

The U.S. and China Could Cooperate to Defeat the Pandemic Instead, Their Antagonism Makes Matters Worse

By Yanzhong Huang

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Workers disinfect a subway train in Wuhan, China, March 2020 Xiao Yijiu Xinhua / eyevine / Redux

Infectious diseases typically generate opportunities for international cooperation. During the Cold War era, scientists in the former Soviet Union and the United States jointly developed and improved a polio vaccine. The same spirit of cooperation animated the U.S.-Chinese response to the SARS outbreak of 2003. In September 2005, the presidents of the two countries hammered out "Ten Core Principles" of global pandemic response, which were later supported by 88 nations and agencies. On May 6, 2009, President Hu Jintao of China personally called U.S. President Barack Obama to express his "sincere condolences" for the H1N1 outbreak in the United States and his desire to "maintain communication with the World Health Organization, the United States, and other relevant parties, as well as strengthen cooperation, to jointly deal with this challenge to human health and safety."

The COVID-19 outbreak should have offered a perfect opportunity for China and the United States to rise above their differences and tackle a common threat together. The two countries could have joined hands to support the World Health Organization in coordinating an international response to the pandemic. Experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States could have helped China investigate the origin and nature of the "mysterious" virus, at a time when their Chinese counterparts were overwhelmed and needed more specialized expertise in the field. As a leading manufacturer and exporter of active pharmaceutical ingredients, China could have worked closely with the United States to minimize the disruption of the drug supply chain. Both countries have robust capacities to manufacture vaccines: they could have mobilized these capabilities in a cooperative effort to develop and produce a vaccine. Such efforts, in combination with the historic phase one trade deal that the two countries reached on December 13, 2019, would have cooled tensions and reinvigorated a relationship that trade war and strategic rivalry have soured over the past three years.

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Indeed, until late January, U.S.-Chinese cooperation over a COVID-19 response remained promising. China informed the United States about the disease situation as early as January 3. It shared the genetic sequencing of the novel coronavirus on January 10, enabling the United States

to develop diagnostic tests for the disease and advance a potential vaccine. U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar offered to send a team of CDC experts to China to observe the outbreak and help if possible. The presidents of the two countries spoke on the phone on February 7, when U.S. President Donald Trump expressed his readiness to send experts to China and provide other forms of assistance.

But for more than a month starting in early January, Beijing showed no interest in Azar's offer. Margaret Brennan of Face the Nation pressed Cui Tiankai, the Chinese ambassador to the United States, on the matter, but he dodged the question. On January 31, Trump signed an executive order banning all foreign nationals who had recently been in China from entering the United States. The same day, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur

Ross said that the outbreak in China would help accelerate the return of jobs to the United States.

Chinese authorities greeted the U.S. restrictions with concern. An article posted by the official Xinhua News noted that the U.S. measures were "tantamount to a travel ban, which will allow other countries to isolate China," generating what could be a major shock to China's economy. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying did not hide her frustration with the United States on February 3, when she said, "The U.S. government has not provided any substantive help to the Chinese side yet. On the contrary, it was the first to withdraw its consulate staff from Wuhan, the first to suggest the partial withdrawal of embassy staff, the first to announce a ban on entry by Chinese citizens after the WHO made it clear that it doesn't recommend and even opposes travel and trade restrictions against China."

Four days later, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pledged up to \$100 million to help China and other affected countries fight COVID-19. But China's nationalist tabloid Global Times was quick to point out that there was no guarantee that China would receive that money, because it was to come from the Global Health Security budget, which is used to address a range of acute disease outbreaks worldwide. On March 20, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson tweeted that "China has not received a penny" from the U.S. government. Moreover, the Chinese authorities had

reason to distrust Pompeo's words: days before his pledge to help China fight COVID-19, the secretary had called the Chinese Communist Party "the central threat of our times."

Beijing was upset not just with U.S. government officials but with the U.S. news media, as well. Starting in February, U.S. outlets aggressively reported COVID-19 outbreaks in China, and their criticism of the country's handling of the crisis drew the wrath of the Chinese government. On February 3, The Wall Street Journal published an opinion piece titled, "China is the Real Sick Man of Asia." Although the piece described only the problems in Chinese governance, the headline brought back the historical memory of China being humiliated and bullied by Western powers. In Cui's words, it was "very insulting on the entire Chinese nation." China's foreign ministry spokesperson denounced the column as "racist" and "malicious" and demanded an open and formal apology

from The Wall Street Journal. Before the anger over the column could subside, the Trump administration imposed new limits on the operation in the United States of state-run Chinese news organizations, limiting to 100 the number of Chinese citizens who could work in the United States for five news organizations and forcing 60 Chinese employees of the organizations to leave the country. The next day, China announced that it would expel three Wall Street Journal reporters based in Beijing.

Trump escalated the diplomatic spat over the outbreak on March 16 by referring to COVID-19 as "the Chinese virus."

In the meantime, the two sides began to spar verbally over the origin of the virus. Tom Cotton, the Republican senator from Arkansas who serves on the Senate Intelligence Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, indicated that the virus might have come from China's biological warfare program, an accusation that Cui considered "absolutely crazy." However, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Zhao Lijian, promoted a similar conspiracy theory, suggesting on Twitter that U.S. Army soldiers might have brought the coronavirus to Wuhan. Zhao was likely reacting to Pompeo's remarks on March 6 that the "Wuhan coronavirus" had caused the pandemic and that China's lack of transparency had delayed the U.S. response. In a phone call, Pompeo warned the top Chinese diplomat Yang Jiechi against spreading "outlandish rumors" about the virus. Yang reportedly admonished Pompeo that attempts to smear China's epi-

demic-control efforts "will not succeed."

Trump escalated the diplomatic spat over the outbreak on March 16 by referring to COVID-19 as "the Chinese virus." Although naming diseases after places or people (for example, Spanish flu, Japanese encephalitis, German measles, Russian flu) is not uncommon, in 2015 the World Health Organization issued best practices for naming new human infectious diseases that discouraged the use of human or geographic names for diseases. Trump's deliberate usage touched a raw nerve in China and triggered a nationalist backlash. The spokesperson for China's foreign ministry called the appellation "despicable." The next day, China announced that it would expel more American journalists, including those working for The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post. Walter Russell Mead, the author of the column whose title had first rankled the Chinese authorities, suggested that removing the reporters would only "solidify the bipartisan consensus" in the United States that China is a hostile threat. An escalating cold war between the two countries in the midst of a pandemic could redound to the United States' detriment, the aforementioned Xinhua article implicitly threatened: the United States could be "plunged into the mighty sea of coronavirus" if China imposed controls on the export of basic pharmaceutical ingredients and facemasks.

On March 13, the Harvard University President Lawrence Bacow wrote in an email to the university community that "COVID-19 will test our capacities to be kind and generous, and to see beyond ourselves and our own interests." He added, "Our task now is to bring the best of who we are and what we do to a world that is more complex and more confused than any of us would like it to be." In the United States and in China, we have seen people extend helping hands to one another. On January 27, Bill Gates committed \$5 million in emergency funds to support China's fight against the virus; he then followed that with a pledge of up to \$100 million. On the morning of March 16, the first shipment of Chinese billionaire Jack Ma's donation, which included one million masks and 500,000 test kits, arrived in the United States.

Alas, demagogues and rumormongers obstruct such basic humanity and acts of conscience. When politicians and diplomats imitate or overreact to one another's unconstructive and uncooperative remarks and behaviors, they create a downward spiral that does more than COVID-19 to push the world closer toward doomsday.



密西根青年文化志工首辦線上課程傳承臺灣文化



密西根青年文化志工(FASCA)於4月5日下午由諮詢導師陳青青及Senior FASCA學員李雙宇及李雙安共同舉辦首場網路文化

課程。近35位青年文化志工報名參加，課程首先教導全體學員使用線上會議視訊軟體，俾讓青年志工於配合密西根州政府「居家避疫」期間，能持續學習臺灣文化。

文化課程由密西根青年文化志工團隊長陳致穎帶領練習團歌及團舞「我相信」，諮詢導師陳青青表示，很高興看到學員們在疫情肆虐期間都平安健康，並踴躍參與課程研習，也感謝家長們對線上課程規劃的寶貴意見，相關課程仍將承襲以往傳承具臺灣特色的中華文化。

陳青青也簡報本年文化課程內容，並鼓勵志工們善用所學，以「你(妳)在FASCA期間，印象最深刻的一堂課」為題製作3至5分鐘短片，就FASCA所提供豐富多元的文化課程包括布袋戲、歌仔戲、舞龍舞獅、扯鈴、書法、國畫、皮影戲等，以及臺灣美食如珍珠奶茶、臺式剉冰、臺式涼麵、湯圓、冰皮月餅等，利用居家期間發揮創意製作影片與學員們分享。課程最後由李雙宇帶領志工們相互提問，許久未見的學員們交流熱絡、互相關懷，在溫馨歡樂的氣氛中圓滿完成首場線上文化課程。

圖片說明
一、諮詢導師陳青青(右上)以簡報說明本年文化課程內容
二、文化志工們在線上熱絡交流互動



克里夫蘭傷痛診所
Dr. Wenning Zhao, Acupuncturist from China, Chiropractic Physician
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