

Eight Negative Arguments Smearing China's Virus Fight Must be Refuted

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The COVID-19 outbreak in China has begun to decline outside Hubei Province, meanwhile in some countries it is on the rise. This fully shows that the epidemic is a challenge faced by all humanity and needs to be addressed by all countries. China's experience in combating the outbreak shows that timely, accurate and authoritative information disclosure is crucial. However, "negative energy" arguments in the public opinion field, which undermines the solidarity and cooperation between human beings and even creates panic out of nothing, will harm the efforts to fight the epidemic and can be called a "tumor" in the public opinion field during the epidemic.

Here, we summarize eight typical "negative energy" arguments in international public opinion and reveal their absurdities, hoping to provide a "mirror" on the information field in the epidemic.

1. 'Economic fall' ignores the complete picture

Under the coronavirus epidemic, the streets in Chinese cities were empty for a time, and there is no doubt the economy will be affected to some extent. However, to claim that the fundamentals of the Chinese economy have changed and that growth will plummet from mid-high speed to zero or negative is an overstatement. For example, the New York Times published an article on February 11 entitled "Like Europe in Medieval Times': Virus Slows China's Economy" saying that the epidemic has made China stay in low gear.

This coronavirus epidemic has been widespread, and many industries, such as catering, tourism and film and television, have been severely impacted. However, it should be noted that the impact of the epidemic on China's economy is mainly reflected in the restriction of the demand side, resulting in a short-term structural imbalance between supply and demand. In the long run, the means of production are still there, and production equipment and technology have not been affected by the outbreak. So the outbreak will not dent the internal dynamics of the Chinese economy. International Monetary Fund (IMF) spokesman Gerry Rice said at a regular press conference on February 13 that "over the medium to long term we remain confident that China's economy is resilient." The IMF expects a V-shaped recovery for Chinese economy, in which sharp decline in economic activities would be followed by a rapid recovery. With improvements in containing the epidemic, the supply side will gradually return to normal, and at the same time the potential demand suppressed during the epidemic will be released, and there will be a large rebound in future economic growth.

Structural transformation has given China a strong and resilient economy. First,

consumption has become the primary driver of growth. In 2019, consumer spending contributed 57.8 percent to economic growth. Second, the proportion contributed by the service industry keeps rising, and the proportion of value added by the tertiary industry to GDP in 2019 is 53.9 percent. The third is to shift from an excess of savings to an absorption of savings, which has led to a continuous increase in disposable household consumption. Fourth, from the introduction of innovation to independent innovation, the current digitization and intelligent transformation of various industries has led to the rapid development of online business. Although the epidemic outbreak has increased short-term downward pressure on the economy, the long-term positive trend of the Chinese economy has not changed.

2. 'China-US decoupling' farfetched

Under the coronavirus epidemic, the resumption of work in many factories in China has been delayed, which has affected the global supply chain. But it may be delusional to talk about "international companies fleeing China" and to think that the US and Chinese economies will "decouple" as a result of the outbreak. For example, US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross told Fox Business Channel on January 31 that the novel coronavirus epidemic helps "accelerate the return of jobs to North America, some to US and probably some to Mexico as well," adding that factors such as this will prompt US companies to reevaluate risks, such as the supply chain of China-related businesses.

It should be noted that in the face of the epidemic, the Chinese government has demonstrated its firm belief in winning the battle against the epidemic. It is believed that the outbreak will not last long, nor will it cause lasting damage to the economy. Business confidence in the future has not disappeared. The experience of the SARS epidemic in 2003 also shows that after the epidemic, people's desire for consumption will erupt and the economy will see rapid growth.

Compared with the US, where the tertiary industry accounts for 85 percent of the total economy, China's tertiary industry only accounts for just over 50 percent. There is still more room for development. Naturally, companies will not lose sight of this, and abandon huge development space to go to a place where competition is fierce.

The US government's push for the return of manufacturing is not new. It began during the Obama administration, but the real results have been poor. This is because China is the world's largest manufacturing base with a more complete upstream and downstream industry chain and a large and diversified consumer market. Only by being close to the Chinese market can companies feel the cutting-edge demand, have faster production speed and ensure more reliable product quality.

Of course, China's industry is in a period of transformation and upgrading, and some enterprises that can no longer adapt to China's market will leave. This is the natural law of economic development, and it is by no means the exodus that Ross is talking about.

3. 'China image collapse' baseless

Under the coronavirus epidemic, some voices in the international public opinion have tarnished the image of China.

For example, on February 6, under the headline "This is not a coronavirus, it is an official

virus”, a Deutsche Welle report in Putonghua claimed that China’s governance system is not a modern governance system, so it was vulnerable in the face of the epidemic. On some overseas social media, some people have hyped up argument that “China’s national image has collapsed”, in order to disparage China’s image as a responsible power. They even claimed that China would not be able to build a moderately prosperous society in all respects as planned.

It is clear that the above slander is groundless and based on a play of words. The “China threat theory” is a virus in the field of international public opinion.

After the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, the Chinese government quickly set up a special team to deal with the outbreak, deployed them extensively throughout the country, and assisted relevant countries in evacuating personnel. These things could only be achieved by an excellent modern governance system and governance capabilities, and they have been widely praised internationally.

Compared to the performance of some advanced economies, China has also done a much better job of reducing the risk of the disease spreading globally. On February 16, in response to the shortcomings and deficiencies exposed in the response to the epidemic, the Chinese government again made a “two-handed” deployment, including improving the biosafety law, the national emergency management system, and the distribution of production capacity of key materials. China’s epidemic prevention measures have been praised by the international community. French President Macron expressed admiration for China’s effective measures and the country’s openness and transparency in fighting the epidemic. World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised China for taking many prevention and containment measures that go far beyond the relevant requirements for responding to emergencies. This has set a new benchmark for epidemic prevention in all countries. The speed, scale and efficiency of China’s actions reflect the strengths of its system.

4. ‘Sick man of Asia’ rekindles century of discrimination

Amid the outbreak of the COVID-19, governments, enterprises and people from dozens of countries have donated humanitarian aid to China to support the country’s fight against the epidemic. Meanwhile, some people have maliciously taken the opportunity to spread discrimination against China – the Wall Street Journal published an article under title “China Is the Real Sick Man of Asia” on February 3, hurting Chinese people’s feelings. We should not only refute such absurdity with a comprehensive win over the epidemic but also continue increasing China’s public health services and national capabilities, throwing the discriminatory tone into the junk heap of history for good.

China was once weak due to its seclusion and was taken advantage of by Western powers, which derogatorily called China the “sick man of Asia.” Such contemptuous words have been a scar on Chinese people’s mind. With unremitting efforts of more than 100 years, China is much stronger than it was, with people’s general health status reaching a new high.

After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the country has been improving its public health status, eliminating malignant infectious diseases such as smallpox and cholera, and developing a cure for schistosomiasis which once threatened Chinese people for a long time.

A comprehensive medical system has been established in China, covering all rural areas. China has also sent medical teams to help African countries battle against epidemics such as Ebola. As China is completing the building of a moderately prosperous society, the country is rapidly increasing the budget for medical treatment and public health, assuring residents in cities and towns have basic medical insurance.

Currently, Chinese people's average life expectancy, which continues to grow, has surpassed that of Americans. Through international medical and health cooperation including the building of a Health [Silk Road](#), China's experience in medical treatment and public health has been widely recognized and accepted.

5. Yellow Peril hysteria pure racism

On February 1, German weekly magazine Der Spiegel had a cover headline saying the novel coronavirus was "Made in China." At a crucial time when the world is jointly fighting the epidemic, the German magazine inhumanly spread the Yellow Peril hysteria, the core of which is the West's fear of the East.

The Western world regards the Eastern world as a threat, and fears itself will lag behind the latter, and thus refuses to accept the fact that the Eastern world has become more developed and much stronger than it once was. The West wants to safeguard its dominance in the world.

With this being the case, some nationalists in the West have taken advantage of the COVID-19 epidemic to spread this hysteria.

In the era of globalization, human civilization should no longer engage in zero-sum games between the East and West and between races, but rather in building a community of shared future, where people can co-exist and jointly develop. In the face of this public health emergency, no one can really escape and remain isolated. Only cooperation, solidarity and mutual help can help people win the fight against the virus.

It is high time to put an end to the farce of Yellow Peril hysteria that encourages people to play a "hunger game."

6. 1984 metaphor obscures reality

To fight against the COVID-19, China has adopted various high-tech measures, such as Big Data and artificial intelligence, to control population flow and reduce cross-infection risks. However, some Western media outlets seem to have been frightened by China's governance capability. Real Clear Politics published an article on Thursday saying, "China's government is like something out of '1984.'" There are two reasons such viewpoint can echo in the West.

First, people are more likely to believe stories they are familiar with. George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* is well known, but not many people know the real China. Therefore, Chinese people find it hard to persuade their Western friends that China is not something out of *1984*. This is like giving a friend, who has never seen a real panda, a toy of panda, the next time you mention panda, this friend would probably call to mind the toy rather than a real panda.

Second, the media always caters its subscribers with reports that draw attention, even

though their viewpoints are abnormal. For those media outlets, a frightening China is obviously more effective than a normal China at attracting an audience.

Using *1984* as a metaphor, those Western media outlets can spread fear of China among Westerners and thus make more profit. This is why a very ordinary story with an eye-catching headline can be forged into something that is scary and strange about China. As many Western media outlets are driven by business interests, it is not hard to understand Western people's stereotype of China.

What *1984* describes can happen anywhere people live. The novel was supposed to be a warning not an instruction manual. George Orwell's masterpiece is not banned in China. Instead, his books have been among the best sellers in China since the country's reform and opening-up. China is moving forward in a broad way using Chinese people's accumulated experience rather than something out of a novel.

7. 'Biochemical weapon' conspiracy pure fantasy

Conspiracy theories are a constant reality in the international public opinion field. Once there is a disturbance, they will surface.

On January 31, US senator Tom Cotton tweeted that "it's more urgent than ever to stop travel between China and US," and sent a "[MESSAGE TO ALL AMERICANS IN CHINA: Get out - now.](#)" He also claimed that the virus might have originated in a "super laboratory" in Wuhan.

The Ministry of Health of Russian Federation on January 29 published a guidance for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of new coronavirus infection. According to this document, COVID-19 was found to be recombined from a bat coronavirus and another coronavirus from unknown origin, triggering speculation that the virus had been developed by the US as a biological weapon.

Although such arguments have been prevalent, but even in the mainstream Western public opinion, there are few experts who agree.

The Washington Post on January 29 published an article entitled "Experts debunk fringe theory linking China's coronavirus to weapons research," with interviews from five experts from prestigious US universities and research institutes. All of them "rejected the idea that the virus could be man-made."

An expert on chemical weapons said he and other analysts around the world "had discussed the possibility that weapons development at the Wuhan lab could have led to the coronavirus outbreak in a private email chain," but none of them "had found convincing evidence to support the theory."

A professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology also pointed out that "a good bioweapon in theory has high lethality but low, not [high], communicability," and spreading such "misinformation" is "incredibly irresponsible."

The Lancet, the world's leading general medical journal, released on February 19 a "Statement in support of the scientists, public health professionals, and medical professionals of China combatting COVID-19" signed by 27 top public health scientists around the world.

The statement “strongly condemn[s] conspiracy theories suggesting that COVID-19 does not have a natural origin” and shows that scientists from multiple countries “overwhelmingly conclude that this coronavirus originated in wildlife.” It also calls on the World Health Organization (WHO) “to promote scientific evidence and unity over misinformation and conjecture.”

8. Questioning WHO’s impartiality destructive

China’s efforts and achievements in fighting the epidemic are obvious to all. Everyone with a realistic attitude will make a fair evaluation. However, some in the international community have been looking at China through colored spectacles, and even slander those entities and individuals who have praised China.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus’ affirmation of China’s performance has been described by certain media outlets as “skewed in China’s favor.”

Tedros was asked on February 12, if “Chinese government approached the WHO to ask it to stand up and say that China is doing a good job? Was there pressure put on this organization to say those sorts of things... because I know how important it is saving face in China.” He refuted, “China doesn’t need to ask to be praised... because we have seen these concrete things that should be appreciated.”

He has seen clearly China’s tremendous efforts to stop the virus from spreading to the rest of the world, including notifying other countries of those confirmed cases with outbound travel history.

State leaders and public health experts of various countries have applauded China’s efforts and transparency. Tedros has also called on the international community to stop “stigmatizing a country” and stand “in solidarity in fighting against the common enemy, COVID-19.”

Similarly, former WHO director-general Margaret Chan Fung Fu-chun was also criticized in 2015 for “taking sides” with South Korea in combating MERS.

WHO’s remarks and actions are all based on information reported by the government at the epicenter, latest data generated by the organization, and suggestions given by the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee. Clarifying and dispelling rumors and misinformation is also part of its job.

Along with China, the Singaporean government is also urging citizens to stop spreading rumors. Moreover, the WHO has already taken action to prevent the coronavirus epidemic from triggering “a dangerous social media ‘infodemic’ fueled by false information,” and appealed for the curbing of rumors, lies and misinformation.

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