



BBC World Service

G20–Pandemic Coordination

China’s Contributions

Robert Lawrence Kuhn

March 25, 2020

BBC HOST: The G20 gathering of world leaders, which includes China and Russia, will meet later today, Thursday. Hubei Province used to be the epicenter. Yesterday, the deaths from coronavirus in Spain surpassed China. So, can the nations come together? And who is going to lead the worldwide effort?

Earlier, I spoke to Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a long-term advisor to China's leaders and multinational corporations. He is the host of *Closer to China with R.L. Kuhn* on the Chinese TV channel CGTN.

ROBERT LAWRENCE KUHN: The power of the G20 is both real and perceived: real, in terms of coordinated economic and financial policies that we hope will be enacted; and perceived, in terms of creating a sense of aligned interests and cooperation.

The perceived is actually more meaningful because the world needs encouragement that there would be some kind of combined effort or mutual support, especially at this time



between China and the US, because a strong sense of coordination and cooperation coming out of the G20 – which would have to be founded on the US and China having a common platform – will be a needed boost.

BBC HOST: How much of a barrier to talks is President Trump calling this the “Chinese virus”, or do the Chinese kind of rise above it?

KUHN: There has been rhetoric on both sides, but I think in the last few days we've seen a mutual de-escalation. The Chinese ambassador to the US basically said that accusations that the U.S. Army is responsible for it was “crazy”. Trump then backed away from the “Chinese virus” kind of thing.

BBC HOST: So what will the challenges in these talks be? China is a huge manufacturing giant and appears to have turned the corner. But the US is just experiencing it, is at the bottom end of the curve. So, it feels like China comes from a greater position of power.

KUHN: Certainly, China has a great contribution to make. China, because of its great manufacturing capability, and because of the need in the world for everything from masks and protective clothing to ventilators and pharmaceuticals, China can really play a major role – and they are beginning to – in helping the world.

It had a two-month head start and it has “battle tested” medical teams – and they're sending [them] to countries suffering under this siege. And China can bring these experts with contemporary, frontline epidemic experiences. They've evolved the knowhow in fighting and containing the virus. And so the world can indeed benefit from China's experience.

I mean, China's not happy to have been the first place where the epidemic started and spread. But China is now reaching out. They've already sent medical teams to Italy, to Iran, Spain.

BBC HOST: Did you see them also being sent to the US? Could you see, you know, Chinese equipment, Chinese teams?

KUHN: I think there is communication between the healthcare professionals in the U.S. and in China. I've heard that first or second hand in some cases. So, I think that is going on. I think there is some sensitivities. Yes, China was a little bit chary about having U.S. CDC experts in China at the very early stage — maybe China really didn't know what was going on. In the US, I think they would be similarly chary at this point.

But overall, China's contribution to get this contained in a worldwide sense under control is absolutely critical, especially those areas that haven't really broken out yet.

BBC HOST: So that's Robert Lawrence Kuhn's take on the wider G20 meeting later today to try and coordinate a worldwide effort against the virus.

**<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w172wpksnxdjmq4>
Begins ~27:40 ends ~31:35**