

CIVITAS

# Year of the Bat

Globalisation, China and the Coronavirus

Niall McCrae  
and M.L.R. Smith



## THE COVID-19 REVIEW

How Britain responded to the Coronavirus

Part One

# Year of the Bat



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## Globalisation, China and the Coronavirus

*'The bat is a symbol of happiness and joy. ...  
Five bats together represent the 'Five Blessings':  
long life, wealth, health, love of virtue and  
a peaceful death.'*

**The British Museum, 2008**

**Niall McCrae and M.L.R. Smith**

CIVITAS

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email: [books@civitas.org.uk](mailto:books@civitas.org.uk)

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## Authors

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Niall McCrae is Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing at King's College London. A regular writer for *Salisbury Review*, *Gateway Pundit* and the Bruges Group website, he has written three books: *The Moon and Madness* (2011), *The Story of Nursing in British Mental Hospitals: Echoes from the Corridors* (with Peter Nolan, 2016) and the forthcoming *Moralitis: A Cultural Virus* (with Robert Oulds, 2020).

M.L.R. Smith is Research Associate in the Office of the Dean of Humanities, University of Pretoria and Professor of Strategic Theory at King's College London. He is co-author of *Reinventing Realism: Australia's Foreign and Defence Policy at the Millennium* (2000); *ASEAN and East Asian International Relations: Regional Delusion* (2006); *Asian Security and the Rise of China: International Relations in an Age of Volatility* (2012), and *Sacred Violence: Political Religion in a Secular Age* (2014).

# Summary

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‘The deserted streets will fill again, and we will leave our screen-lit burrows blinking with relief. But the world will be different from how we imagined it in what we thought were normal times.’ – John Gray, 3 April 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the underlying flaws of globalism as an ideology. As a system of thought, globalisation is an understanding of a hyper-connected world built not only on technology, international trade and movement of labour, but also on a liberal, post-nation eschatology. Although globalisation is a Western form of historical determinism, China is central in this worldview as a major engine of economic growth, especially via the offshoring of manufacturing capacity. Globalist assumptions hold that the benefits of free trade, economic cooperation and enhanced transnational connectivity will erode traditional attachments to the nation state. Over time, world populations will be socialised into the post-national norms of global governance, universal human rights and redistributive justice. Transnational and regional institutions like the United Nations and the European Union will, it is assumed, constitute the vehicles through which the happy end of polyarchy will one day be reached.

The Chinese Communist Party has other ideas. It asserts a different form of globalisation than the one promoted in many Western societies. Its vision is one that is supremacist.



It views the world in terms of national and political struggle, and wishes to see China at the centre of the international system. For the Chinese state, the processes of globalisation are not the route to a harmonious liberal end of history but a sphere to be ruthlessly exploited for national gain. In this goal it is facilitated by globalist idealists in Western policy-making circles and the intelligentsia, who turn a blind eye to China's gross human rights abuses, the establishment of a network of client states and its infiltration of international agencies and Western institutions. Invariably, they prefer to focus their energies on domestic political opponents who are sceptical of their utopian aspirations. While some countries have awoken to the threat of China's strategy, including Australia and the US under Trump's administration, the British establishment have underestimated the extent to which their naiveté renders them vulnerable to Chinese state influence.

The ideology of globalisation is, however, seriously threatened by Covid-19. China tried to cover up the contagion, and did little to stop its worldwide spread from the initial source in Wuhan. The World Health Organisation, beholden to Beijing, was complicit in failing to pass on adequate warning of the seriousness of the pandemic. Italy was particularly badly affected, having a large Chinese community since it joined President Xi's Jinping's Belt and Road initiative, with the virus almost certainly spread by workers returning from the Lunar New Year festivities. Furthermore, the claim that the infection began at a traditional 'wet market' could be a convenient narrative for the Chinese authorities, possibly masking an alleged accidental leak from the bat coronavirus laboratory at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

As nations rushed to close their borders, restricted travel

and looked to their own resources to escape the crisis, the follies inherent in globalist ideology were revealed. Its precepts have been thoroughly discredited. Western leaders have intimated that there will be repercussions from the crisis. These include debt cancellation for poorer countries and compensation for the dire economic damage caused by the drastic lockdown on people and businesses across the world. The key point of this report, however, is that while the pandemic was made in China, the conditions that gave rise to the Year of the Bat arose also from the assumptions of globalist thinking in the West. These have resulted in extraordinarily poor policy choices. A resetting of the international order is needed.

### **Where do we go from here?**

There are, of course, many features of globalisation as an economic and technological manifestation that cannot be changed. They will continue to be a feature of our world and few would necessarily wish otherwise, be it our capacity to travel easily or the ability to access communications technologies that enable us to retrieve every conceivable form of information at the touch of a computer screen. What can be changed, however, is the conceptual and philosophical interpretations placed upon these developments, and to recognise that there is nothing inevitable about our final political destination or how we must lead our lives. These are the product of deliberate choices often freely, if sometimes unthinkingly, given.

In considering where we go from here in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis demands a mix of practical policy responses but perhaps, above all, it requires a change in disposition and outlook, in particular the way we in Britain think about what we call globalisation. Ultimately, the

most serious requirement is to reflect upon the values that need to be defended in order to sustain a genuine liberal world order. It is from these reflections that British policy responses should flow. With this in mind, the following general and specific suggestions are offered:

- Acknowledgement that the world has not embarked on an inevitable transformation to a harmonious global order;
- Recognition that the liberal conception of the international system needs to be defended by strong, independent, liberal states, not multinational institutions;
- Acceptance that the Chinese state should be regarded as a rival ideological power, not as a friendly nation, and Britain should certainly not regard itself as China's 'best partner in the West';
- Economic relations with China should be subordinated to the maintenance of key values of national security and humanitarian ethics;
- Broader networks of relations should be deepened with China-sceptic powers, particularly in East and Southeast Asia;
- The government should abandon the decision to allow Huawei to participate in the development of the nation's 5G network;
- The government should consider introducing counter-interference laws similar to those in Australia that force all current and former politicians, officials, public and private bodies (including media companies and universities) to register all links with, and funding received from, foreign entities;

## SUMMARY

- All commercial contracts/buy-outs by foreign registered companies should be based on a reciprocity convention, i.e., foreign companies cannot take over enterprises or bid for contracts in economic sectors if they are not permitted in their home jurisdiction;
- The central government should ensure that the indigenous capacity to manufacture vital medical supplies and pharmaceuticals is treated as a national security issue;
- Incentives should be provided for the broader repatriation of manufacturing capacities to the UK;
- Universities should cease links with, and/or dissociate from all Confucius Institutes;
- Universities should be placed under a formal remit to pursue their basic educational functions rather than engage in foreign policy 'free-lancing' that seeks to curry favour with autocratic regimes;
- China and the World Health Organisation should be investigated for its handling of Covid-19, particularly in the early stage of the contagion;
- The WHO should be pressed into redeeming itself by enquiring into organ harvesting in China and clearly stating that such human rights abuses cannot be tolerated.



# Introduction

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As an ideology, globalisation is like a stool. The round, flat surface represents a unified world standing on three legs:

1. The harmonisation of the world order via global institutions and regulations, boosting trade and preventing conflict, but overriding national sovereignty;
2. Common humanity: wherever they are, people have the same fundamental rights, including the freedom to travel, work and live in any part of the world;
3. Political hegemony: globalisation is proselytised and critics are dismissed or vilified as nationalists or populists.

Since the end of the Cold War, a convergence arose between self-anointed progressive political elites, multinational corporations and business interests. They envisaged the emergence of a 'borderless world' that would render the nation state increasingly outmoded (Ohmae, 1991). The rapid development of the internet after 1990 gave added tangibility to the era of transnational connectivity, enabling instant contact with people anywhere in the world and rapid transfers of capital between continents. The social effects of this transnational connectivity were also transformative because they were perceived to be leading to processes of integration: towards the creation of an integrated economic system and towards a single world political order (Hirst and Thompson, 1996).

In other words, globalisation is a force for homogenisation, eroding distinctive cultures and customs. This was taking place both involuntarily as a process of economic convergence as transnational capitalist corporations reduced citizens to global consumers and by design as national identity and time-honoured local traditions were consciously abandoned, particularly by idealistic younger generations, schooled by the world's universities in the practices of global citizenship (Goodhart, 2017). Marketing billboards by HSBC bank told the British public that 'we are not an island' (*Times*, 8 January 2019), although the meaning was far removed from the original words of John Donne (1624/1976).

The Covid-19 pandemic has raised serious questions about globalisation, not only about the virus and its rapid transmission around the world, but also about its source, China, and its central place in a global system that it has begun to dominate. The conditions for this crisis were created by Chinese totalitarianism and the ideological naiveté of the West. Globalisation combines mega-capitalist enterprise and the post-nation pursuit of multiculturalism and moral relativism. How the world has come to pay the price for this hubris is the focus of this report.

# 1.

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## Gambling on China

On a grey winter day in February 1972, Air Force One touched down on Chinese soil. Although little tangible benefit came of President Richard Nixon's surprise visit to Chairman Mao Zedong and the impenetrable communist state, it was one of the most theatrical acts of diplomacy in modern times. It was, moreover, the pivotal event that was to slowly open up China to the world.

Throughout history China has been the great 'unknown', in some ways ahead of the West but physically and philosophically distant (Jones, 2001). Its rich heritage features the wisdom of Confucius, Buddhism and enduring dynasties, alongside the pitiless application of a version of Marxism. Today, China imposes strict internal control while engaging in external economic expansion, in a potent mix of communism and capitalism. As described by Charlotte Ikels (1996) in her study of Guangzhou, the country has made a startling transformation from the dead end of Maoist dogma to high-tech modernity, with a rapidly growing middle class and consumerism served by glitzy shopping malls with global brands.

Since the fall of Soviet communism, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has shifted from Marxist egalitarianism to promote Chinese (more specifically, Han) nationalism. Mao is still revered, but from a different aspect:



as the founder of the People's Republic but no longer its Great Helmsman. Nationalism with a Communist structure is now the guiding ethos of the Chinese state. The Patriotic Education Campaign teaches schoolchildren that their nation was humiliated by the colonial European powers, the USA and Japan, but is now arising from victim to victor (Zhao, 1998). Jingoistic propaganda serves not only internal control but also mobilisation of the diaspora.

President Xi Jinping is nurturing his 'great leader' status, and he is becoming as much of a personality cult as was Chairman Mao. Xi has bolstered his authority by arresting a hundred thousand people on corruption charges, including many senior party figures (Yu, 21 October 2017). To some in the West, however, he appears suave and sophisticated, an embodiment of China's elevation to the modern world (see Brown, 2016). He has certainly led China to a powerful position, and Chinese students abroad are generally proud of him (Yu, 2017).

In considering the ascent of Xi's China to a position of global pre-eminence it is necessary to understand China's central place in the globalisation project. Following Mao's death in 1976, the People's Republic emerged from its self-imposed autarchy. With the ascent to power of the more pragmatic Deng Xioping, from the late 1970s onwards China gradually opened itself to the outside world and began to accept market economics. In December 2001, this economic transformation was marked by China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO). These developments were encouraging to advocates of an integrated world economic system. China would become the *primus inter pares* for the offshoring of production by multinational corporations attracted by its vast supplies of cheap labour, whilst Chinese conglomerates would have the chance to compete on the

international stage. Furthermore, China's arrival suggested that it too would be socialised into the realms of international good citizenship and would eventually succumb to the charms of political liberalisation.

Despite the ideals of globalisation, China benefits from exceptional treatment in international agreements. It has been afforded the status of 'developing nation' in climate treaties, allowing it to build up a vast urban and industrial infrastructure without any serious environmental constraints that encumber other countries. Major cities are heavily polluted, their air thick with metallic particles and sunlight shrouded by smog. A new coal-fired power station opens every week in China, where more cement was used in three years than in the USA over the twentieth century (*Washington Post*, 24 March 2015).

As for the prospects for political liberalisation and being socialised into the norms of global citizenship, with its 'One China' doctrine Beijing denies the existence of Taiwan as an independently-governed state, while threatening any country that dares to recognise it (Cole, April 2020). China has developed strong economic ties with Taiwan, arguably to weaken its economic autonomy. While merely fifteen countries, all of minor influence, continue to recognise Taiwan as a separate entity, the US administration under Donald Trump has increased trade with the island (Council on Foreign Relations, 22 January 2020). This has caused friction with Beijing, and the Taiwanese have become more sceptical towards China's charm offensive. Elsewhere, Tibetan identity is quashed, and governments are rebuked by China if they receive the Dalai Lama (Frasí, April 2020). China is building naval bases on artificial islands and laying claim to small but strategically valuable islands across the South China Sea. It is asserting control over Hong Kong,

although mass demonstrations and an international outcry have forced it to take a step back, if temporarily.

As it has gained confidence and economic clout, China has begun to challenge the supposedly universal values propagated by the West. Beijing believes that each country should be allowed to set structures, mores and practices to its own culture. A widening gap has emerged between Chinese statecraft and the US-led liberal international order. According to a report by the Brookings Institute (Ikenberry & Lim, 2017), China has created rival institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for counter-hegemonic purposes.

The most notable counter-hegemonic enterprise is the Belt and Road initiative. Launched in 2013, Belt and Road lures economically struggling countries with Chinese largesse, through promises of new roads, ports, bridges, railways, schools, hotels and industrial development. But membership comes at a price, as the clear (if unstated) intent is to bind countries into China's economic and political orbit. Its Latin American allies have helped thwart United Nations resolutions condemning China for human rights abuses (Woolfson, December 2018), while its southeast Asian supplicants such as Cambodia and Myanmar regularly frustrate any collective diplomatic action against its encroachment in the South China Sea (Mogato *et al.*, 2016).

Post-Brexit Britain, seeking trade deals outside the European Union, is vulnerable to Chinese advances (Austin, 4 August 2018). The British government has given Chinese firms sensitive work such as building nuclear power stations and installing surveillance systems. Against the advice of the USA and other allies, the British government has licensed the technology firm Huawei to build part of the fifth-generation mobile phone network. Meanwhile,

Hangzhou Hikvision supplies advanced Internet-linked security cameras on the London Underground and to Gatwick Airport. Both Huawei and Hikvision are at least partly under Chinese state control. Huawei, translatable as 'China's achievement', is widely perceived as a security risk. Allowing Chinese companies to participate in the UK's 5G infrastructure potentially gives the People's Republic access to hugely sensitive data, not only from within Britain but from Britain's allies too.

China has, moreover, exploited technological advances to become an Orwellian surveillance state. A 'social credit' scheme has been introduced by which citizens are scored by an algorithm measuring the desirability of their social media interaction (*Independent*, 10 April 2018). Anyone with a negative record will find difficulty in accessing services, booking railway and flight tickets, or finding a partner on a dating website. As in the Soviet regime, a black mark on a person taints his or her family too, with significant impact on life opportunities and outcomes. Human rights advocates criticised a 'dystopian' ruling by the Chinese government that all mobile phone users must submit to a facial recognition scan (*Guardian*, 2 December 2019).

China persecutes its ethnic and religious minorities, with muted complaint from the West. Despite evidence of suppression of Christians, in 2019 the Pope recognised the state-controlled church, thereby endangering the thousands of Catholics who follow the universal creed. As observed by the *Catholic Herald* (5 July 2019), this was a compromise with harsh reality:

'The Vatican believes that the best response is not resistance but negotiation. It argues that China is rapidly changing and that the best way to safeguard the Church's future is to deepen its ties with Beijing.'

Expecting the Chinese state to turn in Rome's direction is betting on long odds, based on the experiences of other minorities. In the western region of Xinjiang, over a million Uighur Muslims are incarcerated in camps, as the trenchantly atheist state tries to suppress Islam (Shepherd, 14 September 2019). One reason for China's massive investment in Tajikistan, which borders on Xinjiang region, is to stifle opposition to its internment of Uighurs (*Economist*, 27 July 2019). Also targeted are the nomads of Inner Mongolian, Tibetan separatists and followers of Falun Gong.

The persecution of Falun Gong is particularly salutary. A spiritual movement that began in 1992, Falun Gong was initially supported by the government as an expression of authentic Chinese customs and traditions. It gained up to 100 million followers. Strongly influenced by Buddhist philosophy and meditative practice, its guiding principles are 'truthfulness, compassion and tolerance' (McCrae, 20 November 2018). Falun Gong was soon regarded as an ideological challenge to the CCP. Tried and tested methods from the Cultural Revolution were used to suppress it, as described by Maria Cheung and colleagues (2018):

'First, the regime designates the victim group with a derogatory label such as enemy of the state or counter-revolutionary to incite hatred and antagonism among the populace. Intensive nationwide media denunciations and condemnations of the victim group follow suit. Thereafter, the victim group is arrested in large numbers.'

In 1999, when 10,000 Falun Gong followers gathered peacefully at the government petitions office in Beijing, hundreds were arrested. To protect relatives, many refused to divulge their family name, thereby creating a large anonymous population in state detention. President Jiang

Zemin announced a formal programme of eradication. He created the 610 Office, with extrajudicial powers to complete the task within three months. The CCP believed that as Falun Gong was a recent phenomenon, followers could be converted by re-education.

However, Falun Gong proved resilient, and after protests at Tiananmen Square the campaign intensified. People suspected of Falun Gong involvement were dismissed from jobs, their homes ransacked by the police, and bank accounts raided by the state. Many practitioners were jailed and subjected to psychological torture, sleep deprivation, sexual violence, forced labour, and beating with electrocuting batons (Kilgour and Matas, 2009). Abuse of psychiatry is a recurring theme in totalitarian states, where ideological compliance is paramount (reputedly, Stalin said that ideas are more dangerous than guns, and that as enemies were not allowed guns, neither should they be allowed ideas). Falun Gong believers have been diagnosed with 'evil cult-induced mental disorder', incarcerated in squalid psychiatric institutes and plied with tranquillising drugs (Gittings, 2002). Other Falun Gong supporters, as shall be described below, are even less fortunate.

## 2.

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### **A Gothic horror: the human organ trade**

The liver is whisked from a condemned prisoner, and taken to the adjacent operating theatre for instant insertion in a sick patient. The convict, shot by a firing squad, is kept alive until the last moment to preserve his vital organ. China has been dissecting executed prisoners since transplant operations began several decades ago, but unlike recidivist criminals, Falun Gong practitioners provide a reliable source of healthy body parts due to their self-cultivating lifestyle (see Bowcott, 17 June 2019 and McCrae, 20 November 2018).

In 2006, a hospital worker in Shenyang told a reporter that four thousand Falun Gong adherents had been killed for their organs. Her husband, a surgeon at the same hospital, had removed corneas from two thousand living Falun Gong practitioners. This revelation was corroborated in undercover enquiries by David Kilgour and David Matas, whose book *The Bloody Harvest* (2009) was followed by intensive investigation by Ethan Gutmann (2014) in *The Slaughter: Mass Killings, Organ Harvesting and China's Secret Solution to its Dissident Problem*. Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Kilgour, Matas and Gutmann have played a leading role in alerting the West to the scandal.

Organ transplantation is a lucrative global business for China. Officially, about ten thousand operations are

performed annually, but this is probably an underestimate, as capacity in hospitals registered by the Ministry of Health is over 60,000. Kidneys, livers and hearts are available within days, if not hours. This apparent abundance is unlike the waiting times in other countries, and beyond the supply that could be expected from the nascent Chinese donor system.

China denies using Falun Gong followers for forced transplants. In 2015, it stopped using executed prisoners for organs; instead, death-row prisoners ‘voluntarily’ donate and are registered on the national donor programme, a practice described as a ‘semantic trick’ by Kirk Allison and colleagues in the *British Medical Journal* (2015). The World Medical Association (2017) decreed that ‘in jurisdictions where the death penalty is practised, executed prisoners must not be considered as organ donors’, because consent cannot be fully free from coercion. As window-dressing, the CCP ‘closed’ its forced labour camps, simply renaming them ‘legal education centres’.

One doctor who practised in China revealed gruesome details of this human harvest (Gutmann, 2014). Enver Tohti recalled his experience of organ plunder in 1995. Two chief surgeons ordered him to assemble a team for multiple surgeries on the following day, when he and his colleagues were taken to a site outside the hospital. After hearing gunshots they were taken into a yard where a man was lying on the ground. The surgical team was instructed to remove the liver and kidneys. Yet the man was still alive, as revealed by his bodily reaction to the scalpel. This was no mishap: to minimise ischaemic deterioration and thus boost the prospects of successful transplantation, organs are taken from living donors.

Allegedly, intricate medical examinations are performed on Falun Gong prisoners to screen and match their organs



for transplant patients. A testimonial for the film *Hard to Believe* (2016) by Wendy Rogers of Macquarie University explained that ‘wealthy recipients are matched against a large pool of prisoners, with the best matched prisoner scheduled for execution at the convenience of surgeon and recipient’. Uighur prisoners serve a growing demand, as their organs are classified as *halal*. This could be one reason for the reticence of countries like Saudi Arabia to express opposition to China’s oppression of Muslim minorities.

Anastasia Lin, after winning the 2015 Miss World Canada beauty pageant, used her fame to expose human rights abuses in China (Prendergast, 3 September 2016). She acted in the film *The Bleeding Edge* on the human organ trade. She was even invited to Westminster to screen the film to parliamentarians and spoke trenchantly against the Chinese state at the Oxford Union. However, politicians and intellectuals tend to be sceptical about reports of abuse, which they may doubt as exaggerated or unsubstantiated. It is difficult to get information from a secretive totalitarian state that punishes dissidents severely. Moreover, Western governments are afraid of offending a major trading partner.

The Independent Tribunal into Forced Organ Harvesting from Prisoners of Conscience in China (2019), a ‘people’s tribunal’ chaired by Geoffrey Nice QC, heard evidence from refugees and doctors, and concluded that the Chinese state is guilty of forced organ removal. China is transgressing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and governments, charities and medical associations are complicit in this abuse if they stay silent. Falun Gong was the canary in the coalmine, but very few Westerners noticed.

So much, then, for the promise of globalisation’s economic and political potential to moderate China’s human rights abuses, let alone educate it in the ways of

good global citizenship. If anything, globalisation has emboldened China on the world stage while cowering any voices of dissent abroad. What, therefore, is the broader responsibility of globalist advocates beyond China in this evolving catastrophe, the many strands of which the Covid-19 pandemic has merely brought to the surface?

### 3.

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## Wilful blindness of the intelligentsia

In Hergé's *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* (1929/1989) a group of tweed-jacketed and pipe-smoking Oxbridge dons surveyed the scene of a huge industrial plant. They were suitably impressed by the cacophony of clanking metal and the billowing black smoke from the chimneys. Sidestepping the Kremlin minders, Tintin sneaked into the plant and found that the whole enterprise was a sham: workers were instructed to bang sheets of metal with hammers and stoke fires for the smoky emissions, all for the pretence of rapid Russian industrial development.

Such boffins were the 'useful idiots' depicted by Lenin. In his startling account *Labour and the Gulag*, Giles Udy (2017) showed the gullibility of the British Left for the Soviet Union. The more educated the Labour Party supporter, the more credulous and fawning. Romanticising of an oppressive regime was maintained despite knowledge of crimes against humanity. Left-wing scholars glossed over the plight of the Ukrainian people, millions of whom starved in a state-sponsored famine. Under a Labour government, Britain became the biggest importer of forestry felled by slave labourers doomed to perish in the frozen north (Udy, 2017).

Having considerable influence on government policy,

political opinion and broader society, the proclamations of professors on the wonders of the Soviet experiment were naïve and dangerous. Some went beyond political sympathy, notably the Cambridge Spy Ring and the Rosenbergs in the USA, who passed atom bomb secrets to the Soviet Union. Throughout the Cold War, the Western intelligentsia gave succour to communist regimes around the world. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, few apologised for their mistaken loyalties. The pattern is now being faithfully repeated with respect to China, the key difference being that unlike the Soviet Union, the modern Chinese state is now economically powerful and, as will be shown, able to buy its way into the West.

With its combination of communist control of the people and exploitative global capitalism, China has ascended to superpower status. Whereas intellectual backing for the USSR was ideological, the current espousal of a rival power is based not solely on left-wing beliefs but on business interests and the supposedly progressive ideology of globalisation. China threatens the hegemony of the USA, which is perceived by many in academe as the epitome of individualism, selfishness and greed, and of unethical foreign policy and interventionist wars. This view has had stronger resolution in Western leftist orthodoxy since the arrival of Donald Trump in the White House (McCrae, 17 July 2018).

Western universities have fallen for Eastern promise. The inflow of Chinese students generates vast income, and universities are increasingly investing in collaborative ventures in China. Paying full fees, Chinese students are estimated to account for 5 per cent (£1.7 billion) of current university funding (Busby, 23 January 2020). Undoubtedly these students bring benefits to Western academe, with their high aspirations and work ethic. In some universities,

they constitute almost half of the student population. A visitor to a canteen at some British universities will possibly hear more Mandarin than English spoken. Universities have built new accommodation blocks specifically for this influx. However, strengthening links with China is not just for business reasons. Sir Keith Burnett (2 April 2015), vice chancellor of University of Sheffield, suggested that Chinese students should be attracted not simply for market share, but because closer ties with Beijing will ‘secure the future of our world’. Quite what kind of world is in the process of being secured, however, is left disturbingly vague.

The life of a Chinese student in Britain is restricted. Ever since the student demonstrations, and later massacre, in Tiananmen Square in 1989 the Chinese state has sought to control overseas student organisations and isolate ‘revolutionary factions’ (Garnaut, 2018). Minimal integration with the wider student community is, therefore, rarely the freely given choice of the students themselves. Separate lodgings, provided willingly by complicit university administrations, serve an important purpose for the Chinese government, which is able to monitor closely the activities of students abroad. Anecdotal accounts suggest that some students are selected by the authorities to report any wrongdoings of their fellow students. The consequences for a rebellious or careless student are potentially serious: parents in China could be sanctioned for an allegation against their son or daughter. An offence may simply be getting too friendly with Western students, going to church, or reading anti-communist literature such as the *Epoch Times* (Hamilton, 2018).

Confucius Institutes are a controversial development in universities (Zhang, 4 January 2018). Hanban (Office of Chinese Language Council International) runs this scheme,

ostensibly to cultivate Chinese culture abroad, but with a heavy dose of CCP propaganda. Western universities that incorporate Confucius Institutes risk academic freedom, as revealed by Doris Lei in her film *In the Name of Confucius* (2018). In 2013, the Canadian Association of University Teachers passed a resolution against the hosting of Confucius Institutes; in 2014, the American Association of University Professors urged almost 100 colleges and universities in the USA to re-negotiate contracts with Confucius Institutes. Undoing the Chinese charm offensive, Hanban director Xu Lin sent an intimidating message to the University of Chicago when it closed its Confucius Institute (*Inside Higher Education*, 26 September 2014).

There are 29 Confucius Institutes in British universities, more than in any country except the USA. The Chinese Students & Scholars Association UK, founded in 1988, describes itself as a 'non-political, non-religious and non-profit organisation, which organises, sponsors and supports various social and cultural activities among Chinese students and scholars in the UK'. Concerns were raised about curtailing freedom of speech and monitoring of Chinese students, and in 2011, the University of Cambridge disaffiliated its branch after its president decided to lead for a second term unelected, with the support of the Chinese embassy (*Varsity*, 3 December 2011).

Nevertheless, there are still striking examples of universities that are prepared to carry water for the Chinese regime. The Lau China Institute at King's College London, within its School of Global Affairs, declares on its website that 'we seek research collaborations and deeper understanding with the People's Republic of China, ensuring we sit at the heart of King's strategic approach'. The China Centre at Cambridge University's Jesus College, states:

‘Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China since 1978, [China] has experienced an extraordinary transformation under the policy of “Reform and Opening Up” China’s national rejuvenation is returning the country to the position within the global political economy that it occupied before the 19th century.’

These are ‘odd words for an academic project in a great university’, as *Daily Telegraph* journalist Charles Moore (18 April 2020) remarked:

‘They read more like propaganda than independent scholarship. Imagine if there were a ‘Britain Centre’ in a Beijing university whose website said: ‘Under the leadership of the Conservative Party since 1979, Britain has experienced an extraordinary transformation...’ Imagine the (justified) howls about its bias.’

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2019), chaired by Tom Tugendhat, issued a scathing report on British universities for failing to defend academic values in their pursuit of Chinese students and investment. The Russell Group of leading British universities denied any evidence of systematic interference, but the committee noted ‘alarming evidence about the extent of Chinese influence on the campuses of UK universities’. Hong Kong protestors are intimidated, any mention of Taiwan or Tibet is suppressed, and the Chinese embassy is too close for comfort. The Foreign Affairs Committee recommended a system of sanctions for any organisations or individuals found to be acting against academic values. Instead of pursuing global commercialisation at any cost, universities must retrieve their moral compass, which they have substantively lost, and assert Enlightenment values of freedom of speech, democracy and justice.

## 4.

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### Awakening to the threat

‘Revolution is a boy’s game.’

– Mao in *Nixon in China* (Adams, 1987)

Western nations have tended to pursue an idealistic approach to China, avoiding any conflict, and believing, in classic globalist neo-liberal style, that the regime will come round to a more democratic and humanistic outlook (Gilroy and Heginbotham, 2001). But Beijing has different ideas. In 2015, dissenting journalist Gao Yu was reported to have sent a copy of ‘Document 9’, issued by the CCP, to a foreign news organisation (Parton, April 2020). Under the title ‘A briefing on the current situation in the ideological realm’, the document warned of seven threats to the Chinese regime:

1. Western-style democracy
2. Western values, claimed to be universal
3. Civil society and its emphasis on individual rights
4. Neoliberalism, meaning free-market economics and privatisation
5. Western-style journalism
6. Historical nihilism (particularly denigration of Mao)
7. Criticism of Chinese socialism

What such a document underlines is the CCP’s relentless capacity to put the Party before the people. It is unswerving



in its commitment to keeping itself in power, utterly resistant to appeals to universalistic humanitarian values, and dedicated to dominating the diplomatic space against any contrary ideological position. As former British diplomat Charles Parton (April 2020) observed, China's relations with other countries have moved steadily through assertive diplomacy to bullying, locking other countries to the diplomatic doghouse and even hostage diplomacy. In Britain, understanding of the insidious manner in which the Chinese state seeks to bend other nations to its will and blunt external criticism is still inchoate, especially among the more *jejune* sections of society like the universities. Other states, however, have for some years previously been awakening to the threat China poses to the integrity of their political systems and broader national security. One of the most instructive examples is Australia.

Paradoxically, while Australia enjoys a highly positive trade surplus with the People's Republic, worth tens of billions of pounds – mostly deriving from the large export of primary materials, but with tourism and Chinese university students also contributing significantly – it has also been one of the few countries to challenge China's subversive tactics of influence peddling. In 2015, the Australian Secret Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) identified a concerted effort by elements connected to the Chinese Communist party to wield influence in Australian domestic politics, especially through the manipulation of political donations to the main political parties. Indeed, the former head of ASIO, Duncan Lewis, has claimed that the Chinese government is seeking to 'take over' Australia's political system through interference operations (Hartcher, 22 November 2019). Concern, in particular, had been mounting about how an opaque web of Chinese state-linked interests had been

able to infiltrate Australia's ethnic Chinese communities in order to control any criticism of Beijing's policies and to suppress the capacity for any independent civic association. The unease was to culminate in one particular event, a by-election in the constituency of Bennelong in December 2017.

The by-election was precarious for the governing Liberal Party: loss of the Bennelong seat would eradicate Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's slim majority. It was called after John Alexander was alleged to have dual citizenship, thus invalidating his status as a member of parliament. Previously the seat of Prime Minister John Howard, Bennelong is an affluent suburb on the northern shore of Sydney, normally a Liberal stronghold. But the demography is shifting. Rich incomers are steadily replacing colonial-style homes with brash concrete and glass edifices, and whereas the settled Chinese are well integrated, newer arrivals mostly converse in Mandarin and are loyal to Beijing. The Labor Party put up their most appealing candidate, Kristina Keneally, but Alexander held on against the odds.

Leading up to the by-election, the Turnbull government had been alive to the growing infiltration of Chinese state influence, buying off politicians and business people with money and favours, and was in the process of considering the introduction of a series of counter-interference laws that would, among other things, force the public disclosure of any links with foreign states and criminalise any activity conducted on behalf of foreign powers. In Bennelong, United Front, a CCP-funded organisation, attacked the government's foreign interference law as racism. After intensive mobilisation, the swing to Labor was over 10 per cent in areas of high Chinese influx. The Australian government was almost toppled by Chinese interference.

Clive Hamilton, professor of public ethics at Charles Sturt

University in Canberra, exposed CCP tactics in *The Silent Invasion* (2018). Students protesting in support of the Dalai Lama initially alerted him to Chinese state infiltration, as he witnessed an orchestrated and violent counter-demonstration. Effectively, people in one jurisdiction were prevented from exercising their freedom of speech by the foot soldiers of another country.

In 2015, Dong Feng, a Falun Gong member living in Australia, was persuaded by Ministry of State Security agents to return to China on an embezzlement charge. State prosecutions rarely result in acquittal, and political crime is difficult to disprove. However, refusal to comply with the summons puts the family of the accused at risk of persecution, and punishments for non-compliance can be severe. China is believed to account for half of the world's capital punishment tally (about a thousand annually), although records are not divulged.

As Hamilton observed, the Australian establishment tended to shun critics of the communist regime, steering clear of controversy and liaising only with 'community leaders' supportive of Beijing. Illustrating this was a photograph in his book, taken at the prestigious Australian National University, with the caption:

'Vice-chancellor Brian Schmidt flies the flag with PhD student and Chinese Communist Youth League propagandist Lei Xiying. While studying at ANU, Lei produced a virulently patriotic video, with martial music and goose-stepping troops, which went viral in China. On his social media account, he wrote about "dumb c\*\*t Aussies".'

The flag, of course, was not Australia's but that of communist China. Having struggled to get his book published, Hamilton (3 April 2018) remarked that 'academics in Australia might

reflect on the fact that scholarly books critical of the CCP are now shunned by publishers'. Despite having written warmly of Chinese Australians and their contribution to society, some scholars, needless to say, accused Hamilton of being racist. All that Hamilton is doing is echoing the concerns of many in the established Australian Chinese community, wary of the politicised newcomers and their exploitation by the Chinese state in its pursuit of global supremacy. What Hamilton's experience illustrated perfectly was the CCP's playbook in action. The journalist John Garnaut outlined this in a prescient analysis in August 2018. 'Relentlessly, and through a thousand different channels', Garnaut maintained:

'the Party was working to collapse the categories of "Chinese Communist Party", "China" and "the Chinese people" into a single organic whole – until the point where the Party could be dropped from polite conversation altogether. From there, the Party's critics could be readily caricatured as "anti-China", "racist" or even "Sinophobic"' (Garnaut, 2018).

Thankfully, Australia's people and government today are more wary of Chinese state encroachment and the government, with bi-partisan support, succeeded in passing its counter-interference laws in June 2018. The Australian experience provides a telling set of lessons and policy responses that the British government would be wise to heed. However, Hamilton was surprised by the minimal awareness and interest in Britain to this threat. Indeed, he found that British universities are particularly vulnerable, as he is documenting in a forthcoming book, *The Hidden Hand*.

Elsewhere, China's threat to world order has been revealed in other ways. The loss of manufacturing jobs in the United States while imports from China ballooned was a major

factor in the election of political outsider Donald Trump to the US presidency. According to national security adviser John Bolton, the Washington establishment had consistently misjudged Chinese strategy (Baker, 29 June 2019):

‘For years, American policy was based on the assumption that bringing China into the WTO would increase pressure to conform to international norms in trade and business areas. That has obviously not happened.’

The Trump administration has raised tariffs on Chinese imports and has not shied from criticising Xi’s regime. Former statesman Gerard Baker (29 June 2019) argued:

‘Peace is more likely to be achieved through enhanced US strength and a willingness to project it than through accommodation and appeasement.’

The National Security Council in the USA has identified China as responsible for about four-fifths of all thefts of patents and intellectual property. Subsequently, China was prevented from taking over the World Intellectual Property Organisation, a United Nations body (Brummer, 9 April 2020). There is likely to be considerably more caution towards China after the contagious disease that we now know as Covid-19, starting in one of its major cities, was allowed to spread around the world with deadly and far-reaching consequences.

## 5.

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### **Covid-19: globalisation goes viral**

The outbreak of Covid-19, a coronavirus that can lead to a severe respiratory syndrome, was initially attributed to bats sold at a 'wet market' in Wuhan. The largest city in Hubei province, with a population of 11 million, centrally positioned Wuhan is traditionally known as 'the crossroads of nine provinces' (*Economist Business Traveller's Guides*, 1988). It is actually a triple city, comprising Wuchang, Hanyang and Hankou, on the banks of the River Yangtze and Han tributary. A transportation hub within China, it also has a major international airport.

With little to please the eye, like any other metropolis in China, a forest of austere high-rise apartment blocks surrounds the gleaming futuristic towers of the central business district. On the outskirts of cities, traditional ways of life continue, including food markets that sell dogs, rats and other animals that would be intensely unpalatable to Westerners. Freshly killed bats and snakes are regarded as delicacies, with presumed health benefits. When the novel coronavirus emerged, the culprit was assumed to be a bat sold for human consumption. There is a long history of viral outbreaks starting in the insanitary and inhumane animal markets in eastern Asia, including the Asian flu in 1958, which killed 33,000 people in Britain, the Hong Kong flu of 1968, and SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2003.

In late December 2019, Li Wengliang, a doctor in Wuhan, alerted colleagues to a disease similar to SARS. On 3 January, he was taken to a police station and forced to sign a letter admitting to 'false comments' that 'disturbed the social order'. Wengliang later died of the virus. Laboratories reported the genome sequence of the virus to the National Health Commission, but were told to destroy samples and not to divulge any information to the public (Bickerton, 5 April 2020).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) did nothing to stop this obliteration of evidence. It initially blocked any declaration of the coronavirus as a public health emergency. On 14 January, the Chinese government asserted that the transmission of the virus was from animal to human, but not between human beings. WHO agreed, stating 'no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission' existed. However, as early as the second week of December, doctors believed that transmission between people was occurring. On 20 January, with cases rapidly spreading throughout China and to several other countries, the official message was unsustainable. The virus was gaining headline attention in media across the world. Pressed into action, President Xi issued a directive to 'put people's safety and health as the top priority and take effective measures to curb the spread of the virus' (*Time*, 3 February 2020). China revealed the genome sequence of the virus to the outside world.

On 23 January, the Chinese authorities enforced a rigid lockdown on Wuhan, closing all roads, river and rail links. The entrances to apartment blocks were in some instances welded shut, preventing occupants from going out and spreading the disease. Wuhan Tianhe International Airport was closed for internal travel but – significantly – flights abroad continued. According to Zhou Xianwang, mayor

of Wuhan, five million people left the city before the mass quarantine (*South China Morning Post*, 26 January 2020). The exodus was mostly internal, particularly to Hunan province, but thousands flew abroad (*South China Morning Post*, 27 January 2020).

The contagion was escalating at the worst time. The Chinese celebration of the Lunar New Year is the largest annual migration in the world. The director-general of the WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, visited China on 29 January and met President Xi Jinping (*Guardian*, 18 February 2020). In scripted sycophancy at a press conference, Tedros lauded his host, saying, 'The Chinese government is to be congratulated for the extraordinary measures it has taken to contain the outbreak'. He continued, 'China is actually setting a new standard for outbreak response and it's not an exaggeration', and our gratitude 'is beyond words'. Xi, according to Tedros, had shown 'rare leadership'.

The WHO eventually declared a health emergency on 30 January, when it was too late to stop millions of Chinese people returning to other counties after the festivities to study or work. Indeed, the WHO advised that restrictions on movement of people would be counter-productive. However, the USA, Australia and most of China's neighbours banned flights from China. A *Guardian* column by Natalie Nougayrède (18 March 2020) opined:

National governments, including Germany's, have sealed their national borders to neighbouring states or are increasing controls. The rationale for much of this can be mind-boggling. Borders don't stop the virus.

Yet the clear public health evidence is that restricting contact between people reduces the rate of transmission (Xiao and Torok, 5 March 2020). Ironically, international flights



continued during the Covid-19 outbreak in China but were later banned by Beijing after it was found that most new cases were from people travelling from abroad.

Of particularly dire impact was the plea by Tedros against stigmatising. This was a global virus, and should not be blamed on China, he asserted. Some commentators and politicians were concerned with the pejorative labelling of the 'Chinese virus', and the media gave prominence to a few isolated instances of hostility towards Chinese people. US Congress leader Nancy Pelosi went to Chinatown in San Francisco for Lunar New Year and beckoned people to come and join Chinese people in their celebrations. Conforming exactly to the playbook that those like John Garnaut outlined, China was quick to exploit Western liberal sensitivities. Propaganda instruments of the Chinese state, such as the Xinhua news agency, warned against racism, thereby deflecting criticism of the government's role in ignoring and covering up the early stages of the outbreak. The danger of this excessive sensitivity to China for the world beyond would manifest itself first in Italy.

## 6.

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### **The Italian connection**

With a shaky economy yet to recover from the 2008 global financial crisis, exacerbated by the rigidity of the Eurozone currency union, the Italian government was enticed by China's Belt and Road infrastructure programme. In May 2019, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte signed the formal agreement with President Xi to become part of the programme: the only G7 country to do so. Matteo Salvini of the La Liga party refused to attend the signing ceremony, warning that China would be 'colonising' Italian industry.

As research by Alessandra Vecchi of the University of Bologna has shown, the process of Chinese companies acquiring enterprises in Italian luxury goods has been underway for two decades (Vecchi & Brennan, 2014). While exports to the growing middle-class market in China have increased, in the other direction have come around a hundred thousand Chinese workers. Belt and Road has dramatically strengthened Sino-Italian links, with a plethora of deals struck between Italy and China, particularly in the energy sector.

The impact of opening up to Chinese business has had notable effects on the local economy and demographics of northern Italy. Unable to compete with the cheap migrant labour, numerous small Italian family firms either closed or sold out to Chinese enterprises. Chinese Mafia gangs

are heavily involved in the labour supply. They pay their workers a pittance, take away their passports and force them to toil in the conditions of a Dickensian mill. National and European Union employment rights are casually ignored. The incomers live cheek-by-jowl in apartment blocks, rarely engaging with the host community in Lombardy and neighbouring regions. Their hardship was described in a *New Yorker* article 'The Chinese workers who assemble designer bags in Tuscany' (16 April 2018):

'Some migrants came with tourist visas and stayed on. Others paid smugglers huge fees, which they then had to work off, a form of indentured servitude that was enforced by the threat of violence. The long hours that the Chinese worked astonished many Italians.'

The *New Yorker* quoted a senior police officer in Prato who believed that around ten thousand of the city's population were illegal immigrants. Here resides the largest Chinese population in any city in Europe outside Paris. Remarkably, some six thousand of the businesses in the city's environs are Chinese-owned. Local people increasingly resent the Chinese takeover, with the authorities turning a blind eye to tax evasion, illegal dumping and counterfeiting of prestigious brands (a pattern of activity, and associated local antipathy, it might be noted, that is repeated in nearly all other countries to have fallen for China's Belt and Road blandishments).

A high proportion of the Chinese labour influx is from Hubei province, with several scheduled flights daily between Wuhan and Milan. A multitude of leatherworkers would have returned to their homeland to spend time with their families, as they do every year. It is likely that many would have returned hurriedly to Italy as lockdowns were

imposed, having unwittingly contracted the virus and brought it back. The eruption of Covid-19 in Europe began in northern Italy.

In February 2020, the Associazione Unione Giovani Italo Cinesi, a cultural organisation funded by the Chinese government, devised a stunt broadcast by one of China's news channels. The title was 'Italian residents hug Chinese people to encourage them in coronavirus fight' (*New China TV*, 11 February 2020). A widely viewed video featured a winsome girl with a placard 'Please hug me, I'm Chinese not a virus'. Dozens of Milanese enthusiastically took up the offer. Another video, sponsored in conjunction with Dario Nardella, mayor of Florence, showed a man wearing a mask receiving countless hugs from strangers, while a running caption underneath reads, 'I'm not a virus. I'm a human. Free me from prejudice' (*CGTN*, 4 February 2020). Many youngsters, undoubtedly well meaning, embraced the opportunity to disport their multicultural virtue in a naïve but hazardous act. While younger people are generally not seriously threatened by coronavirus, some of the huggers could have passed on the virus to elderly relatives. Italian mortality soon surpassed that of China (or at least, the official Chinese record).

The World Health Organisation, having previously minimised the risk from the virus, went from one extreme to the other in urging countries to replicate the severe lockdown in Wuhan. Tedros stated an estimated mortality of 3.4%, thirty times greater than for influenza. Yet while the disease spread like wildfire in Italy, causing a daily death toll of nearly a thousand in March, it is remarkable that the reported incidence in China remained almost entirely in Wuhan. This is peculiar because cases were recorded in every region of China. Why had mortality reached no

more than a few dozen outside Wuhan, when in most other countries (such as the UK) the disease reached every corner of the land, taking lives in its wake? This raises serious questions about the virus, and the truth that perhaps we have not been told.

## 7.

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### **A bioengineered virus?**

Conspiracy theories abound, with speculation fuelled by a secretive state. Fragments of fact may be weaved into a patchwork of perceived ulterior motives, which Occam's razor (the philosophical tool to cut out all but the most straightforward explanation) could easily rip apart. Yet there is surely some conspiracy in the attempted cover-up by the Chinese authorities, who attributed blame to backward folk who eat freshly-killed bats at a traditional market. This official story of the viral source was hardly queried by Western mainstream media or politicians, despite another highly plausible explanation.

Not far from the presumed source of the virus are two research institutes involved in animal testing: the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and the Wuhan Centre for Disease Control & Prevention. Opened in 1956 as the Wuhan Microbiology Laboratory, under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Wuhan Institute of Virology has a unit at the highest level of biosecurity. The P4 Lab was planned in 2003, after the deadly SARS outbreak of that year, but building did not start until 2015, and it became operational two years later.

A focus of the research at the Wuhan Institute of Virology is transmission of bat viruses to human beings. A prolific researcher at the institute is Zhengli-Li Shi, who is known as 'Bat Woman'. In 2013, Shi confirmed that the SARS epidemic

originated in bats. In 2015, she was one of two members of the institute's staff who co-authored a brief scientific report published in *Nature Medicine*, with the explanatory title 'A SARS-like cluster of circulating bat coronaviruses shows potential for human emergence' (Menachery *et al.*, 2015). This study combined a coronavirus from bats with a SARS-like pathogen in mice. Some virologists expressed concern at this research, with Simon Wain-Hobson of the Pasteur Institute in Paris warning in *Nature* journal (*Scientist*, 16 November 2015) that 'if the virus escaped, nobody could predict the trajectory'. With their synthetic coronavirus, Shi and associates had discovered a pathway for transmission from bats to human beings.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology had partners in some American universities. The US government, through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), gave \$3.7 million for research involving the institute (*Daily Mail*, 12 April 2020). This collaboration resulted in a 2017 paper titled 'Discovery of a rich gene pool of bat SARS-related coronavirus provides new insights into the origin of SARS coronavirus'. Another paper in 2018 described experiments in which a virus was injected into piglets; this was titled 'Fatal swine acute diarrhoea syndrome caused by an HKU2-related coronavirus of bat origin'. The US government was uneasy about this research. On 16 October 2014, under the presidency of Barack Obama, it was announced through the NIH website that no further funding would be given to SARS research (Philipp, 8 April 2020). In 2018, US state department cables warned of safety risks at the laboratory where bat coronaviruses were being studied (*Washington Post*, 14 April 2020). In December 2019, after the first cases of the novel coronavirus, the Wuhan Institute of Virology continued to advertise for scientists in bat-to-human viral transmission.

Having informed the authorities of the new disease on 31 December 2019, on 2 January 2020 Shi and her team determined the genome of the virus, informing the WHO on 5 January. However, it was not until 12 January that the Chinese authorities officially shared the genetic sequence with the WHO, and only after another research institute in Shanghai had already published it. On 14 January, Shi confirmed human-to-human transmission (Birrell, 12 April 2020): the Chinese authorities did not divulge this until six days later.

The accepted narrative of the contagion starting at the wet market is hardly conclusive. Published in the *Lancet* in January, a study of 41 early cases of Covid-19 revealed that 17 had no history of exposure to this market. The first author of this study was Chaolin Huang (2020), deputy director of Jin Yin-tin Hospital, which specialised in treating the new disease. The clear indication was that the outbreak had another source. Meanwhile, a scientific paper by South China University of Technology, now deleted, stated that ‘the killer coronavirus probably originated from a laboratory in Wuhan’ (*National Review*, 3 April 2020), suggesting infection of a research worker due to inadequate precautions. Bats are sharp-clawed creatures and the mechanical gripper is often splattered with blood and urine. There is speculation that ‘Patient Zero’ was research graduate Huang Yanking, whose research papers were mysteriously removed from the institute’s website (*National Review*, 3 April 2020).

In a message on the Weibo social network on 4 February, Xu Bo, founder and chairman of the Goangzhou Duoyi Network game technology firm, claimed that management lapses at the Wuhan Institute of Virology had let the virus escape (Philipp, 8 April 2020). On 17 February, Chen Quanjiao, a researcher at the institute, wrote on social media



that the director-general, Wong Yanyi, was suspected of leaking the virus (Philipp, 8 April 2020). Shi vehemently denied rumours of the virus coming from her laboratory, stating that the genome sequence of Covid-19 did not match any of the laboratory samples. However, the stakes were high and Shi may have been following orders from the authorities in Beijing, who had already ensured that all coronavirus vials at the P4 Lab were destroyed.

When the viral outbreak drew increasing Western media interest in January, widely shared videos showed vampire bats being sold as food, but mostly these were not filmed in Wuhan, or indeed in China. A popular video log by Paul Joseph Watson (24 January 2020) featured a woman trying bat soup, but this was probably from Indonesia. Botao Xiao, author of the South China University of Technology paper, stated that ‘the bat was never a food source in the city, and no bat was traded in the market’ (Philipp, 8 April 2020). The wet market may be a convenient scapegoat for the CCP. The marketplace, actually the site of the Huanan seafood market, was closed on 1 January and disinfected.

Researchers at the Wuhan Institute of Virology use the horseshoe bat, which is taken from caves in Yunnan province, nearly a thousand miles south of Wuhan. The genome matches this species. This raises questions: if the culprit of zoonotic transmission was a bat from Yunnan, and such animals are not sold at the market, the most obvious explanation for the viral outbreak would be a leak from the nearby laboratory that is known to use this species. Yet mainstream media in the UK and USA featured the idea of the virus emanating from a laboratory as one of the many myths of Covid-19. *Times* writer Ben Macintyre (18 April 2020), for example, likened the laboratory link to a spate of attacks on mobile signal masts (associated with Huawei,

and believed to spread the virus by weakening the immune system):

‘Such claims should be treated with the same disdain sensible people attach to the conspiracy theory linking the coronavirus to the rollout of 5G. Giving credibility to such stories is the political equivalent of setting fire to a phone mast.’

Such dismissal seems hasty and lacking in the critical thinking to be expected of a respected newspaper. The mainstream media have characterised claims that Covid-19 came from the laboratory as ‘right wing conspiracy theories’. However, a few publications have given this suspicion due coverage, particularly the *Mail on Sunday*, which ran a series on ‘China in the dock’ (5, 12, 19 April 2020). Molecular biologist Richard H Ebright, who had previously expressed concern at the escape of the SARS virus from laboratories in Beijing, said that a similar leak of Covid-19 cannot be ruled out (*Guardian*, 13 April 2020).

While ‘Bat Woman’ appears to have been muzzled by the CCP, Chen Wei, the top biochemical weapon expert in China, and a major general in the People’s Liberation Army, took over as head of the supposedly biosecure laboratory in February (*Daily Mail*, 14 February 2020). A specialist in the genetic engineering of vaccines, Wei previously led a team that developed a vaccine against the Ebola outbreak in Africa. However, this appointment raised suspicions of Chinese military involvement in the research programme. Dany Shoham, a former Israeli military intelligence officer, suggested that the Wuhan Institute of Virology is linked to Beijing’s covert bio-weapons programme. In a paper in 2015, Shoham described a multiplicity of Chinese research facilities potentially involved in biological weapon development (*Washington Times*, 26 January 2020).

Conspiracy theorists, not content with the possibility of an accidental leak of the virus, argue that Covid-19 was an experimental biological weapon. On 25 January, Chinese dissident Miles Guo suggested a link between the Wuhan P4 Lab and the virus, alleging that the virus was deliberately released into the Wuhan populace under the order of Wang Qishan, vice-president of China (*GNews*, 7 February 2020). Guo argued that China is preparing for war. Of course, China has its sworn enemies, and the veracity of such claims may be highly questionable.

Like the Chernobyl disaster, when the totalitarian USSR desperately tried to hide the horror by clamping down on experts and witnesses while knowingly underestimating the risk to citizens over a vast area, the CCP was more concerned with propaganda and censorship than preventing the spread of the virus. This would be bad enough if Covid-19 was caused by misfortune in a poorly regulated market. But it would be a much more serious indictment if the deadly germ was created by Chinese scientists. And if so, why?

Regardless of the truth of the matter, the crucial point is that the secretive nature of the authoritarian Chinese state does not inspire confidence in the veracity of any of its claims about the origins of the virus. The mendacities of the Chinese government may be one thing, but when it seeks to disseminate its propaganda and cover-ups through international institutions supposedly dedicated to the maintenance of public health, we have truly reached a point where we can clearly discern the darkest sides of globalisation. Serious questions should be asked of why politicians, institutions and media in the supposedly liberal West were unwilling to consider anything but a version of events presented by Beijing. Perhaps it would have upset the delicately-balanced global applecart.

## 8.

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### Corruption of global agencies

A central precept of the ideology of globalisation is that the nation-state is passing into irrelevance as multinational structures, both regional and global, assume responsibility for controlling the complex processes of transnational connectivity (Strange, 1997). The United Nations, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund are examples of the preferred 'post-national constellations' in which the power to regulate the international system should be invested. Underpinning the idea of 'global governance' is an essentially utopian view that the structures of world politics and economics are so complex that they can only be managed by a benign technocracy. The presumption is, in other words, that traditional state-based power politics and rivalries have been banished in the service of world government. For presiding over these institutions of global governance are assumed to be enlightened, highly educated, experts broadly committed to humanitarian goals and liberal notions of justice. The reality is, sadly, somewhat different.

As one of fifteen specialised bodies of the United Nations, the World Health Organisation is one of those structures that globalists would perceive as integral to the system of global governance. If anyone, however, thinks that institutions like the UN float above traditional state-based interests in

some benevolent commitment to progressive humanitarian improvement they will be disabused when they consider of the case of the WHO and its relationship with China.

The miserable failure of the WHO with Covid-19 has already been observed above. What should be emphasised is that the WHO (2020) ostensibly contradicted its own mission statement, which is ‘to advocate and catalyze global and country actions to resolve the human resources for health crisis to support the achievement of the health-related millennium development goals and health for all’. Far from providing accurate guidance to ‘catalyze global and country actions’ to resolve a health crisis, it appeared more concerned with protecting the sensitivities of the Chinese government. The WHO, in effect, facilitated the spread of Covid-19 around the world. If this is the end-product of global governance institutions, then clearly, they are not working and have become deeply malign.

The question is: why would a vital global agency act in this way? The answer in the case of the WHO, as in all other examples, is that in the absence of any proper scrutiny and accountability of global institutions they can become captured by the interests of strong states, especially dictatorships that have no idealistic commitment to cosmopolitan norms but merely see such global institutions as a chance to mould their character and outlook to suit their wider diplomatic interests. In this goal, the Chinese government is ably assisted by global idealists themselves who, imbricated in multicultural sensitivity to the non-western ‘other’, find it almost impossible to call out the brazen self-interest of states like China, for fear of being called prejudiced, colonialist or racist.

While China pays a small amount to the WHO relative to funding from the USA (the biggest donor), it seems to

extract the maximum leverage from its membership. As explained by John Hemmings (15 April 2020) of the Henry Jackson Society:

‘Corruption of the WHO’s function is symptomatic of a wider trend, which has seen Beijing take over one-third of the UN’s 15 specialized agencies, appointing its officials to important posts where they immediately begin implementing “Sino-centric” policies, using a combination of arm-twisting and lobbying.’

Hemmings observed that the Covid-19 crisis ‘has also revealed the unsettling fact that one country, China, has quietly begun to amass influence over the wider UN system, and that in the case of immediate and pressing global emergencies, China’s priorities and protocols come first – over the lives of a great many citizens of this world’. In 2019, a month after China cancelled \$78 million debt owed by Cameroon, the Cameroonian candidate for director-general of the UN Food & Agriculture Organisation was withdrawn, clearing the way for the Chinese candidate’s appointment (*Economist*, 18 April 2020).

All of these suspicions are validated with regard to the activities of the WHO during the crisis. Tedros was elected to his position as director-general with active Chinese support. Having been a health minister in Ethiopia’s brutal (and inept) Derg Marxist-Leninist military dictatorship that ruled between 1974 and 1987, it is not unreasonable to assume that he shares a number of pre-existing ideological affinities with the Chinese communist regime. Ethiopia has been a recipient of Chinese investment. Furthermore, Tedros allegedly has a history of covering up more than one outbreak of cholera in his country (*Spectator*, 18 April 2020). The WHO’s actions under his leadership clearly indicate a

willingness to function as an instrument of Chinese state propaganda.

The WHO, for starters, excludes any participation from Taiwan at the behest of China. One consequence has been a refusal to draw upon Taiwan's knowledge and expertise in fighting infectious diseases, in particular ignoring Taiwan's warnings that Covid-19 could spread from human-to-human contact. One particularly egregious example occurred in late March when senior WHO advisor, Bruce Aylward, refused to answer any questions about Taiwan's Covid-19 response during a news conference, at one stage pretending not to hear questions and feigning disconnection (Davidson, 30 March 2020). Earlier in January, Tedros denounced the imposition of travel bans, claiming that it would have the effect of 'increasing fear and stigma with little public health benefit', a message he reinforced after a meeting with President Xi on 3 February in which he stated that 'there is no reason for measures that unnecessarily interfere with travel and trade'.

There is indicative evidence that a country's prospects for dealing effectively with the coronavirus were inversely related to the advice given by the WHO. For example, the relatively early decision by Trump to ban flights from China, a measure that probably protected American lives and prevented an outbreak of Italian or Spanish proportions. Even so, an estimated 40,000 people flew directly from China to the USA after the travel ban, with no health screening on arrival (*Daily Mail*, 5 April 2020). Another instructive example was that of Australia, which acted early to impose stringent border controls. Interestingly, Canberra ignored the WHO's advice that flights should continue, believing, shrewdly as it turned out, that this organisation was corrupted by Chinese influence (*Breitbart*, 10 April 2020).

Several other statements by the WHO heaped praise on China and sought to shield its government from criticism. So compromised has been the WHO's performance over the Covid-19 crisis that the Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso said that it should be renamed the 'Chinese Health Organisation'. As a result, countries are beginning to wake up to the apparent corruption of the WHO, and its complicity with Beijing in suppressing crucial information on the virus. The US administration has strongly criticised the organisation and announced a temporary cessation of funding. This decision drew much criticism from other countries, particularly from Western liberal democracies, but as *Sunday Telegraph* columnist Madeline Grant remarked (19 April 2020), this was more than a knee-jerk reaction:

'Such bodies have moved from being global forces for good, to expensive talking shops for Third World states to air their grievances – often against the very Western nations whose taxpayers are forced to fund them.'

China, of course, is never the target of grievance, having created a realm of client states. While hundreds of thousands of European and American citizens were succumbing to Covid-19, most Western media outlets showed more interest in accusing Trump of mishandling the pandemic rather than reporting on the WHO's failings. According to a *Guardian* commentary (Borger, 8 April 2020), Trump was scapegoating the WHO to divert attention from his culpability for the heavy death toll in the USA.

Quite how Trump has been responsible for a health crisis that clearly originated in China, the threat of which was initially down played consistently in the media, is hardly made clear (see Riley-Smith, 15 April 2020). The proclivity of liberal-left media outlets to deflect attention away from



the failings of global agencies underlines yet again how the West unwittingly or otherwise aids Chinese state propaganda. Paradoxically, though, such fellow-travelling with China merely reinforces the reality that state-driven political interests predominate in international institutions. Advocates of globalisation might cling to the notion that institutions such as the WHO place 'health for all' above the interests of individual nation states in the name of a common humanity. The harder truth is that the instruments of global governance are not benign or in any way free of national self-interests. That may be an inescapable reality of international diplomacy, but when that point is overlooked in the name of a utopian commitment to globalism then any prospects of a truly liberal world order disappears. A liberal order, and a liberal future, requires *strong* liberal states to defend that order, not global institutions that are by their very nature prone to manipulation. Without strong liberal states, authoritarian states will fill the vacuum. When the authoritarian state in question is the People's Republic of China, that is a particular problem.

## 9.

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### Repercussions

For sure, the complacent West has become too dependent on China, but the Covid-19 crisis is an opportunity to reset the world order, and for nations to review their relationship with China. Leading *Times* commentator Melanie Phillips (4 April 2020) asked:

‘Will the government emerge from this crisis determined that Britain should regain self-sufficiency and end its dependency on China? Or will it, deeming the scale of the challenge too enormous, take the lethal path of least resistance and short-term benefits just as before?’

Wising up to the manner in which large aspects of the global economy and global institutions are now under the sway of China now represents a policy imperative. The British government is undertaking a comprehensive review of foreign and defence policy as part of its post-Brexit planning (*BBC News*, 28 February 2020). Safeguarding public health in containing the outbreak of a pandemic is now manifestly a national security issue. Placing that priority alongside relations with China has clear implications. The vacillation and cover-ups of compromised institutions like the WHO wasted valuable time and accelerated the spread of the virus worldwide, thereby exacerbating the massive loss of life. The Chinese government’s attempts to obscure the origins

of Covid-19, its punishment of doctors for raising the alert and litany of misinformation and smokescreens highlight the danger of the suppression of free speech, a value that Western societies need to appreciate a great deal more than they appear to do at present. The West must now reevaluate its relations with the mendacious Beijing regime, and that means abandoning the facile precepts of globalisation and, perhaps most importantly of all, regaining the moral strength to defend liberal democratic values.

Part of this re-evaluation must start with a preparedness to take a tougher line with China and to ensure that it faces up to its responsibilities that through its propaganda and lies not only caused but exacerbated the Covid-19 crisis. Conservative Party figures such as Iain Duncan-Smith have urged a 'reckoning' for China due to its misinformation and mishandling of the coronavirus outbreak (*Daily Mail*, 23 March 2020). In an opinion poll commissioned by the Henry Jackson Society, 83 per cent of Britons wanted an international inquiry into China's handling of the virus (*Times*, 20 April 2020). Foreign secretary Dominic Raab said that questions must be asked, but he was also keen to maintain good relations with China (*Daily Telegraph*, 16 April 2020). Is this possible, given the tendency for defensiveness and lashing out at critics by the Beijing regime? China has behaved like a classroom bully, who thrives on fear. Standing up to the bully may cause short-term pain, but in the longer term it is likely to gain more respect than a slavish acquiescence.

If there is a case for concerted international action to be waged, then it should be to exert pressure on China to compensate countries for the appalling economic damage that the crisis has inflicted. A report in April 2020 by the Henry Jackson Society indicted China for its failure to adequately report the crisis, thereby costing the world's

economies over £3 trillion, and suggested avenues of legal redress (Henderson *et al.*, 2020). Others, such as Azeem Ibrahim (31 March 2020), Director of the Center for Global Policy in Washington, argue for cancellation of the debts of poorer countries in order to lift their dependency on China's dubious beneficence. After being tempted into the Belt and Road initiative, Djibouti, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, the Maldives, Mongolia, Pakistan and Montenegro have sovereign debts to China equivalent to around half of their gross domestic product. Major European countries, particularly Italy and Spain, also owe vast amounts. Ibrahim argued:

'Beijing has a moral obligation to forgive these debts. If it fails to do so, the rest of the world has a moral obligation to default on them.'

China also owns much of the debt of the USA, which it could suddenly dump and cause extreme market instability, perhaps in retaliation for tariffs or a perceived political slight (*South China Morning Post*, 10 May 2019). Meanwhile, Western consumers continue to buy masses of goods dispatched from Chinese ports (knowingly or not), but the provenance of these may be ethically uncertain. The reliance on the so-called 'global supply chain' renders consumers in the developed world even less aware of the human cost of cheap products, which are often made in sweatshops or labour camps (although the Western company contract is made with a modern factory, this may be a façade). In late 2019, a child in the UK found a message inserted in a box of Christmas cards bought at a Tesco supermarket, written by a camp inmate trying to alert the outside world to the abusive conditions (*Daily Mail*, 22 December 2019). As part of the post-crisis re-consideration of priorities, governments

should take more responsibility, by ensuring better regulatory standards or raising tariffs. This should not be seen solely as a means of protecting national industries, but as a genuine humanitarian concern.

The global supply chain is like capitalism on steroids. Container ships from China are like huge slugs devouring everything in their path, namely national industries and jobs. The West has become too reliant on China for essential goods and services. Furthermore, Huawei mobile technology, Hikvision security cameras, and the use of the TikTok social media platform by the young expose Western societies to potential monitoring by the Chinese state. There is much to review and reconsider by supposedly progressive governments that have failed to protect their own people, and failed to speak out on the abuse of China's own citizens.

Highly respected *Daily Telegraph* writer Charles Moore (18 April 2020), not known for sensationalising or rabble-rousing, asserted that 'the Chinese Communist Party has infected hundreds of thousands of people across the globe'. Not deliberately, he accepted – but it did so nonetheless.

# 10.

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## The twilight of globalisation

Of course, the globalist ideal was never meant to end like this. It was not meant to result in the cataclysm of a world pandemic or the domination of China over large parts of the world economy. It was not meant to end with the re-imposition of national border controls, with bans on international travel, the curtailment of free movement of people and uninhibited free trade. It was not intended to result in a massive global recession. That globalisation is facing its *fin de siècle* can be attributed to hubristic interpretations imposed on the international system after 1990 by post-nation idealists, mainly in the West. What we are witnessing now in the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis, then, is not a natural conclusion, but the product of the naïve political choices informed by globalisation as an ideology.

As a concept, globalisation consists of two, not necessarily related, phenomena: 1) an economic and technological manifestation, and 2) a system of thought concerning the construction of the world order. In relation to the former, the origins of globalisation as an economic manifestation grew out of the deregulatory market reforms (most notably in Britain and the United States). The financial and industrial reforms of the 1980s enabled the freer movement of capital and labour across international boundaries. With rapid advances in information technology, especially after

the creation of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s, supranational corporations were able to shift production and money from one country to another with ease. As an economic activity, therefore, globalisation came to denote a vast interconnected transnational network of technology and finance.

As an ideology, globalisation originates in the end of the Cold War. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, historian Francis Fukuyama pronounced the 'End of History'. The demise of Soviet communism and the defeat of fascism earlier in the century led Fukuyama to assert that there were no other 'viable alternatives to liberal democracy' (Fukuyama, 1992). Allied with the evolution of a hyper-connected world of finance and mobility commentators began to conclude that economic liberalism and democracy would inevitably flourish, while the globalised economic order promised free trade, growing prosperity based on the efficiencies gained from the international division of labour and relative freedom of movement across national borders.

In other words, as an ideology globalisation was conceived as an essentially benevolent and progressive force. In fact, it asserted itself as a post-ideological ideology. Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, one of the most enthusiastic proponents of a new global order, proclaimed in 2002 that the 'struggle for world hegemony by political ideology' had come to an end (quoted in Rogers, 2020). For globalist advocates, the duty was to actively facilitate the push towards this end-point through the promotion of post-national institutions like the UN and the EU, and to encourage the economic and political processes of transnationalism. This is the ideology of globalisation: the idea that the world was being transformed into an increasingly borderless and interdependent Shangri-La.

It was a world where cosmopolitan norms of human rights and redistributive justice would prevail, causing the nation state, notions of national identity, and power politics, to wither as humankind joined together on the happy horizon of the End of History.

It hasn't worked out that way and the point to appreciate is that the Covid-19 pandemic, while it has not caused the crisis in globalisation, has brought its paradoxes and failings to the fore. The crisis has exposed as never before the costs of an unquestioning commitment to a transnationalist dogma that has caused states to become dangerously dependent upon vulnerable extended supply chains for vital medical supplies, including life-saving drugs. All of a sudden, it does not seem quite such a good idea to have outsourced vast swathes of Western industrial capacity to a point where as much as 80 per cent of the world's pharmaceuticals are now made in China. If the People's Republic shared the rosy commitment to a liberal democratic end of history, then that might not be too much of a worry. The problem is, it doesn't.

China does subscribe to globalist vision, but it is not one that has any commitment to cosmopolitan, let alone democratic, norms. It is a supremacist vision that puts itself at the centre of the world order and demands that others pay it obeisance. For evidence, one can observe the manner in which it seeks to subvert international bodies of the UN and place nations in forms of debt servitude via the Belt and Road initiative. But it can also be seen in the manner in which it has shown itself willing to play pandemic diplomacy both in terms of giving out medical aid, to Italy for example, whilst threatening to withhold it from countries that are indisposed to its interests (Buncombe, 13 March 2020).

Yet, as the pillars of this globalist order are now crashing all around them as states engage in an every-nation-for-



itself rush to re-assert their sovereign right to impose border controls and trade restrictions on essential medical supplies, the prophets of globalisation are unlikely to accept that their vision of the world has reached its swansong. After all, they have a lot to lose. *Daily Telegraph* columnist Sherelle Jacobs (16 April 2020) referred to a cabal of interests that trade ‘away their long-term viability for short-term stockholder enrichment in China’. This managerial and corporatist cabal in the West – from corporate executives, to bankers, to university vice chancellors, along with a coterie of what Tom Tugendhat (19 April 2020) has described with good reason as ‘Silk-tongued wheel greasers... selling out to despots’ – that benefits from and enriches itself through globalist arrangements is unlikely to give up its advantages without a struggle (see Bullough, 2018). Because globalisation is an ideology, rather than a hypothesis that accepts that it is subject to sceptical questioning and refutation, no amount of evidence will convince its devotees that its precepts are falsifiable.

From the perspective of neo-liberal globalists, as expressed in the *Financial Times* and *Economist*, the answer to the failures of globalisation is... more globalisation. Accordingly, the Covid-19 pandemic showed the whole world supposedly uniting against a common threat. ‘Don’t waste a good crisis’ was a headline in the *Economist* (4 April 2020), which wholeheartedly supported lockdowns despite the ruinous impact on the world’s economy. It would have been easy to dismiss countries that defied the consensus as reckless populists, as indeed was Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, but liberal-progressive Sweden was not the usual suspect. A report on ‘Europe’s outlier’ (*Economist*, 4 April 2020) suggested that keeping schools and businesses open, following the guidance of chief epidemiologist Anders Tegnell in pursuit

of herd immunity, was a ‘contrarian strategy’. Sweden was an affront to the emergency global order, yet it was other Western countries that were conducting a costly experiment in disease control.

Instead of learning lessons, and realising that their vision has failed catastrophically, globalists are likely to engage in the tactics of displacement, and try to deflect criticism onto alternative targets. For example, Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi of the Council for Foreign Relations (Philp, 10 April 2020) predicted that any backlash against China will be overshadowed by the failings of US leadership nationally and globally, with ‘a brutal outpouring of disappointment: how could you have done this to us?’ Like many other leaders, medical experts, and mainstream media commentators, President Trump was not prepared for the pandemic, but his utterances will be used to show the folly of nations acting unilaterally to ‘beggar thy neighbour’. Bizarrely, amidst the viral crisis, the *Economist* (11 April 2020) argued that the USA and its allies should welcome Huawei to install its mobile technology; Donald Trump was portrayed as a petty nationalist in a progressive, inclusive world that will leave his outmoded mentality behind.

Meanwhile, as the death toll from the virus mounted, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown commended the establishment of a global government to tackle the economic and medical emergency caused by the Covid-19 epidemic. Brown urged replication of the international efforts to save the banks during 2007-2008 global financial crash; this success (as he saw it) would inspire collective action. Leaving aside whether the bank bailouts were a particularly admirable or effective way of dealing with the 2008 crisis, the promulgation of the notion that the failure of global structures requires *more* global government is

an indication of the hold that this ideology has upon its adherents (*Guardian*, 26 March 2020). As an idea, Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant propounded global government in the eighteenth century. In his *Perpetual Peace*, Kant (1795) envisaged a rational order beginning with the dissolution of the states of Europe. Kant saw a three-stage progression from the savagery of tribal existence, to civilisation in the form of nation-states, and lastly to a global reign of reason. Thus humankind would achieve 'moral maturity'. Here we have the pious, moralistic, secular rationalist assumptions that underpin globalist thinking concisely outlined.

Since the 1960s, national identity has been under relentless attack by the intelligentsia and all shades of the Left. In *Nationalism and its Alternatives*, Karl Deutsch (1969) portrayed patriotism as a primitive antipathy to others. In the 1990s, an increasingly educated and well-travelled middle class, with its *bien pensant* consciousness, espoused the EU as the realisation of a post-nation future and traduced any dissent from this secular, post-national religion. The EU has sanctioned the Hungarian government for its nationalist policies, with crimes including promoting the traditional family, encouraging native citizens to have more children, and protecting national culture by limiting immigration (Murray, 2017). Oxymoronically, José Manuel Barroso, president of the EU Commission from 2004 to 2014, described the EU as the 'first non-imperial empire' (Furedi, 2018).

Democracy has been overridden by transnationalist entities, taking power further from the people. The annual meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos in the Swiss Alps is like a synod of the high priests of globalisation: progressive politicians, merchant bankers, multinational corporate leaders and other members of the self-anointed who think that they are building a brighter future (Sowell

1995). Hungarian financier George Soros attracts conspiracy theories, sometimes laced with anti-Semitic tropes (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018), but it is a fact that he invests in globalist projects that undermine national sovereignty, such as the attempt to overturn Brexit. He criticised the Hungarian leader Viktor Orbán's response to an unprecedented mass migration from the Middle East in 2015 (*Bloomberg*, 30 October 2015):

'His plan treats national borders as the objective and the refugees as an obstacle. Our plan treats the protection of refugees as the objective and national borders as an obstacle.'

The global elite is able to enrich itself on the backs of the masses, with a constant supply of cheap labour to produce goods and maximise profits. Christopher Tugendhat (1973) likened global corporations to the Catholic church of the past, 'when kings and emperors frequently felt their positions to be overshadowed by its international organisation, its influence on national policies, and its immense buildings'. Douglas Carswell (2017) described a 'corporate kleptocracy' that prefers supranational agreements to being subjected to the whims of democratic states. As Carswell described, interest rates, energy prices and environmental targets and subsidies are set by people who do not bow to kings and queens:

'This new elite has no loyalty to or understanding of the ordinary citizen. They despise their concerns as parochial and the views of the *demos* as petty prejudice.'

Yoram Hazony (2018) regards globalisation as the new imperialism. The nation is the best structure, Hazony argued, to serve and protect citizens. This debate was already heated before Covid-19, but now it may reach boiling point. The rise of national populism, according to Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin (2018), is driven by

four forces: distrust of politicians, destruction of national culture and identity, deprivation of the lower social classes while the rich get richer and dealignment of traditional political allegiances (particularly as left-wing parties have turned away from the white working class to middle-class intellectuals and minority interests). Brexit and the election of Trump in 2016 were manifestations of a broader change occurring across the West. In *The Price of Prosperity*, Todd Buchholz (2016) explained how globalisation leads not to harmony but entropy. It unravels community cohesion, national identity and cultural security. Decadence deters the raising of families. Affluence induces navel-gazing triviality and self-loathing that have resulted in falling birth rates and an ageing population, for which the remedy of mass immigration has caused overcrowding, rapid cultural change and alienation of the host community.

In an interview by Lionel Barber, editor of the *Financial Times* (28 June 2019), Russian president Vladimir Putin proclaimed the end of liberalism, observing a shift in the balance of power from traditional western liberalism to national populism, fuelled by public resentment about immigration, multiculturalism and secular values. Hungary may not be a model state, but it has achieved some success in bucking the forces of globalisation, becoming more self-reliant and reversing a long-term fall in the birth rate. But Putin and Orbán are demonised by globalists, who control the mainstream media.

The mental gymnastics of the likes of the *Economist* to portray the Covid-19 crisis as a justification for advancing a globalist order are noteworthy. The Bagehot column (18 April 2020) on British politics, for example, argued that the virus is destroying populists and mass ignorance, as ‘the establishment strikes back’:

‘This resurgence will leave a mark, for the establishment is as much a cast of mind as a collection of people and institutions. Establishment types maintain above all that government is a serious business which should be conducted by serious people. They believe in the wisdom of institutions rather than that of crowds, in facts rather than emotions, and in continuity rather than disruption.’

Did the WHO, we might ask, demonstrate the wisdom of institutions? Did it put facts before political favour? And is its continuation better than disbanding it and starting again? We might pose similar questions of the EU, which performed abjectly, leaving the hardest-hit countries like Italy and Spain to swing in the wind.

Robin Niblett of Chatham House has argued that Covid-19 will be ‘the straw that breaks the back of economic globalisation’ (Philp, 10 April 2020). A common argument is that globalisation (through associated capitalism) has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty. But has it really? As it now stands revealed before us, globalisation has now inflicted pestilence and a massive worldwide recession that will reduce millions upon millions to poverty and desperation.

# Conclusion

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‘May you live in interesting times.’  
– Ancient Chinese curse

John Gray argued in the *New Statesman* (3 April 2020) that Covid-19 will be a turning point in history, and that ‘the era of peak globalisation is over’. Insofar as it is wise for analysts to speculate about the future, we can probably deduce that globalisation as an ideological commitment to transnational progressivism has run its course. Its premises have been thoroughly and comprehensively discredited. The Covid-19 pandemic has merely provided the final disillusionment that political and economic forces were moving the world towards a single, borderless, political order governed by enlightened post-national constellations.

This report has highlighted the failures of globalisation with reference to the malign role that the communist regime in China has played throughout the evolving crisis, from obscuring the origin of the virus, to the persecution of medical whistle blowers, to the dissemination of inaccurate information via the WHO that almost certainly contributed to the spread of Covid-19 throughout the rest of the world. The results of these failures and cover-ups are plain for all to see: a terrible scourge loosed upon the world and an economic catastrophe that will surely compound the human tragedy many times over. This report has suggested that the time has come to re-evaluate the West’s relationship with China. In

considering how Britain engages with China from hereon, the central question to which policy makers should address themselves is how and why these circumstances were ever allowed to occur? How did the West come to relinquish much of its economic and political pre-eminence to a brutal ideological competitor? The harshest of reflections is likely to demonstrate that it has been the product of voluntary, if deeply misguided, choices.

The key point of this analysis has been that the West's relationship with the People's Republic has been, to a greater degree, filtered through the prism of globalisation as an ideology, which for too long has subordinated the interests of nation-states to a fallacious idealism that has had the effect of undermining the very liberal order that globalists often purport to uphold and wish to extend. Not only have the economic precepts of globalisation resulted in the wholesale destruction of vast areas of western industrial capacity that has re-located to China, but it has actively facilitated the Chinese Communist Party's vision of a new world order. The naïve belief that the world had entered a post-ideological age, and was embarked on a benign, progressive, end to history that would see the victory of a vacuous humanitarian cosmopolitanism and the rise of transnational institutions replacing outmoded attachments to the nation-state, abdicated responsibility for defending any true commitment to a liberal democratic world order. Instead, globalist beliefs that nations and power politics no longer mattered has merely ceded the field to those like China that are only too happy to see the world in uncompromising terms and to view the processes of globalisation not as a road to harmonious convergence, but as a sphere to be ruthlessly exploited for national gain.

To say all this is not to be nationalistic, regressive or



‘populist’. In fact, it is not to say anything that is new. Stating that the international system is composed of sovereign independent states, and is therefore a realm of power competition and struggle where the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must, is to merely enunciate verities articulated over two millennia ago by philosophers of antiquity such as Thucydides (1874). These political realities have received their echo down the centuries in many other streams of political thought, not least via a venerable Anglophone school of international politics exemplified by E. H. Carr (1939), Martin Wight (1946), Hans Morgenthau (1948), Henry Kissinger (1957) and Hedley Bull (1977). Those who believe eternal political truths about power and the international system dissolve into some post-ideological ‘end of history’ utopia are not idealists to be admired; they are instead, as David Martin Jones (2020) has argued, ‘History’s Fools’. For as we survey the devastation caused by the Covid-19 crisis and the complicity of globalist elites in assisting the rise of China, future generations, who will be the ones that will incur most of the costs of the crisis, will be entitled to ask why the fox was given the run of the henhouse.

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# The Covid-19 Review

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There will be plenty of official inquiries into the Covid-19 pandemic and the British Government's response to it. This series of reports is intended to help those sitting on these inquiries, as well as the public, MPs, peers and experts, to ask the right questions.

To ensure proper accountability and independent scrutiny, these reports are inspired by the need respectfully to examine some of the roots and handling of the crisis and how we can best prepare for future outbreaks.

The authors do not doubt the huge efforts of all involved in addressing the pandemic, from the frontline medical staff, to all those in care homes and the ancillary services, through to our political leaders. Nor do we doubt that, throughout the crisis, they acted with the best of motives.

But there are clearly alternative approaches and different national rates of success in responding to Covid-19. What is important is that we learn the right lessons from this outbreak so that, next time, it really will be different.



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## THE COVID-19 REVIEW

How Britain responded to the Coronavirus

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The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the underlying flaws of globalisation. The ideology of globalisation based on the notion of an increasingly borderless and interdependent world and in which the nation state would wither, is now seriously in question.

In this book, Niall McCrae and M.L.R. Smith argue that, as the virus proliferated, China tried to cover up the contagion and did little to stop its worldwide spread from the initial source in Wuhan. In the absence of proper scrutiny and accountability, international organisations like the World Health Organisation (WHO) have become captured by the interests of authoritarian states. Beholden to Beijing, the WHO was complicit in failing to pass on adequate warning of the seriousness of the pandemic. The claim that the infection began at a traditional 'wet market' has become a convenient narrative, possibly masking other sources in China.

The book finds that while the pandemic was made in China, the conditions that gave rise to what they call the 'Year of the Bat' also arose from the assumptions of globalist thinking in the West. Globalist approaches have underpinned extraordinarily poor policy choices. A resetting of the international order is now needed.

In considering 'where to go' in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis, the authors argue for a mix of practical policy responses in order to sustain a genuine liberal international system, rather than one consisting of multinational institutions. It argues that the Chinese state should be regarded as a rival ideological power – and Britain should not regard itself as China's 'best partner in the West'. Ultimately, they conclude China and the World Health Organisation must be investigated for their handling of Covid-19, particularly in the early stage of the contagion.

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