

# The Washington Post

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*



## Chinese ambassador: Ignoring the facts to blame China will only make things worse

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Since January, China has fought a tough battle against the novel coronavirus and made remarkable progress. In this unprecedented fight, China spared no expense to save lives.

However, an unnecessary burden has been distracting our focus and undercutting international efforts to curb the virus: the absurd mind-set of “always blame China.”

Simply put, for some people, China has to be wrong, regardless of the facts.

When China took the decisive step to lock down Wuhan, critics dismissed the move as a medieval practice that violated human rights, something typical of an “authoritarian” China. When China provided updates about the outbreak, they labeled objective facts as disinformation and propaganda. The nature of China’s political system dominates the content of their attacks, and the Communist Party is the ultimate target of their barrage.

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As China’s situation improved, the number of confirmed cases and fatalities skyrocketed elsewhere. Promptly, a few American politicians switched to their default setting of blaming others, ignoring that China has done its best in responding to a new virus. They persistently accuse China of delays and coverups, and some even demand a reckoning with China.

China was blamed for providing second-rate supplies with quality-control problems. When measures were taken to ensure the products' quality, China was criticized for hoarding supplies and holding up exports. Conspiracy theories abound — and all point to China's “geopolitical strategies.”

The World Health Organization has spoken highly of China's epidemic response, which led the conspiracy theorists to charge that China has either bought the WHO or exerted political pressure on the agency. Naturally, the WHO has been lambasted for taking sides and being incompetent.

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Is China really to blame? Here are some facts:

First, China has taken strict measures and made huge sacrifices to keep the virus in check, which not only saved lives at home but also bought precious time for the world.

Second, China has done its best to share information about the virus. On Dec. 27, a doctor in Hubei province reported three suspicious cases. In the following four days, local and central governments conducted investigations on the ground. On Jan. 3 — within a week — China began briefing the WHO, the United States and other countries about the outbreak. On Jan. 12, China released the whole genome sequence of the coronavirus, which has proved critical for diagnosis and treatment of the disease globally.

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Third, we shared information with the United States at the earliest possible time and have been supporting its fight against the disease. The two countries' centers for disease control and prevention and government agencies have been in close communication since Jan. 4, the day after China briefed the WHO. In their phone calls, President Xi Jinping gave detailed accounts of China's measures to President Trump.

By April 29, China had provided, according to our customs figures, more than 4 billion masks to the United States, or roughly 14 for every American on average.

There is no denying that the first known case of covid-19 was reported in Wuhan. But this means only that Wuhan was the first victim of the virus. To ask a victim for compensation is simply ridiculous.

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If that made sense, then who was to compensate for the fatalities of the H1N1 flu and HIV/AIDS? Who was to pay for the huge losses caused by the 2008 financial crisis?

Behind the mind-set of “always blame China” is a kind of dirty politics, championed by a few people who shift the spotlight for political gain. In their manipulation, China has to be wrong.

It is this blame-shifting that needs transparency.

Blaming China will not end this pandemic. On the contrary, the mind-set risks decoupling China and the United States and hurting our efforts to fight the disease, our coordination to reignite the global economy, our ability to conquer other challenges and our prospects of a better future. The United States would not emerge as a winner from this scenario.

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It is time to end the blame game. It is time to focus on the disease and rebuild trust between our two countries. As President Abraham Lincoln called for “the better angels” in his inauguration speech, I hope that the wisdom of preceding generations will guide us to choose the right side of history and work for our shared future together.

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David Ignatius: How China can end the covid-19 conspiracy theories before they get worse

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The Post's View: China has turned to bullying to avoid accountability. It may be working on Europe.

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