

Loony Epoch Times fronts dangerous anti-China war agenda

If you don't want a bomb in your bathtub, start by not believing the *Epoch Times*. The fringe newspaper of the Falun Gong movement, suddenly ubiquitous online, churns out a deluge of anti-China diatribe masquerading as news, which is seeding wild accusations against China over the COVID-19 pandemic. According to former members of the Falun Gong movement the editorial policy of the *Epoch Times* has always been to publish any and all accusations against the Chinese government. Coinciding with the election of US President Donald Trump, however, the *Epoch Times* morphed into a slick multimedia machine which ingratiated itself with Trump's campaign, becoming a megaphone for the war party faction of US politics and its dangerous agenda of stoking a conflict between China and the United States. That faction appears hell-bent on turning the coronavirus pandemic into a *casus belli*, a cause for war.

There is little doubt that Chinese officials made serious mistakes in their early handling of the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan:

- The local and central governments refused to allow a doctor to test early cases of deceased patients to see whether they had been the first victims of the virus, until eventually the doctor defied the authorities and tested anyway, confirming her suspicion;
- the main infectious disease authority refused to work with the World Health Organisation (WHO), developed a faulty test and stopped local hospitals from developing their own tests, delaying the effort to contain the outbreak by weeks;
- despite knowing there was an outbreak, regional governments refused to stop local holiday festivities that became a vector for the transmission of the virus;
- the central government delayed any serious response for more than a month, and the head of government didn't even bother to attend the first five special security meetings held to assess the seriousness of the threat.

Actually, the first three of the above examples occurred in the United States, while the fourth describes the response of the British government. Chinese authorities also made serious mistakes (elaborated below), but the above examples illustrate that whereas stuff-ups in other countries are treated as just that—stuff-ups—when they happen in China, Western media seize on them as proof of the “evil” Chinese Communist Party system, or, worse, some kind of sinister plot.

China's early mistakes included the management of the Wuhan hospital, where the outbreak was first detected, reprimanding the head of the emergency department, Dr Ai Fen, who first saw the tests showing a SARS-like virus on 27 December, for informing other departments without sticking to the protocol of going through the hospital management. According to a passionate interview Dr Ai gave to a Chinese publication in March (which by the English translation appears genuine, although this has not been definitively verified by the *Alert*), she attributed the management's bureaucratic officiousness to an initial wishful denial of the seriousness of the virus and a fear of spreading panic.

One of those whom Dr Ai warned the new cases were SARS-like was Dr Li Wenliang, the ophthalmologist who was reprimanded by local police for spreading the rumour to an online chat-group on 30 December. This was another early mistake, which the Chinese government has since disciplined by dismissing those involved, but sadly Dr Li, himself a member of the Communist Party, was one of a number of Wuhan hospital staff who contracted COVID-19 and died. The Western press turned Dr Li into a cause célèbre in their campaign against the Chinese government, but it must be noted that these mistakes were made when the seriousness of the outbreak was still unclear, by authorities who would have feared that any comparison to the 2003 SARS outbreak, which had a 10 per cent fatality rate, was guaranteed to spark panic.

False accusations

Whatever mistakes were made in China early on, it soon kicked into gear. On 29 December, China's equivalent of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) launched an investigation; by 3 January they had notified the world, including the CDC in the United States; by 11 January China's CDC published the genome sequence of the virus and shared it with the world. One of Australia's top infectious disease experts told the AAS that once China's CDC got involved they properly shared data on the outbreak.

China's closest neighbours, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore, received the same information as the rest of the world, but they acted immediately to contain the outbreak, whereas many countries dithered, especially the USA and UK. According to a 19 April *Sunday Times* report, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson didn't bother to attend the first five Cobra national security meetings about the crisis, delaying a serious response by five weeks until 2 March. In the United States Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar first warned the White House in early January, after being notified of China's 3 January warning to the CDC, but apart from an initial travel ban the Trump administration didn't take serious action until early March.

It wasn't until the pandemic erupted out of control, first in Europe and then the United States, that

accusations began to fly that China had covered up the outbreak, and was thus responsible for delaying an adequate global response. These accusations contradicted earlier Western media reporting of China's lockdown of Wuhan as "draconian"—suddenly, China hadn't been serious enough. The *Epoch Times* was in the vanguard of the accusers.

Some of the specific accusations relied on public ignorance. For instance, China was accused of controlling the World Health Organisation (WHO), and therefore the WHO was involved in the cover-up when it tweeted on 14 January: "Preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel #coronavirus (2019-nCoV) identified in #Wuhan, #China."

In fact, while everybody would have suspected human-to-human transmission from the beginning, the WHO and similar experts wait for absolute proof before making such confirmations. For instance, [in a 26 January interview with ABC](#), Australia's Chief Medical Officer Dr Brendan Murphy, knowing by then human-to-human transmission had been confirmed within China, similarly claimed: "Again, isolated cases, no evidence of any human-to-human transmission outside of China." Murphy wasn't lying or covering for China; rather he was stating only what had been proven. COVID-19's incubation period of 14 days delayed the confirmation of human-to-human transmission, which was confirmed a few days later. (Taiwan, which is politically dependent on the USA, has recently claimed it wrote to the WHO warning of human-to-human transmission on 30 January, but that's not true—the letter Taiwan published shows it asked about human-to-human transmission, but didn't warn the WHO.)

China is also blamed for the WHO's statement on 29 February that it opposed travel bans, after Donald Trump banned travel from China on 2 February. A 2017 pandemic simulation conducted by the G20, which [can be viewed on YouTube](#), proves this announcement was not a cover-up and had nothing to do with China, as it features a simulated WHO press conference in which the WHO Emergency Committee similarly recommends against travel bans. While this policy may seem inexplicable to many, it wasn't influenced by China.

Among other accusations, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden claimed China did not allow US experts in to assess the pandemic. Again, untrue—Clifford Lane, deputy director at the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a right-hand man to NIAID head Anthony Fauci, was one of two US scientists to join [a 13-person WHO delegation that toured China in 16-23 February](#), which produced the most detailed report about the clinical course of COVID-19 and the epidemiology in China.

Clifford Lane's account of that tour, and the report it produced, shows how open and cooperative China actually was. While China's Hubei province was the epicentre of the outbreak, nobody outside of China seriously questioned its daily figures of infections and deaths, partly out of apathy, but also because there was no reason to assume China was lying—its more than 80,000 cases and 3,000 deaths seemed bad enough. Given the outbreak started in China, both its national figures and the figures of its provinces outside of Hubei are proportionate to those of China's closest neighbours, which had more time to take precautions. Lane described China's progress in a 6 March interview with *Science* magazine: "In most of the provinces, it wasn't a total shutdown— it was a lot of restrictions, and it wasn't that the city was shut down and people couldn't go out. Public gatherings I'm assuming were all terminated, schools were closed. There was a lot of contact tracing, and a lot of isolation of the contacts, and self-isolation. And if you look at those epidemiological curves for those provinces, they're basically close to a few cases a week now."

The explosion of cases and deaths in Italy and Spain in March, however, provoked a serious effort to cast doubt on China's figures. As much as anything, China's "communist" regime couldn't be credited with more successfully handling of the outbreak than developed Western economies. The *Epoch Times* led these attacks on China's figures with a completely wild article on 24 March headlined: "[21 Million Fewer Cellphone Users in China May Suggest a High CCP Virus Death Toll](#)". The article reported on official figures showing a nationwide reduction in mobile phone accounts in the previous three months from 1.600957 billion to 1.579927 billion, a drop of 21.03 million. "Deaths due to the CCP virus may have contributed to the high number of account closings", the *Epoch Times* stated. The article quoted a supposed expert named Tang Jingyuan, only described as "a US-based China affairs commentator", who said: "At present, we don't know the details of the data. If only 10 per cent of the cellphone accounts were closed because the users died because of the CCP virus, the death toll would be 2 million." The far more mundane but true explanation for the drop, confirmed by Associated Press, was a large number of China's mobile workforce that used a second mobile phone for travel cancelled them due to the lockdown. Nevertheless the *Epoch Times* article predictably went viral, its hyperbolic claim even finding its way into the Washington-based foreign policy journal [The Diplomat](#).

At this point it bears mentioning that were it not related to China, any reasonable person would have instantly dismissed the *Epoch Times* claims as ridiculous, given that there would be no way to hide 21 million deaths, or even two million. While China did expel some US reporters in a tit-for-tat altercation with the USA, there are plenty of other foreign reporters in China who would have noticed such a death toll. The numbers are also out of all proportion to the toll in South Korea, Taiwan etc.—put simply, if 21 million had died in China, it would mean the virus is almost uncontrollable and therefore Australia's death toll would be in the tens of thousands by now. This author saw firsthand how widely this *Epoch Times* report was shared on social media by everyday people who gave it credence, and

who frankly should check their assumptions about China that they would believe it. It is also an insight into the other claims by the *Epoch Times* and Falun Gong which people believe, including the outrageous claim that China conducts live organ transplants from Falun Gong practitioners.

Lies about the Wuhan lab

When the COVID-19 outbreak started to explode in the UK and then the United States, it was no longer enough to simply accuse China of covering up its true figures to hide its own poor performance. The war party faction of the AngloAmerican alliance started blaming China's supposed coverup for the toll the virus was taking on the UK and USA. The UK's neoconservative Henry Jackson Society—which hosted Australian Liberal MP Andrew Hastie in July 2019 when he compared China to Nazi Germany, and which has cheered on all of the disastrous Anglo-American regime-change interventions of the past two decades in Iraq, Libya, Syria—demanded in a 5 April statement that China pay the G7 nations £3.2 *trillion* in reparations for the damages inflicted by the pandemic. US politicians echoed the demand, attributing to China a more sinister motivation. Enter the *Epoch Times* with a slick documentary rehashing an early conspiracy theory that the virus either escaped, or was released, from China's only P4-level biosecurity lab at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.



The *Epoch Times* documentary focuses on Shi Zhenli, a.k.a. “bat woman”, as the alleged creator of COVID-19 as a synthetic virus. But the research in this area in which Shi was involved was conducted in close collaboration with the United States. Photo: Screenshot

As of writing, the *Epoch Times* documentary, “Tracking Down the Origin of Wuhan Coronavirus”, which premiered on 7 April (two days after the HJS reparations demand), has gone viral, with 3.5 million views on a Falun Gong YouTube channel called New Tang Dynasty (NTD) that has 326,000 subscribers. This exposure laid the foundation for the *Washington Post* to give credence to 14 April claims citing concerns about the safety standards of the Wuhan lab in anonymous US State Department cables from 2018. The next day Trump administration officials, including Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, demanded China “come clean”.

The *Epoch Times* documentary is easily enough refuted, but only by people who have studied the details of the outbreak and the political context; the average viewer would likely be convinced by its claims. Space doesn't allow a detailed refutation here, suffice to say that while US political officials with an agenda against China jumped on the claims, none other than the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, responded to the *Washington Post* by reiterating the Pentagon's knowledge that the “weight of evidence” indicates the virus is natural. The Pentagon should know, as the US labs that do such research operate under the authority of the Pentagon, just as China's labs operate under the People's Liberation Army, and, most importantly, *there is extensive collaboration between the two countries*.

This was an important detail that the *Epoch Times* deliberately buried in “exposing” the research being conducted at the Wuhan Institute of Virology by Shi Zhengli, a.k.a. “bat-woman”, regarded as the world's leading expert on batsourced coronaviruses. The *Epoch Times* makes a big deal about the Obama administration putting a stop on funding for “gain-of-function” research on viruses like SARS, MERS and Avian influenza in 2014, out of concerns for safety. Gain-of-function research seeks to make viruses more contagious or lethal, in order to develop ways to protect people against such mutations occurring naturally; such research also has the potential to develop biological weapons. The safeguard against the research being used for biological weapons is the international collaboration between such P4 labs around the world, involving top scientists from the major countries working inside each other's labs. Biosafety however is an ever-present concern, in case such enhanced viruses inadvertently escape into the community.

The *Epoch Times* did not point out that the Obama administration's pause on funding this research was not due to safety concerns about China's lab, but about US labs. Nor did it report that in December 2017 the Trump administration lifted the ban on funding gain-of-function research, reported by *US News and World Report* on 19 December 2017: [“US Lifts Funding Ban on Studies that](#)

[Enhance Dangerous Germs](#)".

Instead the *Epoch Times* zeroed in on a paper published by Shi Zhengli in *Nature Medicine* in November 2015, "[A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence](#)", to expose she was conducting gain-of-function research which included creating a chimeric virus, combining proteins from viruses from different animals, that was more infectious to humans. To ominous music the *Epoch Times* attributed the paper to "Shi and her team at the Wuhan lab", and deliberately failed to report that of the 15 authors of the paper, only two, Shi and a colleague, were from the Wuhan lab. Of the 15 authors 12 were from the United States, most of them from the University of North Carolina under leading infectious diseases researcher Ralph Baric.

The war party

The giveaway of the *Epoch Times* documentary is its heavy reliance on aggressive China-haters, including Gordon Chang and retired US Air Force General Robert Spalding. Gordon Chang is infamous for a 2001 book titled *The Coming Collapse of China*, which he predicted would happen by 2017 at the latest; rather than collapsing, in that period China's economy has soared. Spalding is a former member of the US National Security Council, responsible for reorienting US strategic policy towards confrontation with China, and Russia. He's also a close collaborator of the new neoconservative project established in March 2019 called the Committee for the Present Danger: China, involving personnel directly involved in the neocon plot to fabricate lies to invade Iraq in 2003, such as Frank Gaffney, and representatives of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), by which the US government funds regime-change operations against targeted nations; the NED is also involved in the UK's Henry Jackson Society. This is the war party faction of the Anglo-American establishment. A 21 August 2019 report on anti-regimechange blog Moon of Alabama headlined "[Anti-China Cult Gets US Government Money—Runs Large Pro-Trump Ad Campaign](#)", revealed how the US government's neoconservative regime-change machine also funds the *Epoch Times* and Falun Gong's other slick media outlets. This explains why in recent years these outlets have adopted a blatantly pro-Trump position in order to influence him away from his stated position of wanting to get out of wars and be friends with China's President Xi Jinping—they are fronts for the war party who are itching for a military confrontation. The way the *Epoch Times* has used the coronavirus pandemic to dangerously undermine US-China relations demonstrates that unless their propaganda is combatted, before we know it the world could find itself embroiled in the neocons' fantasy war.

Don't take medical advice from Falun Gong and Epoch Times

The supreme irony of the *Epoch Times*' prominence in reporting on the coronavirus pandemic, a public health emergency, is that Falun Gong is a bizarre cult that believes medical science is evil, as it is how actual aliens are taking over the human race. Founder and guru Li Hongzhi told *Time Magazine* in a 10 May 1999 interview:

"The aliens have introduced modern machinery like computers and airplanes. They started by teaching mankind about modern science, so people believe more and more science, and spiritually, they are controlled. Everyone thinks that scientists invent on their own when in fact their inspiration is manipulated by the aliens. In terms of culture and spirit, they already control man. Mankind cannot live without science. The ultimate purpose is to replace humans. If cloning human beings succeeds, the aliens can officially replace humans."

Ben Hurley, an Australian Falun Gong practitioner and *Epoch Times* reporter for 10 years before he left the cult after seeing friends die, went public in a 2017 article on Medium titled "[Me and Li—Why I left Falun Gong after being a devoted believer for a decade](#)". Hurley recounted how a fellow practitioner and friend died after developing a tumour on the side of her head for which she didn't get treatment. Not only did Hurley not urge her to get treatment, he didn't even acknowledge the tumour, as that wasn't allowed. "That Falun Gong practitioners frequently die from treatable medical conditions is one of Falun Gong's dirtiest secrets", Hurley revealed. "A lot of Falun Gong practitioners have died this way. This was one of the Chinese government's earliest criticisms of Falun Gong—that thousands of Falun Gong believers had died because they had refused medical help for treatable conditions."

By Robert Barwick, Australian Alert Service, 22 April 2020