



SHANGHAI EYE
All About Shanghai and China

<https://www.shanghaieye.com.cn/detail?postId=111441>



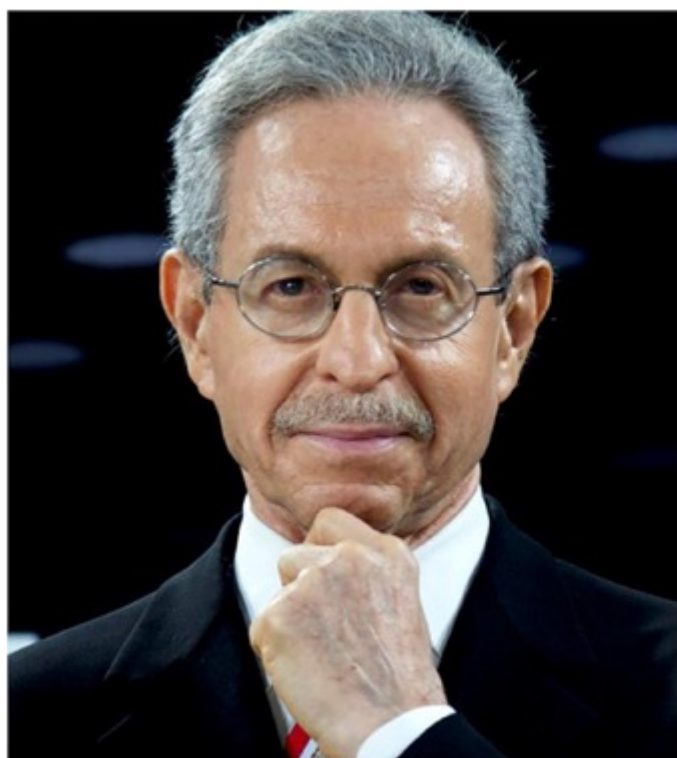
EXCLUSIVE

VOICES: It's KEY to understand how China's great transformation happened and continues – Dr. Robert Kuhn

2022-10-15 18:53

Dr. Kuhn is a commentator on CNN, BBC, CCTV, Fox Business and other media. He is one of only two Americans to have received the China Reform Friendship Medal in December 2018 from Chinese President Xi Jinping. This is one of China's highest awards which honors 10 foreigners who have contributed to China's reform and opening up over the past four decades.

Shanghai Media Group (SMG) interviews Dr. Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a public intellectual, international corporate strategist and invest banker, as well as a renowned expert on China and the recipient of the China Reform Friendship Medal, China's highest award.



SMG: At the end of 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping made clear instruction at the Diplomatic World Conference in China that China should integrate into the world in a more proactive manner. You said at the time that this was the first time China made such a statement in eight years, and China's diplomatic philosophy deserves applause. Eight years later, China has put forward a series of new concepts of security and development. What's your opinion on this type of change in China's diplomacy? And what is the main to global governance?

Kuhn: The transformation in China's diplomacy and international policies is quite dramatic. And it has an important effect on the world. We can go back and

look at the history, China in the early days of the People's Republic, and indeed, until President Xi Jinping largely took office, China had a reactive policy for its own benefit. It was the question of the times: China had to deal with its own internal development and its reform and opening up and to build the economy internally. It needed to have a relationship with the developed world in terms of capital and technology during the early days of reform. So foreign policy was largely reactive.

As China has grown, and particularly under President Xi, China has taken a much more proactive role. The transformation is actually quite dramatic. I would say it starts, in essence, with China's outward participation in the global economy which began with exports, but then developed in other ways: Chinese companies began getting involved outside of China.

The major catalyst for it was President Xi Jinping's announcement in 2013 of the Yi Dai Yi Lu, the Belt and Road Initiative. This was an initial vision, and it has grown over the years to build infrastructure, in particular, in developed (developing) countries. What this that did is it really catalyzed China's involvement with the world in a proactive way.

Normally, when neighbors are next to each other, there is disputes on territoriality that go back in the history, virtually every country in the world has this. And so that's why one needs a security way of thinking in the world. And China has had its own proposal to increase its own participation in what it would seem to be a multipolar world. There are very contentious issues in the world.

One does not have to agree with all of China's diplomatic positions to appreciate that China does want to participate and should participate. The largest population, the second largest economy, the largest trading nation, the largest nation with international reserves, participates in all aspects of international affairs. China's proactive involvement on that is a net positive for the world, even if many countries, particularly developed countries disagree with this or that policy. And that's why you have international organizations, why you need security, because there is disagreement. Most important thing is to engage in serious dialogue both publicly and privately."



SMG: Eight years ago, you pointed out that the United States should abandon the Cold War mentality; containing China is outdated and counterproductive. However, in the past eight years, the United States has become more and more determined on that strategy of containing China, and the gloom of the Cold War is hovering over the world. What do you think about this strategy from the United States against China?

Kuhn: I have always said that the bilateral relationship between China and the US is the cornerstone of not just world peace and stability, but world prosperity. I still believe that, but the last maybe seven, eight years has seen a cascading negative approach. The reasons for this are complex.

The seriousness of the problem can be seen in each country. If we just take the US and China, the two countries I'm most familiar with, you see the extreme polarity in both countries, where each side, the vast majority, blames the other side. You see polls that literally just come out, have shown in a dozen or so of the western countries, including Asian liberal democracy, Japan, South Korea, where China's image has cascaded to its lowest level ever. In parallel, you look in China, particularly in social media, some polls, although they're less reliable, show that the vast majority of the Chinese people blame the US for trying to contain China.

The way to go about it is challenging, but the prescriptions that I would have is number one, don't make things worse, do whatever you can not to exacerbate. Secondly, do not to expect short term resolution. Time is a wonderful healer of all sorts of things, and sometimes it

SMG: So for more than three decades, you have visited more than hundred cities and villages in China. And in July 2019, the documentary Voice from the Frontline, China's Poverty Alleviation filmed by your team was broadcasting in the united states. So in your opinion, what enlightenment can China bring to the world with its experience in poverty alleviation?

Kuhn: I believe that China's experience and approach to poverty alleviation is a story for the ages that is one of the most important events in contemporary human history. And future historians will look upon this as an area of importance. If we look at the world, poverty and great disparities is arguably one of the largest problems, perhaps the biggest problem in the world, maybe other than climate change, which obviously would affect the whole planet.

SMG: When it comes to China-US relations, you once proposed to take history as a mirror. Could you please elaborate on that?

Kuhn: So hundreds of millions of people in China now have adequate healthcare, they have flushed toilets, they have excellent education for their children for the first time. This is tremendous benefits that the world can learn from and benefit from, certainly the Chinese people have benefited. And at the same time, we have this proliferation of very serious problems in the world and conflict. And so we need to see what we can do to keep the problems as dormant as possible, and to share the benefits as much as possible. This is a real challenge today, but IBy Ching-Yi Chang/Li Yuanqing

Editor: Wang Zhong