

The Interview with Jürgen Kurz on the Guangchayuan Platform

Observer.com: Why did you come to China?

Duan George: More than forty years ago, I started in a small company in Germany. It was a Start Up in Automation Industry and we were only twenty people in this company. Now it is a worldwide leading company in our field. I came to China 18 years ago because in Germany the company was established and I expected the future market will be in Asia. Therefore, I set foot on Chinese land in 2002 and obtained the license to operate the company in 2003. Up to now, I have lived in China for nearly 19 years.

Observer.com: After living in China for so long, what has left you the deepest impression? What do you think of the Chinese people?

Duan George: Chinese parents will give everything to make their children live better. Of course, all parents in the world will support their children, but Chinese parents will buy houses for their children to marry, which is strange for a German guy. For me the biggest difference is that people in China still remember the past poverty. Although Germany was defeated in 1945, it had recovered well in the 1960s and 1970s, and during the movement called the 68th Germany stripped away many shadows of the past. So we feel in Germany completely different and real poverty is not settled in the society.

China's current social security system is still developing. Germany's social security system is very developed, but we still feel that it has many problems. However, Germany has only 80 million people, while China has 1.4 billion people. Building a good social security system for 1.4 billion people is an unprecedented challenge, and it will take some time.

Another fact what really impress me: When I first came to China, Shanghai was very different from other places, but today even former poor provinces have been catching up very quickly in recent years.

Observer.com: So do you think that the phenomenon of Chinese people buying houses for their children has nothing to do with traditional Chinese thinking?

Duan George: I think it is a habit developed in the last 40 years. Before people could not effort it. It is very special habit, you can find similar habits in some western countries but not in Germany. In the West we always believe that the Chinese Communist Party controls everything in daily life, but in fact, the Chinese Communist Party has very little influence on the people's lives.

Observer.com: What do you think is the reason why Westerners have this misunderstanding?

Duan George:

I have the feeling that, generally speaking, normal Chinese people are more open-minded, more curious for other ways of thinking, than the majority of people in the West. They can often understand the ideas of Westerners, but Westerners often don't understand Chinese people. Western people often believe the western way of life is the best.

Shortly after I came to China a high executive manager from a Chinese company told me: Juergen, you have to understand the difference between the Western and the Eastern System. The Western system is a system working with individual encouragement, while Eastern Systems are mainly based on a rule with punishment. Although this view is very sloppy, it is not completely unreasonable when you think about it.

In the West we always pay attention to the question how individuals live happily. In Asia mainly China, personal happiness is also very important, but more important is the overall happiness of

the family and the society. Chinese culture, driven by Confucius, always has the target to develop a person to a good member of the society.

Under the corporate system, some penalties will be taken in pursuit of stability, but sometimes I question whether the penalties taken by some Chinese companies are really useful.

We need accept that the West and the East is simply different. I do not support the western idea to classify this with a moral standard.

A nice sample for the Chinese thinking I recognized, when I was taking the Chinese driver's license test. I found that about 25% of the questions were about how the driver would be punished. Such question you will never find in a western driving license test. Of course, I failed in the first attempt.

I publish opinions and articles on Twitter and on my homepage to defeat misunderstandings about China. This is not to speak out for China, but to speak out for justice and fairness. I think one of the reasons why the West has such a misunderstanding of China is that China has been an agricultural society for a very long time. People must work very hard to survive, and family members must depend on each other. Most Chinese people don't want to be involved in political games. When you read a book like "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms", you know that it is common for people to switch camps when playing "political games."

Under such circumstances, the only relatively stable relationship is the family relationship. The tradition that has continued in this way has made Chinese people pay much attention to the family, and the individual is a part of the family, which is very different from the Western emphasis on personal happiness. Therefore, Westerners will feel that the Chinese are all part of the community. China is developing very fast, and the poverty that was regarded as ordinary 20 or 30 years ago no longer exists.

However, Britain and the USA have ruled the world for about 200 hundred years, and the stereotypes and mentality formed during this process are difficult to change all at once. I think the West should recognize one thing, that is, the world is changing dramatically! The West is no longer and should be no longer the leader of the world. We in the West have to accept that we are a part of the world, not more and not less.

Observer.com: In your opinion, does the Western media play an important role in shaping Western stereotypes?

Duan George: I think the ignorance and low ground experience of the western media in China play a very important role. First western journalists really do not know how the society in China is organized. Journalists are always outsiders, so they only make their own projections and another problem is caused from their basic understanding and education. They are educated always to question what politicians or others tell them. If European Journalists reports about China, they always have a narrative in mind and search for a prove from the other side. That means a chinese person telling them openly their idea, western Journalists mostly understand a complete different message. Finally they are more engaged in creation, rather than reaching conclusions based on actual investigations. They believe that "China is like this", but they have never questioned it. Instead, they find all kinds of so-called "evidence" to support their idea.

Observer.com: We saw that you went to Xinjiang before and posted a lot of photos there on Twitter. Did you go there specifically because you wanted to counter the Western media's smearing of Xinjiang?

Duan George: Not exactly like that. In fact, my wife is a Han from Xinjiang, so for me, going to Xinjiang is a normal thing, but in recent years I have been very busy with work, and I have been for 5 years not in Xinjiang. There have been many very wrong and partially fabricated reports in the western media about Xinjiang recently, for example, Uyghur language is no longer taught there. I knew they are fake, but I wanted to collect some actual evidence which I also want show to members from my party. So I went there, took pictures from schools, mosque, vocational

education centers, cotton fields and factories and talked with several Uyghur people.

Very impressive was for me the really successful poverty alleviation work of the Chinese government, which is hard to imagine today in the West. In the West, people do not believe that a government intervention can bring big benefit. Total different in China. Here people expect a strong, helpful government and they follow the advises because they accept the help. The Chinese government servants are today dedicated to help people, and you can see, they are very good educated.

Observer.com: Based on your close investigations in Xinjiang, how different do you think Western media reports on Uighurs in Xinjiang and the real situation?

Duan George: As explained before, I think western journalist are telling more stories than reporting the reality about Xinjiang and the livelihood of Uighur people. I explained that in the report on my homepage (www.juergenk.de)

Observer.com: We can see that Western media seems to have a dual-standard attitude towards China, and what China does seems to them to be wrong. More and more Chinese people have spoken for China on Western social platforms, but they have not received much attention from the Western media. They still speak their own way. Why do Western media treat China this way?

Duan George: In the West, the training method of journalism is to look through the prosperous surface and find the hidden dark side. Therefore, when Western reporters learn about the positive situation of China's development, no matter whether the source of the information is the Chinese government or the private sector, they will today not believe it. Instead they will report more suspicions than facts but create the impression they know what is going on. I am thinking for example about a report from beginning of May in the German magazine "Der Spiegel"..

Observer.com: However, what a media like the BBC does is not to explore the dark side of China, but to create a story, which you have just mentioned.

Duan George: Yes, the BBC is probably in this times the biggest story teller about China. For me the BBC has a political agenda. Beside that it looks they only report any small incident when it can be used for their Agenda. Western reporters are also ordinary people. It is impossible for them to understand everything what is going on. But they must deliver a story to their company. Imagine what would happen if a reporter comes up with a total different story as they reported in the last years. Even when this story is true and got analyzed, nobody from his editorial staff will believe him and he will get big problems for his career. These journalists have nearly no chance to report the facts in China. That China violates human rights is a kind of religion in western medias! Every different opinion is blasphemy. So western journalists, who report negative about China, feel that everything what they do is right. It's a complicate situation and not easy to solve.

Observer.com: In addition to Western media, the US government has also frequently attacked Xinjiang since Xi came to power. Why do you think this is?

Duan George: Shortly after Biden won the election, an important US thinktank, the Atlantic Council, published a document, called "The Longer Telegram – Toward A New American China Strategy". If you read this document, than you have a kind of Play Book for all the US moves. I think the Sino-US relations cannot really improve at the moment. Trump was an impolite person. Biden is much more experienced but he also said very clear and very arrogant: Within my presidency I will not allow that China will overtake the USA in GDP. Since he is in office his complete policy is on this path. The United States has led the world for about 150 years, and now China is returning to its original position.

The political class in the USA knows this. What we see just now is the development of the US

Strategy: They focus on several points what you all can read in The Longer Telegram. They attach Xi Jinping as a ruthless leader, they attach the CPC for violating human rights, they play with Taiwan and they create stories in HK.

The U.S. government's choice to attack Xinjiang's economical base by banning the cotton and polysilicone industry is not without purpose. If they destabilize the economical development – I don't believe it works – and China would struggle in the future in the poverty alleviation than Xinjiang is the province with most likely to possibility for social turmoil. The strong monotheistic believe in this region for some minorities is a possible playground for promises. Therefore, Xinjiang has become a place where rumors spread by the West. For the United States the ETIM (East Turkistan Islamic Movement) is a welcomed group to create problems to the Chinese Government.

The possible strategical idea is that messing up Xinjiang will cause a chain reaction in China. Once Xinjiang is instigated to split out of China, it proves that China's current government is a weak government. In the traditional Chinese concept, the Chinese government must be strong. A weak government will not gain the respect and trust of the people. If a government is weak, it means that it has lost its "mandate" and it is time to change its dynasty. Therefore, it looks that the U.S. government is playing this card, and arranged this strategy also in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The biggest problem is that many people in the USA have a totally wrong perception from China's rise. Kishore Mahbani, a Singaporean scholar described it in a very nice way: Decades ago, when the United States and the West first contacted China, China was like a kitten in the living room. They turned around, gave some food and made their job. As they turned back they suddenly found a tiger sitting in the living room. Now they are shocked and have no idea how to cooperate with the tiger. But fact is: If you are friendly to others, others will be friendly to you, you are hostile to others, and others will be hostile to you. Today Chinese people are becoming more and more self confident. I personally think that is good!

I personally try to convince my people in Germany and Europe that Europe should not line up with the USA against China!. I am not alone. The world is facing the biggest challenge in humanity: the climate change. Just this days a horrible flooding hit my region in Germany where I am from. More than 100 people died! This is a problem that all mankind needs to face. No one can win this fight alone! Now we should join hands and cooperate well and not step back to divide the world into the West and the rest!

Observer.com: Apart from Xinjiang and Shanghai, where have you been to China?

Duan George: I am a person who likes to explore and read. I have been to all provinces in China.

Observer Network: What is your opinion on Taiwan Province?

Duan George: Taiwan is a beautiful place, but compared with Mainland China, Taiwan's development is slow. Today Taiwan is a place with a very "historical sense". It does not possess the modern sense of mainland China. The Chinese mainland government has made great achievements in poverty alleviation. Now you can go to the small towns in Guizhou and Yunnan to know that they are very advanced. I have been to a village in Guangxi mountains, where there is 5G, and it is already connected to the world. As an island in China.

For me Taiwan is today like a museum of China in the last century.

Observer.com: Biden once called for so-called "democracies" to unite. However, this looks like a joke to the Chinese people. Because what those so-called "democracies" do is not democratic at all, and shouldn't "democracy" be very tolerant of various ideologies? But they paint the ground as a prison and distinguish between the enemy and the enemy in the name of "democracy". This is actually an authoritarian approach.

Duan George: Yes. When I visited the China Chengde-Chongqing Railway Museum in Neijiang, I thought that it was also the Chinese people who built the big railroad connecting the east and

the west in the United States. The United States treated them at that time in a way as slaves that a democratic country could not use. I also agree with your second point of view that Biden actually misused the word "democracy". The West still has a problem, that is, it is difficult for them to accept that China's consultative democracy is also a kind of democracy. It is only not established on the concept "One Person, one vote". But China is established on many consultative processes before they make any decision. I believe in the sentence: In China you cannot change the party, but the policy. This is very much opposite to western democracies.

Observer.com: In your opinion, how should China tell its own story and let the world know a real China?

Duan George: This is a very difficult question. As I said, Western media do not believe in the explanations of the Chinese government or the people. Therefore, if you argue for the real China, even if it is reasonable, it is often not successful. I think China must develop other, more practical ways. An example from Europe can be used as a reference.

Germany and France were once feuds and fought for hundreds of years. After World War II, the two countries shook hands and then led the European Union. However, in this process, what the two countries did was not only meet the two leaders, shake hands, and say "Let's become partners", but also set up mutual exchanges at the urban and rural levels. Visits and exchange projects. When more and more people understand each other, each other is no longer strangers.

Therefore, I think China should open systematically the connection from Urumqi to Europe. Tourism in Xinjiang can help to change the thinking. Invite western tourists to Xinjiang to see what the real situation is. I told a friend that I had been to Xinjiang before, and he found it incredible, because in his opinion, Westerners cannot go to Xinjiang. As long as more and more Westerners go to Xinjiang, rumors about Xinjiang will be self-defeating and will eventually be annihilated in the long river of history. It takes time.