

Why China Must Be Held Accountable for the Coronavirus Pandemic

By MICHAEL AUSLIN March 31, 2020 6:30 AM

THE Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is waging a ferocious, global propaganda campaign designed to deflect blame for the origin and spread of the COVID-19 outbreak from Wuhan, China. Moreover, Beijing is trying to take advantage of the pandemic to increase its global standing and influence. There are three main reasons why the world must hold the CCP accountable for the first global pandemic in a century.

Morality

The first reason the CCP must be held accountable for the pandemic is that morality demands it. General Secretary Xi Jinping's regime has refused to accept responsibility for allowing the epidemic to spread uncontrolled, first in Wuhan, then throughout China, and finally beyond its borders to the rest of the world. [Chinese officials knew](#) of the seriousness of the pandemic as early as December, yet waited weeks to begin restricting travel, allowing [millions of Wuhan residents](#) to visit relatives elsewhere in the country and abroad for Lunar New Year celebrations, spreading the virus as they went. British scientists have [argued](#) that if Beijing had acted just three weeks earlier, it could have reduced the spread of the virus by 95 percent.

We also know that in the time before the outbreak's seriousness became apparent outside China, the CCP destroyed laboratory samples and punished the brave doctors and citizens who tried to warn their countrymen and the world about the pathogen, while refusing foreign offers of help. We are almost certain that Beijing dramatically [underreported](#) the number of deaths in Wuhan, and is no longer reporting new infections in China. Leaked [photos](#) have shown huge lines of Chinese waiting for the cremated remains of their loved ones in Wuhan, and widely shared calculations on social media of crematoria activity estimate up to 46,000 deaths in Wuhan alone, far above the country's official death toll of just 3,300. [Riots](#) are breaking out as people desperate to leave Wuhan's Hubei province are stopped at internal checkpoints.

In short, the CCP, which for years has claimed to be a responsible member of the global community, showed its true colors when this crisis hit. It can no longer be denied that Xi's regime is a danger to the world. Justice demands it be held morally culpable for its dangerous and callous behavior.

Global Governance

The second reason that Beijing must be held accountable is a political one: The CCP's actions have gravely undermined global political governance. As legal expert James Kraska has [noted](#), China was morally and legally bound, as a party to the 2005 International Health Regulations, to "provide expedited, timely, accurate, and sufficiently detailed information to [the World Health Organization] about . . . potential public health emergencies" such as the coronavirus. Instead of doing so in this case, Beijing actively misled the WHO about the crucial fact that the pathogen was transmitted between humans. The result is that Xi can no longer credibly claim the CCP adheres to international law, and that the corruptibility of long-standing intergovernmental organizations such as the WHO is more apparent than ever.

Moreover, despite being portrayed as a selfless provider of medical aid to other affected countries, Beijing is actually reaping [hundreds of millions in profits](#) by selling equipment to panic-stricken governments abroad. Much of that is [useless](#) and is being [returned](#) by Spain, the Czech Republic, and Malaysia, among other countries. This sort of thing is typical of the least altruistic regime on earth, and worse may be on the way: Xi's government will likely expect political favors from the countries it has "aided" during the crisis, the same way that aid recipient Greece was pressured to [block](#) an EU statement on Chinese human rights in 2017.

Those who believe that good global governance, however flawed, is an important tool for maintaining international peace and for contributing to development and growth should be appalled at how the CCP is undermining the liberal international architecture and suborning global institutions to its will. The normalization of such misbehavior cannot be allowed to stand.

Protecting against the Next Deadly Pathogen

The third reason Beijing must be held responsible is to prevent another pandemic from ravaging the world in the future. As we saw in the 2014 [Ebola](#) outbreak in Dallas, Texas, and are seeing again now, the era of globalization has allowed once-isolated pathogens to leap across national boundaries. Dr. Anthony Fauci of the CDC is among many who have [pointed](#) out that Italy has been devastated by the Wuhan coronavirus partly because it hosts a huge number of Chinese tourists as well as workers in the northern manufacturing regions where the virus emerged. In all, [310,000](#) Chinese live in Italy, and many returned there after visiting China for the Lunar New Year, spreading the virus to their adopted home country. This was, again, the fault of CCP officials, who failed to implement the proper travel restrictions despite knowing of the outbreak's seriousness.

If Beijing escapes blame for its failure to curb the coronavirus pandemic, its lies, and its attempts to cover up the pathogen's seriousness — or, worse yet, if it actually earns global plaudits for its actions — then no country will feel the need to be honest with the world when another epidemic breaks out, and the same deadly fiasco will repeat itself. Meanwhile, an emboldened CCP will grow only more aggressive and repressive, having learned that it can fool and bully the world into submission. Quite simply, if nation states do not understand that there will be repercussions for such malfeasance, then our globalized world will suffer more coronavirus-style pandemics in the future.

Beijing freely chose to deny the truth of COVID-19, and its governing malpractice and incompetence helped unleash a pandemic on the world. For the sake of morality, political governance, and the future, the world must speak truth to power, remember the facts, and condemn the CCP's actions.

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