

The Unz Review • An Alternative Media Selection

A Collection of Interesting, Important, and Controversial Perspectives Largely Excluded from the American Mainstream Media

American Pravda: Covid as Lab-Leak or Biowarfare?

RON UNZ • JULY 12, 2021 • 13,100 WORDS • 137 COMMENTS

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The Alleged Wuhan Lab-Leak and Its Scientific Skeptics

During most of the last year theories regarding the origins of Covid, whether conspiratorial or otherwise, had disappeared from the public debate, pushed aside by the nationwide Black Lives Matter protests and the final stages of the heated presidential campaign.



In early January, prominent liberal author and public intellectual Nicholson Baker had tried to revive the issue with a 12,000 word cover story in *New York* magazine, only to see his Covid lab-leak theory swamped and forgotten when the DC Capitol was stormed by a mob of outraged Trumpists two days later.

- [The Lab-Leak Hypothesis](#)[1]

For decades, scientists have been hot-wiring viruses in hopes of preventing a pandemic, not causing one. But what if ...?

Nicholson Baker • *New York Magazine* • January 4, 2021 • 12,000 Words

But then on May 2nd, a revolution occurred after former *New York Times* science journalist and editor Nicholas Wade published a lengthy article on *Medium*. His careful 11,000 word analysis mustered the strong evidence that the virus was the artificial product of a human lab, suggesting that it had probably leaked out of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, China's most advanced viral research facility. That laboratory was known to have been working with those types of coronaviruses and was located in Wuhan, the site of the initial outbreak, raising all sorts of obvious suspicions.

- [The Origin of Covid](#)[2]

Did people or nature open Pandora's box at Wuhan?

Nicholas Wade • *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* • May 5, 2021 • 11,000 Words

The floodgates soon opened and over the next few weeks far more was written on that subject than had been produced during the previous twelve months combined. In just one example, Donald G. McNeil, Jr., the forty-five year veteran of the *Times* who had spearheaded his paper's Covid coverage, published a striking *mea culpa* and embraced the lab-leak hypothesis, admitting that he and other *Timesmen* had previously dismissed the idea as "far right" lunacy, closely associated with "Pizzagate, the Plandemic, Kung Flu, Q-Anon, Stop the Steal, and the January 6 Capitol invasion."

- [How I Learned to Stop Worrying And Love the Lab-Leak Theory](#)[3]

Donald G. McNeil, Jr. • *Medium* • May 17, 2021 • 4,700 Words

McNeil had already retired from the *Times* the previous December after an unrelated controversy, but others at his former newspaper had also experienced a similar change of heart. For more than a year, the editors had been fiercely critical of the lab-leak theory, heavily promoted by Donald Trump and his allies, but with Trump now safely gone, their perspective changed.

In late June, Zeynep Tufekci, one of their opinion columnists, published a 5,500 word article harshly criticizing China and arguing that the global epidemic had probably been the consequence of a Chinese lab-leak. Prof. Tufekci's field of study was sociology rather than the biological sciences and her expertise lay in social media, but the appearance of her long piece surely reflected a seismic shift in the views of her top editors.

- [Where Did the Coronavirus Come From? What We Already Know Is Troubling](#).[4]

Zeynep Tufekci • *The New York Times* • June 25, 2021 • 5,500 Words

A far longer exposition of this emerging American media consensus had appeared at the beginning of that same month in *Vanity Fair*. The 12,000 word article strongly favored the lab-leak theory and focused upon the bureaucratic infighting regarding that issue within the national security apparatus of the Trump Administration. Based upon months of investigative reporting and numerous interviews, the piece seemed to heavily rely upon anonymous Trump intelligence sources, while generally taking our government claims at face value.

- [The Lab-Leak Theory: Inside the Fight to Uncover COVID-19's Origins](#)[5]

Throughout 2020, the notion that the novel coronavirus leaked from a lab was off-limits. Those who dared to push for transparency say toxic politics and hidden agendas kept us in the dark.

Katherine Eban • *Vanity Fair* • June 3, 2021 • 12,000 Words

Moreover, although the suggestion was presented in a defensive, insinuating manner, the long article also raised serious suspicions that Covid had been developed as a Chinese bioweapon, with that particular word appearing nine times in the text. Millions had already died around the world, including many hundreds of thousands of Americans, so some might find it troubling that such inflammatory accusations had appeared in one of America's most prestigious general interest magazines, especially considering the near-total lack of any supporting evidence. This article demonstrated the drastic shift in elite media sentiment, with theories previously confined to the extreme anti-China ideological fringe now occupying the center of American journalism.

This situation carried disturbing echoes of how those same mainstream media organs had played a similar role twenty years ago in fostering the hoax of Saddam's WMD and promoting our disastrous Iraq War. Indeed, I found it rather ironic that one of the main Trump Administration Covid experts quoted in that article and others was David Feith, whose father Douglas Feith had been one of the leading Neocons involved in that notorious Bush Administration intelligence fraud. Moreover, the lead author of the front-page *Wall Street Journal* [story](#)[6] that helped to revive the lab-leak theory in late May was Michael R. Gordon, who had previously shared a byline with Judith Miller on most of the fraudulent Iraqi WMD stories that had propelled us into war. And in early 2020, former Mossad agent Dany Shoham had been one of the earliest figures [suggesting](#)[7] that Covid was a Chinese bioweapon leaked from the Wuhan lab, with few remembering that in 2001 [he had falsely fingered Saddam's regime](#)[8] as the source of the Anthrax mailings. It almost seemed that members of the old Iraqi WMD cast were reassembling for a revival.

A useful roundup of this sudden wave of supportive lab-leak coverage came in a 4,500 word article published by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), a left-leaning watchdog organization. The article documented this rapid media shift by citing examples from the [Washington Post](#)[9], the [New Yorker](#)[10], [New York Magazine](#)[11], and [ABC News](#)[12], and strongly pushed back against it, continuing to argue for a natural origin of the virus.

- [US Media Give New Respect to Lab Leak Theory—Though Evidence Is as Lacking as Ever](#)[13]
Joshua Cho • *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)* • June 28, 2021 • 4,500 Words

Unfortunately, although this piece was quite useful as a compendium of media links, the analysis provided was far from persuasive. Author Joshua Cho was described as a recent college graduate and former FAIR intern, presumably placing him in his early 20s, so I was hardly surprised to notice quite a number of factual and logical errors in his presentation. Most egregiously, he devoted half his article to attacking Wade, whom he ignorantly and insultingly denounced as a notorious promoter of “pseudo-science” and he seemed rather dismayed that prominent left-liberal journalists such as Thomas Frank and Jonathan Cook had taken Wade's views so seriously. Perhaps this rather self-important former intern should have recognized that they probably knew some things that he did not, and might consider that Wade had become the science editor at the *New York Times* almost a decade before Cho was even born.

However, others possessing far greater credibility and scientific expertise have also recently challenged the lab-leak hypothesis on much stronger grounds. The day before Cho's article appeared, *Bloomberg* had run a long interview with Danielle Anderson, an experienced Australian virologist who had been the only Westerner working at the Wuhan lab during the period in question. By her account, the description of the lab and its operations provided by the Western media had been totally at odds with what she had seen working there, and the likelihood of a virus leak seemed nil.

- [The Last—And Only—Foreign Scientist in the Wuhan Lab Speaks Out](#)[14]
Virologist Danielle Anderson paints a very different picture of the Wuhan Institute
Michelle Fay Cortez • *Bloomberg* • June 27, 2021 • 2,200 Words

Based upon a few sentences in American government cables, our media [has repeatedly alleged](#)[15] that the operating standards of the Wuhan lab were poor, but Anderson's own experience had been entirely different, with the safety protocols so impressive that she later suggested they be adopted at her own research organization. For many months, former members of the Trump Administration [had been promoting](#)[16] some questionably-sourced “third party” intelligence claiming that three lab workers

became seriously ill in November 2019 with Covid-like symptoms, but Dr. Anderson could recall no such cases, and believed that she would have heard about them. She had generally enjoyed a very friendly and open relationship with her Chinese colleagues, with scientific gossip regularly being shared back and forth. Under these circumstances, she felt certain that if a suspected lab-leak had occurred, she would have heard about it, but there had never been a hint of any such incident.

Furthermore, the creation of a dangerous virus such as Covid would have required many layers of official authorization by lab administrators, and she doubted that a decision of such importance could have been taken without word getting around. While she admitted that it was theoretically possible for some rogue Chinese lab researcher to have secretly undertaken such a project and bioengineered the virus, then accidentally infected himself or others, she rated the likelihood as “exceedingly slim.”

So based upon her personal experience at the Wuhan lab, she thought it very unlikely that the Covid virus was developed there and equally unlikely that any lab-leak had ever occurred. For these reasons, she still leaned towards a natural source for the viral outbreak.

Similar conclusions had been made in an early June interview with Christian Drosten, a German virologist ranked as one of the world’s leading experts on both SARS and Covid. Although the discussion appeared in a small German-language publication and has received minimal attention, the magic of Google Translate has made this important material available to a worldwide audience:

- [Mr. Drosten, where did this virus come from?](#)[17]

Marie-Jose Kolly, Angela Richter, and Daniel Ryser • *Republik* • June 5, 2021 • 4,500 Words

Although Dr. Drosten fully accepted a natural origin for the virus, speculating that the undiscovered intermediate host might be found somewhere in China’s huge fur-farming industry, he also gave his opinion on the possibility of a bioengineered virus or a lab-leak. In particular, he broached the idea that the virus was created and released as a bioweapon, but deliberately shied away from discussing it:

There are actually two laboratory theses. One would be malice that someone has intentionally constructed such a virus. The other would be the research accident, that in spite of good intentions and curiosity an experiment went wrong. The malicious thing, to be honest: you have to talk to the secret service about it. As a scientist, I cannot judge that.

He went on to say that the structure of the virus made it very unlikely that it would have been produced as the result of an innocent scientific research project, or that it came from the Wuhan lab and was accidentally released:

This idea of a research accident is extremely unlikely for me because it would be far too cumbersome. The idea of malicious use by some secret service laboratory somewhere: If anything, something like that would probably not come from the Wuhan Virology Institute. This is a reputable academic institute.

Although their reasons differ, the combined testimony of virologists Anderson and Drosten raises considerable doubts about the accidental Wuhan lab-leak scenario that now increasingly represents the conventional wisdom of the American mainstream media. Both experts are very skeptical that Covid could have been the product of innocent scientific research, and they also think it quite unlikely that the Wuhan lab either created or accidentally released it. Thus, although they both still prefer the natural virus theory, they seem to regard the likely alternative as an illegal or malicious project, seemingly implying the creation and deliberate release of a deadly bioweapon. But under such a scenario, the initial outbreak in Wuhan, one of China's largest cities and a key transport hub, would obviously tend to exculpate that country, while logically pointing the finger of blame in an entirely different direction.

It is noteworthy that we have one of the world's leading scientific authorities on Covid gingerly raising the possibility that it was a non-Chinese bioweapon, and doing so in a small-circulation German-language publication. Yet this very brief and glancing speculation seems to be the only time I have encountered this obvious idea anywhere in the 100,000 or more words of mainstream articles I have read on the possible origins of Covid during the last year or more. Surely many other journalists and scientists must have considered such a possibility, yet virtually none of them had allowed such an idea to appear in print. How can we best understand this complete intellectual embargo?

I think part of the explanation may be found in [an interesting exchange late last year](#)[18] on entirely different matters between prominent liberal journalists Matt Taibbi and Chris Hedges, formerly of *Rolling Stone* and the *New York Times* respectively. As they described it, working journalists greatly rely upon social media, especially if they are not directly affiliated with a major publication. And such individuals recognized that a few wrongly-chosen words can provoke a swarming Twitter lynch-mob, possibly leading to the deadly fate of deplatforming. So writers and their employers must necessarily exercise a great deal of self-censorship, fearful of the disastrous consequences of a careless sentence.

Given this reality, the sudden, striking collapse of the natural virus propaganda-bubble that had so completely dominated the mainstream media for more than a year becomes much less surprising. Probably a considerable number of individuals had had their doubts all along, but fearful of being purged, they had kept silent. However, once Wade's article appeared and began attracting some favorable discussion on social media, they gradually lost their fears and jumped on board, soon demonstrating that those views had been far more widespread than anyone realized.

The Plausible Deniability of Bioweapons and Their Effectiveness in Economic Warfare

There may or may not exist similar hidden reservoirs of support for the possibility that Covid was a non-Chinese bioweapon, but if so these have remained remarkably well concealed.

Over the last year I have produced a long series of articles explicitly making the case that the Covid virus was released in a deliberate biowarfare attack against China (and Iran). Taken together, these pieces have been viewed some 250,000 times. Yet with a few rare exceptions, the material has been considered far too radioactive to have been acknowledged anywhere in the alternative media, let alone by its mainstream counterpart. The following are the most substantial elements of the series:

- [American Pravda: Our Coronavirus Catastrophe as Biowarfare Blowback?](#)[19]
Ron Unz • *The Unz Review* • April 21, 2020 • 7,400 Words • 1,638 Comments

- [American Pravda: Covid-19, Its Impact and Origins After One Year\[20\]](#)
Ron Unz • *The Unz Review* • March 15, 2021 • 8,700 Words • 975 Comments
- [American Pravda: “The Truth” and “The Whole Truth” About the Origins of Covid-19\[21\]](#)
Ron Unz • *The Unz Review* • May 10, 2021 • 6,400 Words • 847 Comments
- [American Pravda: George Orwell’s Virus Lab-Leak\[22\]](#)
Ron Unz • *The Unz Review* • May 31, 2021 • 5,200 Words • 999 Comments

These articles have established our publication as one of the very few venues open to such controversial ideas. As a consequence, we recently received and published a submission by an emeritus professor in Europe with a background in politics and security issues, who wrote under the pen-name “Andreas Canetti.” Although somewhat unwieldy and unpolished, his text ran 26,000 words with over 280 footnotes and provided an enormous wealth of information and references, much of it analyzing and explicating the biowarfare hypothesis. While I would not necessarily endorse some of the arguments made, the article served as a very useful source of information on many aspects of the topic.

- [The Flying Pangolin\[23\]](#)
Andreas Canetti • *The Unz Review* • June 18, 2021 • 26,000 Words

The lengthy *Vanity Fair* article had revealed that some Trump Administration national security officials were strongly opposed to challenging the natural virus theory, fearing that talk of an artificial origin would “open a can of worms,” with that phrase so significant that it was even used as one of the main section headings. But the possible nature of those concerns is much better understood after we absorb some of the important material revealed in the Canetti article.

For example, Canetti quotes long passages by a noted military expert on the particular effectiveness of biological warfare in crippling the economy of an international adversary but doing so in a manner that retains the plausible deniability that any attack had even occurred:

[T]he twenty-first century will be a century of economic warfare... [The] emergence of economic competition...raises the possibility of a new form of warfare. This includes the development and use of biological warfare (BW) against economic targets. Using BW to attack livestock, crops, or ecosystems offers an adversary the means to wage a potentially subtle yet devastating form of warfare, one which would impact the political, social, and economic sectors of a society and potentially of national survival itself...[Bacteria and viruses] that incapacitate or kill humans, animals, or plants have an unsettling value in waging economic warfare....[U]sing BW may inflict a grave blow to that nation’s economy or society and possibly result in some political impact. History has recorded the chaos and instability created by such natural catastrophes as famines and epidemics. Using BW in this fashion would have applications to waging low-intensity warfare with strategic outcomes.

[A bioweapon] is the only weapon of mass destruction which has utility across the spectrum of conflict. Using biological weapons under the cover of an endemic or natural disease occurrence provides an attacker the potential for plausible denial. In this context, [bioweapons] offer greater possibilities for use than do nuclear weapons... [Bioweapons]

can be employed in noncombat settings under the guise of natural events, during operations other than war, or can be used in open combat scenarios against all biological systems – man, animal, or plant. Deliberate dissemination of BW agents may be afforded possible denial by naturally occurring diseases and events... Biological warfare's potential to create significant economic loss and subsequent political instability with plausible denial exceeds any other known weapon.

These words were written in 1998 by Robert P. Kadlec[24], who went on to become a top biowarfare advisor in the George W. Bush Administration, and then most recently returned to government in 2017 as an Assistant Secretary under Trump. His cogent analysis brought to mind some disturbing facts I had noted in my original April 2020 article[25]:

[D]uring the previous two years, the Chinese economy had already suffered serious blows from other mysterious new diseases, although these had targeted farm animals rather than people. During 2018 a new Avian Flu virus had swept the country, eliminating large portions of China's poultry industry, and during 2019 the Swine Flu viral epidemic had devastated China's pig farms, destroying 40% of the nation's primary domestic source of meat, with widespread claims that the latter disease was being spread by mysterious small drones...So for three years in a row, China had been severely impacted by strange new viral diseases, though only the most recent had been deadly to humans. This evidence was merely circumstantial, but the pattern seemed highly suspicious.

Furthermore, the particular features of Covid itself seem to fall into this same category. Early last year, we published[26] the perspective of a retired forty-year veteran of American biodefense, who focused on the unusual epidemiological characteristics of the virus, which was extremely contagious but had a low fatality rate of 1% or less. As I summarized his analysis[27]:

One important point he made was that high lethality was often counter-productive in a bioweapon since debilitating or hospitalizing large numbers of individuals may impose far greater economic costs on a country than a biological agent which simply inflicts an equal number of deaths. In his words "a high communicability, low lethality disease is perfect for ruining an economy," suggesting that the apparent characteristics of the coronavirus were close to optimal in this regard.

- Was Coronavirus a Biowarfare Attack Against China?[28]
OldMicrobiologist • *The Unz Review* • March 13, 2020 • 3,400 Words

For decades, America has maintained the world's most extensive biowarfare program, having absorbed much of the previous Soviet capacity[29] after the collapse of the USSR. We now operate a global network of biolabs in 25 countries, many of them bordering either China or Russia.



US biolabs in 25 countries around Russia and China and in Africa (from Dilyana Gaytandzhieva)

A great deal of this information was summarized in a January 2020 article by investigative journalist Whitney Webb, which we published after her regular outlet at the time had balked at releasing it:

- [Bats, Gene Editing and Bioweapons: Recent Darpa Experiments Raise Concerns Amid Coronavirus Outbreak](#)[30]
Whitney Webb • *The Unz Review* • January 30, 2020 • 5,700 Words

Finally, the website of [Dilyana Gaytandzhieva](#)[31], a former Bulgarian journalist, contains a long article providing a wealth of links and information on America's biowarfare efforts, representing a very useful resource for those interested in further investigating this important topic:

- [The Pentagon Bio-weapons](#)[32]
Dilyana Gaytandzhieva • *Arms Watch* • June 14, 2019 • 6,800 Words

From the earliest days of the administration, leading Trump officials had regarded China as America's most formidable geopolitical adversary, and orchestrated a policy of confrontation. Then from January to August 2019, Kadlec's department ran [the "Crimson Contagion" simulation exercise](#)[33], involving the hypothetical outbreak of a dangerous respiratory viral disease in China, which eventually spreads into the United States, with the participants focusing on the necessary measures to control it in this country. As one of America's foremost biowarfare experts, Kadlec had emphasized the unique effectiveness of bioweapons as far back as the late 1990s and we must commend him for his considerable prescience in having organized a major viral epidemic exercise in 2019 that was so remarkably similar to what actually began in the real world just a few months later.

With leading Trump officials greatly enamored of biowarfare, fiercely hostile to China, and running large-scale 2019 simulations on the consequences of a mysterious viral outbreak in that country, it seems entirely unreasonable to completely disregard the possibility that such extremely reckless plans may have been privately discussed and eventually implemented, though probably without presidential authorization.

The Long-Forgotten Early Iranian Outbreak

China ranks as our most formidable geopolitical rival, and when it was suddenly struck by a mysterious viral plague at the height of our international tensions, the implications were entirely ignored by our timorous media. But they have also completely ignored an even stranger coincidence, as I had [noted in my original April 2020 article](#)[34]:

As the coronavirus gradually began to spread beyond China's own borders, another development occurred that greatly multiplied my suspicions. Most of these early cases had occurred exactly where one might expect, among the East Asian countries bordering China. But by late February Iran had become the second epicenter of the global outbreak. Even more surprisingly, its political elites had been especially hard-hit, with a full 10% of the entire Iranian parliament soon infected[35] and at least a dozen of its officials and politicians[36] dying of the disease, including some who were quite senior[37]. Indeed, Neocon activists on Twitter began gleefully noting that their hatred Iranian enemies were now dropping like flies.

Let us consider the implications of these facts. Across the entire world the only political elites that have yet suffered any significant human losses have been those of Iran, and they died at a very early stage, before significant outbreaks had even occurred almost anywhere else in the world outside China. Thus, we have America assassinating Iran's top military commander on Jan. 2nd and then just a few weeks later large portions of the Iranian ruling elites became infected by a mysterious and deadly new virus, with many of them soon dying as a consequence. Could any rational individual possibly regard this as a mere coincidence?

That initial Iranian outbreak was also strangely centered on the Holy City of Qom, the home of that country's elite political and religious leadership rather than in the far larger metropolis of Tehran. Whether Covid appeared in Wuhan as a natural virus or was released due to an accidental lab-leak, Wuhan is some 5,500 kilometers from Qom, so the latter city would hardly seem the most likely location for the next major appearance of the virus.

By March additional major Covid outbreaks had also occurred in Northern Italy and soon afterwards Spain, but the circumstances were quite different. According to Wikipedia, some 300,000 Chinese[38] live and work in that Italian region while another 150,000 Chinese reside in Spain[39], and many of these individuals had surely returned from annual Lunar New Year trips to their Chinese homeland, perhaps bringing the virus back with them. By contrast, Iran's total Chinese population is one of the smallest in the world, numbering just 5,000-9,000[40], and overwhelmingly concentrated in Tehran rather than Qom.

China has very extensive trading and business links throughout the world, with perhaps a million Chinese residing in Africa[41] and several million Chinese immigrants[42] in the US and Canada, many of whom retain close personal ties to their homeland. So if an international panel of expert epidemiologists had been given the hypothetical case of a new epidemic in Wuhan, China and asked to predict the next city to which the disease would spread, I suspect that Qom in Iran would have been close to the bottom of their list. But after our early January assassination of Gen. Qasem Soleimani and Iran's retaliatory cruise missile strikes against our Middle Eastern bases, any panel of military strategists would surely have ranked Iran's leadership near the absolute top of American targets.

Together with its close Israeli ally, the U.S. has long maintained an effective network of agents and operatives in Iran, who have successfully carried out numerous major sabotage operations and high-level assassinations. Compared to such difficult attacks on heavily-guarded targets, the quiet release of an invisible and untraceable but highly contagious virus in some gathering of political elites would

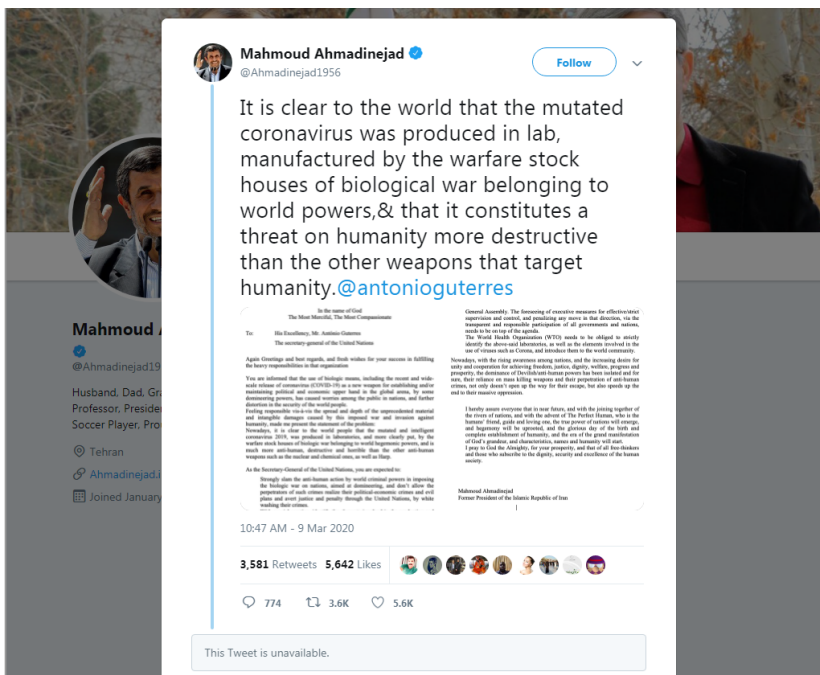
have been an extremely easy operation, especially since the results would have only become apparent weeks later as the victims fell ill and the disease began to spread.

The circumstantial evidence suggesting that America (or its Israeli partner) had deployed Covid against Iran's leadership class in Qom seemed so strong, I found it puzzling that the Iranians themselves had apparently not drawn those same conclusions and publicly denounced what had occurred. They might not have had any proof, but such a biowarfare attack would be an unprecedented violation of important international conventions, and surely such plausible allegations would have generated worldwide headlines and elicited a considerable amount of sympathy. But then a few months ago, I was very much surprised to discover that the Iranians had actually done exactly that.

In February 2021, a social media research group affiliated with the establishmentarian Atlantic Council released a massive 17,000 word, 54 page report[43] documenting and denouncing the wide range of supposedly false or unsubstantiated "conspiracy theories" regarding the Covid epidemic, and devoted several pages[44] to presenting what they considered widespread Iranian "falsehoods," but which I viewed in an entirely different light. By early March 2020, the Iranian general[45] overseeing his country's biowarfare defense had already begun suggesting that Covid was a Western biological attack against his country and China, and a couple of days later the semiofficial Iranian news agency FARS quoted[46] Iran's top Revolutionary Guards military commander as declaring:

Today, the country is engaged in a biological battle. We will prevail in the fight against this virus, which might be the product of an American biological [attack], which first spread in China and then to the rest of the world...America should know that if it has done so, it will return to itself.

Soon afterward, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei [47] took the same public position, while populist former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became especially vocal on Twitter for several months, even directing his formal accusations to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Just a single one of his numerous Tweets drew many thousands of Retweets and Likes.



Iranian radio and television and its international news service repeatedly carried these stories, backed by supportive interviews with a top political aide to Malaysia’s former prime minister. But America’s overwhelming domination over the English-language global media ensured that this major international controversy never came to my attention at the time it occurred.

The blockade preventing these Iranian charges from reaching the English-speaking world was further facilitated by American control over the basic infrastructure of the Internet. Just one month earlier, Iran’s *PressTV* channel for Britain had been deleted by YouTube[48], following the earlier elimination of its main global channel. Most recently, the American government took the unprecedented action of seizing *PressTV*’s Internet domain[49], completely eliminating all access to that website.



Wikipedia is also under hostile control, so we should hardly be surprised that ubiquitous source of worldwide information rather implausibly suggests[50] that a single Iranian businessman returning from China was the cause of the Qom outbreak.

Manipulating Scientists into Deflecting the Iranian Accusations

Although in recent decades America seems to have fallen behind various other countries in industrial production, governing competence, and some important aspects of military technology, the effectiveness of our propaganda organs remains undiminished. As I considered the means by which our Neocon-dominated national-security-media complex had so effortlessly deflected those seemingly formidable Iranian accusations, an apparent strategy became clear. As [I explained](#)[51] in my April 2020 article:

Using alternative media to immediately promote theories that the coronavirus outbreak was the result of a leak from a Chinese biowarfare lab was a natural means of preempting any later Chinese accusations along similar lines, thereby allowing America to win the international propaganda war before China had even begun to fight...I discovered that the fringes of the Internet were awash with claims that the disease was caused by a Chinese bioweapon accidentally released from that same Wuhan laboratory, with former Trump advisor Steve Bannon and *ZeroHedge*, a popular right-wing conspiracy-website, playing leading roles in advancing the theory. Indeed, the stories became so widespread in those ideological circles that Sen. Tom Cotton, a leading Republican Neocon, began promoting them on Twitter and *FoxNews*, thereby provoking [an article](#)[52] in the *NYT* on those “fringe conspiracy theories.”

As the *Times* article indicated, these early claims that Covid might be a leaked Chinese bioweapon were soon [heavily amplified](#)[53] by Neocon-oriented international news outlets such as the *Washington Times* and Alex Jones’s popular *InfoWars* network. Fearful of the possible international consequences of such explosive charges, well-intentioned scientists mobilized behind the defense that the virus was entirely natural, whether or not they actually believed the evidence was as strong as they claimed. Public statements to this effect appeared in a January 29th *Washington Post* [article](#)[54] and a couple of weeks later the *New York Times* article [debunking](#)[55] Sen. Cotton’s charges.

This may also be the most likely explanation for the high-profile declaration published in the *Lancet* on February 19, 2020 by a group of 27 virologists and other noted scientists, condemning speculation about an artificial virus as an untenable “conspiracy theory,” and the equally high-profile piece the following month in *Nature Medicine* arguing for a natural Covid origin. These early statements in prestigious journals completely framed the media discourse for more than a year, and as a consequence this supposed scientific consensus ensured that any Iranian accusations of a biowarfare attack were automatically dismissed as absurd and ridiculous.

I think that this reconstruction of events is supported by the remarkably contradictory public positions taken by [Prof. Richard H. Ebright](#)[56], a highly-reputable Rutgers molecular biologist and biosafety expert, who has recently established himself as one of the most widely cited scientific backers of the Wuhan lab-leak theory.

In January, Nicholson Baker [had quoted Ebright](#)[57] as saying that for years he had been concerned about the Wuhan lab and the work being done there to create “chimeric” SARS-related bat coronaviruses “with enhanced human infectivity.” In an email, the scientist further declared that “In this context, the news of a novel coronavirus in Wuhan ***screamed*** lab release.”

Soon afterwards, Ebright became one of the prominent signatories of the [March Open Letter](#)[58] sharply criticizing the WHO report and calling for a renewed international investigation of the Wuhan lab, outlining his views in a lengthy *Independent Science News* [interview](#)[59]. According to the *Vanity Fair* [article](#)[60], when the earliest reports of the Covid outbreak appeared, his suspicions that an artificial virus had leaked from the Wuhan lab were immediate, emerging within “a nanosecond or a picosecond.” Ebright’s statements also constituted a centerpiece of Wade’s [seminal article](#): [61]

It is clear that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was systematically constructing novel chimeric coronaviruses and was assessing their ability to infect human cells and human-ACE2-expressing mice. It is also clear that, depending on the constant genomic contexts chosen for analysis, this work could have produced SARS-CoV-2 or a proximal progenitor of SARS-CoV-2...It is clear that some or all of this work was being performed using a biosafety standard...that would pose an unacceptably high risk of infection of laboratory staff. It also is clear that this work never should have been funded and never should have been performed.

Yet strangely enough, during the early months of the epidemic, Ebright had seemingly taken an entirely contrary public position. In his January 29, 2020 interview with the *Washington Post*, [he had declared](#)[62]: “Based on the virus genome and properties there is no indication whatsoever that it was an engineered virus.” And according to a *Post* story a couple of weeks later, [he also added](#)[63] “The possibility that this was a deliberately released bioweapon can be firmly excluded.”

Ebright’s sweeping statements had been intended to rebut the widespread allegations that Covid was a *Chinese* bioweapon that had accidentally been leaked, but they soon proved extremely helpful to our own government-sponsored *RFE/RL*, which [denounced](#)[64] the Iranian biowarfare accusation as “an unfounded claim” backed by “no evidence,” and quoted Ebright’s blanket assertion as an effective rebuttal. The apparent scientific consensus that the virus was natural ensured that any further Iranian accusations were summarily rejected as completely irrational by the international media, forcing Tehran to soon abandon the effort as counter-productive.

Whether or not my analysis of Ebright’s motive is correct, there is the undeniable reality that the loudest early scientific voice favoring Covid as natural has become the loudest voice arguing that it came from a lab, a belief he now claims to have held from the very beginning. No one in the media seems to have commented upon or perhaps even noticed this radical reversal.

I cannot say if this political/media strategy was actually planned, but it proved very effective, and the fierce, early attacks on China for having released Covid achieved a double result. The accusations successfully demonized that country with much of the American and world public, so that according to a poll taken at the end of April, [a remarkable 45% of Americans](#)[65] believed that the deadly virus had “probably” or “definitely” originated in a Chinese laboratory, with 74% of Republicans holding that opinion. But the charges also provoked a defensive response by reputable scientific authorities, who gravitated towards the doubtful natural virus theory as their best defense, and this proved extremely useful in defeating the Iranian accusations when they soon came. Moreover, the resulting natural virus consensus remained confined to the mainstream media, a source of information widely distrusted by

populist conservatives, most of whom may have remained stubbornly convinced that Covid had indeed come from the Wuhan lab and had probably been a Chinese bioweapon.

By the beginning of 2021, the extremely suspicious aspects of the early Iranian outbreak had long since been forgotten and Iran's biowarfare accusations abandoned, so there was little cost in allowing the resurrection of the theory that Covid was the artificial product of a lab. This cleared the way for a new media consensus along those lines.

Trying to Disguise a Smoking Gun

The extremely suspicious nature of the very early Covid outbreak in Qom points the finger of blame in an obvious direction, as Iran's top leadership had publicly declared at the time. But evidence related to Wuhan itself is even more compelling, and the probable timeline of the first appearance of Covid constitutes a crucial element of that story.

Throughout 2020, teams of investigative journalists from the *New York Times*[66], the *Wall Street Journal*[67], and the *Associated Press*[68], sometimes assisted by leaked Chinese documents, had firmly established that China's central government was unaware of the growing viral epidemic until the end of December, and then immediately provided the information to the World Health Organization and other international authorities. That same year a very thorough analysis[69] by Philippe Lemoine in *Quillette* had also strongly argued that the local Wuhan officials only discovered the viral outbreak a couple of days earlier.

The exact date of Wuhan's Patient Zero is much more difficult to determine, but can probably be roughly estimated. Years of censorship and ideological curation have severely impaired the utility of Google as an objective search engine on controversial topics, but it remains invaluable as a guide to the established standard narrative. And if we Google a phrase like "first Wuhan Covid case," a top result is the official summary of an academic paper published in *Science* on March 18, 2021 by a team of researchers from the University of California San Diego School of Medicine, with the first author being Dr. Jonathan Pekar.

- [Novel Coronavirus Circulated Undetected Months before First COVID-19 Cases in Wuhan, China](#)[70]
Study dates emergence to as early as October 2019; simulations suggest in most cases zoonotic viruses die out naturally before causing a pandemic
Scott LaFee • *UCSanDiegoHealth* • March 18, 2021 • 1,100 Words

Based upon the characteristics of the virus and employing a series of simulations using standard molecular clock techniques, the researchers concluded that the outbreak in Hubei province probably began no earlier than mid-October 2019, while regional newspaper reports suggest that Covid was already actively circulating by November 17, 2019. This allows us to effectively bracket the appearance of Patient Zero between mid-October and mid-November, with very early November being the most likely date. According to the paper's estimate, there were probably no more than four infected individuals by mid-November and just nine by December 1, 2019, though obviously all these dates and totals are mere approximations. A rough timeline along these same lines had already been widely accepted by spring of last year, but a rigorous academic study has now placed it upon a much more solid footing.

However, when we combine certain other facts with these seemingly solid scientific conclusions, the implications are explosive, as I have repeatedly emphasized[71] for more than a year:

But with the horrific consequences of our own later governmental inaction being obvious, elements within our intelligence agencies have sought to demonstrate that they were not the ones asleep at the switch. Earlier this month, an ABC News story[72] cited four separate government sources to reveal that as far back as late November, a special medical intelligence unit within our Defense Intelligence Agency had produced a report warning that an out-of-control disease epidemic was occurring in the Wuhan area of China, and widely distributed that document throughout the top ranks of our government, warning that steps should be taken to protect US forces based in Asia. After the story aired, a Pentagon spokesman officially denied the existence of that November report, while various other top level government and intelligence officials refused to comment. But a few days later, Israeli television mentioned[73] that in November American intelligence had indeed shared such a report on the Wuhan disease outbreak with its NATO and Israeli allies, thus seeming to independently confirm the complete accuracy of the original *ABC News* story and its several government sources.

It therefore appears that elements of the Defense Intelligence Agency were aware of the deadly viral outbreak in Wuhan more than a month before any officials in the Chinese government itself. Unless our intelligence agencies have pioneered the technology of precognition, I think this may have happened for the same reason that arsonists have the earliest knowledge of future fires.

According to these multiply-sourced mainstream media accounts, by “the second week of November” our Defense Intelligence Agency was already preparing a secret report warning of a “cataclysmic” disease outbreak taking place in Wuhan. Yet at that point, probably no more than a couple of dozen individuals had been infected in that city of 11 million, with few of those yet having any serious symptoms. The implications are rather obvious.

Founding *Slate* Editor Michael Kinsley once famously quipped that a gaffe was when a politician inadvertently spoke some forbidden truth, and by failing to recognize the obvious implications of the date of the secret DIA report, the four government sources who revealed its existence and the Israeli source who independently confirmed that disclosure had constructed an enormous political bomb, which only the “see no evil” behavior of our timorous media has allowed to remain undetonated.

Because the nominal focus of the original *ABC News* report had been the incompetence of the Trump Administration in failing to heed the November warning of the looming epidemic, the story received enormous early discussion, being very widely Tweeted out[74] and attracting over 1,700 comments. The lead author was Josh Margolin, the news network’s chief investigative reporter, whose excellent governmental and intelligence sources greatly strengthened its credibility and impact. Even the much less prominent Israeli story confirming the secret report’s international distribution attracted more than 50 comments.

But there are grave implications to a secret American government report that described a potentially “cataclysmic” disease outbreak in Wuhan that has not yet actually occurred, and once these were

recognized, the entire episode was quickly flushed down the media memory hole and almost never mentioned again, even by alternative journalists.

One particularly suspicious aspect of the DIA report was that it had allegedly been “the result of analysis of wire and computer intercepts, coupled with satellite images.” Yet at the time it was prepared—“the second week” of November—we now believe that no more than a handful of Chinese had yet become infected by Covid in that city, hardly the sort of situation that would have been apparent on satellite reconnaissance photos.

The Pentagon’s first line of defense was simply to deny that the report had ever existed, though this became more difficult after the Israelis confirmed that both they and NATO had received copies at the time. But given the enormous stakes involved, additional efforts to obfuscate the apparent smoking gun seem to have been quickly undertaken.

Two months after he had published his inadvertent bombshell, Margolin co-authored another article almost twice as long, which heavily promoted an unpublished Harvard Medical School study[75] allegedly replicating those DIA findings. The authors claimed to have used satellite images and electronic Internet data to demonstrate that the virus outbreak had already produced a major health crisis in Wuhan by September or October, with local hospitals supposedly already heavily burdened by Covid patients, months earlier than previously believed. Such findings were obviously intended to explain how the DIA had come to similar conclusions in November, and the second sentence of the news story stated that the research study was performed “[u]sing techniques similar to those employed by intelligence agencies,” while explicit references to the DIA report also appeared later in the text.

- Satellite data suggests coronavirus may have hit China earlier: Researchers[76]
Researchers say surge in cars at hospitals may indicate outbreak in fall
Kaitlyn Folmer and Josh Margolin • *ABC News* • June 8, 2020 • 2,500 Words

Dr. John Brownstein, the lead author of the study, served as an *ABC News* contributor, and he was described as having spent more than a month on the project, suggesting that it had begun just days after Israeli television confirmed the existence of the officially-denied secret DIA report. Heavy use was made of satellite-imaging and RS Metrics, a leading geospatial analysis firm, was recruited to evaluate the data. The authors claimed to have received no outside funding, but surely such services hardly came cheap, and the project seems to have been initiated and completed in record time.

Unpublished studies rarely receive much media coverage, but the report was propelled into the public eye by a glowing 2,500 word *ABC News* story, longer than the body of the paper itself, and immediately Tweeted out[77] by such high-profile individuals as Donald Trump, Jr. and the Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, thereby attracting a great deal of attention. According to Margolin’s article, it had been submitted to *Nature Digital Health* and was undergoing peer review, yet more than thirteen months later it has never appeared in that publication or anywhere else, implying that it was uniformly rejected for publication. Moreover, after such an auspicious launch, it has never been mentioned or cited in any subsequent mainstream analysis of the early Wuhan outbreak, suggesting that it was considered an embarrassment, an analysis that no respectable journalist nor editor took seriously.

The reasons are obvious. Covid is an extremely contagious disease, and once it has become established in an urban community, infections will normally tend to double every 3-6 days, so if thousands of Covid victims had been clogging Wuhan’s hospitals in September or October, the entire city would

probably have reached herd immunity by the time the lockdowns and other strong public health measures were implemented in mid-January. Yet this huge supposed local health crisis had remained entirely invisible to the many Westerners who were still living in the city during that period.

The fact that a team of Harvard researchers was mobilized on such extremely short notice to produce an obviously fallacious and illogical study intended to explain away the secret DIA report simply underscores the tremendous importance of that inadvertent disclosure. And although apparently rejected by all academic journals and shunned by the regular media, the study has still served as a useful talking-point for the gullible, being regularly cited by online commenters as supposedly explaining and justifying those impossible DIA conclusions, which is how it first came to my attention.

False Narratives Based Upon False Positives

The promotion of the fallacious evidence that the Covid outbreak in Wuhan had begun much earlier than generally believed was a product of the anti-China camp. But similar sorts of claims have become quite common among pro-China propagandists, who have regularly argued that the virus was circulating in parts of Europe, America, and other countries during 2019, long before the Chinese authorities discovered its existence in Wuhan at the very end of that year. This theory has obviously been intended to deflect the accusation that a Chinese virus, whether natural or not, had been responsible for the deaths of millions around the world.

The most solid evidence for these supposedly early Covid infections have been tests of stored wastewater or blood samples in various countries, with the results published in reputable scientific journals. For reference purposes, here is a list of the examples known to me:

- Barcelona, Spain. [Reuters](#)[78], [The Conversation](#)[79]. Wastewater, March 12, 2019. [Paper](#)[80].
- Milan, Italy, [Reuters](#)[81]. Blood samples in lung cancer screening, as early as September 2019. [Paper](#)[82].
- Santa Catalina, Brazil. [SCMP](#)[83]. Wastewater, November 27, 2019. [Paper](#)[84].
- France. [CGTN](#)[85], [Inserm](#)[86]. Blood samples in twelve regions, between November 2019 and January 2020. [Paper](#)[87].
- Milan and Turin, Italy. [Reuters](#)[88]. Wastewater, December 18, 2019. [Paper](#)[89].
- California and eight other states. [NYT](#)[90]. Red Cross CDC blood samples, as early as December 13, 2019. [Paper](#)[91].
- Illinois and four other states, [NYT](#)[92], [WSJ](#)[93]. Blood samples, as early as December 24, 2019. [Paper](#)[94].

At first glance, this collection of more than a half-dozen scientific studies seems a very impressive body of evidence. But although these individual cases are often grouped together and presented as proof for the early presence of Covid in the West, important distinctions must be drawn. According to our standard timeline, the Covid virus probably first appeared in Wuhan between mid-October and mid-November of 2019, so given widespread international jet travel, the possibility that it might have initially reached parts of Europe or America by December hardly overturns our existing framework, and the same might even be true for those examples in which the virus seems to have appeared somewhere else by late November.

Wuhan is a densely populated urban metropolis, ideally suited for the rapid spread of an unsuspected contagious disease, and we still believe that a couple of months elapsed between the appearance of Patient Zero and the steadily growing epidemic reaching the attention of the local health authorities, so

a roughly similar gap between the initial presence of the virus in other parts of the world and serious local outbreaks would only be expected. Also, the epidemiological simulations run in the Pekar study mentioned above have suggested that a large majority of initial pinprick infections die out by themselves, with only a fraction become the larger, exponentially-growing local epidemics that gain public visibility.

So among the above cases, only the first two—from March and September 2019—seem to seriously challenge our existing assumption of an original Wuhan source. And as we examine those cases in detail, their credibility disintegrates.

In June 2020, stored Barcelona wastewater revealed a single positive Covid result for March 12, 2019, while no other instances were found for the subsequent ten months until January 2020, a few weeks before the earliest victims were discovered and the large Spanish outbreak began. Such a single, anomalous datapoint can easily be ascribed to lab-error or accidental contamination of the sample, and indeed other [Spanish](#)[95] and [Chinese](#)[96] experts expressed strong skepticism of the test results on exactly those grounds.

Similarly, the Italian evidence for Covid infections as early as September 2019 was based upon stored blood samples from a large cancer-screening trial, and is also very doubtful. According to the antibody test used, a remarkable 11.6% of all healthy volunteers had tested positive for the virus by March 2020, seeming to imply that enormous numbers of Italians had already been infected by that date, a far larger total than the corresponding number of hospitalizations or deaths. So if an overwhelming majority of those 111 total Covid infections appear to be false-positives, the same might easily be true of the four cases that dated back to September.

The likely prevalence of false-positives also undermines the credibility of the other studies, which allegedly detected the virus in France, Brazil, Italy, and parts of the U.S. by November or December of 2019. For example, the [French study](#)[97] based upon blood antibody tests seemed to reveal that 1.9% of the population—more than a million individuals—had already been infected by November 2019, which would have produced a huge public health care crisis long before the one that actually began in April of the following year.

Similarly, [an antibody analysis](#)[98] of Red Cross blood samples by the researchers at our own CDC seemed to indicate that 2% of Americans—more than six million people—had already been infected by January 2020, long before our own first large outbreak began. If such enormous numbers of Americans had been infected that early, we surely would have seen direct evidence, and the exponential growth of infections would have swamped our health care system by the following month. Indeed, the lead author of the article seemed to acknowledge that the antibody evidence found was actually quite doubtful, suggesting that up to 98% of the supposed infections detected might be erroneous.

Our strong suspicion that nearly all these anomalous results were simply due to false-positives seems entirely confirmed once we carefully consider the details of the last study in the list.

On June 15, 2021 both the [New York Times](#)[99] and the [Wall Street Journal](#)[100] reported the results of a newly published study that applied antibody tests to a very large set of stored blood samples, and found evidence of American infections as early as December 24, 2019, several weeks before the first known case. It is hardly surprising that the virus might have reached this country before the end of

2019, and those results do not seriously challenge our existing narrative. However, certain aspects of the methodology employed provide important information.

Due to serious concerns over false-positives, the researchers had decided to apply two consequence Covid antibody tests to the 24,000 blood samples that they analyzed, and the first test flagged 147 positive results, a total which was then reduced to just 9 by the second test. This implies that roughly 95% of the initial Covid antibody matches were actually false-positives, and it is quite possible that a third antibody test might have further reduced the total of true infections detected. Once we realize that at least 95% of the matches in a single-antibody test are likely to be false-positives, the very few anomalous early Covid results in those other papers no longer seem at all mysterious.

All these studies were aimed at locating the earliest signs of the Covid virus in various parts of the world, and there surely must have been many other studies that found no results worthy of publication, let alone media coverage. Yet with the exception of two minor and obviously spurious instances, this global effort found absolutely no signs of the virus anywhere in the world prior to the date we currently believe that it first appeared in Wuhan. This provides strong support for the null hypothesis, fully affirming our existing Covid timeline.

Promoting a Ft. Detrick Lab-Leak as a Failure of Nerve

The total absence of any Covid antibodies prior to December 2019 in tens of thousands of American blood samples should be kept firmly in mind as we consider the possibility of a summer 2019 Ft. Detrick leak, a theory widely popular among pro-China propagandists and anti-American “conspiracy” websites.

From January 2020 onward, anti-China elements had been promoting the theory of a Wuhan lab-leak, so a few weeks later their pro-China and anti-American counterparts began responding in kind, arguing that Covid had indeed leaked from a lab, but that the source had been Ft. Detrick, America’s premier biowarfare center. In fairness, that latter hypothesis at least had some solid factual basis, given that the facility had been ordered shut down by the CDC for eight months due to safety violations, as reported[101] in the *New York Times* and other newspapers:

Deadly Germ Research Is Shut Down at Army Lab Over Safety Concerns

Problems with disposal of dangerous materials led the government to suspend research at the military’s leading biodefense center.

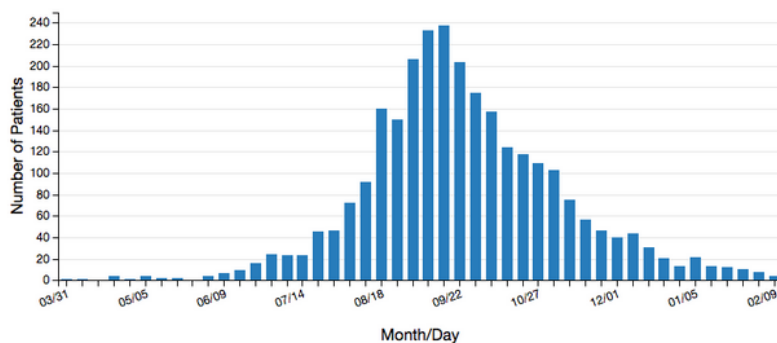
Screenshot from The New York Times[102] August 08, 2019

However, the other half of the theory was much more doubtful. During 2019 there had been a flurry of unusual respiratory illnesses across America, including more than 2,600 individuals requiring hospitalization and 68 deaths, with the condition labeled EVALI by the CDC[103]. A public shutdown of Ft. Detrick for safety violations soon followed by a wave of illness with symptoms somewhat similar to Covid constitutes a tidy package providing simple talking-points, and this allowed the blame for the

virus to be thrown back at the Americans. Many pro-China partisans jumped at this attractive opportunity, with the accusations sometimes amplified by Chinese officials or media organs.

Unfortunately, this hypothesis disintegrates upon any close examination of the evidence. An unusual aspect of Covid is the extreme age-skew, with victims over 60 having fatality rates perhaps a hundred times greater than those under 40, and the young being almost invulnerable. Indeed, according to some estimates the majority of deaths have been among individuals in their late 70s or older. By contrast, EVALI was an illness of youth, with 52% of the serious cases occurring among those younger than 25, compared to perhaps 0.2% for Covid. Thus, the profile of victims seems entirely dissimilar, differing by more than two orders of magnitude.

Moreover, the single most important characteristic of Covid is the extremely contagious nature of the disease, with outbreaks growing exponentially if not controlled by strong public health measures. But the graph of EVALI cases provided on the CDC website tells a very different story, rising sharply during the summer of 2019, but then tailing off to low levels by late December.



EVALI Hospitalizations (CDC Website)

If thousands of Americans had become infected with Covid by mid-2019, the total would have reached many tens of millions by the end of the year, and the resulting hundreds of thousands of excess deaths would have ensured that no one paid any attention to emerging reports of some viral outbreak in Wuhan on the other side of the world. By contrast, there seems no evidence that EVALI was contagious, and according to the CDC it was strongly associated with the use of Vitamin E acetate in vaping products.

Thus, the two illnesses had entirely different age-profiles, entirely different epidemiological characteristics, and apparently different causes. No trace of Covid antibodies was found in America during the peak of the EVALI cases, which had already dwindled down to low levels several months before our Covid outbreak began. There were only a few dozen EVALI cases in the Ft. Detrick region and far more in California, Texas, Illinois, and New York. And much speculation notwithstanding, there is no evidence that anything, contagious, Covid, or otherwise, had leaked out of Ft. Detrick around the time of its temporary shutdown.

Closely associated with the highly implausible theory of a Ft. Detrick lab-leak has been the suggestion that the virus was accidentally brought to Wuhan by the American participants in the World Military Games held in that city, which ended on October 27, 2019. That date does seem to almost perfectly match the beginning of the Covid outbreak, and for more than a year I have suggested that the presence of 300 American military servicemen and many thousands of those from other countries would have provided perfect cover for a couple of operatives to have been slipped into the city in order to quietly release the virus. It is noteworthy that the Sheraton Wuhan Hankou Hotel hosting some of

the American military contingent was located only a mile and a half[104] from the Huanan seafood market, an early epicenter of the outbreak, while the Wuhan lab is twenty miles distant.

But there is no evidence that any of the American participants were themselves infected and if Covid had already spread widely enough in the U.S. to have infected random members of the team, our own outbreak would have occurred months before the one in China rather than months afterward.

I strongly suspect that the widespread focus by pro-China partisans on a Ft. Detrick lab-leak or some other accidental American release has been due to political expediency more than anything else. As discussed above, there exists strong even overwhelming evidence that the worldwide Covid epidemic was caused by an American biowarfare attack against China (and Iran), probably by rogue elements of our national security establishment associated with the Deep State Neocons near the top of the Trump Administration. But with millions dead, many of them American, such monumental accusations might easily exceed the intestinal fortitude of nearly all journalists and editors, even those found among alternative media outlets. Therefore, they judged it far safer to instead condemn America for an alleged lab-leak at Ft. Detrick, thereby mirroring the Wuhan lab charges. But there are serious difficulties with advancing theories that have no factual basis, including doing severe damage to one's future credibility.

Diverting “Conspiracy Theorists” into Dead-Ends

In the years following the 9/11 attacks, a vibrant movement of “conspiracy theorists” developed on the Internet, arguing that the true facts had been quite different than the official story, with most of them suggesting heavy American government involvement in those momentous events.

Back then, the Internet was far less channeled and regulated than it eventually became, and few effective means existed for the political establishment to shut down such troubling discussions. Therefore Harvard Law professor Cass Sunstein, soon to become a top Obama aide, shrewdly suggested[105] that the activities of those energetic individuals could best be undermined and disrupted by means of “cognitive infiltration.” Agents of the government or its close allies should join those online communities and promote a wide range of additional theories, often rather absurd ones, thereby stirring up internal conflicts, diverting the members into theoretical dead-ends, and heavily discrediting them with the broader American public.

There is no evidence that Sunstein himself ever attempted to implement that project, nor did he pioneer the idea. Such an approach was hardly new, and J. Edgar Hoover's notorious Cointelpro program of the late 1950s and 1960s had used quite similar methods, though the FBI had targeted real-life activist organizations rather than any non-existent online communities of those pre-Internet days. Indeed, the use of *agents provocateurs* has always been a standard operating technique of domestic intelligence services. But we should keep these obvious tactics in mind as we consider the vast profusion of diverse conspiratorial theories that have sprung up like mushrooms in the wake of the global Covid epidemic and the severe stresses that it imposed on the ordinary lives of so many Americans.

Many, perhaps most individuals are quite reluctant to embrace any theory not blessed by their personal figures of authority, whether these be the editors of the *New York Times* or the pundits of *FoxNews*. Only a small minority of the population is willing to cross such ideological boundaries and risk the stinging epithet of being labeled “a conspiracy theorist.”

Transgressive individuals who adhere to some heterodox beliefs are also usually willing to accept many others as well, and are often quite eager to do so, sometimes exhibiting the troubling lack of logical thinking and careful analytical judgment that may taint their entire community. This leaves them open to eagerly nibbling the poisoned bait of fraudulent but attractive theories, whether these are advanced by well-meaning advocates, self-serving charlatans, or covert agents of the establishment engaged in “cognitive infiltration.” The vast profusion of unorthodox Covid theories, heavily promoted in videos, Tweets, and websites, may derive from all three of these different sources.

Some individuals have claimed that Covid does not exist, or that it is almost harmless, being little more dangerous than the ordinary flu, with our alleged death-toll merely a product of fraud and media propaganda. Others have taken this notion even further, arguing that viruses in general do not exist. Such sentiments have been all too annoyingly frequent on the very lightly moderated comment-threads of this website, leading me to leave [the following response](#)[106] on several occasions:

But here’s a listing of TOTAL American deaths from all causes over the last few years, taken directly from the CDC website:

2014: 2,626,418
2015: 2,712,630
2016: 2,744,248
2017: 2,813,503
2018: 2,839,205
2019: 2,854,838
2020: 3,384,426

You’ll notice that the numbers are fairly steady until 2020 when they suddenly jumped by well over 500,000.

If I didn’t know any better, I’d almost think that America had been struck by a dangerous disease epidemic that year.

It’s obviously just a matter of personal opinion whether an extra half-million deaths in 2020 is a big number or a small number...

The strong public health measures implemented in this country and elsewhere to control the spread of the virus—lockdowns, masking, and social distancing—have been very disruptive and unpleasant for many people, provoking a wide range of harsh criticism, ranging from the reasonable to the ridiculous. The all-out effort to develop and distribute effective vaccines, including new and briefly-tested ones, has merged the Covid controversy with the longstanding anti-vaxx movement, whose best-known advocate has been [Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.](#)[107]

Not having devoted much time to these matters, I can only say that a great deal of the agitated commentary on this subject appears outlandish and implausible. Many activists seem to assume a unified worldwide conspiracy involving China, America, Russia, Israel, Iran, and virtually every other nation, all secretly working together to pretend that Covid is dangerous and that the vaccines against it are not, even though the truth is exactly the reverse. But the notion of all these mutually-hostile

countries collaborating in such a bizarre scheme seems extremely unlikely, and Russian President Vladimir Putin recently made exactly this important point[108] in his long annual presentation to his concerned citizens:

I heard: that there is nothing at all, in reality there is no epidemic. When you tell them that this is happening all over the world, they reply: “Right, country leaders have come into collusion.” Do they have any idea of what is happening in the world, of the contradictions that are plaguing today’s world, where all leaders allegedly upped and conspired with each other? It is absolute rubbish.

Particularly absurd has been the cast of primary villains for many of these agitated activists, who often focus upon Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum and Microsoft founder Bill Gates as the diabolical masterminds of our global calamity, with their plot identified as “the Great Reset.” A couple of months ago I addressed some of these claims in one of my comments[109]:

I’ll admit that the whole Great Reset/Agenda 2021/World Economic Forum stuff has always seemed like total crackpottery to me, so ridiculous that I never looked into it other than sometimes reading some of the articles or discussion on my own website. I also put all the “Bill Gates’ diabolical plot to exterminate mankind” stuff in pretty much the same category.

My very strong suspicion is that these sorts of (in my opinion) implausible and ridiculous “conspiracy theories” are probably promoted to divert attention from the very real and strong evidence of Covid-19 having been an American biowarfare attack. After all, wouldn’t the CIA or whomever prefer that agitated activists on the Internet spend all their time ranting about some 83-year-old Swiss international banker named Klaus Schwab who holds annual public conferences in Davos rather than paying attention to all the numerous pieces of evidence I’ve accumulated implicating America’s national security apparatus in the gigantic global disaster?

In fact, didn’t that Cass Sunstein fellow years ago say that the using “cognitive infiltration” to promote ridiculous nonsense was the best means of defeating “conspiracy theorists” on the Internet? It worked pretty well for 9/11, so why not apply it to Covid-19 as well?

I’d be the first to admit that various groups and individuals are certainly taking advantage of the viral epidemic, notably getting the Federal Reserve to spend many trillions of dollars bailing out their businesses and loans, and massively boosting their stock prices. But after the 2008 Financial Meltdown, they used their political power to loot the American Treasury in exactly the same way and got a huge government bailout without the need for any disease outbreak. So I doubt they created Covid-19 for that purpose.

Most recently, Dr. Anthony Fauci of our NIH has become demonized as a particular target, partly because he had already been hated by many activists for his association with our unpopular lockdowns

and other measures to control the epidemic. Cable news shows have focused on the supposed revelation that he had been involved in funding the research of the Wuhan lab, including the enhancement of viruses, seeming to imply that he was responsible for the creation of Covid.

But these facts had already been widely known for more than a year, presented in [an April 2020 article](#)[110] in *Newsweek*. Anyway, since Covid probably didn't come from the Wuhan lab, the entire issue is completely irrelevant, a classic red herring used to distract the gullible. As I discussed in a comment last month:

I think 95% of the people currently ranting about "Gain of Function" had never even heard the term until a few weeks ago when the talking-heads on *FoxNews* and *CNN* began spouting it 24/7 in the wake of Wade's important article.

Everyone even moderately interested has known for a year or more that the NIH had provided much of the funding for the Wuhan lab's virus research via Daszak's organization, and that such research including enhancing the characteristics of viruses, i.e. GoF. I read the long Deigin article when it appeared in April 2020 and also the long and persuasive 12,000 word cover-story by Nicholas Baker when it appeared in January 2021. As Wade himself emphasized, nearly all the facts he discussed had been publicly known for a year or more but had simply been ignored by the Trump-hating American MSM.

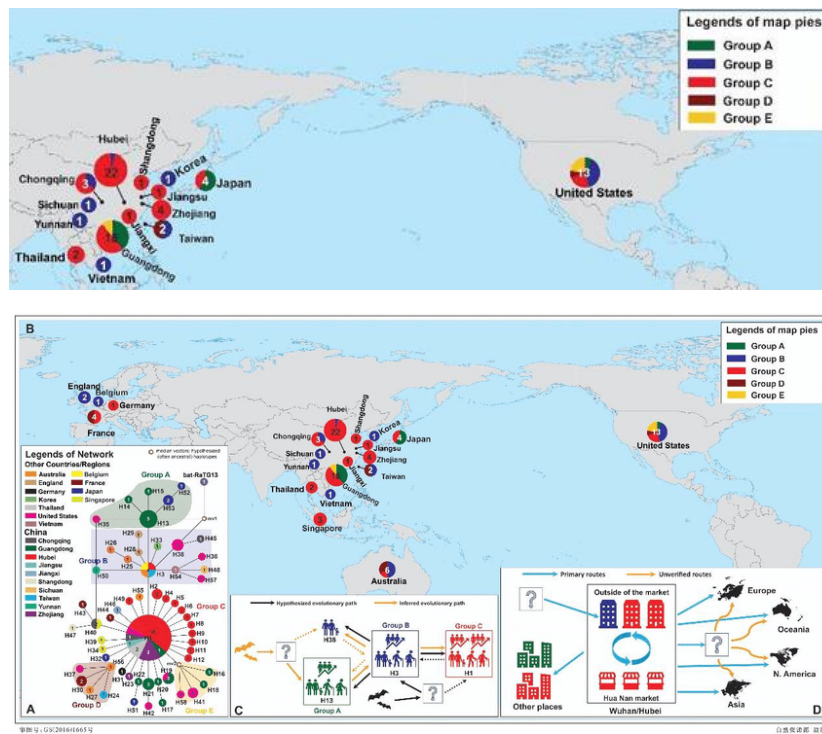
The Wuhan lab did research enhancing viruses. So what? Many, many other labs, most of them American and some of them secret biowarfare sites, do exactly the same sort of research. The only reason people point at the Wuhan lab is because it's in Wuhan.

The Unresolved Phylogenetic Analysis Puzzle

For reasons of completeness, I should also discuss one strange aspect of the global Covid epidemic that has been completely ignored by our Western media even while it has been heavily promoted by pro-China activists and outlets.

Like any RNA coronavirus, Covid has undergone a series of random mutations as it has spread around the world, and scientists have created an international database containing a large number of fully-sequenced Covid viruses from different geographical regions, allowing experts to trace the likely origins of particular outbreaks.

Beginning in March 2020, several different research teams of virologists and other scientists published academic papers attempting to use this genetic data to construct a complete ancestry-tree of the virus, using mathematical techniques to divide the virus into several major clades or ancestral families. But the rather surprising findings seemed to reveal only a single uniform clade in Wuhan itself, while several different ancestral families were found in Guangdong, other countries in Asia and Europe, and especially in the United States. This was illustrated by the diagrams below, taken from one of these papers.



Such a result seemed quite counter-intuitive, since we would normally expect the greatest genetic diversity of the virus to be found at the site of its first appearance, and various pro-China writers quickly seized[111] upon these findings to argue that Covid did not originate in Wuhan but instead had been brought there from the U.S., which possessed the greatest number of different Covid strains.

These journal articles were published at the early stages of the massive international propaganda-war between China and America over culpability for the global disaster, whose cost would total many trillions of dollars. Most of the papers were written by Chinese researchers at Chinese academic institutions, raising natural suspicions that the findings might be inaccurate or at least distorted. But one of the most prominent articles was authored by a British-German team and appeared in *PNAS*, the prestigious flagship journal of the our own National Academy of Science, and anyway all the results were supposedly based upon objective analyses of a public genetic dataset. The following are links to two of the earliest papers as well as a much more recent one:

- Phylogenetic network analysis of SARS-CoV-2 genomes[112]
Peter Forster, Lucy Forster, Colin Renfrew, and Michael Forster • *PNAS* • April 28, 2020 • 2,100 Words
- Decoding the evolution and transmissions of the novel pneumonia coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2 / HCoV-19) using whole genomic data[113]
Wen-Bin Yu, Guang-Da Tang, Li Zhang, and Richard T. Corlett • *Zoological Research* • May 2020 • 7,300 Words
- Analysis of the Genomic Distance Between Bat Coronavirus RaTG13 and SARS-CoV-2 Reveals Multiple Origins of COVID-19[114]
Shaojun Pei and Stephen S.-T. Yau • *Acta Mathematica Scientia* • April 19, 2021 • 2,800 Word

As we have seen, analysis of stored wastewater and blood samples in the U.S., Europe, and other parts of the world have found no credible traces of Covid anywhere prior to the Wuhan outbreak, so the interpretation of these research findings by pro-China elements seems erroneous. But the international map of Covid clades remains puzzling.

Given the total absence of any discussion of these anomalies in the mainstream sources I consulted, I tried to read the articles for myself, but my complete lack of technical expertise left me adrift. The important *PNAS* paper had provoked three critical letters by other researchers that disputed the results, and the authors then rebutted these, while admitting that the implications of their findings had been misinterpreted by some writers. But I found it impossible to properly evaluate these conflicting scientific claims.

With no informed discussion of the results anywhere to be found and being at a loss to properly interpret them, I contacted a knowledgeable individual and solicited his opinion. Although previously unaware of these scientific findings, he suggested that the small number of Covid mutations during the few months between the initial Wuhan outbreak and those which soon followed elsewhere in the world might render the ancestry-tree techniques invalid or misleading, perhaps explaining the discrepancy. But I would feel much more comfortable if this issue were thoroughly debated in public by disinterested scientists rather than having been entirely ignored by our media.

Understanding the Most Important World Event in Three Generations

World War II ended more than 75 years ago, and across the last three generations there seems no single event that has impacted the world as much as the ongoing global Covid epidemic. The collapse of the USSR would be the only serious rival, but while that dramatic development greatly changed the lives of hundreds of millions of Soviet citizens and Eastern Europeans, most people elsewhere regarded it as nothing more than a story in the news. By contrast, the daily lives of many billions have already been drastically affected by Covid, while the fiscal and economic policies of major nations including our own have been transformed.

From the very beginning, many leading scientific experts believed that Covid was a product of human design, notably including virologist David Baltimore[115], a Nobel Laureate and former president of Caltech. But for various reasons our Western media establishment instead quickly constructed a Potemkin-like consensus that the virus was entirely natural and the global catastrophe a random, unforeseen event for which no one could be blamed. However, over the last couple of months, this propaganda-bubble has collapsed, and there is now increasing agreement that Covid was probably an artificial creation, engineered in some laboratory.

The same American-dominated propaganda organs that had spent more than twelve months mustering shreds of fact and logic to loudly proclaim that the virus was natural and ignoring all dissenting voices have now mustered other shreds of fact and logic to argue that it was created in China and leaked from a Wuhan lab, once again ignoring those who suggest otherwise.

But the flood of mainstream writers promoting this new consensus have built their narrative on a factual foundation that is gossamer-thin, and those spiderwebs of speculation were recently swept aside by the direct personal testimony[116] of Danielle Anderson, a respected Western virologist who was working at the Wuhan lab during that period, and who described the likelihood that Covid was either created there or that any lab-leak had ever occurred as “exceedingly slim.”

From the first, there had been three plausible origins for the disease. Covid was either a natural virus, a Chinese virus, or an American virus. But although our media has wildly swung between the first and second possibilities, the third has been entirely excluded from consideration, with those who suggest it completely ignored.

This information blackout was even extended to major world governments. The remarkable speed with which the virus had jumped more than 3,000 miles from Wuhan to Qom and infected much of Iran's parliament and political leadership class led that country and its media to denounce the outbreak as a likely American biowarfare attack against its two leading international adversaries, China and Iran, with the former Iranian president lodging an official complaint with the United Nations[117]. But virtually no Americans were ever informed of these grave public accusations by a nation of 80 million people.

A few weeks ago I summarized my own conclusions[118] regarding the epidemic:

Thus, we are left with the strong likelihood that Covid came from a laboratory along with a good possibility that it was designed as a bioweapon, yet we lack serious indications that any lab-leak occurred. So if the original Wuhan outbreak was due to the deployment of a powerful bioweapon but not one that had accidentally leaked from any lab, then surely China was the intended target, the victim rather than the perpetrator. Indeed, the PRC only avoided suffering devastation because it responded in such extremely prompt fashion and quickly imposed exceptionally strong public health controls. Some 700 million Chinese were confined to their homes for weeks, a lockdown probably more than a thousand times greater than anything previously seen in history.

Given our ongoing military and geopolitical confrontation with China, America seems the likely source of the attack. However, once the virus eventually reached our own country, President Trump's completely lackadaisical response demonstrated that he himself had absolutely no idea that he was confronting the threat of a dangerous bioweapon, thereby proving his own personal innocence. The most likely suspects would be rogue elements of our national security establishment, probably some of the Deep State Neocons whom Trump had placed near the top of his administration.

This small handful of high-level plotters would have then drawn upon the resources of the American national security apparatus to actually carry out the operation. The virus and its dispersal devices might have been obtained from Ft. Detrick and CIA operatives or members of special forces would have been sent to Wuhan to release it. However, all these latter individuals would have believed that they were participating in a fully authorized covert military strike against America's primary geopolitical adversary. In effect, what happened was a *Dr. Strangelove*-type scenario, but brought to real life.

I have also elsewhere provided a summary of the plausible sequence of events:

- Outline of the Hypothetical Biowarfare Attack Scenario[119]

During the fifteen months that I have advocated this same basic thesis, the most surprising reaction has been from the fierce critics of the Trump Administration, so numerous in elite circles.

During the last few years, Trump was regularly vilified in almost comic-book fashion, as a uniquely dangerous president who threatened our entire way of life, with such hysterical charges usually being based upon his crude public utterances or even his misspelled Tweets. Meanwhile, these same critics

have entirely ignored the very real evidence that individuals he had placed in authority had carried out an exceptionally reckless biowarfare attack against China and Iran, with the unintended blowback consequences having devastated our own society and killed many hundreds of thousands of our citizens. The ruling elites who fiercely attacked Trump dwelt upon his vulgar trivialities, which were magnified beyond all recognition, while steadfastly disregarding those enormities, thereby demonstrating astonishing levels of decadence and solipsism.

Future historians will surely mark this as a very telling episode in the likely twilight of the decaying American Empire.

Related Articles:

- [American Pravda: George Orwell’s Virus Lab-Leak\[22\]](#)
- [American Pravda: “The Truth” and “The Whole Truth” About the Origins of Covid-19\[21\]](#)
- [The Covid BioWeapon: Made in the USA, Aimed at China\[120\]](#) by Mike Whitney and Ron Unz
- [American Pravda: Covid-19, Its Impact and Origins After One Year\[20\]](#)
- [American Pravda: Our Coronavirus Catastrophe as Biowarfare Blowback?\[19\]](#)
- [Was Coronavirus a Biowarfare Attack Against China?\[28\]](#) by OldMicrobiologist
- [Bats, Gene Editing and Bioweapons: Recent Darpa Experiments Raise Concerns Amid Coronavirus Outbreak\[30\]](#) by Whitney Webb

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