

Ask A Genius 55 – US, China, India, and Talent 1
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Scott: ‘Hot button’ issues still in the United States. Acceptance of basic ideas in various fields. In climatology, global warming; in biology, evolution, for examples.

Rick: There’s big science, then there’s everyday science. Big science includes everything everybody thinks of when they think of science, which includes the nature of the universe, climate change, evolution, but most people in science don’t work in big science, necessarily. Most people push science forward in smaller ways and work on smaller projects.

Scott: America is the most powerful country, ever. So, whatever it does in science affects not only its internal population, but the external ones, the stances on climate change, because the policies influence many coastal peoples in the world, and evolution, because it influences medicine, are important.

Rick: If we have policies that turn us into a bunch of yahoos, then we fall out of the top leadership position within 50 years because there are other countries that have the resources to take over from us as the leading countries in science and technology. We’re a big country relative to the world population. We have 325 million people out of 7.4 billion people. We have slightly less than 1/20th of the world’s population.

You have two countries that each consist of about 1/6th of the world’s population. China with 1.3 billion people and India with 1.2 billion people. Together, they are a little more than 1/3rd of the world’s population. They are both pro-technology countries. China in its recent past has been hampered by bad communistic policies, and perhaps even from the 1940s, 1950s onward China wrestled with bad communist leadership – killed a lot of its people, repressed a lot of its people, sent educated people to the countryside to work on the farms. That screwed China for many decades.

India has been a poor ass country. It remains poor, but at the same time with 1.2 billion people. There are enough people who aren’t poor and who are probably educated that they probably have at least as many people who are tech savvy as our population, even while they are struggling with being poor. China is getting better at scaling back on the communist government interference in technology, and getting better at the government facilitating the development of technology.

I think it’s fairly obvious that they think they can achieve whatever position they want to achieve in the world, which is, I assume, to run the world as much as they can via technological superiority. If we’re not going to be technologically superior in America, to use a stupid cliché, ‘eat our lunch’ – probably not in the next 10 years, but maybe in the next 50 years.

Scott: Three things come to mind there. Two are ethnic and linguistic issues. Another is a statement by Lee Kuan Yew, the deceased ex-prime minister of Singapore – for 30 years. On the ethnic and linguistic issues, India has a bigger issue because it has caste, a

tremendous number of ethnicities, and a tremendous number of languages, which makes integration more difficult and processes in the country slower – which by implication can make progress slow. China, it has mostly one language with different dialects, mostly one people, at least by a large margin – the Han, and those simple pervasive factors can make it more able to develop at a faster rate.

Rick: Before you get to the third one, that's what makes China scarier than India because China has one time zone across one country! Which is insane with a country that's 4,000 or 5,000 miles wide, they have more unification than India, but they're both scary. In that, India may be chopped up into these little pieces by bad infrastructure, by caste, by lack of common language, but still they've got 1.2 billion people to deploy.

1.2 billion people who want the things that people want, which means they can have inefficiencies and still do very well in competition with us because they have 900 million more people than we do. They can still waste a lot of those people via those people being trapped in the wrong places, in the wrong castes. They can still do well. China, with its monolithic culture, and focus on being a technologically superior country, and having more than a billion people than we do, if we want to maintain our position, we're in trouble.

Maintaining our position involves America being the greatest place to do technology, move to America and have freedom, it's fun in America. If you're a nerdy guy, you might become reasonably affluent, meet awesome women, live in an awesome place and have awesome stuff, and not have to worry about having to say the right thing, and without having to kiss the right party member's butt. As long as the world sees America as a place where you can become Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Wolf of Wall Street* via doing tech, then we'll be kind of okay, but China seems to make it fun to do tech over there, where if you're the head of a tech thing over there then you can live a rich person's life. All of the things people associate with an awesome life in America.

I'm sure there might be some protocols, but a lot of those things are probably left out. And if you live in a big industrial city, and if you're a big tech mogul, you probably get to eat great food, have great romantic partners, and cars, and places to live. If we're going to be a country of yahoos, where you've got a bunch of racist dumbshits running around and making things tough for brown people, if you're some super smart kid from India, do you want to live in China and live awesomely or do you want to live in India and live awesomely?

If America is going to be a country of dumbshits and yahoos, where somebody is going to be roughing you up on the street because they don't like your color, and if we have a country that starts denying tech visas to people because we want to reserve smart person jobs for America's smart people who may or may not want them...

Scott: ...You mean the HIBs.

Rick: Yea, if we start messing with that program, then America becomes less and less promising as the country where you go to achieve your dreams. China doesn't have to do that much. The worse we become then the less China needs to do to become the country where you achieve your

dreams. For a while, I was watching a bunch of Bollywood movies. Yea, a lot of people are poor as crap in Indian cities, but there are many places in India for people to live awesomely. Yea, there might be people living poorly two blocks away, but there are places for people to live awesomely in India.

The less awesome America is, then the easier it will be for other countries to hang onto or grab people who do want to live awesomely, and a racist or yahoo government will lose us talented people.



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