

# CHINA & US FOCUS DIGEST



## TOGETHER WE FIGHT

ISSN 2414-0783



9 772414 078005

# CHINA & US FOCUS

*Tung Chee Hwa*

*Chairman*

*China-United States Exchange Foundation*

## *Editors*

*Zhang Ping*

*Hong Chang*

## *Special Advisor*

*Zhu Yinghuang*

## *Assistant Editor*

*Peng Hui*

China-US Focus Digest is a bi-monthly magazine of exclusive commentaries on China-US relations. The articles express views of influential opinion leaders and scholars in China and the US on the issues faced by the two nations.

@ China-United States  
Exchange Foundation, 2019

For comments, please send to  
digest@cusef.org.hk



www.chinausfocus.com

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter: @ChinaUSFocus

With special thanks to Chatham Strategies  
and Shanghai Institutes for International Studies  
for their supports to www.chinausfocus.com  
and China-US Focus Digest

## CONTENTS

### THE DAY THAT CHANGED THE WORLD P. 07

James Chau

The pandemic will go down in history as one of the most devastating to human lives, economic systems, and global order. But what we remember from here on out depends on how we proceed in the mitigation of this crisis.

### HUMANITY & SCIENCE V.S. FEAR & STIGMA P. 12

### THE ONLY RATIONAL RESPONSE P. 14



Chen Dongxiao

To overcome the coronavirus challenge, empathy, solidarity and coordination are required, along with an update of an outmoded health security concept characterized by the “panic-neglect” cycle.

### NOTE TO AMERICA: TRY SCIENCE P. 20

George Koo

It was the world's most dramatic two weeks for the turmoil caused by the novel coronavirus, and the United States had been dragging its feet, with President Donald Trump in a pattern of denial that downplayed just how serious things were. The U.S. needs to learn from China, and do so in a hurry.

**76 DAYS AT WUHAN THE EPICENTER** P. 28

**CHINA'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS** P. 29

**TCM EFFECTIVE FOR COVID-19** P. 30

**CHINA'S INSTRUCTIVE RESPONSE** P. 31

Jin Liangxiang

The coronavirus epidemic's end may be in sight because of China's aggressive measures. It can provide a road map that others can adapt to their own conditions.

**WHO HAS THE ADVANTAGE?** P. 36

He Yafei

Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. China has confidence in its socialist path, theory, system and culture. And its strengths are evident in its response to the coronavirus epidemic.

**DEALING WITH THE EPIDEMIC IS NOT AN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION** P. 40

Li Zheng

Cooperation is needed now more than ever. Political stereotypes should be abandoned, joint research should be fostered and critical supply chains should be protected.

**DON'T GIVE UP EATING FOR FEAR OF CHOKING** P. 46

Zhou Xiaoming

Dismantling supply chains that took years, or even decades, to build is an expensive and time-consuming proposition. It makes more sense to preserve them.

**A NEW VISION FOR GLOBALIZATION** P. 52

Lawrence Lau

As the coronavirus epidemic is waning in China, serious new outbreaks have occurred elsewhere, and overseas visitors to China could bring the virus with them and start a new wave. Individual health documentation needs to be revived at international borders. At the same time, critical supply chains must have backup sources.

# CONTENTS

## COMPETITION AND THE CORONAVIRUS



David Shambaugh

The coronavirus has only deepened U.S.-China competition and could weaken America's global standing if Washington continues to stubbornly adhere to "America first" and forgo its long-standing international leadership.

P. 57

## IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CORONAVIRUS

Minxin Pei

China-U.S. relations could turn for the worse when the epidemic passes. But there's a glimmer of hope. If they take prompt action to ease the tension and cooperate in mitigating the health crisis, they can avoid what might be a devastating geopolitical conflict in the post-pandemic world.

P. 61

## MASK DIPLOMACY

Cheng Li

Ryan McElveen

In the wake of the global coronavirus epidemic, China and Japan have embarked on an unexpected path of reciprocal generosity.

P. 65

## TWO PATHS TO THE FUTURE

Dan Steinbock

The assassination of Iranian Major General Soleimani in Iraq shows that certain objectives, including regime change, have taken a perilous turn in the volatile Middle East.

P. 72

## LESSONS FROM SOLEIMANI'S DEATH

Zhou Bo

Scholars speak of the old Chinese idea of "wangdao" — an enlightened and benevolent power. But it doesn't require China to become a new hegemon.

P. 76



EDITOR'S NOTE

# Under the Same Sky

Zhang Ping

First and foremost, we would like to begin by paying tribute to the healthcare workers and first responders around the world for their relentless efforts in dealing with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Our thoughts are with them, and with all the individuals, families, and communities affected by this crisis.

We open this edition of Digest with China-US Focus Editor-at-Large and World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador James Chau, who shares his personal thoughts on the ongoing outbreak, which at this moment in time seems far from over. It continues to take lives, ravage economies, cause panic, and in some cases, foster hate and division. Based on his expertise in global health, Chau's observations are somber, yet hopeful.

Other Focus contributors featured in this issue provide insights and explore the impacts, far and near, of the pandemic on global growth, humanity, geopolitics, and global governance. Their commentaries shed light on how the worldwide fight against a largely unknown virus is opening a window of opportunity for China and the United States to narrow their ever-growing rifts, and how that window is quickly closing.

It is noteworthy that President Xi Jinping recently spoke with his American counterpart, President Donald Trump, after the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. During their phone conversation

on March 27, the two leaders pledged cooperation in fighting the scourge. Reports that medical professionals in both countries are comparing notes through videoconferences indeed raise hope of increased scientific and health collaboration between the two nations as the world races to find a cure.

As China has made major strides in containing the spread of COVID-19, and with its government seeking to stimulate the economy and restore the global supply chains, some of our contributors also discuss the lessons learned and how China's experience might help other nations.

"Although we are in different places, we are under the same sky." This message was written on boxes of medical supplies donated from Japan to Wuhan, the hardest-hit Chinese city. It is a message of unity and empathy that applies to all of humanity.

Ultimately, on behalf of the China US Focus editorial team, we believe it is life and public health, not politics, that should be our guiding light in resolving this pandemic. China and the U.S. should, and must, join hands to fight this virus – just as they once did for Ebola and the global financial crisis of 2007-08.

It's our fight, and humanity's fight. We are in it together, and we will emerge from it together, under the same sky.



Thank you





# The Day that Changed the World



**James Chau**

*Host of The China Current*

*Goodwill Ambassador for WHO and UNAIDS*

COVID-19 has yielded tragedy and shifts to our lifestyles unlike any other we have seen in a century. The pandemic will go down in history as one of the most devastating to human lives, economic systems, and global order. But what we remember from here on out depends on how we proceed in the mitigation of this crisis.

---

As a child, I often asked my parents where they were when major world events occurred: the day Winston Churchill was returned to 10 Downing Street, the day Neil Armstrong took one giant leap for mankind, and the days John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. were assassinated. All of this happened before I was born, so my mother and father,

and the stories they told me, provided a link to the historical markers of the post-war period.

Unlike all of these events, there is no official date for the global pandemic we now know as COVID-19. Scientists have not yet established when, where, nor how it first emerged – and perhaps

we may never know. But similar to AIDS – which is traced to June 1981, when the first cases in New York and Los Angeles appeared in a publication of the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention – I think of COVID-19 in terms of the day it impacted the world.

On January 23 this year, I was rushing to JFK for my early morning flight to Hong Kong, one day before Chinese New Year Eve and the traditional reunion dinner that typically occurs on that evening. Traffic was light in New York, but as time was tight, I made it to the airport, through security, and onto the plane before I saw the news coming out of Wuhan: that city, and eventually 14 others in Hubei province, had been locked down. The world was officially transformed.

“Lockdown”, a term familiar only to those old enough to remember the 9/11 attacks, has now become part of the global vocabulary, regardless of demographic. In the cur-

***“Lockdown”, a term familiar only to those old enough to remember the 9/11 attacks, has now become part of the global vocabulary.***



- ▲ World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus speaks at a daily briefing in Geneva, Switzerland, on Mar 9, 2020. WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic on Mar 11.

rent context, working from home in many industries has become the norm rather than the exception. Lockdown means that the anti-vaccine movement has been put on pause as scientists collaborate to find a cure. Producers of personal protective equipment are trading higher than some of the world’s best-known brands. Panic buying at supermarkets, pharmacies, and even gun shops have become commonplace; and, as such, concerns over where we’re going to find our most basic necessities are reshaping the conversations we have with our families.

***We are not properly positioned to prepare for the ‘future of now’: climate change, endemic poverty and hunger, COVID-19, and more.***

Today, we are required to respond in unprecedented ways to an unprecedented threat. And while we may have found ways to muddle through the global financial crisis in 2008, we are not properly positioned to prepare for the ‘future of now’: climate change, endemic poverty and hunger, COVID-19, and more.

Last September, in my capacity as a World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador, I joined world leaders at the launch of the report of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, an independent body intended to track the next health emergency and the accountability of governments. The warning from the participating leaders, including World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, was very clear: a disease epidemic or pandemic that would cause significant loss of lives, upend economies, and create social chaos was on its way. It was a question of “if”, not “when”. Yet all of this ultimately fell on deaf ears, and my concern is that it will continue to do so.



In late January, when the lockdown in Wuhan began, our team at The China Current – a partner platform of China-US Focus – stopped our regular work and moved to a complete focus on COVID-19. Our mission was to offer human stories impacted by the outbreak and interviews with leaders in health, science, and diplomacy shaping the response. Fifty episodes later, we have created a body of content that provides a public record of the virus when it happened, as it happened.

But what have we learned in that process?

On a personal level, COVID-19 has revolutionized the way I work. As a television news anchor, I am used to working with multiple camera crews, sound engineers, and lighting technicians. But there was no such opportunity this time around. The urgency to communicate the knowledge of a new virus meant learning to work in ways I haven't before. Our first interview with former WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan, for example, was conducted over a landline phone.

But with the exception of Dr. Arthur Reinhold, head of epidemiology at Berkeley's School of Public Health, all of our subsequent interviews have been done over FaceTime, WhatsApp, and WeChat. The video is grainy, and the sound isn't great, but it allows us to communicate with interviewees in real-time. Some of those conversations have helped steer the public narrative and understanding on COVID-19. We spoke to Professor Sharon Lewin soon after her laboratory at the Doherty Institute became the first outside China to isolate the virus. We connected with WHO Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan weeks before trials of repurposed drugs and candidate vaccines began. And we heard from Professor Gabriel Leung, who, as a key member of the WHO-China Joint Mission, was in the first line of experts to look at the gender and age of people first affected by the virus.

# 950,752

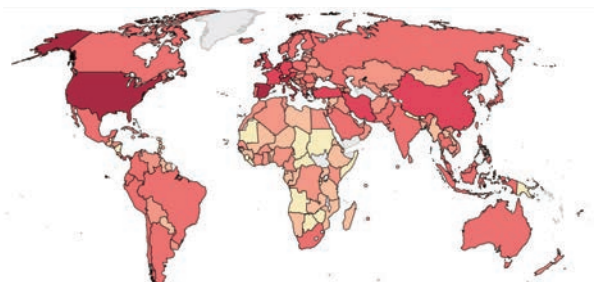
Confirmed cases worldwide

# 48,302

Deaths worldwide

Jurisdictions with cases confirmed as of April 2, 2020 GMT+8 8:29 PM

1-9 10-99 100-999  
1,000-9,999 10,000-99,999 100,000 or more



## Countries with higher death toll

	Deaths	Cases
<i>Italy</i>	13,155	110,574
<i>Spain</i>	10,003	110,238
<i>U.S.</i>	5,138	216,721
<i>France</i>	4,032	56,989
<i>Mainland China</i>	3,318	81,589
<i>Iran</i>	3,160	50,468
<i>U.K.</i>	2,352	29,474
<i>Netherlands</i>	1,173	13,614
<i>Belgium</i>	1,011	15,348
<i>Germany</i>	944	78,115

(Sources: Johns Hopkins University Center for Systems Science and Engineering, Bloomberg News reporting)

There is a lot that we still don't know about COVID-19, and until we do, it will be extremely challenging to create effective therapies and cures. We still have to understand the origins of the virus, when and how it jumped from animals to humans, and whether there was an intermediary animal in between the two. Moreover, while there is tremendous urgency and excitement about a possible vaccine, the cold, hard truth is that there may never be one.

***There is a lot that we still don't know about COVID-19, and until we do, it will be extremely challenging to create effective therapies and cures.***



Almost forty years after AIDS, there is still no vaccine or cure. But as one of history's most prolific epidemics, it offers a textbook example that encourages mobilizing communities in the response, adopting a people-centered and human rights approach, and designing a vision that is based on science. It is no coincidence that major figures from the AIDS community have been repurposed for this new effort, most notably in the United States, where Dr. Tony Fauci has made significant research contributions to HIV and other immunodeficiencies, and Dr. Debbie Birx, who, as head of PEP-FAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), is effectively America's AIDS and health ambassador to the world.

AIDS and COVID-19 are very different in their epidemiology, but we must recognize that they are much larger than health crises: they present a major threat to our global security. In our interview with He Yafei, China's former Vice Foreign Minister, Ambassador He described COVID-19 as a "non-traditional security threat" that demands global health governance be embedded into global governance. But our ability to slow and stop a surging pandemic is going to need the cooperation of individuals. Staying at home and maintaining thorough hand hygiene are effective public health measures, but what about those who have access to neither a home nor clean water?

There are growing concerns of community clusters in refugee camps, especially on the African continent which still bears the greatest global health burden. If this fully transpires, it could devastate a region where fragile and underfunded health systems struggle with everyday health needs and exceptional emergencies, such as the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo. If this happens, and borders close, it will not only devastate the health of one billion people, but it will dis-

mantle their economies that in turn could push Africa back further than ever.

Clearly, though, this is not a pandemic that impacts Africa only – and it is time for the global north to wake-up to its own vulnerabilities.

COVID-19 will become a place-marker in history. I expect that one day, my children will ask me about the world "before" and "after" COVID-19, but we still have the opportunity to create an ending for this story. Will we idly sit by while infections and deaths accumulate, or will we stand up? The next weeks, months, and maybe years will surely test our resilience, but even more so, they will offer a public record of the human condition at this time, and test whether or not we chose to unite in kindness and compassion.

*I expect that one day,  
my children will ask  
me about the world  
"before" and "after"  
COVID-19, but we still  
have the opportunity  
to create an ending for  
this story.*



*Fighting coronavirus together!*

*A 9-year-old girl holds a painting sending best wishes to the Chinese people in their fight against the novel coronavirus in Sao Paulo, Brazil on Feb 7, 2020. (Xinhua)*

# Humanity & Science

## V.S.

### Fear & Stigma



#### Global Health on the Line

*Drawing on her deep experience in handling infectious diseases, former WHO director-general Margaret Chan explains what this global health emergency means, and what governments and individuals can do to prepare early.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19415/global-health-on-the-line-the-novel-outbreak>



#### Working at the Epicenter

*Dr. Bernhard Schwartlander, chief of staff of the WHO and its assistant director-general, highlights why it's critical to mobilize a community-led movement to end the epidemic.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19448/working-at-the-epicenter-the-novel-outbreak>



#### Our Global Village Needs the UN

*Kishore Mahbubani, who served as Singapore's permanent representative to the United Nations, speaks on the critical role of the UN in crises of global scale, such as COVID-19 epidemic.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19536/our-global-village-needs-the-un-the-novel-outbreak>



#### We Are One Human Race

*James Chau speaks to Neil Bush, who heads the George H.W. Bush Foundation for U.S.-China Relations. The organization initiated a donation of 2 million medical masks for health workers and infected people in China.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19538/we-are-one-human-race-the-novel-outbreak>





## The Wuhan Experience

*The coronavirus is exploding far beyond China. What can other countries learn from the experience of Wuhan about the protection of health workers and the implementation of public health measures to contain the initial outbreak in China? James Chau offers his take.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19544/the-wuhan-experience-the-novel-outbreak>



## Science Fights Back

*James Chau calls Gabriel Leung, an international epidemiologist instrumental in the SARS response in Hong Kong, to discuss the scientific community's evolving understanding of the epidemiology behind the new coronavirus, as well as the stigma and misinformation that aims to undo the science.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19576/science-fights-back-the-novel-outbreak>



## Scientists in Solidarity

*After China shared the genetic sequence of the new coronavirus, major online publications removed their paywalls to ease the spread of knowledge, and countless scientists and labs have come together to deconstruct the disease. In short, global cooperation is leading the way in combating this new threat. James Chau speaks with WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19591/scientists-in-solidarity-the-novel-outbreak>



## Young and Healthy People Also at Risk

*Berkeley epidemiologist Art Reingold looks at the evolving outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States and provides insights into different risk groups, the impact of public health measures in different cultures and the likelihood that it's going to take a turn for the worse if strong interventions don't materialize.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19606/young-and-healthy-people-are-also-at-risk-the-novel-outbreak>



## We're in a Pandemic. What's Next?

*Following the WHO's announcement that the COVID-19 outbreak is now a pandemic, and with the numbers of infections and deaths climbing outside China, James Chau explain what it all means and what will happen next.*

<https://chinacurrent.com/story/19605/were-in-a-pandemic-whats-next-the-novel-outbreak>





# The Only Rational Response



**Chen Dongxiao**  
*President,  
Shanghai Institutes  
for International  
Studies*

To overcome the coronavirus challenge, empathy, solidarity and coordination are required, along with an update of an outmoded health security concept characterized by the “panic-neglect” cycle.

---

The World Health Organization has declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11. As of April 2, about 200 countries and regions had reported confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus. Outside China, the number of newly confirmed cases continues to rise dramatically, with the United States, Italy, Spain, France and Iran being the worst hit.

Threatened by a disease that is more contagious than SARS or MERS, will the world unify in solidarity to stop it? Or will nations be so overwhelmed by growing fears that they resort to beggar-thy-neighbor policies, weakening the foundation of global public health cooperation? Is the fast-spreading virus a wake-up call for the international community to act swiftly, and in concert, to build a safer globalized world? Or does it portend further deglobalization in a world already beset by virulent nationalism?







▲ People wearing masks walk in Tokyo, March 6, 2020.

There are no easy answers to these questions. Things may go in either direction. For example, upon learning about the coronavirus outbreak, the WHO gathered more than 400 world-class virologists and disease control experts via physical and virtual platforms to examine the possible origins of the virus, make containment plans and identify research priorities. As WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan put it, this scientific solidarity in the face of a common enemy is unprecedented.

***Worse still, some senior officials in the United States are looking at the epidemic through an ideological prism, further poisoning China-U.S. relations.***

At the same time, a stigma associated with the disease is proliferating, and racism and xenophobia against people of Chinese and Asian ancestry are growing. Worse still, some senior officials in the United States are looking at the epidemic through an ideological prism, further poisoning China-U.S. relations at a

time when the U.S. should be expressing sympathy and working with its Chinese counterparts to kick-start bilateral health cooperation. The outcome of the current battle and, by extension, the prospects of global public health cooperation, depend on which perspective dominates — uplifting stories or negative narratives.

Viruses respect no borders. The novel coronavirus epidemic has widened into a pandemic. Reviewing the results of international cooperation on the coronavirus battle and the lessons it holds is especially relevant at this critical juncture. Three questions, in my view, deserve special mention.

First, why does international cooperation matter in a globalized world?

Human experience with epidemics, from SARS to H1N1 and from Ebola to the current COVID-19, have proved that internationally coordinated responses are essential in any global public health emergency.

Take the COVID-19 outbreak as an example. As the first line of defense against a



▲ Cemetery workers and funeral-agency workers in protective masks in Bergamo, the epicenter of the hardest-hit province of Italy's hardest-hit region, Lombardy, March 16. (Flavio Lo Scalzo/Reuters)





- ▲ A commuter wearing a protective face mask waits for a train at Clapham North underground station in London, March 18, 2020. London's iconic underground system, the Tube, which started ferrying people around the capital in 1863 and which operated throughout World War II, has closed 40 stations in the battle against the novel coronavirus.

newly identified and potentially deadly virus, China made great efforts and sacrifices to open a precious window of opportunity for others to take precautions. At the same time, closer international cooperation in such forms as joint research programs, assistance with medical materials, engagement with leading research institutes and the WHO's indispensable role in countering all virus-induced stigmatization and politicization helps the international community set up well-coordinated, science-based response mechanisms.

Given the many flaws and vulnerabilities in today's global public health governance system, had China not acted decisively and coordinated with the rest of the world during the early stages of the epidemic, we may now be seeing a far more serious worldwide health crisis.

Second, how should others evaluate China's response measures and their global applicability?

*Because there is no silver bullet to address all epidemics, control measures should be customized and contextualized.*

*As the main initial battlefront of the global anti-virus war, China made immense efforts, adopted the strictest measures, gained the most firsthand experience and achieved the most remarkable results.*

Countries vary in their national conditions and capabilities, and each epidemic outbreak has its own characteristics. Because there is no silver bullet to address all epidemics, control measures should be customized and contextualized.

But timely interruption of transmission routes, early detection and effective treatment are essential elements of any prevention measures. As the main initial battlefront of the global anti-virus war, China made immense efforts, adopted the strictest measures, gained the most firsthand experience and achieved the most remarkable results. Many Chinese practices have been commended by the WHO — for example, its whole-of-government, whole-of-society mobilization, unprecedented social-distancing measures, timely sharing of information and knowledge with the WHO and deep involvement in international medical research cooperation.

Beijing's holistic, science-based, targeted and highly contextual approach, which has been guiding all its response measures, I believe, is the most valuable lesson for every country impacted by the virus.

Third, what should be done to strengthen the global public health governance system?

The unfolding coronavirus crisis has exposed many flaws and vulnerabilities in public health emergency preparedness around the world. Countries differ starkly in terms of their political and value systems, social norms, cultures and traditions, emergency preparedness and capacity.

Given the uneven distribution of global health risks and disparate levels of



▲ Medical professionals leave work at a hospital in Daegu, South Korea, on March 1, 2020.

national preparedness, as well as geopolitical factors such as regional and global security contingencies and crises, a health emergency in one country may trigger different reactions and responses, making consensus-building difficult and international coordination even more so.

To address these challenges, we must:

- update our outmoded health security concept to overcome the “panic-neglect” cycle;
- mend flawed health emergency response mechanisms and build up core monitoring and response capabilities in developing countries so that the International Health Regulations (2005) can be upheld during health crises;
- strengthen leadership and bridge resource shortfalls in global health cooperation, and make earnest efforts to

counter politicization and stigmatization of health crises;

- increase experience and knowledge sharing related to public health emergency responses so the world does not have to start from scratch in every crisis.

Humanity’s past encounters with viruses and epidemics have proved, and will prove again, that empathy, solidarity and coordination are the only rational responses to massive outbreaks of infectious diseases and will lead us to a safer world as a community with a shared future.





- ▲ A stop sign and a plane approaching to land at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia on March 10, 2020. U.S. President Donald Trump announced on Wednesday night to suspend all travel from European countries except Britain for 30 days in a bid to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

## Note to America: Try Science



**George Koo**  
*Board Member*  
*New America Media*

It was the world's most dramatic two weeks for the turmoil caused by the novel coronavirus, and the United States had been dragging its feet, with President Donald Trump in a pattern of denial that downplayed just how serious things were. The U.S. needs to learn from China, and do so in a hurry.

At the beginning of March, a group of my family and friends departed for a tour of Easter Island and Patagonia. We were not paying much attention to the coronavirus sweeping Asia. Two weeks later, everything changed. We had to cut short our tour and hurry home — and none too soon: The Chilean government closed its border to foreigners a couple of days later.

Our experience was just one in a worldwide panoply during a dramatic two weeks of global turmoil caused by the novel coronavirus.

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a world pandemic during that period. As the coronavirus spread to 80 countries in the blink of an eye, the stock market plummeted.

The disease hit Italy especially hard. At first, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte attempted to contain the disease to one region but changed his mind overnight and declared a national lockdown. He saw that any hope of containment would require following a protocol similar to that established by China in Wuhan, Hubei province. Thus, the world began to appreciate that the “Wuhan model” was the only way to defeat the epidemic.

***The world began to appreciate that the “Wuhan model” was the only way to defeat the epidemic.***

Up to this point, China had been subject to ridicule and abuse by the Western media. They said that China was a police state that ran roughshod over the civil liberties of its people; that China was not transparent and suppressed the people’s right to free speech; that the Chinese were dirty and lacked hygiene; that China

was “sick man” of Asia — all over again.

Battling epidemics in the past has always been a collaborative international effort. This time the United States stayed on the sidelines but became active in the blame game. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, America’s lead diplomat, insisted that Beijing had kept the true nature of the disease under wraps until it couldn’t be hidden anymore. And he insisted that China’s lack of candor had cost the U.S. valuable time in preparing to fight the disease — which he called the “Wuhan virus” until his boss trumped him by calling it the “Chinese virus.”

Thanks to reputable publications, it’s possible to find facts to support or reject U.S. accusations. A most useful compilation of events comes from Nature magazine. An item from a March 19 post said, “By contrast, three weeks after the first known case of the disease now known as COVID-19, China had notified the WHO of a spike in cases of a pneumonia-like disease. Two weeks after that, the coronavirus had been isolated, genetically sequenced, and a diagnostic test developed, giving China the tools it needed to launch one of the greatest infectious-disease containment efforts the world has ever seen.”

When it was established that the coronavirus can be transmitted from person to person, Wuhan swiftly imposed a citywide lockdown that soon encompassed all of Hubei and its population of 50 million.

In retrospect, Dec. 8 has been identified as the date the first suspicious case appeared. Multiple cases of unusual fever appeared at Wuhan hospitals on Dec. 21. This raised the alarm of medical professionals and was reported to the district level of China’s Center for Disease Control. Developments were reported up the line to the provincial center. The national CDC was notified on Dec. 30. The people

of Wuhan were warned the next day as the contagion was reported on CCTV, and the World Health Organization were notified.

Bear in mind that at this point, the cause of the pneumonia and fever was not yet understood. The virus had not been identified and genetic sequencing and diagnostic testing were yet to be made available. Accusations of a Chinese cover-up seem farfetched, if not outright ludicrous.

Yet America's mainstream media can be most persuasive. They have convinced nearly everyone that something nefarious was going on in China. To this day, even after much more information has come to light, U.S. academics, pundits, talking heads and, of course, politicians across the entire spectrum continue to insist that China had covered up.

Robert O'Brien, the U.S. national security adviser, said that China "had reacted slowly to the coronavirus, probably costing the world two months when it could have been preparing." In light of the timeline presented by Nature and other postings, some responsible member of the media should ask O'Brien for an accounting of how he came up with two months.

### Time wasted

Finally, on March 13, the New York Times added a modicum of fairness by publishing the observations of its Beijing bureau chief. He compared the rigorous precautions taken at Beijing Capital International Airport with the lackadaisical handling of travelers arriving in London. His concluding lament: China, with its draconian measures, had purchased precious months for the world to prepare, and the West squandered the opportunity.



▲ People queue to enter a tent erected to test for the coronavirus disease at the Brooklyn Hospital Center in Brooklyn, New York City, U.S., March 19, 2020.



▲ Emergency personnel in the U.S. state of Washington prepare to transport a person from a facility, where several residents contract the coronavirus infection.

Let the record show that in the two months the novel coronavirus was known, the President of the United States, Donald Trump, did nothing. He proclaimed that the virus would go away when the weather warmed. Even as late as Feb. 25, he assured the American public that he had the matter “very well under control.” The first case in the U.S. was reported in Seattle on January 19. Since his assertion that all’s well, Trump has taken to calling the pathogen the “Chinese virus,” as if that will ameliorate his having screwed up.

The same Nature post said: “The SARS outbreak went on for three months before being identified as a distinct disease. Then, for nearly two more months, it was a disease in search of a pathogen: the identification and genomic sequencing of the virus itself largely came from researchers outside China.” But China had learned from having to deal with SARS in 2003.

### China’s findings

China was prepared to slow the exponential expansion of this new contagious disease. As soon as the outbreak was detected, it launched an urgent investigation and research. Within nine days, the genetic profile of the virus had been mapped so that diagnostic tests could be developed. It was known how long the virus would survive on surfaces in public places, such as door handles or subway seats; and the public was warned to maintain social distance of about 2 meters to avoid transmission between people. There was zero evidence that sunlight would kill the virus, under Trump’s wishful thinking.

One crucial finding of China’s intense research was the discovery that a patient can be contagious for five days before showing any symptoms of the illness. On average, during this hidden period, a virus carrier could infect four to eight other people. Since those infected by the primary carrier would also be asymptomatic, each could infect another four to eight before





- ▲ Few vehicles are seen on the 42nd street in New York, March 21, 2020. Governor of the U.S. state of New York Andrew Cuomo announced that a mandate, which requires people working in non-essential businesses to stay at home, will take effect Sunday night, March 20.

knowing they have the virus. Thus, each original patient can cause the infection of a minimum of  $4 \times 4 = 16$  or as many as 64. This is just a simple illustration of the exponential transmission juggernaut.

Because of the explosive nature of exponential transmission, it became obvious and necessary

***Because of the explosive nature of exponential transmission, it became obvious and necessary that a total lockdown was essential to block the paths of transmission.***

that a total lockdown was essential to block the paths of transmission. It was the surest means of containment. Critics call the Wuhan lockdown draconian, but the epidemic could not have been stopped without that step.

Italy has recognized mathematical necessity of a lockdown, and soon the U.S. will have to face the same harsh reality, no thanks to the reckless frat boys on Spring Break who brush off the seriousness of the infection and who will contribute to the explosion to come.

***It took Wuhan about one month from lockdown to reporting no new cases.***

It took Wuhan about one month from lockdown to reporting no new cases. As Pueho showed in his comprehensive analysis of the exponential nature of pandemics, the sooner transmission is halted and contained, and sooner new cases will stop appearing — what he calls “flatlining.” If you want to understand why early response is so important in minimizing deaths from the disease, you’ll find the answers in his post. Someone in the White House needs to read it.



## China helping others

Having shown the world how to contain the pandemic, China stands ready to help others. Teams are being sent to Italy and Spain to help with treatment and containment. The president of Serbia asked for help, and Beijing responded within 24 hours. Cynics like to call this a Xi Jinping victory lap. That's nonsense. China has learned, and apparently the U.S., has not, that pandemics affect everyone in the world — first at the site of the outbreak and in breathtakingly short time everywhere else. Helping others is in a nation's self-interest.

There are some loose ends to wrap up before concluding this discussion.

The World Health Organization first visited China in January to gain understanding and devise a plan to contain the disease. Since then, Washington and

***China has learned, and apparently the U.S., has not, that pandemics affect everyone in the world. Helping others is in a nation's self-interest.***

Beijing have been sniping at each other. U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross started it by expressing halfhearted condolences to China and saying out loud that maybe the coronavirus will encourage the return of jobs to America.

Then the mutual spitting contest intensified. A glaring example was when Senator Tom Cotton, a Republican from Arkansas, speculated that the virus was man-made from a biological lab in Wuhan and accidentally leaked. He offered no proof or evidence to back his claim, but the media immediately picked it up and proliferated the story into



- ▲ The U.S. check-in express service area is seen with few people at the Terminal 3 of the Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Canada, March 21, 2020. At midnight on Friday the land border between Canada and the United States was closed to all non-essential travel in an effort to stem the spread of COVID-19.



- ▲ U.S. President Donald Trump uses the term “Deep State Department” during a coronavirus press briefing on Mar 20, 2020. Standing on his left is Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

*It was whispered that Pompeo’s intent was to acquire the company, then move it to the U.S. and use the vaccine to serve Americans first.*

a near virtual fact. As one commentator in Taiwan observed, when you are one of the 100 most senior legislators of the most powerful nation in the world, your statements are taken seriously by everyone.

Beijing’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded in kind, saying that U.S. soldiers competing in multi-national games in October seeded the virus, but the ministry didn’t present much evidence to back up its accusations either. There were rumors in China’s cyberspace alleging that the CIA was complicit and offered as evidence that the American team did poorly and did not dominate as its athletes usually do in international games. For two great nations to devolve into such a petty tit-for-tat contest has to be disheartening and embarrassing.

As if trying to keep the controversy from getting out of hand, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held a news conference on March 17 in which he said, “Now is the time to solve this global pandemic and work to take down risks to Americans and people all across the world.” This is a fine sentiment, indeed, especially coming from someone accused of trying to take over a German company said to be on the verge of developing a vaccine against the coronavirus.

It was whispered that Pompeo's intent was to acquire the company, then move it to the U.S. and use the vaccine to serve Americans first. The alarmed German government stopped the process and kept the company in Germany. It's a matter of public record that Pompeo is proud of his self-proclaimed reputation as a liar. Perhaps that's why Chancellor Angela Merkel doesn't trust him.

Historically, international collaboration in fighting pandemics has been a given. The outbreak of SARS in 2003 caught China flat-footed. Up to that time, it had limited experience in dealing with infectious diseases. The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta sent teams to Beijing, first to help their Chinese counterparts contain the epidemic and later to discuss and plan how to collaborate and share data and experience.

In 2014 the Obama Administration reached out to China and invited its collaboration in fighting the deadly Ebola epidemic in West Africa that was concentrated in Sierra Leone. The team effort was highly successful, but it should be noted that many other countries joined in the effort to contain this frightening, high-fatality disease. Everybody has a stake in protecting the health of the people and in keeping such efforts above politics.

When we returned to California from our interrupted travels, we immediately complied with the "shelter-in-place" edict issued by Governor Gavin Newsom. Let's hope this and similar measures across the country will be enacted in time to keep the contagion from blowing up into another Italy, or worse.

In the event the Trump administration lets the COVID-19 pandemic run out of control, I am confident China, with the expertise and technology it has developed in the past few months, will be standing by to help. A change of attitude in the White House would help, along with a dinner or two of humble pie.

*I am confident China, with the expertise and technology it has developed in the past few months, will be standing by to help. A change of attitude in the White House would help.*



# 76 Days at the Epicenter

## 武汉



Mount Fire God Hospital is built in 10 days.

23,000

12

38,000

22



Medics and patients exercise together in a makeshift hospital.



Medics return home!

### Jan

23 Wuhan is placed under lockdown at 10 a.m., followed by 13 counties and cities across Hubei Province.

24 Some 450 professionals from medical universities of the PLA Army, Navy and Air Force fly to Wuhan. In addition, 137 doctors and nurses from Shanghai hospitals and another 128 from Guangdong arrived in the city on the same night.

25 Construction begins on Mount Fire God Hospital and Mount Thunder God Hospital, the primary intensive care facilities run by the PLA for the treatment of severely ill patients.

30

6,000

### Feb

02 Mount Fire God Hospital starts operation.

05 The first three Fangcang makeshift hospitals converted from stadiums and exhibition centers enter service, receiving suspected coronavirus patients and people with mild symptoms.

06 Mount Thunder God Hospital starts operation.

09

11,921

10 16 provinces with fewer cases are designated to help 16 cities in Hubei except Wuhan, on a one-on-one basis.

17

32,000

29 By this time, 16 Fangcang makeshift hospitals have been built.

#### Jan to Feb

Chinese people nationwide strictly comply with the country's "Stay home" and "Wear mask" rules. Industries and businesses in most cities, except Hubei, carefully begin to resume operations.

### Mar

01

42,000


10 All the 16 Fangcang hospitals are closed after all the patients with milder symptoms recovered.

17 The first batch of 41 medical teams comprising 3,675 members begin their departure from Hubei. And more depart in the following days.

23 With consecutive reports of zero confirmed cases and zero domestic cases, the central government announces that the spread of the virus has been effectively contained. Businesses begin to restore operations in Hubei, a little at a time.

### Apr

08 China lifts lockdown over Wuhan..

\*  represents the total number of medics to Wuhan and other cities in Hubei province from all over the country by that date.

# China's Fight against COVID-19 by the Numbers

Report a case online within  
**2 hours**

Testing organization delivers test  
result within **12 hours**



Disease control and  
prevention centers complete  
epidemiological investigation  
within **24 hours**  
and track close contacts



**6** revisions of the guideline to  
prevention and control of the virus

**6** neighboring provinces of Hubei set  
up joint prevention systems

**7** revisions of guideline to the  
diagnosis and treatment of the virus

**8** days spent to identify the pathogen

**15** prevention brochures issued, for  
different groups and public areas

**16** provincial-level regions provide  
one-to-one relief to cities of Hubei

More than **12,000** patients in mild condition  
received treatment in makeshift hospitals

A total of **23,000** hospital beds provided,  
increasing from the previous 5,000 in Wuhan

**35,000** nucleic acid samples tested per  
day after 3 mobile P3 labs were sent to Wuhan

**42,000** medics sent to Wuhan from all  
over the country

## **4** principles of “Early”

Early detection



Early report



Early isolation



Early treatment



## **4** principles of “Pooling”

Patients



Experts



Resources



Treatment





## Six Effective TCM for COVID-19

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been playing a critical role in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of patients with COVID-19.

**91.6%** *Patients in Hubei Province treated with TCM*

**92.4%** *Patients nationwide treated with TCM*

**3+3** *The “three formulas, three medicines” approach proved effective*

*(Source: State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, March 15.)*

### TCM 3+3 TREATMENT

#### 1. Jinhua Qinggan Granule

The Jinhua Qinggan Granule was developed during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009. It consists of 12 herbal components and can clear heat and detoxify lungs. It can also improve the recovery of lymphocytes and white blood cells.

#### 2. Lianhua Qingwen Capsule/Granule

Lianhua Qingwen is a common TCM compound for treating colds and flu. Made with 13 herbal components, it's proved effective in milder cases, especially in relieving fever, cough and fatigue.

#### 3. Xue Bi Jing Injection

The injection was developed and marketed during the SARS epidemic in 2003. Consisting of five herbal extracts, its main function is to detoxify and eliminate blood stasis. It's proved effective in suppressing inflammatory response syndrome induced by infection in the treatment of critically ill patients, as well as repairing impaired organ function.

#### 4. Lung Cleansing and Detoxifying Decoction

The Lung Cleansing and Detoxifying Decoction has 21 herbal components and is mainly effective in easing fever, cough, fatigue and lung conditions.

#### 5. Hua Shi Bai Du Formula

Hua Shi Bai Du Formula is made of 14 herbal components. Its primary use is to detoxify, remove dampness and heat from the body and relieve cough to achieve an inner body balance.

#### 6. Xuan Fei Bai Du Granule

Xuan Fei Bai Du Granule consists of 13 herbal components. It can detoxify the lungs and clear dampness and heat, and is used for treating mild and moderate symptoms.





▲ “Ark in Wuhan”

In Wuhan, 16 Fangcang makeshift hospitals offer more than 13,000 beds and receive 12,000 patients in their 35 days of operation (Feb 5 – Mar 10), meaning that one out of four COVID-19 patients in Wuhan has received medical treatment in Fangcang. They play a key role in the battle against the epidemic.

## China’s Instructive Response



**Jin Liangxiang**  
*Senior Research Fellow  
Shanghai Institute of International Studies*

The coronavirus epidemic’s end may be in sight because of China’s aggressive measures. It can provide a road map that others can adapt to their own conditions.

China has taken strong measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 since January. Its efforts have been effective and have drawn praise from the World Health Organization and the broader international community. Its efficiency has inspired the world.

Some of China’s practices — for instance, vehicle restrictions in the most

seriously affected provinces and cities — have been noted and applied in some other countries. But not all have attended sufficiently to the matter.

Some of the measures are worth trying in other countries, even in modified form. At minimum, they provoke constructive thought about how to deal with some of the key problems.





▲ Empty shelves in an Australian supermarket, March 4. Panic buying occur in many countries with COVID-19 outbreak. Shoppers are stockpiling canned goods, flour, sugar, bottled water, hand sanitizer — and toilet paper.

The first goal should be maintaining market and social order. Human history has shown that serious epidemics are always accompanied by social and market chaos. When people are in a panic, they rush to buy commodities, which results in price hikes and shortages, which in turn increases the panic further and adds to the difficulty of containing the disease.

But this scenario didn't unfold in China this time. At the very beginning, while the government was investing efforts and resources against the disease, it simultaneously issued orders and regulations to prevent businesses from increasing the prices of daily necessities and provided serious punishments for violators.

Meanwhile, the government took steps to safeguard the supply of commodities to the

market. Some provinces that have been less affected by the disease, such as Shandong, donated various foodstuffs, including vegetables, to the places that were most seriously hit.

Because of these measures, markets have remained stable, prices reasonable and supplies uninterrupted. Nobody was rushing to the store for necessities. A relatively stable environment was provided in which concentrated efforts to fight the epidemic could proceed, as ordinary people willingly stayed at home in self-isolation.

Unfortunately, in some other countries that have been seriously affected by COVID-19, and despite the numerous lessons of history, disorder has shaken them. People have poured into supermarkets and emptied the shelves. In the United States, some people

even purchased guns and bullets, believing that only personal weapons can protect them from being robbed of necessities.

Now that the WHO has declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, more countries will be involved in the public health crisis. While enhancing medical treatment, they will also have to take preventive measures to maintain market and social order.

***When one province or municipality is stricken by crisis, the central government designates one of the other provinces to help a city in the affected province.***

The second practice worth mention is China's one-on-one help mechanism. The Chinese mainland has 31 provinces and municipalities. Each province has about 20-30 cities. When one province or municipality is stricken by crisis, the central government designates one of the other provinces to help a city in the affected province. This mechanism has made it possible for an affected city to be substantially aided by resources of provincial scale.

This mechanism has worked well in many ways. China has employed it in poverty reduction for many years. A wealthier province or municipality, usually in the more developed southeastern region, would be assigned to help one of the cities or counties in relative poverty, usually in northern or southwestern China.

The scheme has worked well, and China is now on track to achieve its objectives of poverty eradication by the end of this year. It was also employed in the post-2008 earthquake reconstruction in Sichuan province, making it possible for all those seriously affected to be relocated within three years.

The one-on-one mechanism has also proved to be successful recently in Hubei province, the epicenter of the coronavirus epidemic. Shortly after the outbreak, the central government designated 16 less-affected provinces to help cities in Hubei on a one-on-one basis. For instance, Shandong province was assigned to help Huanggang; Jiangsu province was assigned to help Xiaogang.

***Shortly after the outbreak, the central government designated 16 less-affected provinces to help cities in Hubei on a one-on-one basis.***



- ◀ Residents in Wuhan wear masks at a supermarket on Jan 23. At 10 a.m., Chinese authorities drastically lockdown Wuhan and 13 more cities in Hubei province. All the goods from food to daily supplies to protective materials are prioritized either to supply or donate to Hubei. Panic shopping and soaring prices never happen all over China throughout the COVID-19 outbreak period.



▲ Work by epidemic prevention personnel goes on 24/7 at an entrance to a gated community in Fancheng, Xiangyang, Hubei Province. Across the country, urban residential quarters are strictly managed to constrict the flow of people and prevent cross-infection.

Through this arrangement, the cities benefited from extensive medical resources, including personnel, which greatly mitigated problems.

The results are clearly visible. Within about a month, China has been able to bring the epidemic largely under control, and the one-on-one help mechanism has played a significant role. Though not all affected countries can follow this practice, larger ones can try it. Less-affected areas run to help those more seriously affected.

Third is the way in which China maintained a stable economy during a time when containing the epidemic was the top priority. The country imposed strict measures over at least two months to discourage population flows — for example, suspending passenger traffic by road and waterway into the city of Wuhan.

At the same time, China used strong measures to protect the economy. Authorities had kept channels open for transporting materials needed to fight the disease and maintain people's livelihoods

even at the height of the crisis. It ordered checkpoints to be removed as the epidemic picture began to improve.

Financial measures have also been used, including encouraging rent exemptions in office buildings and shops and providing financial assistance for companies in grave difficulty. The government proposed that migrant workers come back to factories via chartered planes, trains and buses to avoid catastrophic disruptions of production, all the while working to protect workers from exposure to the coronavirus.

All these measures have provided conditions for China's industrial machine to keep running. According to reports, almost all big companies had resumed business by mid-March in almost all provinces and



▲ Medical workers from Shanghai Changning Tianshan Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital deliver food to travelers staying in quarantine in a hotel near Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport, March 21, 2020.



municipalities, except for Hubei, and deliveries from the manufacturing sector have gradually returned to normal.

Controlling the spread of disease is a priority, but maintaining regular economic activities is also important. If the latter is not protected, the efforts to fight the epidemic would be undermined because the effort depends largely on manufacturing capacity. That is, without a functioning economy it would be difficult to maintain social and political stability during and after the epidemic.

Keeping the economy running while fighting the virus is equally important at the global level. Concerns over the economy could cause infected countries to hesitate on strict measures. Blocking international traffic channels at large scale, as is taking place at present, will damage the global economy.

To overcome this, we need a united global effort to protect transportation while conducting quarantines. It is certainly a big challenge to keep a balance.

***Without a functioning economy it would be difficult to maintain social and political stability during and after the epidemic.***

All in all, China's success in controlling the epidemic suggests the end is in sight, and the expected triumph can be attributed, in no small amount, to the various aggressive measures the country took. Some of its practices can provide other countries with a road map of approaches they can consider and adapt to their own conditions when dealing with the epidemic.



▲ Workers make face masks on production lines at a workshop of SAIC-GM-Wuling (SGMW), a major Chinese automobile manufacturer in Liuzhou City, South China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, February 16, 2020.



# Who Has the Advantage?

Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. China has confidence in its socialist path, theory, system and culture. And its strengths are evident in its response to the coronavirus epidemic.



▲ The walls of the Fangcang makeshift hospital in Wuhan are decorated with notes written by grateful patients.



**He Yafei**

*Former Vice Minister of  
Foreign Affairs*

The foreign policy of the United States has undergone major changes in recent years. From the Obama administration's passive response to great-power competition to the Trump administration's targeting of China and Russia as major strategic rivals, the U.S. has officially given up unipolarity in favor of a new era of great-power competition.

Henry Kissinger put it this way in 2018: "I think Trump may be one of those figures in history who appears from time to time to mark the end of an era and to force it to give up its old pretenses."

The U.S. elite define Trump's great-power competition policy as ensuring the strength and economic vitality of the United States, maintaining advantages in the regional balance of power and clearly delineating American interests and redlines in order to keep the world free and open.

Thomas Friedman once described economic globalization as "wiring the world into networks," and said the popularity of the internet and the information revolution have formed virtual and real networks into a complex, interconnected super

network connecting countries. That much is clear. Since the global financial crisis of 2008, all countries have been perplexed by the complex changes in globalization, non-traditional security threats and geopolitical tensions. During the new era of competition between great powers, there have emerged both a new international architecture and a new competitive situation. Relations between major powers have been constantly refreshed and reshaped, and the different political and economic systems and approaches to development that they represent have different impacts on economic globalization and global governance. All this has become a focus of reflection and comparison by governments and scholars.

*During the new era of competition between great powers, there have emerged both a new international architecture and a new competitive situation.*

In the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, a global public health crisis, different political systems have yielded vastly different results in responding to this non-traditional security threat, providing a clear indication of their respective competitiveness.

After the coronavirus outbreak, China quickly activated public health emergency mechanisms from the national to the community levels and adopted powerful measures to control the spread. It relied on the strength of its socialist system of governance to mobilize resources and execute plans.

In addition, the Chinese government pushed out fiscal and monetary policies in response to the changing situation, including special and stopgap measures, such as strengthening credit, reducing and exempting corporate taxes, supporting companies

in the resumption of work and ensuring that supply chains for industry continued to function. The Communist Party of China and the Chinese people worked together and achieved good results.

Following the 2008 financial tsunami, China worked with other major economies to dampen recession. It stood out conspicuously in the G20, played the role of a global power and demonstrated the advantages of its governance system.

Facing the onslaught of the coronavirus, China has once again given full play to its system's strong ability to pool resources in major undertakings and has shared its experience for the benefit of other countries in fighting the epidemic. It has modeled many examples of cooperation.



- ▲ Jan 24, Chinese New Year's eve. 450 PLA medical professionals from the Army, Navy and Air Force are dispatched to Wuhan. Another 137 medics from Shanghai and 128 from Guangdong arrive on the same night.



◀ Medical workers from Guangdong Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region treat patients in an ICU ward at Wuhan Union Hospital in Hubei Province on March 11, 2020.

At present, the coronavirus situation in the United States, Iran and European countries — especially Italy — is slipping from bad to worse. Nobody knows where the epidemic will go, but we do know that it will severely test the ability of these countries' economic and political systems and mode of governance to mobilize the resources and execute the needed response plans.

It is worth noting that American scholars have recently been discussing the so-called clash of capitalisms. They characterize the “state macro control-plus market economy” model of socialist economic development — as represented by China — as “state capitalism” and the system represented by the United States as the “free capitalism” of the elites. They emphasize that capitalism has become the ruler of the world, while socialism barely survives.

In brief, they believe the competition is not between capitalism and socialism but between two different capitalist models, arguing that free capitalism gives rise to rapid economic growth. They emphasize elements of freedom and democracy under the Western model in order to downplay the institutional advantages of China's political system, socialist market economy and unique national structure of governance.

The U.S. declared at the end of the Cold War the historic end of competition bet-

ween world political systems. American domination was expected to go on for a long time, and even if the world has entered a new era of great-power competition, the capitalist system represented by the United States will not be rendered obsolete. It will simply be called post-capitalist.

Now the Trump administration has shifted the focus of its foreign policy to competition between great powers and is pursuing decoupling from China — most notably trying to undermine China with a technology blockade.

Taking advantage of the short-term impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on global supply chains, some Americans are clamoring for a broad restructuring of supply chains to support U.S. decoupling.

Pointing to the coronavirus in China, U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, first urged American companies to return to the United States and then called for them to look for alternative suppliers. The excuse was that supply chains were temporarily disrupted.

All this departed from principles of fair competition in the context of economic globalization. It amounted to the suppression and containment of an emerging power by a naked hegemonic country, and therefore contributed to the cutthroat competi-





▲ Passengers take subway in Wuhan, as the city resumes rail transportation after a two-month lockdown, on March 28, 2020.

on between the great powers.

It should be noted, however, that the United States will have difficulty decoupling from China, given the general trend of globalization. Its attempt to downplay the advantages of the Chinese system in favor of the flawed American capitalist system will distort economic globalization, derail global supply chains and compromise the cooperation of the great powers in their response to nontraditional security threats, including public health crises. This, in turn, will endanger the overall interests of the international community.

Ironically, as the 2020 presidential election in the United States ramps up, Democratic candidates Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren not only called themselves socialists but proposed plans that contained many socialist ideas for eliminating the growing inequality in American society.

Which system and governance approach is better, Chinese or American? It seems this debate will continue for a long time.

But practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. China has confidence in its socialist path, theory, system and culture. It is firmly committed to running its own affairs well. In addition, it works to benefit the world to the best of its ability and continues to be a force for world peace and economic growth.

*It amounted to the suppression and containment of an emerging power by a naked hegemonic country, and therefore contributed to the cutthroat competition between the great powers.*









▲ The G20 Extraordinary Virtual Leaders' Summit on COVID-19, the first ever online summit by the G20 countries, is held on March 26, 2020.

# Dealing with the Epidemic Is Not an International Competition



**Li Zheng**

*Assistant Research Fellow*

*China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations*

Cooperation is needed now more than ever. Political stereotypes should be abandoned, joint research should be fostered and critical supply chains should be protected.

---

Since the beginning of the new century, human society has faced many threats of transnational infectious diseases. The recent coronavirus epidemic, COVID-19, is probably one of the most dangerous.

This new cross-species virus is spreading rapidly in many countries. It is cunning and highly infectious. So far, infected people have appeared in about 200 countries, with the United States, Italy, China, Spain, Germany, Iran, France and the U.K. experiencing the most severe outbreaks.



▲ The Dow Jones Industrial Average is displayed after the closing bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, Mar 11, 2020. The market has reacted to recent unpredictability with huge drops, triggering a market wide circuit breaker four times in March.

This epidemic should make the international community acutely aware of the need for cooperation, as in previous global crises. At the same time, some new negative factors have cropped up and need attention.

The panic triggered a precipitous drop in global stock markets, impacting global supply chains and long-term prospects for economic growth. The risk of an outbreak triggering a global financial and social crisis is increasing significantly. Yet international cooperation remains insufficient. That's not good for controlling a pandemic.

***Once an outbreak triggers a financial crisis, the ultimate impact may be far more profound than the disease itself.***

Worse, the golden window for avoiding a crisis may have already closed. Once an outbreak triggers a financial crisis, the ultimate impact may be far more profound than the disease itself.

The lack of international cooperation may be traced to two primary factors. First, since 2016, populism has spread glo-





▲ Chinese medical team experts and Italian doctors in the hospital, Padua, Italy, March 18, 2020.

bally, and Western countries have lost their incentive to promote international cooperation. Populism has driven Western governments to make isolation and self-protection their first priority.

The United States was the first to impose immigration restrictions on China. As the epidemic has spread, more countries have adopted discriminatory measures against citizens of other countries. Populism has also made it easier for some conspiracy theories and false reports to spread through social media, while constructive voices calling for international cooperation have been marginalized.

Second, harsh competition between large nations has weakened strategic trust among all nations. After the U.S. government put forward the concept of strategic competition between big powers at the end of 2017, Sino-U.S. relations clearly tightened. Around the world, countries have lost confidence in cooperation between nations of the G7 and G20.

During the outbreak, some negative arguments appeared in the United States that tried to turn the coronavirus epidemic into a referendum on political systems. For example, some politicians and media claimed that the epidemic represented competition between the governance models of China and the United States, or competition between the two countries' comprehensive scientific and technological capabilities. For no good reason, an unfortunate health disaster was conflated with national strategic competition. This only heightens the need for international cooperation.

Regardless of the response to the epidemic itself and the chain reaction that has come in its wake, advancing global cooperation is of vital importance.

It may be no coincidence that new infectious diseases have appeared frequently around the world since the turn of the century. As the climate warms, some primitive viruses are being re-released into



nature. Globalization has also accelerated the speed and scope of the spread of disease. The rapid development of biotechnology has significantly increased the risk of bioterrorism. These risks cannot be handled independently by any one country.

At the same time, the economic and social impact of new infectious diseases has increased significantly. The novel coronavirus epidemic is one of the first major cases of an infectious disease to occur in the age of intense social media. Panic spread rapidly, supercharged by “information viruses,” such as conspiracy theories, fake news and extreme voices. All these increase the risk of losing control, magnify the impact of the epidemic and arouse the hatred of people in different countries toward their fellowman.

Currently, as the pandemic rolls over the globe, the international community urgently needs to strengthen cooperation at three levels.

First, governments and the medical community should abandon political stereotypes and strengthen the sharing of information, technology and resources for prevention and control. Countries should support the World Health Organization’s authority and use it as a platform to share information widely about viruses, cases and treatment options.

They should promote international joint research and development of vaccines and drugs, while promoting transparency with regard to stocks of prevention supplies. Information sharing and exchanges of experience will help countries avoid repeating mistakes and improve the overall effect of prevention efforts.

Second, governments need to quickly coordinate their efforts in response to the economic and trade impacts. International

cooperation includes promoting confidence and sending positive signals to the market, strengthening macroeconomic policy coordination and avoiding impacts on supply chains and the trade of international goods.

The governments of all countries should pay special attention to the security of medical supply chains. They need to activate emergency mechanisms to provide green channels for cross-border transportation of such supplies, increase cross-border industrial chain cooperation on pharmaceuticals and protective items and improve production efficiency.

Third, the mainstream media in all countries should collectively voice their support for the WHO, publicize scientific knowledge and methods of prevention and jointly oppose conspiracy theories and false reporting about the epidemic.

The mainstream media’s constructive role in information dissemination will help control the social panic and psychological shock caused by the epidemic and reduce the costs of control.

*The governments need to activate emergency mechanisms to provide green channels for cross-border transportation of such supplies, increase cross-border industrial chain cooperation on pharmaceuticals and protective items and improve production efficiency.*



*A face mask is attached to a sculpture at the Carlo Alberto square in Turin, Italy, Mar 5, after the government decree to close cinemas, schools and urge people to work from home. Italy has been hit particularly hard, with more than 13,000 deaths by Apr 2, 2020.*





# Don't Give Up Eating for Fear of Choking



**Zhou Xiaoming**  
*Former Deputy Permanent Representative of  
China's Mission to the UN Office in Geneva*





Dismantling supply chains that took years, or even decades, to build is an expensive and time-consuming proposition. It makes more sense to preserve them.

Once upon a time, as an old Chinese story goes, a rich man was treating his friends and neighbors to a feast at home. Amid the excitement, one of the guests, an old man, choked on a chicken bone. Just as the guests were about to resume eating and drinking after the old man recovered, the host announced that the dinner was over. We should learn a lesson, he told his guests: There will be no more eating in the house.

We might chuckle at the logic of the host, but many of us may fall for similar fallacies just now.

As the coronavirus outbreak has brought factory shutdowns and transport disruptions in China, and as supply chains outside the country are seriously affected, some multinationals are reviewing their reliance on supplies from China.

As the world's factory, China occupies a special, prominent place in the intricate and interconnected matrix of global supply chains. For example, 95 percent of Fortune 1000 companies buy components from China. Not surprisingly, the impact of the virus within the country is having knock-on effect around the globe. A survey of 857 multinationals by Morgan Stanley two weeks ago found that 43 percent of them were badly in need of parts and components, and that this figure would jump to 86 percent if the epidemic were to extend beyond March. Similarly, carmakers — from Nissan and Hyundai to Fiat Chrysler — have all seen disruptions.

***For example, 95 percent of Fortune 1000 companies buy components from China.***

These days, the coronavirus is bringing angst to the United States, Japan and the European Union, with increased calls for multinationals to diversify their supply chains. Companies such as Hyundai and Electrolux are scouting for alternative sources of supplies. Given the impact of the epidemic on their businesses, a rethink of supply chains appears to be the right thing to do.

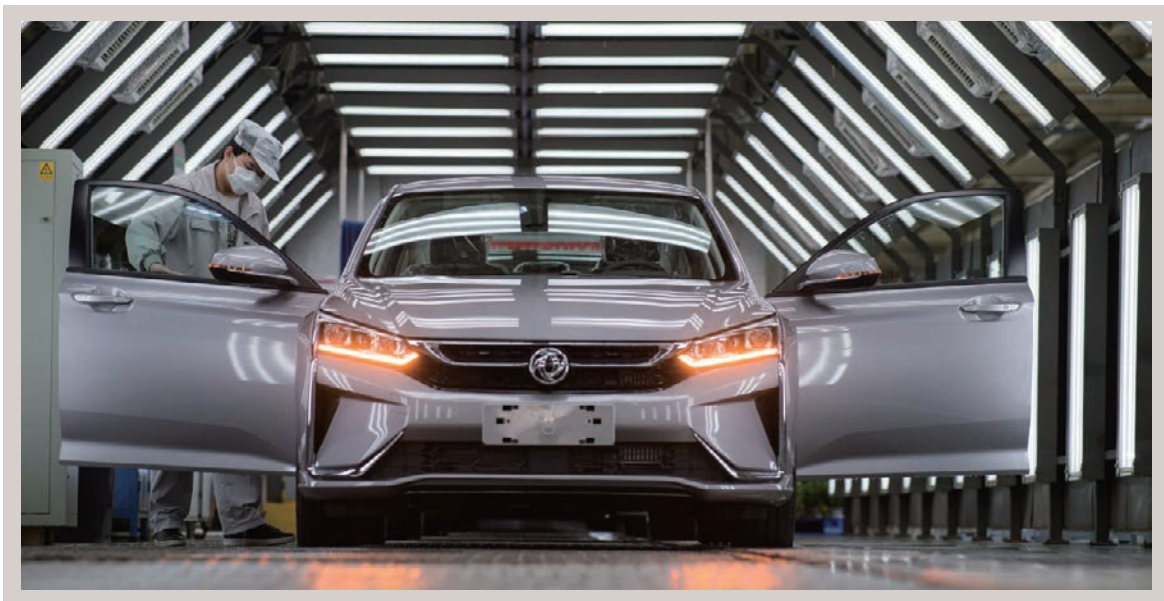
But that line of thinking may miss the point. Just the other day, I discussed the issue with a number of Chinese CEOs. It was pointed out to me that switching away from China for fear of future supply chain problems amounts to assuming that another health crisis of similar magnitude will erupt in China. This is far from certain, and arguably unlikely.

Even if such a misfortune were to befall China again, would any other country in the world be better able than China to cope with it? With reported cases of in-

fections brought down to low double digits in recent days, the outbreak appears to have peaked, and it's quickly fading in the country. China has apparently achieved success in confronting the epidemic and, as the World Health Organization concluded, has set an example for the world.

What is more, the Chinese government views it as a top priority to maintain the stability of global supply chains. Both central and local authorities are going out of their way to help manufacturers get back to work. In addition to fiscal and financial policies, I've heard stories about local authorities chartering high-speed trains at their own expense to take workers back to their factories from thousands of miles away. Local governments are also reportedly helping overcome hurdles, from shortages of parts and materials to financing and logistics.

As the outbreak subsides in China, factories are being reopened. In the coun-



- ▲ An employee works at an auto production line in virus epicenter Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province, on March 24, 2020. The city begins to resume normal production and life on March 19 as Hubei reported zero new infections for consecutive days, and the lockdown over Wuhan will lift on April 8.

***Both central and local authorities are going out of their way to help manufacturers get back to work.***

try's big manufacturing hubs — Shanghai, Chongqing and the provinces of Guangdong, Jiangsu and Shandong — more than 90 percent of the manufacturers are up and running. Gradually and surely, Chinese factories will return to full capacity. This will minimize the impact of the virus on global supply chains. This is seen by China as not merely in its own interest but also the way to fulfill its responsibility as a major player in the global community.

The coronavirus has now spread to around 200 countries. New cases outside China have outnumbered those inside in recent days. Contrary to what is happening in China, the situation in the rest of the world is likely to get worse before it gets better.

This development does suggest that an infectious disease, as the name implies, can hardly be confined to a single country or



▲ An employee checks products at a workshop in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei province, on March 24, 2020.

small group. Virtually no country in the world is immune to a plague like the novel coronavirus.

Can there be any unbroken eggs when the nest is overthrown? It's a question worth pondering in light of the epidemic. In the same vein, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for any country to avert supply chain disruptions under such circumstances. Thus, it is highly questionable that diversifying supply chains can effectively wall off the harm an infectious disease might cause.

It is time for countries and businesses to engage in more consultations and cooperation to confront the virus, while ensuring the smooth operation of supply chains.

***Washington is keen for U.S. companies to change their China strategy.***

For its part, the Donald Trump administration in the U.S. sees the outbreak as an opportunity to reduce America's reliance on China. Washington is keen for U.S. companies to change their China strategy. Peter Navarro, Trump's trade adviser, is calling for the U.S. to create new supply chains for medicines and pharmaceuticals in the name of national security. At the same time, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is encouraging U.S. companies to bring jobs back to the U.S.

In their push for a decoupling of U.S.-China supply chains, these Trump administration officials have exaggerated the risk. Rather, switching from China has become an instrument of Washington's geopolitical strategy.





▲ Employees work at a smart socks production line in Shiyan, North China's Hebei province, on March 24, 2020.

*Clearly, the dismantling of supply chains that took years, even decades, to build would be expensive and time consuming.*

In rethinking its supply chain strategy, however, a business will have to weigh many factors, ranging from the quality and price of the product to logistics and the reliability of supply. In most cases, restructuring supply chains would likely jeopardize the current supply chains, which have consistently kept goods cheap and available. This would create a downward drag on operations and earnings — at least in the short run. As Apple has lately discovered, such a move could do more harm than good. For this reason, while three-fourths of its top 200 suppliers have manufacturing facilities in China, Apple decided in early March to produce its top-end iPhone 11 series units in China, abandoning a proposal to move production to India.

Clearly, the dismantling of supply chains that took years, even decades, to build would be expensive and time consuming.

Just as giving up eating for fear of choking can never be a good option, maintaining the status quo — rather than shifting supply chains away from China just to avoid future supply chain disruptions — will prove to be the more rational and beneficial course.



On Mar 28, 2020, the China Railway Express to Europe, the flagship project of Belt and Road construction, resumes operation.

(Above) A China-Europe cargo train departs from Wuhan to Duisburg, Germany.

(Below) A China-Europe cargo train departs from Yiwu in East China, to Madrid, Spain, loaded with epidemic prevention supplies.



# A New Vision for Globalization



As the coronavirus epidemic is waning in China, serious new outbreaks have occurred elsewhere, and overseas visitors to China could bring the virus with them and start a new wave. Individual health documentation needs to be revived at international borders. At the same time, critical supply chains must have backup sources.



**Lawrence Lau**

*Ralph and Claire Landau Professor of Economics  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong*



Just as the COVID-2019 epidemic appears to be under control in China, serious new outbreaks have occurred in South Korea, Italy, Japan, Iran and elsewhere. The virus seems to be ubiquitous and unstoppable. While I am hopeful that the epidemic in China will be over by the end of March, I worry about the possibility of overseas visitors to China bringing the coronavirus back and starting a fresh epidemic again. China cannot afford to have its hard-won and costly victory over the virus annulled by a few infected visitors from abroad.

What China can and should do is to maintain the strictest quarantine measures for all entrants into the country, including its own nationals, who are either from or have been in or through seriously infected areas in the previous 14 days. They should all be required to undergo quarantine in government-furnished isolation facilities.

To facilitate such a requirement, Chinese airports and ports of entry should be limited to Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shenzhen, with ready isolation facilities nearby.

This measure may sound draconian, and it would disrupt not only tourism but all commercial activity, including international trade and cross-border investment between China and other countries. But this is the only safe and sure way to prevent a recurrence of a COVID-19 epidemic in China. China will switch from being a blocked country to a blocking country. Moreover, it is uncertain how long this situation will last. That depends on how quickly other countries can succeed in their own control efforts.

While it is true that China should and could have acted more quickly to close

off Hubei province and Wuhan and implement a full lockdown, the stringent measures when applied were instrumental in confining the virus mostly to Hubei and, within Hubei, to Wuhan. They enabled China to keep the epidemic under control.

It is not clear whether other countries have the administrative ability or the social discipline to do the same.

***Patient Zero in Italy, as well as a Japanese case, did not have any direct or indirect connection with China. They shared a common history of having vacationed in Hawaii. A recently identified case in Northern California also had no connection with China.***

Moreover, there is now some question whether Wuhan was the primary originating source of the coronavirus, since Patient Zero in Italy, as well as a Japanese case, did not have any direct or indirect connection with China. They shared a common history of having vacationed in Hawaii. A recently identified case in Northern California also had no connection with China. So it is at least possible that the primary originating source of the virus was somewhere else. Further testing and retesting of U.S. cases that occurred over the past six months, especially those that resulted in deaths, may throw some light on this question.

One might ask: If every country adopts a stringent entry policy for the protection of its citizens, does it mean the end of globalization? I believe this is not the end, but the beginning of a safer and more stable form of globalization that is less susceptible to disruption.

I recall that years ago I would travel not only with a passport but also with a small yellow booklet that contained a record of all my vaccinations and inoculations. It would always be examined upon my entry into another country. I would need vaccinations against smallpox, cholera and other diseases, and occasionally a shot of gamma globulin. What this epidemic has taught us is the necessity of reinstating some form of such requirements if we are to continue to be able to travel freely internationally.

The destination country of a traveler should know a person's recent health status, as well as his or her health and travel history, including vaccinations and possibly ad hoc antigen-specific tests. It would

actually be quite straightforward for an international authority such as the World Health Organization to maintain such records in digital form and in real time, so that they would be readily available for inspection whenever a traveler crosses a border.

For example, if and when a vaccine is available for COVID-19, it should be required for those who wish to be exempted from the mandatory quarantine requirement. This would also apply to other transmissible diseases and viruses in the future. A traveler without an acceptable WHO record would have to satisfy whatever other requirements the destination country may impose, including a lengthy quarantine period. If such a system were



- ▲ Passengers wearing face masks and raincoats walk through a nearly empty departure hall at Beijing Capital International Airport, Mar 9, 2020. China has decided to temporarily suspend the entry into China by foreign nationals holding valid visas or residence permits because of the rapid global spread of COVID-19. The suspension starts on Mar 28.



◀ Staff members wearing protective suits register passengers in front of a check-in counter of Air China at Beijing Capital International Airport, Mar 16. Due to the fast spread of COVID-19 overseas, China tightens entry controls to prevent an epidemic recurrence.

implemented globally, then citizens of all countries would be reassured that foreign visitors will not pose a threat to their health.

However, simply controlling the borders is not enough. It is extremely important to prevent domestic transmission of diseases and viruses by unidentified domestic infected patients; otherwise, the number of new domestic infected patients will rise as before. The transmission of the new coronavirus, like the SARS virus and the more common influenza virus, is almost entirely through direct or indirect physical contact between an infected patient and a healthy person, generally through the medium of a body fluid. Thus, the domestic population should be educated to take proper precautions against having either direct or indirect physical contact with any other person, friend or stranger.

This means adopting and maintaining good hygienic behavior. For example, one should forego shaking hands, kissing and hugging. One should wear face masks, wash hands regularly and refrain from touching one's eyes, nose and mouth with one's hands. In time, perhaps most doors can be sensor-operated and elevators can be voice-activated, so that even indirect

physical contact can be minimized. The transmission of a disease or virus will stop if everyone takes full precautions for his or her own self-protection.

An epidemic such as the COVID-19 pneumonia, with its potential for disrupting or even halting all economic activity for months, provides yet another important justification for having reliable parallel sources for all critical supply chains. The China-U.S. trade war and the continuing technology rivalry between the two countries have already threatened to decouple established technology supply chains. But even without them, the epidemic shows that secondary sources remain indis-

*An epidemic such as the COVID-19 pneumonia, provides yet another important justification for having reliable parallel sources for all critical supply chains.*



*What we should expect to see in the future is “diversified globalization.”*

pensable. It is crucial for the world to have at least a second source for any link in any supply chain.

Doing so might be costly, but it would provide insurance against unexpected contingencies, such as an epidemic, a natural disaster or even a war. It would also prevent a supplier from exploiting its monopoly position to gouge customers. Not having backups for crucial supply chains may prove to be even more costly than having them, as production may be halted for the lack of a critical component supplied by a single vendor.

The trade war and the epidemic together will cause nations to reconsider the benefits and costs of unfettered globalization. If a country depends solely on the Middle East for its oil, it will be in serious trouble, even with a substantial oil inventory in reserve, when war breaks out in the Middle East. Of course, a country can try to be self-sufficient, as the former Soviet Union and China did at one time, but this is also extremely costly.

What we should expect to see in the future is “diversified globalization,” under which no one country would be totally dependent on another as its sole source of supply of a critical resource, component or part. There will have to be a second source for everything. In the long run, the world will be better off having two or more competing suppliers for every good or service.



- ▲ Expressways are seen with less traffic near the Pearson International Airport in Toronto, Canada, March 21, 2020. At midnight on Friday the land border between Canada and the United States was closed to all non-essential travel in an effort to stem the spread of COVID-19.

# Competition and the Coronavirus



**David Shambaugh**

*Gaston Sigur Professor of Asian Studies and  
International Affairs  
The George Washington University*

The coronavirus has only deepened U.S.-China competition and could weaken America's global standing if Washington continues to stubbornly adhere to "America first" and forgo its long-standing international leadership.

Unfortunately, instead of the devastating global coronavirus crisis bringing the United States and China together to battle a common scourge and support each other's societies, the crisis has once again revealed the semi-adversarial nature of their relationship and the deep distrust between the two governments. The crisis was — and still could be — an opportunity for the two powers to put aside competition and suspicions and together confront an existential threat to both nations and the world.

From the beginning, crisis management has been undertaken primarily independently amid mutual accusations, finger-pointing and recriminations. This has included American denunciations of the initial cover-up of the outbreak in Wuhan by the Communist Party of China. Since then, the two sides have traded sharp barbs in news briefings. Both sides have indulged in conspiracy theories about the origins of the virus, with China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian peddling the unsubstantiated claim that the U.S. Army released the virus in Wuhan during the World

Military Games in October (a theory retweeted by several Chinese ambassadors abroad until it was tamped down by Cui Tiankai, the country's ambassador to the United States), while some on the U.S. side have suggested that the virus leaked from a Chinese biological weapons laboratory in Wuhan. Instead of the two governments reaching out to work with each other, conspiracy theories emerged.

*The crisis was —  
and still could be —  
an opportunity for  
the two powers to  
put aside  
competition and  
suspicions and  
together confront an  
existential threat to  
both nations and the  
world.*



- ▲ A Department of Health employee trains New York Army National Guard members in New Rochelle, New York, the epicenter of America's coronavirus crisis. The U.S. surpasses Italy and China to become the country with the most coronavirus cases in the world on Mar 25. (Sgt. Amouris Coss/U.S. Army National Guard)

*Historians may even look back on the crisis as the transition point from American to Chinese leadership in times of global crises (at least humanitarian ones).*

This reveals just how deeply dysfunctional the Sino-American relationship has become. When the crisis finally abates, the U.S.-China rivalry will be even more apparent as the primary defining characteristic of world affairs. Historians may even look back on the crisis as the transition point from American to Chinese leadership in times of global crises (at least humanitarian ones). This is because the United States has been totally preoccupied with trying to manage and contain the outbreak of the virus inside its borders. The profound ill-preparedness of the U.S. in terms of public health resources has further undermined any idea in the Trump administration that the country should exercise global leadership and contribute to other nations' considerable coronavirus challenges. Until Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's March 25 video discussion with G-7 foreign ministers, there had been no international initiatives emanating from Washington. Pompeo revealed that the U.S. military had sent a C-130 aircraft with supplies and set up a field hospital in northern Italy, a welcome but minimal development.



To date, most everything has been about “America first” — coping with the crisis in the homeland, evacuating Americans from foreign countries and hoarding supplies. This comes against the backdrop of four years of President Donald Trump’s disdain for international multilateralism. His fixation has been 100 percent domestic. This is not the behavior of a global leader. While the need to cope with the immediacies of the crisis at home is certainly understandable, this forsaking of global leadership is unprecedented for the United States over the past 70 years. Time and again since World War II — and covering a wide variety of humanitarian crises — it was the United States that mobilized international coalitions, institutions and resources to cope.

When the current devastating global

scourge finally dissipates, the world will remember those that stepped forward to help when they themselves were suffering (and these need not be mutually exclusive for a nation as large and powerful as the United States). In America’s absence, China is doing this, much to its credit. In recent days, the Chinese government has sent plane loads of tons of public health supplies (masks, gowns, ventilators and medicines) to Italy, Iran, Iraq, the Netherlands, Serbia, Hungary and the Czech Republic, Ukraine and others, with more nations to come. Jack Ma’s Alibaba itself has reportedly delivered supplies to all 54 African states and has offered the same for the U.S.

While the United States government did send 38 tons of relief supplies to Wuhan on the chartered aircraft that evacuated



▲ (Left and upper right) Chinese medical team with local doctors and Red Cross staff in Padua, Italy, Mar 17, 2020.  
(Lower right) Chinese medical team with health officials in Bagdad, Iraq, Mar 11.

U.S. diplomats and citizens, this was not systematically followed up. (Nor was it publicly acknowledged by the Chinese side.) As the crisis emerged across Europe in February and March, the United States and its NATO allies could have invoked Article V and the U.S. military could have dispatched doctors and medical equipment to its allies in Europe. It is not too late for this to happen. While civilian healthcare workers struggle to cope with the crisis at home, together with the mobilized National Guard, the U.S. military can be deployed into European and other societies from their forward bases overseas.

Given America's failure to rise to the global challenge and fill the leadership vacuum in a time of need, Beijing has stepped up. This will likely have significant implications for the global "balance of influence," if not the balance of power, between the U.S. and China, once the crisis abates. American commentators Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi recently observed that this could turn out to be America's "Suez moment," after which the world will decidedly look upon the United States as a selfish and declining power, while China will be viewed increasingly as a magnanimous and responsible international power that

contributes to the public good. While certainly an overstatement in each case, this meme is already emerging and may take hold globally.

***Given America's failure to rise to the global challenge and fill the leadership vacuum in a time of need, Beijing has stepped up.***

Regardless of the international outcome, the coronavirus crisis will only further cement the perception in the American and Chinese governments and societies that the other is an untrustworthy adversary. In the U.S., this will only be further fueled by the anti-China rhetoric anticipated during the presidential election campaign during summer and autumn.

This is by no means to suggest that there are not multiple valid reasons for the U.S. to view China suspiciously (and vice versa), but the Sino-American competition for global influence and soft power could swing in China's favor if the United States abdicates its long-standing international leadership.



◀ On the evening of March 23, representatives from China and Latin American and Caribbean countries held a 3-hour online meeting on COVID-19 epidemic prevention and control. Photo taken in San Salvador, El Salvador.

# In the Aftermath of the Coronavirus



**Minxin Pei**

*Tom and Margot Pritzker '72 Professor of Government  
Claremont McKenna College*

China-U.S. relations could turn for the worse when the epidemic passes. But there's a glimmer of hope. If they take prompt action to ease the tension and cooperate in mitigating the health crisis, they can avoid what might be a devastating geopolitical conflict in the post-pandemic world.

---

At the beginning of this year, the U.S. and China had a brief moment of stability after they signed an interim agreement to pause the trade war. Although they continued to jostle on other contentious issues, such as American sanctions against Huawei and China's efforts to seek leadership positions in international organizations, there were no indications that bilateral relations would deteriorate further, or rapidly, in this American election year.

***The new cold war between the U.S. and China could become a reality much sooner than even the most pessimistic observers have feared.***

But the coronavirus pandemic has changed everything. If neither government takes immediate steps to arrest the downward spiral, the devastation wrought by the viral outbreak will not only severely damage the U.S. and Chinese economies but also drive the countries further toward an accelerated strategic conflict. The new cold war between the U.S.

and China could become a reality much sooner than even the most pessimistic observers have feared.

This tragedy could have been avoided. But, sadly, leaders in neither country were disciplined or sensitive enough to refrain from a war of words that may have hopelessly poisoned the diplomatic atmosphere. In the Chinese case, Foreign Ministry voices have been criticizing Washington for its stingy assistance and deliberate use of the phrase "Chinese virus" or "Wuhan virus" to stigmatize China.

Senior U.S. officials were incensed by reports of China's initial mishandling of the outbreak, in particular the muzzling of the press and healthcare workers. The widespread consensus in Washington was that China should bear the responsibility for this global calamity because it botched its response to the outbreak during the most critical early stage.

While this acrimonious blame game dominates news headlines, its impact on the future of U.S.-China relations will likely



depend on other outcomes linked with the coronavirus pandemic. Broadly speaking, three factors could determine whether the coronavirus crisis will push the two countries deeper and even more irreversibly into the new cold war, or provide a momentary pause for cooperation and a precious opportunity to avert a looming geopolitical catastrophe.

The foremost factor is whether presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump can order an immediate cease-fire in their war of words and cooperate to lead a global fight against the coronavirus. Should the exchange of diplomatic insults continue or escalate, such cooperation would become impossible. However, if cooler heads prevail and both sides signal their willingness to cooperate, we could see an immediate and even dramatic de-escalation of tensions.

This rosy scenario is no fantasy. Xi and Trump may lead their nations in a zero-sum contest for power, but their immediate political interests are perfectly aligned. Xi needs to refocus his attention on reviving the virus-wracked economy, a goal impossible to achieve if the U.S., one of China's largest export markets, is also devastated. As for Trump, his re-election odds will be significantly improved if his administration contains the virus quickly and avoids a deep recession.

***Xi and Trump may lead their nations in a zero-sum contest for power, but their immediate political interests are perfectly aligned.***

There are many practical steps both sides can take to cooperate in the immediate term. For example, China can break the diplomatic ice by donating a large quantity of medical supplies to the U.S. as a gesture of

goodwill. Beijing can also share its experience in containing the virus and treating its victims. Both countries can join efforts in developing a vaccine and pledge to make it freely available to the world.

But the window of cooperation is fast closing. Goodwill gestures and a diplomatic cease-fire must happen within two to three weeks. Otherwise, they will be too little, too late.

***Goodwill gestures and a diplomatic cease-fire must happen within two to three weeks. Otherwise, they will be too little, too late.***

The second factor for averting geopolitical catastrophe is the acceleration of economic decoupling. The coronavirus outbreak has revealed the fragility and risks of globalization. In the U.S., it has greatly boosted the case for decoupling from China. In particular, China hawks have seized upon the fact that the U.S. depends excessively on China for supplies of the basic chemical ingredients needed for medicines and other critical medical supplies (such as masks and protective gear), and they're pushing for decoupling. Such efforts will likely be met with greater support in Washington once the epidemic abates and the attention of the political class turns toward the future.

Decoupling would also be accelerated by market forces. The double-whammy of the U.S.-China trade war and the coronavirus outbreak will tilt the economic calculus of multinational corporations further in favor of reducing dependence on China-based supply chains. China will also reassess its dependence on overseas markets and supply chains. The result of such adjustments could be a dramatic net decrease in commercial ties between China and the U.S.

Such a negative development would make it harder to fulfill the terms of the interim trade deal signed in January because China would not have the means or the need to purchase \$200 billion worth of additional American products in the 2020-21 period. The trade war would likely reignite in 2022 and perhaps sooner.

Accelerated decoupling would guarantee that U.S.-China trade relations are much less valuable for both countries in the long term as well. Tragically, a more decoupled world is a more dangerous one. If you think Sino-American relations are ugly today, just imagine how much uglier and more hostile they would become if commercial ties were severed altogether, which is what hawks in both countries have been rooting for.

The third factor is the overall geopolitical fallout from the coronavirus crisis, or how this crisis resets relations among major powers. This outcome critically depends on the behavior of the U.S. and China during the crisis. If they are perceived as responsible actors who contribute to global efforts to mitigate the crisis, they will gain durable support. But if their actions are seen as petty, selfish and harmful, they will lose support.

The stance of third-party players is critical to the strategic calculations of the two countries. The success of their long-term geopolitical contest depends not just on each one's resources and capabilities but on their ability to recruit allies or prevent their adversary from forming a broad coalition.

When we examine the conduct of Beijing and Washington during the crisis, the picture is mixed. China's poor handling of the viral outbreak in early January has done damage to its image in the international community, but its quick progress

in containing the outbreak, subsequent donation of medical supplies and dispatching of medical personnel to countries hit hard by the virus have earned it goodwill.

Washington's inaction during the crucial month of February and its lack of concern and consultation with its allies (especially the sudden announcement of a ban on the entry of Europeans into the U.S. made by President Trump on March 11) have disappointed those allies. But there is still time for the U.S. to abandon its "America first" approach and resume its traditional role as a global leader in fighting the virus.

The glimmer of hope in U.S.-China cooperation is real but fleeting. To avoid a further escalation of their strategic conflict in the post-coronavirus world, both the U.S. and China should seize this opportunity and pull back from the brink.

*But there is still  
time for the U.S.  
to abandon its  
"America first"  
approach and  
resume its  
traditional role  
as a global leader  
in fighting the  
virus.*





*The Diamond Princess cruise ship has developed one of the world's largest outbreaks of the new coronavirus. Altogether 714 passengers on board have tested positive for the disease COVID-19.*

*The Diamond Princess had set sail from Yokohama on Jan 20, on a 16-day round trip that would see it stop in Hong Kong, Vietnam and Taiwan. On Feb 1, an 80-year-old Hong Kong passenger who had disembarked in Hong Kong on Jan 25 tested positive for the coronavirus. The cruise ship shortened its trip and returned to Yokohama on Feb 3, and was quarantined for the next two weeks in the port of Yokohama till each relevant country sent flights to evacuate their residents on board.*





# Mask Diplomacy



**Cheng Li**  
*Director*  
*John L. Thornton China Center*  
*Brookings Institution*



**Ryan McElveen**  
*Associate Director*  
*John L. Thornton China Center*  
*Brookings Institution*

In the wake of the global coronavirus epidemic, China and Japan have embarked on an unexpected path of reciprocal generosity.

Within a few weeks of identifying the novel coronavirus in January, medical masks quickly became one of the most sought-after commodities on the basis of their perceived protective powers. They quickly vanished from store shelves and websites around the world.

As the virus continues to spread, the stockpiling of medical supplies has led to global supply shortages.

But there's good news: In the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic, China and Japan have embarked on an unexpec-



▲ A signboard conveying support to China in fighting the novel coronavirus epidemic at a store in Tokyo, Feb 11, 2020.

ted path of reciprocal generosity. While the deep-seated tensions across the East China Sea will not be resolved overnight, their collaboration provides a powerful lesson for other bilateral relationships that have succumbed to similarly strong hostilities around the world. China has been in particularly desperate need of masks.

While the coronavirus crisis has led many states and non-state actors to behave in their own self-interest, viewing the distribution of masks and other medical supplies as a sort of zero-sum geopolitical game, others have selflessly endeavored to distribute supplies to those who need them most, engaging in what might be called “mask diplomacy,” despite needs in their own countries. In turn, the exchange of masks has taken on a new meaning of goodwill. Perhaps nowhere has that act of goodwill been as pronounced — and surprising — as the generous gifting between Japan and China.

The contrast in the global response to the coronavirus outbreak has been stark. While China leveled criticism at the United States for its miserly initial offers of aid to China, at Taiwan for cutting off exports of masks to the PRC and at countries around the world for closing borders to Chinese travelers, it held up Japan as an example of magnanimity. Japanese entities — from central and local governments to NGOs and corporations — joined together in common cause to help their neighbors.

***The exchange of masks has taken on a new meaning of goodwill.***

The Japanese government was quick to take symbolic action, with members of Japan’s ruling Liberal Democratic Party voting to donate 5,000 yen (around \$45) each from their monthly salaries — tota-

ling 2 million yen or \$18,170 — to help fight the outbreak in China. The Japanese government built on those efforts by sending thousands of pieces of protective garments to Wuhan, while the residents of Oita prefecture — Japanese sister city of Wuhan — sent 30,000 masks to the epicenter. Other cities, including Mito, Okayama and Maizuru, joined the effort.

***Through the giving of masks and other supplies, Japan rebuilt a bridge to China that had long been severed.***

Simultaneously, the Japanese company Ito-Yokado donated over a million masks to China, while other corporations including Maeda Construction, Air Water and MUJI provided protective supplies. Movingly, the Japan Youth Development Association dispatched boxes of masks and thermometers emblazoned with characters from an ancient poem: “Lands apart, sky shared.” And perhaps most moving of all, Tokyo’s world-renowned Matsuyama Ballet troupe was filmed singing the Chinese national anthem on stage and cheering on its Chinese viewers from afar.

Through the giving of masks and other supplies, Japan rebuilt a bridge to China that had long been severed. In response, Chinese social media quickly filled with gratitude for Japanese well wishes. The Chinese people, as well as the Chinese government, have sought to return the kindness, even from their own precarious situation. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Geng Shuang expressed China’s willingness to reciprocate with a quote from the Book of Songs: “You throw a peach to me, I give you a white jade for friendship.” After the coronavirus outbreak on the Princess Diamond cruise ship, which docked in Japan, China donated testing kits to the



- ▲ On the boxes of 20,000 masks and infrared thermometers donated by the Japanese HSK Bureau to Hubei, whose capital city Wuhan is the epidemic epicenter in China, a Chinese-language verse was written, “Although we are in different places, we are under the same sky.”

National Institute of Infectious Diseases of Japan. Even China’s richest man, Jack Ma, has stepped up to help, not only by pledging \$14.5 million to fight the coronavirus but also by donating a million masks through his foundations.

This reciprocal generosity has come as a shock to many observers because, for generations, the Sino-Japanese relationship has been among the most entrenched rifts in the world. Rooted in mutual mistrust, unresolved tensions over territorial issues and longstanding historical grievances, the abrasions in the bilateral relationship have failed to heal. In recent years, disputes over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and visits by Japanese leaders to the Yasakuni Shrine

honoring war dead have only continued to pick at old wounds. Chinese media and popular culture regularly fan the flames of distrust, with China’s film industry producing as many as 200 war-themed TV dramas and movies about Japanese treachery each year.

Those negative perceptions have hardened over the years, making the positive developments in recent weeks even more impressive. The latest Pew Global Attitudes Survey released in September found that a record high of 85 percent of Japanese had unfavorable views of China, with only 14 percent expressing a positive view.

It is hard to imagine that such deep-rooted hostility could so quickly be reversed.

Japan’s response to the coronavirus outbreak, however, was only the latest in a series of events pointing toward improved relations between it and China. In a sense, the positive sentiments surrounding Japan’s coronavirus response are the result of concurrent trajectories of increasing collaboration between China and Japan and frustration below the surface between Tokyo and Washington.

*In a sense, the positive sentiments surrounding Japan’s coronavirus response are the result of concurrent trajectories of increasing collaboration between China and Japan and frustration below the surface between Tokyo and Washington.*





▲ A member (R) of “Mask Panda Action Team”, a volunteer group initiated by local Chinese community and later joined by more people in Japan, hands out masks to local people in Tokyo, Feb. 29.

Since 2010, when China overtook Japan as the world’s second-largest economy, Japan has viewed China with increasing suspicion in the economic realm. However, the U.S.-China trade war, beginning in 2018, has served as a powerful motivator — especially for China — to minimize economic tensions between the second- and third-largest economies in the world.

At the same time, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has faced difficulty in handling the U.S.-Japan relationship, which he has sought to manage in part by engaging in a continuous charm offensive on U.S. President Donald Trump. Abe successfully partnered with the Trump administration to garner support for major policy proposals like the 2019 U.S.-Japan Trade Deal, the Indo-Pacific strategy, and the Blue Dot network.

Yet to Japan’s dismay, while there is no open friction between the leaders, there

is a deep disquiet in Tokyo about the ever-unpredictable Trump, who has also threatened America’s most important strategic alliance in the Pacific by expressing a distressingly cavalier understanding of the U.S.-Japan military alliance, threatening high tariffs on Japanese industries and disagreeing with Japan over the legality of North Korean missile launches.

On the other hand, President Xi Jinping and Abe have developed an increasingly strong personal relationship. Both leaders are looking to sign a new joint document on the future of bilateral relations — now postponed because of the coronavirus, along with Xi’s state visit to Japan in April, which would have been the first since that of Hu Jintao in 2008.

Meanwhile, China has remained a steadfast supporter of its Asian neighbor holding the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics as scheduled, particularly given Beijing’s



*A Japanese girl wearing a red Chinese cheongsam bows deeply to passers-by with a donation box in hands to raise money to help those in China affected by the virus on the Chinese Lantern Festival in Tokyo, on Feb 8, 2020.*

common goal of hosting its own Olympics in Winter 2022.

Another calming factor in the China-Japan relationship has been a surge in people-to-people exchanges. The number of Japanese students studying in China has been rising steadily. From 2016 to 2018, Japanese students studying in China increased 5 percent from 13,595 to 14,230. The number of Chinese students studying in Japan has increased 22 percent over the last four years from 94,111 to 114,950.

Chinese tourism in Japan has also been on the rise over the past decade, jumping 14.5 percent from 2018 to 2019. Between 2013 and 2019, the number of Chinese tourists in Japan increased by a staggering 630 percent, from 1.3 million to 9.6 million. As of October 2019, the number of monthly flights between China and Japan reached 2,200, an increase of 23 percent over the previous year. Notably, flights from China make up one-fourth of all international flights connecting to Japan. Of course, given that Japan has increased travel restrictions on Chinese visitors because of the coronavirus, these numbers will certainly drop this year.

Despite the many factors pointing toward a thaw in China-Japan relations, it is impossible to say whether that thaw will be short-lived or be the first sign of a sustainable alteration of the political, economic and strategic landscape of the Pacific. Certainly, given the engrained nature of bilateral tensions — from frictions over disputed islands, guarded views of the Chinese public, the fate of the Olympics and newly implemented travel restrictions on Chinese visitors to Japan — tensions will not disappear overnight, and any major flashpoint could negate the goodwill gained from mask diplomacy.

If nothing else, the coronavirus has done what few observers thought possible: quell generations of China-Japan antagonism. And for the immediate future, both countries are now bound together in the same public health crisis — the full political and economic implications of which are yet unknown — and neither side would gain from halting the mutually beneficial collaboration now.

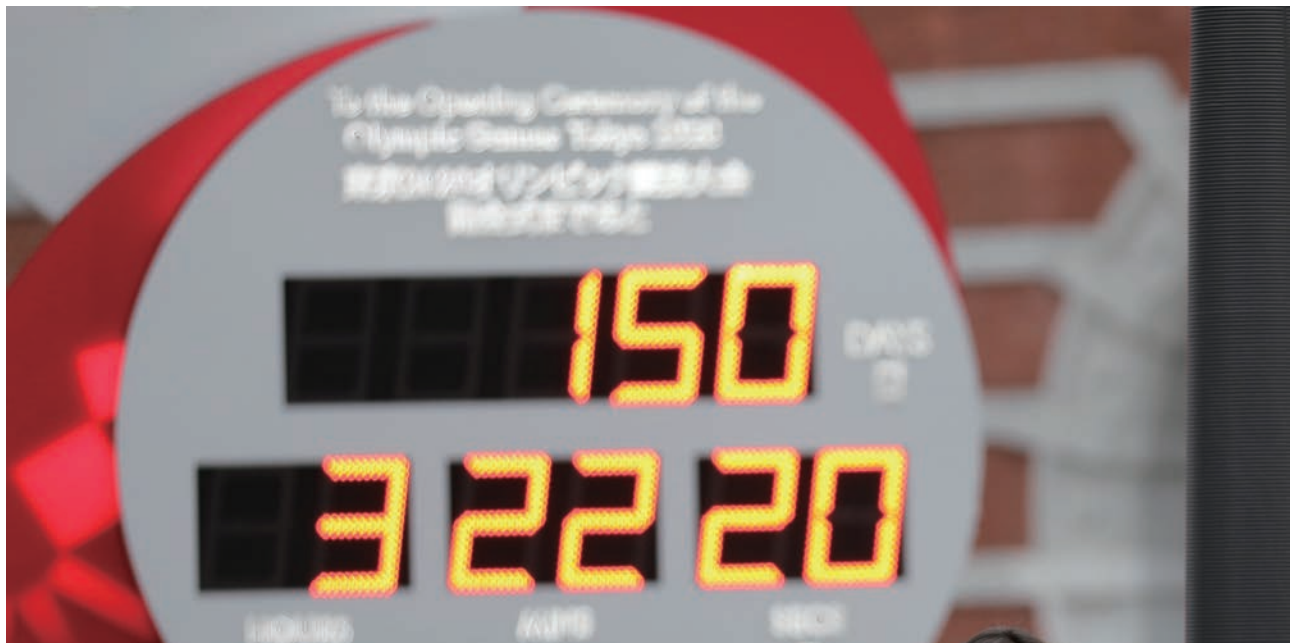
It is often said that a crisis is a terrible thing to waste, and it is clear that whereas the United States has forsaken its global leadership role during the coronavirus crisis, Japan has pounced on the opportunity to use mask diplomacy to alter geopolitical dynamics to its advantage.

***Countries that emanate a belief in common humanity and invest in building relationships during global catastrophes often have the greatest say in the world order that follows.***

The lesson that Japan has remembered from the 20th century — and American leaders have seemed less motivated to recall — is that countries that emanate a belief in common humanity and invest in building relationships during global catastrophes often have the greatest say in the world order that follows.

Arguably, mask diplomacy has taught us an even more powerful lesson for the 21st century: If a relationship between two countries as seemingly intransigent as that of China and Japan can improve so rapidly, so too can many other relationships that have succumbed to deep-seated hostility around the world.





*The Tokyo 2020 countdown timer outside Tokyo Station  
on Feb 25 (above) and Mar 25 (below), respectively.*

*Now it displays the current date and time, as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japanese government on Mar 25 finally agree to put back the Games until 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic. It was a huge blow to Japan, which has invested \$12 billion in preparations.*



## Two Paths to the Future



**Dan Steinbock**  
*Founder*  
*Difference Group*

The assassination of Iranian Major General Soleimani in Iraq shows that certain objectives, including regime change, have taken a perilous turn in the volatile Middle East.

---

At 1 a.m. on Jan. 3, a motor convoy escorting Qasem Soleimani, major general of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and commander of Iran's elite Quds Force, was hit by several missiles delivered by an American MQ-9 Reaper on Baghdad Airport Road.

As the cars exploded in flames, killing 10 people, Soleimani's body was charred beyond recognition. He could only be identified by his ring. Ironically, several of the 10 Iranian and pro-Iranian commanders who were killed had been instrumental in the defeat of the Islamic State.



Two days after the assassination, Iraq's Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi addressed his country's parliament and suggested that Soleimani was on a peace mission to de-escalate tensions with Saudi Arabia, and that Iraq was brokering the talks.

The effort by the United States Congress to craft a resolution limiting Trump's war powers against Iran, which most Americans support, is a move in the right direction, but it can neither reverse past policy mistakes nor halt the current escalation.

One of the assassination's goals was to accelerate regime change in Iran after years of misguided covert operations. And it is no longer the only alternative in the region.

### Trump's U-turn

Only a few years ago, there was still great hope in Iran. After years of diplomacy, the comprehensive nuclear

accord — JCPOA, July 2015 — was reached by Tehran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — China, France, Russia, the UK and the U.S. — plus Germany and the European Union.

Under the deal, Iran agreed to eliminate its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium, while gaining relief from sanctions imposed by the U.S., the United Nations, as well as from multilateral sanctions on the energy, financial, shipping and automotive sectors, among others. After years of struggle, Iran's oil production and economy began to recover. Yet, already during the Trump transition, the Congress paved the way for the ongoing escalation by extending the Iran Sanctions Act for a decade.

Subsequently, Trump began developing a far more muscular policy against Iran to gain the economic and geopolitical support of Saudi Arabia. In May 2017, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia signed a historic arms deal, which totaled \$110 bil-



▲ Protesters gather in Times Square in New York amid escalated tension between the U.S. and Iran, Jan 8, 2020.



lion immediately and \$350 billion over a decade. In return, the Trump White House began a coordinated escalation to counter Iran, starting with U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal. After Iran's missile attacks on two U.S. bases, which deliberately avoided targeting people, Trump promised a further ratcheting up of economic sanctions against Iran.

Worse, since early 2017, the Trump administration has given a green light to clandestine operations that seek to soften Iranian moderates, while pushing hawks strategically to act in ways the White House could use as a pretext for regime change and new rounds of sanctions.

Initially, Trump relied on the neoconservative John Bolton's "Shah scenario" for regime change. It has been followed for covert operations by some of the most controversial CIA officials, who were also deeply involved in the detention and interrogation program condemned by the 2014 Senate report. The current head of the CIA was charged over the destruction of videotapes containing evidence of torture.

Critics see the covert signature of the head of the CIA and its Iran desk chief as one catalyst behind the 2019-20 Iranian protests.

***Oil and military exports are seen as the main U.S. interests in the Middle East.***

**Oil and armaments**

Unsurprisingly, the Iraqi parliament has called for the expulsion of U.S. troops from the country. Oil and military exports are seen as the main U.S. interests in the Middle East. After all, Iran and Iraq hold some of the world's largest deposits of proven oil and natural gas reserves. Combined, their

reserves exceed those of Venezuela, which has the world's largest proven reserves. Moreover, Saudi Arabia and the UAE account, respectively, for 22 percent and 7 percent of total U.S. military arms exports.

***In contrast to China's emphasis on economic development, the U.S. approach has been predicated on political and strategic alliances and regime change.***

China's effective presence in the region began to increase only in the early 21st century, but it differs from the U.S. role, which stems from the postwar era. Moreover, in the past decade, the international environment that gave rise to the tacit U.S.-Saudi pact has crumbled with the shale gas revolution in America, while the spread of brutal terrorism and counterterrorism pose questions about U.S. goals in the region.

In contrast to China's emphasis on economic development, the U.S. approach has been predicated on political and strategic alliances and regime change. The list of these interventions is long, particularly in the Middle East, where it includes coups and interventions in Syria, Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. After the U.S. became an oil importer, and then the 1970s energy crises, the proclivity for intervention intensified.

In the past, major oil and gas exporters earned significant revenues from the U.S., but today China ranks as the top export destination for Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait and Oman. If successful, China's Belt and Road Initiative could be seen as a 21st century Marshall Plan that can accelerate infrastructure investment, particularly in modernizing medium- and low-income nations. In 2018, the Middle East and North Africa leapfrogged other emerging economies as a destination for BRI projects, which boomed to an estimated \$28.1 billi-

*If successful, China's Belt and Road Initiative could be seen as a 21st century Marshall Plan that can accelerate infrastructure investment, particularly in modernizing medium- and low-income nations.*

on. Since the launch of the initiative, these investments have soared to more than \$123 billion in a half-decade.

By comparison, U.S. total economic and military assistance amounted to \$50 billion in 2017. In the Middle East, most went to Iraq (\$3.7 billion), Israel (\$3.2 billion), Egypt (\$1.5 billion), Syria (\$0.9 billion) and Yemen (\$0.6 billion). Even combined, these revenues account for barely a third of Chinese BRI projects in the region — and their objectives are not constructive.

### **Expansions and contractions**

Before 2015, Iran's economy shrank by 9 percent over two years because of sanctions. After stabilization, sanctions relief enabled Iran's oil exports to return to nearly pre-sanctions levels, boosting 7% economic growth in 2016. Growth broadened to the non-oil sector. Real GDP growth was projected to rise toward 4.5 percent over the medium-term. After the U.S. withdrew from the nuclear deal, secondary sanctions drove Iran's economy into mild recession, as major companies exited to avoid being penalized by the U.S.

Thanks to Trump's policies before Soleimani's assassination, Iran's economy was expected to undergo a second consecutive year of recession and shrink by 8.7 percent in 2019 and 2020. Inflation was projected to reach 38% annually with mounting fiscal pressures. But stagnation is not enough for the Trump administration, which appears to be fostering a steep contraction, and possibly Iran's economic collapse.

Historically, U.S. stance in the Middle East has rested on assertive politics, economic sanctions, military interventions, covert operations and regime changes. In the Trump era, the darker side of this stance has grown paramount, as evidenced by the alienation of U.S. allies in Europe.

By contrast, the Chinese stance relies on political cooperation, economic development, non-interference and explicit opposition to clandestine activities and regime change. With its BRI projects, China has the potential to accelerate economic development in the region.

***As is the case elsewhere around the world, there is room for both the U.S. and China in the Middle East.***

As is the case elsewhere around the world, there is room for both the U.S. and China in the Middle East. The rise of multipolarity in the region holds the promise of a more peaceful, stable and prosperous future — particularly now that U.S. escalation in the region could cause a global contraction in 2020.

# Lessons from Soleimani's Death



**Zhou Bo**  
*Honorary Fellow*  
*PLA Academy of Military Science*

Scholars speak of the old Chinese idea of “wangdao” — an enlightened and benevolent power. But it doesn’t require China to become a new hegemon.



▲ Hundreds of thousands of Iranians in Tehran mourn the assassination of Iranian Maj. General Qassim Suleimani on January 6, 2020.

Few people outside Iran, including me, know much about the Achaemenid or Sassanian or Safavid dynasties — the prime time of the Persian Empire. But when U.S. President Donald Trump warned that 52 Iranian cultural sites would be “hit very fast and hard” if Tehran retaliated for the killing of General Qasem Soleimani, I felt as if he was threatening to

bombard the sites in the Arabian Nights, the bedside stories we grew up with.

Such a threat by an American president is almost as appalling as the killing of General Soleimani, especially if it indicates how a superpower might behave without regard for international law in the days to come.



The Taliban deliberately bombarded the Bamiyan Buddha in Afghanistan in 2001; a group affiliated with al-Qaida destroyed ancient religious monuments in Timbuktu, Mali, in 2012 (which the International Criminal Court took on as a unique case); and ISIS fighters destroyed significant parts of the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra in 2015.

Has America's moral high ground fallen to the point that it appears only at the end of Hollywood blockbusters?

A couple of years ago, I heard two questions that I found most interesting at an international conference: If China's ascent and America's decline are inevitable, could China create an international order that the Chinese are happy with and foreigners could also live with? And if the abuse of force by the United States has brought on world catastrophes, how can China make a difference?

China today looks like a magician wearing three hats at the same time — a socialist country with Chinese characteristics, a developing country with GDP per capita of \$10,000 and the second-largest economy in the world. This could be confusing, and understandably so.

The first hat is easiest to explain. If a miracle has a color, it must be red. No country has benefited more from globalization than China in the last 40 years since it decided to reform and open up to the world. This explains why, as a socialist country, Beijing has vowed to safeguard the current international order, which, to a great extent, was designed by the West after World War II.

Further, China has become a champion of multilateralism. It has demonstrated potential for leadership on issues of global concern ranging from multi-polarity to climate change and the development of artificial intelligence.

The confusion is increased when the second and third hats are put together. How to balance the seemingly contradictory roles of a developing country that is also the second-largest economy in the world?

China has said it would make contributions to the world in line with its actual national strength. This is usually taken to mean that China's contributions will be limited to those of a developing country, but this is the wrong conclusion. Since China's national strength is bound to grow, it can certainly contribute more to the world, especially because it is widely assumed that in 10 to 15 years, China will surpass the United States to become the largest economy.

If China's ascent and America's decline are indeed inevitable, China should resist the temptation to fill in the vacuums left by America. These vacuums could easily turn out to be traps, particularly in the Middle East. Nowhere else on Earth has seen so many conflicts, proxy wars and major power rivalries. China's non-interference may not be what the warring parties or nations there need most, but its impartiality is trusted by all parties in the Middle East precisely because they believe China is not allied with any one of them.

***If China's ascent and America's decline are indeed inevitable, China should resist the temptation to fill in the vacuums left by America.***

So far, China's operations overseas, such as peacekeeping, counter-piracy and disaster relief, have been mainly humanitarian in nature. This is not a coincidence. For Beijing, the aim is helping, rather than policing, the world. It is hard to imagine any circumstance in which the PLA would use

its drones to assassinate a foreign leader, let alone in a third country.

Beijing's contribution to global security is not necessarily what it has done, but equally what it surely won't do to the world. This is not just because non-intervention in the affairs of other nations is enshrined in the UN charter. It is also underlined in China's foreign policy.

If the world were a jungle of trees, perhaps it would be better to let a devastated region recover naturally, as with Mother Nature, given that external interference is often destructive rather than constructive. For example, the United States has been fighting in Afghanistan for 18 years. More than 2,300 of its troops have died and more than 20,000 wounded in the longest war in American history. Yet, Afghanistan is no safer than it was 18 years ago, and there is no foreseeable peace in sight.

***Unlike Pax Britannia in the 19th century and Pax Americana in the 20th century, the 21st century will not be shrouded in Pax Sinica.***

By comparison, since 1990 the Chinese PLA has sent around 40,000 peacekeepers on 24 UN peacekeeping missions around the world, but only 13 soldiers have died.

What does an ideal world order look like to the Chinese? Unlike Pax Britannia in the 19th century and Pax Americana in the 20th century, the 21st century will not be shrouded in Pax Sinica, as some people have assumed. Despite the awesome buildup of the PLA, the Chinese military won't catch up with the Americans until at least midcentury, if it's possible at all. Nowadays, amid accelerating globalization and persuasive technological advances, no single civilizati-

on can dominate the world. Every culture is a hybrid. Yes, the world will have more Chinese elements, but China will be equally colored with more international hues.

Some scholars in China talk about an ancient Chinese vision of world order — “humane authority,” or “wangdao.” This is fine if the word represents China as an enlightened and benevolent power willing to fulfill other countries' security and economic needs, but it is wrong if it suggests that China does all this as a hegemon in exchange for deference.

***What might be closest to humane authority is the authority of the UN.***

What might be closest to humane authority is the authority of the UN. Despite problems such as bureaucracy and low efficiency, which are criticized from time to time, the largest intergovernmental organization in the world represents the global community better than any other organizations and therefore should be strengthened rather than weakened. In this regard, China has rightly increased its financial contribution to the UN and added to the number of standby peacekeepers.

Thank goodness Trump's threat has proved hollow, but the price Washington paid for General Soleimani's death will be greater than Tehran's retaliatory missile attacks at American bases in Iraq. The genie is out of the bottle.

## About China-US Focus

China-US Focus is a platform where Chinese and American thought leaders can openly express their views on the myriad issues that face the two nations.

China-US Focus is published by the China-United States Exchange Foundation (CUSEF), an independent, non-profit and non-governmental foundation committed to the belief that a positive and peaceful relationship between the strongest developed nation and the most populous, fast-developing nation is essential for global wellbeing. Founded in Hong Kong in 2008 and privately funded, CUSEF builds platforms to encourage constructive dialogue and diverse exchanges between the people of the U.S. and China.

China-United States Exchange Foundation  
20/F, Yardley Commercial Building  
No.3 Connaught Road West, Sheung Wan,  
Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2530 6788

Email: [digest@cusef.org.hk](mailto:digest@cusef.org.hk)

Website: [www.chinausfocus.org.hk](http://www.chinausfocus.org.hk)



CHINA<sup>US</sup> Focus IS PROUD TO INTRODUCE...



A new storytelling experience bringing you up close to the fascinating people shaping our shared global future.

Weekly videos and podcasts hosted by James Chau take you on an exciting journey to 'see' and 'hear' China first-hand.

Now available on all major digital and social media platforms  
[@thechinacurrent](https://www.instagram.com/thechinacurrent)



#### ABOUT JAMES CHAU

James has earned a special reputation for his interviews with world leaders in politics, science and health. Amongst them, Nobel Peace Prize winners Jimmy Carter, Kofi Annan, Muhammad Yunus and Aung Sang Suu Kyi, and also Winnie Mandela, Arianna Huffington and Christine Lagarde. He serves as World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador and UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador.

