

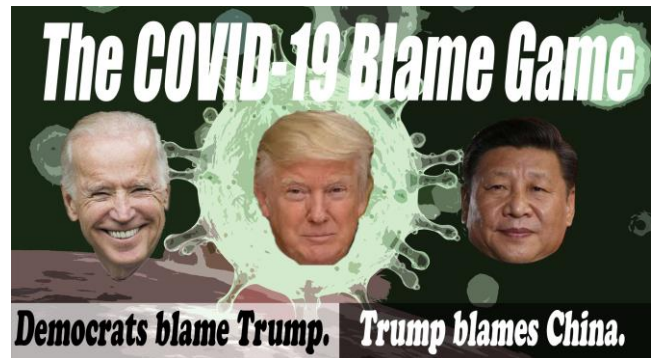
Is China the boogeyman ?

害怕中国?

The COVID-19 Blame Game

Doctors, scientists, and disease control experts didn't seem to have a ready answer for COVID. That puts politicians in a difficult position. As such, we should be careful blaming politicians. Yet the Democrats want to blame Donald Trump and Mr. Trump wants to blame China. Is it possible all sides are playing politics?

COVID-19 stumped the experts. When evaluating the response to the virus, you have to start there. This is true just about everywhere, not just the US or the WHO. Should we restrict travel or not? Should we quarantine or not? Should we shut down the economy or not? Should we wear masks or not? Nobody had a credible playbook at the beginning. Everyone was just feeling it out, trying to see what works. There are challenges mankind has yet to master. Cancer and drug abuse come to mind. Disease control appears to be another weak spot, even before the politicians get involved.



We shouldn't make politics out of a scientific challenge

The pandemic was a scientific and medical challenge, as opposed to the traditional societal, political, and economic issues that are at the center of policy debates. Of course, human nature being what it is, politics has been thrust into the middle of the COVID-19 debate anyway.

The Democrats want to blame Donald Trump

The Democrats have been extremely critical of Donald Trump's response. They say he didn't react swiftly and decisively enough and that at times he appeared to play down the impact of the virus. They say this despite the fact that the apolitical CDC clearly struggled to find the right response, despite the fact that most countries, including those most like us in Europe, had similar challenges and responses, despite the fact that Joe Biden criticized one of President Trump's most decisive, early measures, shutting down travel with China, and despite the fact that Democratic Governors played a huge role in the response and there were some notable missteps made on their part, including Governor Cuomo of New York allowing the transfer of patients to retirement facilities.

President Trump wants to blame China

Not to be outdone, President Trump takes that blame and shifts it to China. Presumably the Democrats figure that, since Trump is President, i.e., he was in the chair when it happened, it must be his fault. President Trump's response seems similarly predicated on the idea that, since COVID-19 started in China, it must be their fault. Also similar to the Democrats, President Trump's criticism of China ignores the fact that, since everyone struggled to deal with the virus, isn't it likely that China would make mistakes as well?

Similar to the Democrats, President Trump's criticism of China ignores the fact that, since everyone struggled to deal with the virus, isn't it likely that China would make mistakes as well?

The President criticized China's application of travel restrictions

In his recent UN address, President Trump cited the fact that China delayed closing down travel in and out of China as evidence of its culpability. While this is true, it must be put into perspective. At first, China didn't shut down anything. Then it restricted travel from Wuhan, the epicenter. Then travel was restricted to Hubei Province, where Wuhan is located. Then restrictions were extended further to other parts of China, although much of the country was not locked down as much as Hubei. Then came global travel restrictions.

China's decisions were similar to those of other countries

This is a similar pattern as was experienced in the rest of the world as governments took measured steps—rightfully so because no one wants to shut down a society and an economy—and then increased the measures as the advance of the virus continued. Also, keep in mind that Hubei is roughly the size of Italy and China is almost four times larger than Europe. When Italy first started having problems, no one said all of Europe should be closed down. In essence, China put the Chinese people outside of Hubei under the same risk as President Trump alleges was placed on those outside of China and reacted similarly to Europe. That doesn't seem to make China particularly culpable in a sinister way. More like China was no more competent than the rest of the world.

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With something like COVID-19, we have to grade leaders on a curve

Unlike high school algebra, life is graded on a curve. When scientists, doctors and experts don't have all the answers, and all countries struggle to cope, we have to be careful assigning blame to public officials. In hindsight, it is likely that many decisions will be reevaluated. But that doesn't necessarily they were bad decisions at the time, particularly if others were making similar decisions. Democrats should keep this in mind. So should President Trump.

Of course, if the problem is not bad decisions but misdeeds or malicious intent is involved, that's a different story. Relative to China we cover those in additional articles:

For more on this topic click on the links below:

[Holding China Accountable for COVID-19](#)

President Trump told the UN he wants to hold China accountable. Easier said than done. We summarize the factors.

[China COVID-19 Cover Up: Criticism or Secrets](#)

China is definitely silencing discussion on COVID. What is it hiding?

[Trump Hawks vs. China Hawks](#)

Some on the left believe all the worst things about Trump. China Hawks are the same way with China

[Trust in China Has Taken a Hit](#)

The lack of transparency reminds business that political risk in China remains fairly high

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