

## **Modern China, from a Chinese perspective**

Douwe van den Oever / 05.06.2019

Thank you for having organised this excellent event with Ronnie Chan. I found it a highly illuminating experience, as it was a microcosm of the current interaction between a rising China and an increasingly jittery West.

What we witnessed that evening was modern China, from a Chinese perspective. In the West, such a perspective is rarely seen first-hand, especially in such an unadulterated manner, as most of what we know about China and its history is either filtered by our own Western biases or our lack of understanding about the subject.

The Trump administration now speaks about “a fight with a different civilisation, and a different ideology”. Is this really a fight, or have we just decided, by default, to see it as a fight? It should not be forgotten that China merely is regaining its position as the world’s largest power, a position that it held for over two thousand years, and which was lost for just a century.

Notwithstanding the current actions of the US government, firmly locked into protecting its current position as the dominating superpower, Chinese presence will inexorably continue to increase on the Eurasian continent.

Quoting Ronnie Chan, we first need to get our facts straight, and, in my opinion, also strive to transcend our Western-centric worldview. China operates very differently from the West. As the French Sinologist Simon Leys aptly said: “China is the other pole of the human experience”. A better understanding of China and its historically evolved value system, this from a Chinese perspective, is crucial for ensuring mutual understanding and, hence, lasting peace. Otherwise, no meaningful interaction can take place.

**Douwe van den Oever advises organisations as to their interactions with China, frequently lectures on the subject, and is fluent in Chinese, which helps quite a bit, by the way (vdo@domainshift.com).**