering of Cold War-era rhetoric. If you ask anyone on the streets of Orlando, Kissimmee, Miami, or Tampa about what they think of China, they will probably describe a bleak and impoverished nation full of pollution, corruption, and totalitarianism – a dire image more akin to North Korea. But this no longer reflects modern China; a fact largely ignored by western media to fool us into thinking that we of the west are still the pinnacle of civilization.

Obviously, China is not without its glaring flaws. As an artist, I am not particularly fond of their overt censorship. But given that my country, and the elderly war hawks that infect the halls of my government, have essentially declared China a threat to our global preeminence, you will almost never hear anything good about China. In the eyes of the political elites of the United States, everything China does is evil or unfair rather than pragmatic or competitive. I submit to you that America may not truly *understand* China.

Following the death of Mao Zedong in September of 1976, the reformist Deng Xiaoping came to power. When he visited Japan in 1978, he must have realized just how utterly backwards China was compared to the rest of the world. At the time, Japan was one of the fastest growing and most advanced nations on Earth. There, Deng witnessed Japan's mighty Shinkansen (bullet trains), saw cars being assembled by robots in automated factories, and observed all manner of modern appliances and comforts enjoyed by the average Japanese citizen. In those days, China was still very much an agrarian society that failed to feed its own people and was one of the poorest nations on earth; even worse off than the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Soon after, Deng Xiaoping would engage in a series of initiatives meant to open up the economy by merging the

ideals of communism with the raw vitality of capitalism. Business was allowed to flourish which unleashed a mighty wave of creative, social, and psychological transformation all across the country; their path to modernization now set in motion. The high productivity and low cost labor in China also attracted foreign business and investors from all over the world to move overseas and set up shop; ultimately turning the middle kingdom into the world's factory.

There is still much resentment here in the United States regarding China's supposed theft of our jobs. But this anger is misplaced. China never stole our jobs. It is the American businessman who is at fault. They, with zero loyalties to the nation, collectively sold away our American Dream in order to increase their own profits at *our* expense.

Since the reforms of Deng Xiaoping and the careful stewardship of successive leaders of the Communist Party, the China of today is vastly different from the primitive land it once was fifty years ago. Within one lifetime, China has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty; a feat unmatched in the entirety of human history. Many western pundits ascribe this to China abandoning socialism in favor of capitalism. But this may be a distortion of the reality on the ground. While China does have a market economy, the government is still firmly socialist. It is this harmony of diametrically opposed ideologies that continues to perplex the west which often perceives things within a dualistic framework rather than in a more nuanced manner; possibly due in part of our Judeo-Christian leanings.

China in 2025 is now a global economic force that may yet surpass America in the near future. According to the International Monetary Fund, China had already become the largest economy by Purchasing Power Parity back in 2014.

Many others claim that the bulk of Chinese modernization is built on the theft of western ideas and tech. By this logic, Japan should have incurred the same criticisms. Their own path to modernization relied on copying the west under the then-newly-formed Meiji government. But nowadays, China appears to require less and less on mere mimicry. They have reached a point where they are now innovating and leading in a wide variety of sectors. And as of this writing, they aim to lead in many more industries in the coming future.

## THE CHINESE DREAM -----

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, current Chinese leader Xi Jinping delivered a speech in which he said the following:

*The Chinese people are striving to fulfill the Chinese dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation. The Chinese Dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation is about prosperity of the country, rejuvenation of the nation, and happiness of the people. It reflects the ideal of the Chinese people today as well as the fine tradition of relentlessly seeking progress that we have had since ancient times. The Chinese dream requires balanced development and mutual reinforcement of material and cultural progress. Without the continued development of civilization, the promotion and prosperity of culture, the Chinese Dream will not come true.*

The communist-led Chinese government has invested heavily in infrastructure, leading to the development of the world's most advanced and comprehensive network of high-speed rail, airports, bridges, and shipping ports; all which serves as the bedrock in establishing the most sophisticated

supply chain in human history. Their hunger to modernize and to achieve the Chinese Dream is something that all of us Americans can appreciate; regardless of one's politics.

Once poor and desolate towns such as Chongqing or Guangzhou have now become world-class cities like the bustling metropolises of Shanghai and Hong Kong. But it is Shenzhen which has truly astounded me. Back in the 1970s, Shenzhen was nothing more than a tiny fishing village of little significance. Today, Shenzhen's growing population boasts almost 20 million people and has become the primary technological hub for research and innovation.

I used to believe that Tokyo was the greatest city in the world given its size and unrivaled vitality. However, in my lifetime, Tokyo may soon be eclipsed by the breathtaking futurism of Chinese cities. I am honestly taken aback by how rapid the rate of development has become for cities such as Chengdu, Suzhou, and Xi'an; rivaling the once unparalleled sophistication of Japanese cities.

New York City or Los Angeles might be as close as my country will ever get in emulating such wonders. And even then, I *still* do not think that American cities can compare to anything like Tokyo, Osaka, Nara, or Sapporo. Much more depressing are Floridian cities which, in my exceedingly biased view, are but mere villages. Miami, Tampa, and my native Orlando can never match the size, developmental refinement, exuberance, and splendid density of Asian cities. Perhaps one day in say, a hundred years, my home state of Florida *might* finally catch up to the China of 2025.

But it's not just China's grandiose cities which instill wonder to the curious and daring traveler. All across the country, the Communist Party has invested in a plethora of mega projects meant to bolster the prosperity of the nation in

a myriad of ways. One such project, and one of my favorites, is the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge which respectively connects the economic regions of Hong Kong, Zhuhai, and Macau over a vast series of artificial islands and underwater tunnels. Built in just nine years, this bridge serves as the longest one ever constructed over the sea at a whopping length of 34 miles; nearly five times longer than the famed bridge of the Florida Keys.

However, the spot for longest bridge on Earth actually belongs to the Danyang-Kunshan Grand Bridge (102 miles) which acts as a viaduct for one of the highspeed rail lines that connects numerous cities between Beijing and Shanghai. The highest bridge in the world is the Beipanjiang Bridge which spans the deep gorge of the Ninzhu River between Guizhou and Yunnan. China *does* like their bridges. But they like their dams just as much!

One mega project of profound significance is the famed Three Gorges Dam. Spanning the width of the Yangtze River, it is currently the largest hydroelectric dam on Earth which provides renewable energy for millions of people. A rather fun little fact is that the construction of this dam seems to have slightly slowed down the Earth's rotation by about 0.06 microseconds; a small price to pay for taming the Yangtze which has claimed countless lives throughout history.

Then there are the TRAINS!!! This is a subject I'm most passionate about. I remember growing up as a kid hearing short-sighted politicians and business leaders say that the reason America never built a highspeed rail network like in Japan or Europe is because America was simply too big. But this excuse always rang as hollow to me. Sure, America is a massive country. But the point of highspeed rail is to render such vast distances inconsequential.

Having been a Japanophile for pretty much my entire life, I always admired how the Japanese have access to the shinkansen and all of the other convenient transit options available to them whereas in Florida, you only really have the automobile. Everything, and I mean everything, in this irrational state is so damned far away from everything else. In Florida, without a vehicle, you are left destitute.

Florida is a dismally designed peninsula built to service legacy industries and greedy real estate investors who care more for profit than in the livability of their tenants. Anyone who has driven on the Interstate (I-4) between Orlando and Tampa to commute to and from work will understand what a Tartarian Hellscape it is. Hours of our lives are wasted crossing this inefficient death trap which could be rectified by the implementation of a proper highspeed rail network.

Given Florida's relatively flat and agreeable terrain yet frustratingly large population, I can think of no greater place to test highspeed rail in this vast country except for maybe Puerto Rico – an island long neglected by America. With the implementation of HSR, our cities would become ever more connected, providing ample business growth opportunities. But such efforts have been vehemently resisted for decades by my frivolous state government who would rather fulfill the needs of oil lobbyists instead of helping to transform Florida into the experimental prototype zone of tomorrow.

This refusal to do what I consider the rational necessity of improving the lives of the citizenry is a sad story which proliferates all across the American heartland. Much of our infrastructure is crumbling and functionally outdated. The Japanese invented the shinkansen in 1964... 1964... And yet as of 2025, the state of America's infrastructure is that of a nation frozen in time. Not China, however!

Despite being around the same size as the United States and with much more challenging geography, China has fully committed themselves to the vision of connecting every major city and town via highspeed rail. It's an ambitious and insanely expensive undertaking. And yet, regardless of all our naysaying, they are doing precisely what we as a nation are unwilling to do ourselves.

Today, China has the most extensive HSR network in the entire world. As of the end of 2023, their rail network reached approximately 45,000 km in total length or roughly 28,000 miles. And this is just the beginning, for China now expects to surpass 70,000 km (43,500 miles) by the end of 2035. Now THAT is a vision I've not seen any US President seriously propose to the American public. What saddens me the most is that I *know* that we can do it. America has the manpower, the tech, the expertise, the capital, and the scientific might to achieve this and much more! And yet... We seem to lack the cojones to get the job done.

The far-flung regions of Tibet and Xinjiang have now become sites of major investments and economic growth with the rapid construction of freeways, trains, airports, and other critical infrastructure that will better connect them to the rest of the country. This has encouraged development in new industries with an additional focus on free education and renewable energy. Xinjiang in particular is set up to be transformed into a primary hub in the region to expand the **Belt & Road Initiative** which aims to connect China to the rest of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

Back in September of 2013, I vaguely remember when Xi Jinping announced his vision of a new economic corridor during his visit to Kazakhstan. Harking back to the days of the ancient Silk Road, he proposed what we call the BRI; the

Belt & Road Initiative. Billions of dollars have already been invested into numerous nations in Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia with the construction of airports, bridges, HSR, roads, shipping ports, and much more in its growing bid to unite the world through trade and commerce. Of course, America has expressed concerns that China is trying to perform debt entrapment despite having done the same. And yet, over 145 nations from around the world have signed up to participate in the BRI. At the end of the day, it is all about connectivity and building a more prosperous world. The BRI will become a new silk road for a new era. What tangible alternative does America offer?

## **THE ASIAN CENTURY -----**

In 2011, the United States banned China and Chinese-owned companies from working with NASA; effectively cutting them off from ever being able to work in the ISS, the International Space Station.

Space exploration is, in my personal view, meant to be a collaborative effort between the greatest scientific minds humanity has to offer. Sadly, America has chosen to impair China's earnest aspirations of space travel just to remove a competitor. Left with no other recourse, China decided to take matters into their own hands. They have since launched the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System and the Tianwen-1 Mars probe. The most fascinating thing of all is that we now have real Chinese Taikonauts living and working aboard the Tiangong Space Station; soon to be the ONLY space station in our region of the cosmos as the ISS will eventually come to the end of its operations by 2030.

I have no doubt that we will see a Chinese national standing atop the surface of the moon in our lifetime. They

even express a desire to establish a base on the moon and to launch a solar power station into the Earth's orbit. But the true question is *who* becomes the first nation to set foot on Mars: China or the United States? The implications of such a renewed space race is indeed exciting. But even though the idea of space exploration can offer endless opportunities, we must still tend to the very urgent challenge of climate change on our own planet.

As a kid growing up in the early 2000s, I was always fascinated by science and loved to read as many books as I could get my hands on. I also watched numerous scientific documentaries whenever they happened to air on TV. Long before the manga dream was conceived in middle school, I had initially yearned to become a scientist. Therefore, when it came to the science of climate change, not once did I harbor any resistance to the idea.

To me, the evidence was (and still is) undeniable. Even at that tender age, I could recognize that our unrestrained industrial output and unchecked emissions of greenhouse gases would plunge humanity on a collision course towards biospheric disaster. Even now, our hubris can be seen all around us with rising temperatures and environmental degradation. Our collective lack of desire to change our ways spurred by rampant capitalism is resulting in the creation of a sixth global mass extinction event.

America, China, Europe, and India remain the largest producers of greenhouse emissions which continue to alter the planet in horrifying ways. For decades, scientists and activists have tried to promote awareness of climate change and to motivate politicians to enact laws and other bits of legislation that prioritizes sustainable and renewable energy. For sure, some strides have been made in alternative sources

of power with immense promise. But while the United States is uniquely positioned to lead the world in this new green revolution, they have consistently chosen to cower away from their responsibilities.

Most discouraging is the wretched fact that too many Americans remain illiterate in their scientific understanding of the world; a disturbing trait no doubt worsened by our absurd religiosity as a nation which dulls the mind. I cannot express how many people I've met in Florida who have professed that they don't believe in climate change despite temperatures rising every accursed year. I have spoken with far too many fools who still claim that evolution is not real and consider the Hebrew Bible as the only text of legitimate consideration. Logic, reason, and empirical evidence means nothing to the pious and the devout. And that ignorance unfortunately translates into public policy.

In 2001, then President George W. Bush irresponsibly rescinded America's pledge to the old 1997 Kyoto Protocol which was meant to curb greenhouse emissions worldwide. In 2015, almost all nations of the world signed into the historical Paris Climate Accords. This is a legally binding agreement for all signatory nations to pursue alternative and renewable forms of energy whilst eventually eliminating our dependence of fossil fuels.

In 2018, Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the agreement; reverting American climate policy to a more backwards paradigm in favor of fuels such as oil and coal. President Joe Biden rejoined the Paris Accords. But I fear that Donald Trump, vain and petty as he is, will simply withdraw America once again as soon he takes office. Under Trump, rather than fulfill America's promise of a green and sustainable future, we will continue to play into the hands of

ignoble oil lobbyist and fossil fuel companies to the peril of the entire world – all for something as asinine and fleeting as profit. I suppose that it is the American way to pursue short-term thinking at the expense of long-term strategy. China shows us a different way.

Aware of their overreliance on fossil fuels and of the existential threat that climate change poses for humanity, China has taken a rapid and aggressive approach towards investing in green technology. Today, China is considered a trailblazer in the adoption of this rising renewable energy revolution while America seems content with ceding its leadership across a wide variety of sectors. China is now also the largest producer of solar panels, wind turbines, and even dominates the electric vehicle (EV) industry.

As the United States continues to stubbornly cling to gas-powered cars, China invests in electric vehicles as they understand that EVs are the future. Even now, Chinese corporations stand at the frontier of lithium-ion batteries which are essential for the production of EVs and other forms of energy storage for a green grid. The largest battery maker in the entire world, CATL, is also located in China. In terms of production capabilities, affordability, and their impressive command of the global supply chain of rare-earth minerals, many international competitors are being surpassed.

Even Elon Musk's Tesla may soon start to suffer as they struggle to compete against the much cheaper and superior technology of Chinese EVs. Although, given Elon Musk's past antics, I can only imagine that whatever actions he takes to dismantle our Republic (once in the White House) will only bolster public uproar against Tesla. Between Musk and Trump, I am fairly worried that international support of American interests will decline as, come post-inauguration,

we could end up antagonizing the world with our infantile brand of imperialism. In the coming vacuum left in the wake of America's withering leadership, China will happily fill the void. Chinese EV brands such as NIO and BYD are already entering several international markets such as in Europe and Latin America. Sadly, rather than attempt to compete fairly against them, America has chosen to outright ban Chinese EVs; a cowardly act by our invertebrate government.

Amazingly enough, China has also done the hard work of creating a comprehensive ecosystem of infrastructure to support this new EV revolution with charging stations, both manual and autonomous, dotted all over the country. Under the coming Trump administration, I do not see America ever divorcing from fossil fuels and their billionaire CEOs until it is too late. And each year we neglect to move forward and progress in this crucial sector, China gets further and further ahead of us. And that, my dear reader, is our own fault. But perhaps the most critical area in the great contest between China and the United States is artificial intelligence.

The very first industrial revolution centered around the steam engine. Electrification, the assembly line, and mass production would define the second industrial revolution. Computerization, digitization and the internet ushered in our third industrial revolution. Now, with the advent of AI, we are experiencing the beginnings of the fourth industrial revolution. And the single most important fuel that enables AI is data. Though American tech companies have ransacked and absconded with our private data for years in the absence of sufficient legal protections, China may have even more data to work with given their enormous population of over 1.4 billion people compared to America's smaller but still remarkable 340 million.

While I think America still has a demonstrable lead in artificial intelligence with tech companies such as Nvidia, Open AI, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon and Google paving the way towards an uncertain future, China is rapidly catching up with their own enterprises such as Alibaba, Huawei, ByteDance, and Baidu. I'm sure they will eventually release something to challenge American dominance in this industry that will send shockwaves throughout the world. Things get even more interesting upon witnessing the incredible strides being made in advanced Chinese humanoid robotics.

This new wave of technical innovation can be felt all over China. As far as drone technology is concerned, DJI, a Chinese company, is the largest drone producer on Earth. Autonomous buses, trains, and self-driving cars enabled by AI-powered Smart Cities are now a common occurrence on the streets of China's major urban centers. Even EV charging stations have become autonomous; requiring almost little to no human interaction whatsoever. Certain EVs are even able to drive themselves to a charging station without the driver physically being present inside of the vehicle. That's nothing short of incredible!

In adherence to their fierce commitment of adopting new technologies, China has also become a cashless society; something I wish America would push more towards. My beloved Japan is especially behind in these efforts as their banking system is firmly rooted in the past. For a myriad of reasons beyond my understanding, Japan insists on sticking to cumbersome physical currency over digital convenience.

Even the video game sector, still largely dominated by American and Japanese firms, is being encroached upon by Tencent and other Chinese developers looking to make their mark on the global gaming landscape. The fabulous success

of **Black Myth Wukong**, China's first AAA game made for consoles and PCs, shows the tremendous promise for the future of the game industry. This has opened the floodgates for an entire generation of aspiring game developers from China to build and share their vision with the whole world. With over 5,000 years of historical and cultural tradition, China has a vast arsenal of stories just waiting to be told.

Lastly, China's growing economic might brings with it a meteoric rise in political and cultural prestige which is already causing a seismic shift in the balance of power. Nowhere else is this being made more evident than with the formation of BRICS – a multinational cooperative initially consisting only of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. BRICS is born from a need to counter the hegemonic abuse of America against poorer nations such as those in the global south who are often bullied into submission. While the United States employs all manner of tools to control the world through tariffs, sanctions, and other coercive means, China and their partners offer an alternative to the western-led G7 nations of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Today, many more countries are expressing interest in joining BRICS which is now making gains in South America. During the Cold War era, the United States had a penchant for using their CIA to destabilize and overthrow lawful republics all across the Latin world. Whether or not the native populations thrived was of zero consequence to the Americans. Even now, much of South America struggles with the echoes of American imperialism. An uncouth and arrogant bastard like Donald Trump issuing ultimatums will only stoke old wounds among our southern neighbors. The African continent is a whole other saga of colonization and

vile exploitation from the west – even to this very day. China and BRICS offers the world a new path forward. China has come in to build roads, bridges, trains, airports, hospitals, schools, and much more. With Trump soon returning to unleash his wrath upon the land, the time may have come to end the old unipolar world of American domination in favor of a multipolar world where America, and the American dollar, no longer determines the political and economic destiny of humanity.

It is a bold and ambitious dream that may not come to pass for many decades. But it is a noble cause, nonetheless. America has only increased its regrettable abuse of the dollar by weaponizing the currency to attack anyone who does not align with our narrow worldview or objectives. If the second Trumpian presidency is what I think it will be, then soon countries such as Canada, Mexico, Australia, South Korea, Japan and all of our European allies will have to make a critical decision. Do they remain as loyal and subservient vassals to the fading American Empire? Or... Will they have enough self-respect to take measures that will secure their place in the coming transition to a new world order where America no longer dictates demands to everyone with impunity? I suppose only time will tell.

## **FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC -----**

I feel that I must once more reiterate the fact that I do not hate the United States of America. I have merely become disillusioned with it and with the worsening direction it is taking. The prevalence of dishonest and divisive rhetoric spewing from the politicians and pundits have left much of the national discourse confused and fragmented. But the world is changing whether we want to accept it or not.

When I observe the rise of China, I see a civilization stretching far back into the hallowed mists of antiquity. I see a nation of inventors, engineers, thinkers, and visionaries with a ravenous hunger to succeed and excel in all things. I see a nation of optimists who dare to dream and aspire to rejuvenate their homeland for the collective prosperity of all Chinese people. We were not so different once upon a time.

America has the capital, the resources, the science, the ingenuity and the means to continue to thrive and prosper for centuries to come. There's just this persistent rot at the core of our Republic that won't mend – a wound that, if left untreated, will surely lead to our doom. Anti-intellectualism is spreading amongst the populace. In the absence of a true leftist movement built on progressive values, the far-right has taken hold like barbarous invaders marching to the edge of our citadel that is the American Republic. Their words and ideas are like the bubonic plague, transmitted across a wide variety of mediums which appeal to primitive emotions and prejudice rather than logic, reason, and introspection.

To those like me who prioritize fact over superstition, humanity over bigotry, science over religion, and collective prosperity over selfish greed, the entire country seems to have lost its god-damned mind. After all it was WE, the American People, who voted for this convicted criminal, a seditionist, and a nazi-sympathizer who has unashamedly boasted his autocratic machinations to the country.

The mainstream corporate media has even taken an apologetic and capitulatory tone while it increasingly stifles dissenting voices on the left side of the spectrum. Congress and the Senate has become complicit in this decay and the courts have surrendered their mandate to uphold the rule of law and the values laid out by the founding fathers. A man

who should have been tried for treason will now sit in the oval office once more... MAGA, the enemies of the Republic, now stand at our city gates and we invite them in with open arms... What depraved timeline is this?

Those who believe that the Democrats are the only ones who can act as a bulwark against rightwing tyranny will be severely disappointed. The Democrats grow weaker and more cowardly by the day. What does the party stand for anymore? There is no *true* leftist movement in America. The "*Radical Left*" which conservatives decry is but a made-up fiction. The few who consider themselves "left-leaning" fight amongst themselves and focus primarily on identity politics while the right is unified in their shared disdain for us and all that we represent. They have systematically picked us apart and monopolized the national conversation with a legion of billionaire-backed influencers. The political left has no major voices to counter the dangerous propagandists like Charlie Kirk or the vacuous buffoons such as Joe Rogan.

Needless to say, corporate and online media seldom supports progressive content creators as we are more likely to be deplatformed for not aligning with the interests of patrician oligarchs. Their algorithms ensure that we remain invisible to the vast majority of people. And thus, in our absence, the prevalent disease of far-right-conservatism will continue to spread its devilish dominion.

We are steadfastly losing this battle for the heart and soul of America. If the democratic party does not step away from their patrician backers and embrace a properly leftist form of democratic socialism which benefits ALL people, then there is no saving this country. The America I love will continue to sink further into the dark abyss of theocratic fascism until it can no longer claw itself out of the deep. If

Jesus of Nazareth were to be resurrected today, it's unlikely that the modern conservative would even recognize him. They would all sooner condemn him as a brown-skinned communist and crucify him a second time.

How can we hope to prevail against such unfettered idiocy? Perhaps there *is* no victory to be had? Maybe, just maybe, the end had already come the moment a naively reconciliatory Joe Biden appointed Merrick Garland as the Secretary of State? Biden foolishly sought appeasement with the enemy and, as a consequence, ended up legitimizing their cause. Merrick Garland did everything in his power to obstruct, deny, and delay all efforts to properly investigate, prosecute and hold accountable the traitor Donald Trump. And now we have arrived here at this uncertain juncture in history. Perhaps the American Republic is a lost cause?

With the utmost sincerity, I genuinely yearn for the day where everything which I have written in these essays will be proven historically incorrect. I just hope that, for all my grandiloquence and egotistical ramblings, that I am made out as erroneous in all of my assumptions about America. I pray to whatever gods may be that America really *does* reach a new golden age where we can all thrive. But as of this writing, I remain unconvinced of this. My views retain their cynical and depressively bleak outlook.

We can only hope that our institutions hold and that the courts do their job in restraining the ambitions of this man. Else, absent a popular uprising, I know not how else we can preserve the Republic. Civil protests will do nothing. But no matter what happens here in the American heartland, China will continue its ascension on the world stage. Who knows? Perhaps America's ultimate decline will come *not* from a raw contest of peer civilizations, but from our own stupidity?

With Donald Trump and his billionaire accomplices bragging about how they plan to do their absolute darndest to undermine American democracy, I must consider how best to approach **The Manga Dream** in the coming years. Having always gravitated to the far east since I was a young lad, I'm willing to bet that the future belongs not to the western world, but to **Asia**. It's not just China that is rising. India is set to surpass Japan and Germany in nominal GDP, soon to become the third largest economy. This growth trend can be observed throughout much of the ASEAN nations such as Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Some are fearful of what will happen should the day arrive when America is no longer number one. I believe that such a historic event will be hugely beneficial. For too long, we Americans have grown accustomed to being the greatest; comfortable in complacency while at the same looking down on the world. Rather than look beyond to learn from others, we have retreated inwards into our own panopticon.

For too long have we been convinced by the myth of American exceptionalism. And in our collective hubris, we have failed to recognize that much of the world is not only catching up to us, but in some ways, is even surpassing us. Losing our spot at the summit would force us to reflect and ponder. It may provide us with an excellent opportunity to cease the infighting, introspect, ask some tough questions, and heal as a nation. But until then, I suspect things will only get crazier and more violent once Trump takes office... Will we even see another presidential election come 2028? Now that is a rather disturbing thought.

In the meantime, I must remain steadfast and focused on the manga dream. When the day finally comes to pursue life abroad, I can only hope that my American passport isn't

reduced to a worthless piece of paper on account of my would-be Führer... Or worse... That the American people will be barred from leaving under the guise of forced loyalty and national security; rendering us as prisoners in our own country. I suppose only time will tell... I hope I'm proven wrong... Come January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, we shall soon find out.

To my fellow Americans, stay safe and stay vigilant. To those who did NOT vote in favor of fascism and remain diametrically opposed to the Trumpian parasites, know that you are not alone. We *will* get through this dark chapter. Always remember: E Pluribus Unum – Out of many, One.

(To be continued in **Part Three**?)