

# IS CHINA'S CORONAVIRUS WAR A FORM OF TERRORISM?

by Howard Rotberg



Mark Twain used to say, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

Even if we keep that in mind, a study of Covid19 statistics should pose some very troubling questions, and even more troubling answers.

The questions relate to the origins of the virus in Wuhan, China, the failure of the Chinese authorities to bring it under control before allowing Chinese to travel around the world spreading what was invented in a virology lab in Wuhan – and purposely misrepresented as something coming from a “wet market”. Leading Chinese virologists or other doctors were “disappeared”.

The attitude of too many politicians was shown by American

presidential candidate Joe Biden (who is pro-China) who reacted to President Trump's January 31<sup>st</sup> order to stop flights coming to the U.S. from China, by alleging that Trump's order was a "racist" and "xenophobic" action.

Speaking to reporters in early May Mr. Trump said: "We went through the worst attack we've ever had on our country, this is worst attack we've ever had.

"This is worse than Pearl Harbor, this is worse than the World Trade Center. There's never been an attack like this.

"And it should have never happened. Could've been stopped at the source. Could've been stopped in China. It should've been stopped right at the source. And it wasn't."

But Trump realized that he could not make an allegation of war against China, so he clarified his remarks a short time later to another reporter, who asked him if he saw the pandemic as an actual act of war, Mr Trump indicated the *outbreak* was America's foe, rather than *China*.

"I view the invisible enemy [coronavirus] as a war," he said. "I don't like how it got here, because it could have been stopped, but no, I view the invisible enemy like a war."

So Trump at most inferred that China should have stopped that which was the enemy, not that China was the enemy.

Let's look at the chronology for December 1 to and including January 1, as reported by the BBC:

December 1 – The first onset of symptoms are observed, according to the Lancet medical journal.

However, it's believed the virus first appeared some time in November.

December 27 – Chinese authorities are told about a Sars-like disease by a doctor in a provincial hospital in Hubei

province. By this point, cases are multiplying.

December 30 –The health commission in Wuhan notifies local hospitals of a “pneumonia of unclear cause”, and asks them to report any related information of suspicious cases in the past week.

Ai Fen, a leading doctor at Wuhan Central hospital, receives medical results from a patient with a suspected coronavirus.

Dr. Ai takes a photo of the results and sends it to another doctor in the area. It circulates among the medical community in Wuhan.

Another doctor at Wuhan Central hospital, Dr Li Wenliang, sends a message to fellow doctors in a chat group warning them about the outbreak and advising they wear protective clothing to avoid infection. Dr Li is later summoned to the Public Security Bureau and accused of “making false comments” that had “severely disturbed the social order”.

December 31 – Chinese officials confirm they are investigating 27 cases of viral pneumonia and dispatch a team of health experts to the region.

The authorities alert the World Health Organization (WHO).

January 1 –Dr Ai Fen says she is reprimanded by a hospital disciplinary committee for “spreading rumours”.

The Wuhan Public Security Bureau detains eight people for spreading rumours about the virus, reporting it on a Chinese news programme, Xinwen Lianbo, a show watched by millions.

The Chinese, along with the WHO whose director has close ties to China, were content to allow the world to believe that the virus came from a Wuhan “wet market” selling live animals. It was not until the end of May that a leading Chinese virologist whose mysterious disappearance was much discussed, advised that the virus did not come from the wet market but from the

Wuhan Institute of Virology. In a television interview on China's state television network, she said that such viruses were the "tip of the iceberg" and that she regrets that science became so "politicized". We may indeed wonder what she meant by that.

Shi Zhengli, known as the "bat woman" for her passionate research on bats and the viruses associated with them, denied rumours that her disappearance for some weeks meant that she had defected to the West. I think that many in the West would like to know just what her job was, what she knew about the coronavirus that seems to have emanated from her lab, and why neither she nor the Chinese Government took strong actions to either prevent further spread of the virus or seek the assistance of experts who could stop its spread.

It took the World Health Organization until March 11<sup>th</sup> to declare this a pandemic. Does this have anything to do with its director having close ties to China?

Chinese authorities imposed harsh lockdowns in Wuhan and elsewhere after the virus took off in December. However, research from Britain's University of Southampton suggests 95% of infections world-wide could have been avoided if China had acted three weeks earlier, and acknowledged the threat to the whole world.

*TIME* magazine last April reported that one study by six researchers from the University of Hong Kong found that 232,000 people in China may have been infected by Feb. 20, compared to the approximately 75,000 cases the country had officially reported on that date.

Let's look at statistics, and try to keep Mr. Twain's admonition in mind. First of all, China has made it a practice to alter its method of reporting of cases, for example, by not including asymptomatic cases in its case count. It has redefined what is a covid19 infection some 8 times. Second,

early reports from Wuhan indicate that many deaths were not counted because crowded hospitals were not able to treat and give authoritative death counts for death caused by the virus when bodies were just dumped in the street, or sick people were locked in to die in their homes.

World-wide death counts are suspect also, as the U.S. was found to have ordered doctors to attribute deaths to coronavirus even if a co-morbidity in an aged patient was the greater cause of death, and the virus in and of itself was not the chief cause of death.

So, it may be that China *under-reported* its coronavirus deaths, while the United States *over-reported* its coronavirus deaths. The statistics as of October 3rd (from [worldometers.info](http://worldometers.info)) show that China self-reports that, with a population of 1,394,015,977 it has had only 85,434 cases and only 4,634 deaths, ranking it 44<sup>th</sup> in the number of cases per country. The U.S., with about 329,877,505 people has had a much worse problem, with 7,570,742 cases and 213,758 deaths. That means that the U.S. has had about 44 times the number of deaths as China when it has less than 25% of the population of China.

India, with a population of 1,326,093,247 reports a similar number of cases as the U.S. but about one-half the fatalities. Brazil's figures, adjusted for its lesser population of 211,715,973, has similar figures as the U.S. but Russia, with about 141,722,205, reports 1,204,502 cases but only 21,251 deaths.

Israel, where much of the population is blaming its politicians for bungling the pandemic, has only 1,679 deaths (still a lot for a small country of just over 9 million people) out of 263,983 cases.

Sweden, with its lack of lockdowns is sometimes treated as a model for those negating the need for lockdowns and the

economic and mental health effects thereby created. But the numbers are in line with similar sized countries in that it has 5895 deaths out of 94,283 cases.

Egypt is another populous county with modest cases and deaths for its size. Iran with over 84 million people reports 26,746 deaths out of just over 468,000 cases. Of course, Iran, Egypt, and China are totalitarian countries where the government's statistics, can be construed, as per Twain's famous quote, as "damned lies".

Canada, with a population of 37,826,000. has had 164,419 cases and 9,460 deaths.

This means that comparing it to its neighbour and very similar society, we note that Canada has just under 11.5% of America's population but has had only 2% of cases compared to America and only 4.5% of the deaths.

Now we return to the cases of China and the U.S. As noted earlier we might have to adjust the numbers due to our belief that China under-reports and the U.S. over-reports.

But the one thing we take away from this basic statistical analysis, is that China, a high density society where many people live and work in much more crowded conditions than Americans, supposedly has 1.1% of the cases as the U.S. and only 4.5% of the deaths.

It seems to me, as a retired lawyer, than when there are acts that cause injury or death, we usually look closely to see if such might be accidental, or might there have been some motivation or intention that can be inferred. If the latter, we have a bigger problem than the former.

From the date of his inauguration, Trump has been in a trade war with China, imposing tariffs on Chinese goods, with China retaliating. Whether it was just a coincidence, China and the U.S. signed the first phase of a trade agreement, in early

January as the virus was spreading.

*The New York Times* summarized the agreement as follows: "The pact is intended to open Chinese markets to more American companies, increase farm and energy exports and provide greater protection for American technology and trade secrets. China has committed to buying an additional \$200 billion worth of American goods and services by 2021 and is expected to ease some of the tariffs it has placed on American products.

"But the agreement preserves the bulk of the tariffs that Mr. Trump has placed on \$360 billion worth of Chinese goods, and it maintains the threat of additional punishment if Beijing does not live up to the terms of the deal."

The agreement does not meet some critic's demands to curtail China's subsidies to its manufacturers or its tight controls over how companies handle data and cloud computing nor does it address Chinese hacking of American companies.

The administration has said that Phase 2 of the negotiations will address some of these issues, and is keeping tariffs in place in part to maintain leverage for the next round of talks. Mr. Trump said he would remove all tariffs if the two sides reach agreement on the next phase.

The United States will continue to maintain tariffs covering 65 percent of American imports from China,

American industry was pleased with the opening up of markets for biotechnology, beef and poultry. Banks, insurers, pharmaceuticals and the energy industry were given assistance.

China agreed not to force American companies to hand over their technology as a condition of doing business there, refrain from directing its companies to obtain sensitive foreign technology through acquisitions and there was a pledge by both not to devalue their currencies to obtain an advantage in export markets.

There remains work to be done on America's scrutinizing of Chinese investments and technology purchases for national security threats, including blacklisting Chinese companies like Huawei, the telecom firm.

The American charges against Huawei and its extradition proceedings against Huawei's Meng Wanzhou, which have her under house arrest in Canada, are a sticking point in the relationship. Meng Wanzhou is a Chinese business executive with permanent residency in Canada, who is the deputy chair of the board and chief financial officer of telecom giant and China's largest privately held company, Huawei, founded by her father Ren Zhengfei. She was arrested on a provisional U.S. extradition request for fraud and conspiracy to commit fraud in order to circumvent U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Canada has been drawn into the dispute as two Canadians, one a businessman, and one part of a think tank, were jailed in China in an apparent attempt to put pressure on Canada to release Meng. The jailed Canadians, Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, popularly known as the "two Michaels" have been in a Chinese jail for over a year and are now charged with espionage.

Canadian writer Matthew Fisher, writing in *Global News* last June says that while it is true that they are caught in the middle between China and the U.S., there is another reason why China flouts international legal norms and ignores Canada's demands about the two prisoners: "China regards Canada as a pushover since Canada never pushes back."

Fisher continues: "Like any great power, China can smell weakness. It likely sensed Canada's vulnerability the moment Trudeau made his absurd declaration a few years back, when asked about other countries that he admired he cited China's 'basic dictatorship'. To this day, the prime minister has not walked that bizarre statement back or explained his naivete in saying it."



“The fate of the Two Michaels, who now face the un-tender mercies of China’s rigged, state-controlled justice system, is one of many recent examples of Beijing ignoring international conventions with no apparent concerns for its own reputation. In so doing, the communist dictatorship has quickly been transitioning from a rogue state into a pariah”, alleges Fisher.

China has recently had military actions against India’s northern border; Australia is having a series of disputes involving hacking; China has literally attacked Vietnamese and Filipino maritime interests in the South China Sea; and has been worrying Japan concerning the Japanese islands in the East China Sea. Then, of course, we have China’s actions to terminate Hong Kong freedoms. Is it coincidental that it took the Coronavirus to stop the pro-freedom demonstration in Hong Kong?

Despite some real progress on the trade front, China sees its future hegemony in Europe and Asia threatened by the Trump administration and American allies.

Whether the trade war has now become a war using viruses and disinformation as weapons is a good question, deserving of some study by our leaders. When we see how many people are suffering when disease strikes them or their loved ones, and how many people are suffering mental illness due to lockdowns and business failures, we can understand that the coronavirus is a weapon spreading fear. Causing us fear is a technique of terrorists. Has China utilized a form of terrorism in its hegemonic war?

Howard Rotberg writes on political culture, values and ideologies. He is the author of four books with his most recent being *Tolerism: The Ideology Revealed* and *The Ideological Path to Submission... and what we can do about it*. He has written for Frontpage Magazine, New English Review, Israel National News, Vancouver Sun, Hamilton

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