



PANDEMIC QUOTABLES

Views and News

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300. Recent Surge in China's
COVID Cases Challenges
Beijing's Narrative



Empty roads during a phased lockdown due to COVID-19 in Shanghai, China, on Apr. 4, 2022. China's COVID-19 situation is on a knife's edge, as a lockdown of its financial hub intensifies amid a surge in new cases and new sub-strains of the omicron variant emerge nationwide. (Qilai Shen/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

Recent Surge in China's COVID Cases Challenges Beijing's Narrative



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Commentary

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While the rest of the world is finally getting out from under the fear-driven authoritarian lockdowns and mandates, China is doubling down on its “zero-COVID” policy to control the recent outbreaks in major cities.

If the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) “zero-COVID” policy measures actually worked, then why the numerous outbreaks in Chinese cities in recent weeks?

Why is Shanghai, in particular, undergoing a second week of horrible lockdowns, including reports of increasing food shortages and panic food-buying, with 38,000 medical workers deployed there to support citywide testing?

The CCP knew about the existence of the CCP virus in November 2019 yet did nothing to stop its spread through early disclosure of virus-related clinical data and other key information that could have helped other countries combat the virus. Indeed, Beijing did not even admit the problem until forced to do so by the world community as the virus spread around the world.

Despite relentless misinformation and misdirection by the CCP and state-run Chinese media over the past two years, all evidence points to the origination of the virus outbreak in Wuhan city in Hubei Province in late 2019.

Whether it was engineered or a natural mutation of an existing virus remains unknown (although much reporting on gain-of-function research would indicate the former to be true). But indeed, it is not coincidental that the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV)—which is where China's only level four biosafety laboratory is located and which studies some of the world's deadliest viruses—is located just 20 miles from the center of the original outbreak at a wet market.

Yet the CCP has vociferously denied that the WIV was even involved in so-called gain-of-function virus research, let alone had anything to do with the outbreak.

One example among many is this comment from the Chinese ambassador to South Africa last August: “The U.S. spared no effort to hype up the so-called Wuhan lab leak, and slander that China withholds information, refuses to cooperate and obstructs international investigation. These U.S. slanders have no grounds. The U.S. side is blatantly telling lies.”



The P4 laboratory on the campus of the Wuhan Institute of Virology in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, on May 13, 2020. (Hector Retamal/AFP via Getty Images)

It cannot be repeated too many times that China is a closed society. The CCP tightly controls all information, particularly anything that may be damaging or embarrassing to the regime.

At the beginning of the Wuhan outbreak, China expelled many Western journalists to clamp down on virus-related reporting that did not conform to the preferred CCP narrative (that the virus outbreak was under control through “Chinese methods”).

The CCP has also invested millions of dollars in Western media over the past two decades to influence and suppress negative information linking communist China to the virus. It is thus relatively easy to spot the pro-Chinese media trying to shift the blame for the virus from China to the United States. Simply compare which U.S. media companies received CCP money to their virus narratives, which parrot Beijing’s claims.

Does anyone seriously believe that the CCP’s “Chinese methods” in responding to the virus successfully resulted in zero Chinese deaths from May 2020 through a couple of weeks ago?

Or that communist China (with about 1.4 billion people) is 117th in the world in the ranking of countries with the most virus cases?

This is the kind of information control that the authoritarian-minded in U.S. media must be very jealous of! And Heaven forbid that the U.S. mainstream media would ever challenge the CCP on its highly questionable COVID statistics.

It is thus ironic—and perhaps schadenfreude for the CCP?—that after a period of relative quiescence in China and suppression of domestic virus-related information, the country is writhing under outbreaks and forced lockdowns in major cities such as Changchun (6.8 million), Shenzhen (12.8 million), and Shanghai (27.8 million).

China even added two deaths to the Worldometers COVID-19 statistics that had been frozen at 4,636 death toll for almost two years.

For nearly two years, the Chinese regime has been touting its “zero-COVID” policy, which consists of a collection of authoritarian measures to “control” the virus, including mass vaccinations, universal mask mandates, surveillance

and detection, rapid reporting, near-universal testing, isolation and quarantines, food delivery and quarantine checking, closed borders, and individual treatment of the infected.

Never mind the near-total loss of personal and economic freedoms required to implement these authoritarian methods!

Here are some recent headlines in state-run media that attempt to make a case for the continuation of Chinese methods to control the virus—or at least to try to convince the Chinese people that the CCP has it all under control:

- “China upholds dynamic-zero COVID strategy following 100,000+ domestically transmitted cases in a month” (Global Times, April 1).
- “China builds solid wall of defense against COVID-19 to protect people’s lives, health” (People’s Daily, March 29).
- “Dynamic zero-COVID approach effective, necessary” (China Daily, March 25).
- “Chinese vice premier demands full implementation of epidemic control measures” (People’s Daily, March 20).

- “Dynamic zero-COVID policy working, NHS [National Health Commission] says” (China Daily, March 16).

As usual, the headlines and the articles mask facts that are uncomfortable for the CCP.



People line up for nucleic acid testing at a residential block during a citywide COVID-19 testing campaign in Shanghai, China, on April 1, 2022. (Zhang Suoqing/VCG via Getty Images)

Note that the CCP tacitly acknowledged that the “zero-COVID” policy had to be renamed to account for the increasing number of cases detected. The recent outbreaks made “zero COVID” into an oxymoron.

The subtle label change now includes the word “dynamic” as if that will fool anyone into believing that the measures actually work, or that they have been enhanced in some magical way to “stop the virus.”

Also, note the first bullet above in which the Global Times claims in a headline that there have been over 100,000 new cases last month. How do 100,000-plus new cases square with only two people dying? Do the Chinese people believe in this “miracle”?

Given that the state-run media always shade the truth in their reporting—particularly when the underlying issue is suboptimal for the CCP—the actual number of cases is almost certainly much greater.

It would also appear that China is not very good at reporting its latest statistics to Worldometers and international authorities, with April 4 statistics showing a paltry 1,405 new daily cases. That works out to about 43,500 cases over a month.

Is the CCP losing control of the reporting and its own narrative?

Some Final Thoughts

While the CCP is on the receiving end of some well-deserved schadenfreude for its COVID-related lies over the past two years, the burden is, unfortunately, being borne by the Chinese people. And residents of Shanghai, in particular, are on the front lines in enduring the lockdowns, family separations, food shortages, personal loss of income, and other drastic restrictions mandated by the CCP.

One wonders if the propaganda is working in Shanghai (or anywhere else in China) these days.

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