

# Obstacles to understanding the real China

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Recently, I encountered on the way back to the aircraft, a French friend. She said to me: "The whole world is talking about China. Everyone is quite concerned." I had not seen her for years. For her to have made these remarks so soon after meeting me, I believe, was of some significance.

Later, I met Mr Mahbubani, dean of National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. I asked him: Is everyone a little afraid of China? He said: Yes.

Having people afraid of you is not a good thing. When people are afraid of you, they will be against you. Why does this happen? This is worth pondering.

People are afraid of China due to the enormous changes in the world. After the end of the Cold War, a number of powers emerged, China being the most prominent example. The rise of China has attracted all kinds of speculation. Out of 7 billion people in the world, only a handful have a real understanding of China's peaceful development policy. Most people judge China's rise on the precedent of the rise of great powers in history, which is associated with aggression and expansion. Why should China be an exception?

Western worries are also due to their situation. The United States remains the world's only superpower, but the financial crisis has impacted it badly, posing a struggle to its economic recovery. In Europe, the financial crisis triggered a sovereign debt crisis. Here in Europe, the pessimistic mood of the locals is beyond my imagination. In contrast, China's economy has still maintained a rapid growth momentum. This has undoubtedly increased the concern, worry and even fear of the West towards China.

China's rise is a rise of 1.3 billion people. There is no precedent in human history of the rise of a country of 1.3 billion people. The rise of China will certainly have a major impact on existing structures. This will inevitably lead to mixed feelings.

Moreover, the global mainstream media is still controlled by the West. They harbor deep prejudices about China's social system and the leadership of the Communist Party. These prejudices affect their reports on China. They will also affect the Western understanding of China.

Recently, in the Second Nishan World Civilization Forum, I chaired a lecture entitled "How to Understand China". There were four participants in the lecture: Zhao Qizheng, Director of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the CPPCC National Committee, Valérie Terranova, former French President Jacques Chirac's Advisor for Culture, Michael Kahn-Ackermann, founder of Goethe Institute China, and Stewart J Brown, Head of Edinburgh University's School of Divinity.

I asked them, "In order to help the world understand China, what needs to be

done”? Zhao Qizheng said that it was necessary to let the world know the true China.

Ackerman agreed with Zhao, saying that to know the true China, it would be necessary to take a comprehensive perspective. Although China has made great achievements, it also faces many difficulties. What the outside world is most afraid of is the "monolithic" China. Let the world see the diversity of China, and they will see that the Chinese are not that different from them, and their fears will dissipate.

Professor Brown believes that China must let the world know that China has opened up. The rise of China will inevitably encounter many challenges and problems – this is perfectly normal. The world should understand that China means no harm.

Terranova put it bluntly: China needs a little more confidence. The rise of a large country like China would inevitably provoke a global discussion. The Chinese do not have to respond to everything

Zhao also stressed that, in order to let the world know the real China, China must strive to strengthen “public diplomacy”. “Public diplomacy”, is the job of the government; it is also the job of people from all walks of life; it is also the job of the public.

Dispelling concerns and fears of China cannot be accomplished in a day. Chinese society needs to express its creativity and put in massive efforts. Only by gradually eliminating this anxiety and fear, can we make full use of the strategic opportunities presented to us in the second decade of the 21st century.

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