

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: TRACING THE BEGINNING OF CORONA VIRUS OUTBREAK

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ABSTRACT

The paper encapsulates the initial phase of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China. The result from genetic sequences from early samples has also been described. The political noise around the outbreak has been summed up for better understanding about the spread of the pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, Gene Sequence, Wuhan, Wuhan Institute of Virology, WHO.

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide outbreak of corona virus has brought major global economies on their knees. The outbreak has already infected more than 7.5 million people and 421,456 people lost their lives as on June 12 across the globe according to the data published by Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at John Hopkins University. According to China's National Health Commission (NHC), the country has reported 82, 249 confirmed cases and 3341 deaths out of which 77, 738 recovered and being discharged from hospitals. The outbreak is considered to have originated in the city of Wuhan located in Central China's Hubei province. According to initial investigation Chinese authorities has pointed out the link of corona virus to the "Huanan seafood market" infamous for selling trafficked wild and exotic animals in unhygienic conditions. Initially United States and some other countries demanded independent investigation to trace down origin of the Covid-19 which WHO initially refused but later accepted to do so amidst pressure. The intention of this article is to trace down the origin of corona virus outbreak citing some exclusive reports, published scientific papers within China and worldwide. During the outbreak series of abnormal events happened in China which drew attention of many experts such as Joshua Philipp who has been working on Communist Party of China's espionage and warfare from one decade. He even raised question on official figures given by Chinese authorities after citing censored videos, reports and pictures and warned that situation in China is even worse than what the regime is trying to show.

The first thing that received public attention about the epidemic was an internal notice of "Wuhan Health Commission" on December 30, 2019 which mentioned about unknown pneumonia cases at "Huanan Seafood Market". Next day, the Health Commission had issued

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a public notice for the first time saying that some medical institutions found link between the pneumonia cases and seafood market with no human to human transmission. On January 1, 2020 the seafood market was closed followed by thorough clean-up and it was seized for investigation. On January 26, 2020, Center for Disease Control (CDC) lab of Wuhan Institute of Virology said that 33 out of 585 samples from seafood market were found to contain novel corona virus suggesting that the virus could have originated from wild animals sold at market. At this point “Huanan Seafood Market” was being suspected as source of epidemic. However few days later a paper published in *Lancet* journal, a popular medical journal entitled “*Clinical features of patients infected with 2019 novel corona virus in Wuhan, China*” in which the authors claimed that novel corona virus does not have any links to seafood market. The interesting fact is that the first author of this paper is Prof. Chaolin Huang, the Deputy Director of Jin-Yin-Tan hospital of Wuhan. The hospital is one of the first medical institutions which were designated by authorities to treat novel corona virus patients. Furthermore, the paper made another shocking claim such as symptoms onset of first patient had no relation to seafood market, no links between first and later cases and lastly no one sells bat at “Huanan Seafood Market”. According to “*New England Journal*”, 45 patients who were reported before January 1, had no history of exposure to the seafood market. According to Daniel Lucy, an epidemiologist at University of Georgetown, the first human infection must have occurred in November 2019 because there is an incubation period between infection and symptoms. If so, the virus possibly spread silently between people-to-people in Wuhan and perhaps elsewhere before the cluster of cases reported in infamous seafood market was discovered in late December 2019. The experts from National Health Commission after studying cases from Jin-Yin-Tan hospital, Wuhan has set up criteria to confirm the cases i.e. 1) A history of contact at seafood market; 2) a fever; 3) whole genome sequence after knowing the hospital has stipulated the history of contact. On January 18, 2020 the second group of experts from Health Commission made a revision and removed the first step of criteria i.e. a history of contact at seafood market. They even questioned why did first panel make it compulsory to include history of contact to confirm the case knowing at least every third case in unrelated to seafood market. Many global experts saw this move as Chinese authorities’ deliberate attempt to make seafood market as source of outbreak and intentional cover up of important source of information by imposing false narrative.

AN INSCRUTABLE GENE SEQUENCE

On January 10, China officially disclosed genome sequence of corona virus. After that many virologists from world began to analyze it. As early as on January 7, an academic group from National Institute of Communicable Disease Control and Preventing along with School of Public Health of Fudan University submitted a joint paper to “*Nature*” journal. The title of paper was “*A new corona virus associated with human respiratory diseases in China*” which was published on February 3 and they made a shocking claim that the corona virus is closely related to the two viruses (CovZC 45 and CovZXC 21) sampled from bats in Zhoushan by People’s Liberation Army. The corona virus has 89.1 % nucleotide similarity with CovZC 45 virus and exhibit 100 % amino acid similarity in the nsp 7 and ‘E’ protein. Soon after this, the other scientist used “BLAST”, a program developed by National Institute of Health

and National Center for Biotechnology Information of USA and compared the gene sequence and the results were matched with above paper. The earliest discovery of bat-derived virus was conducted by experts from Institute of Military Medicine from Nanjing command. The paper was published in 2018 entitled 'Genomic characterization and infectivity of novel SARS like corona virus in Chinese bats collected from Zhoushan city'. In short, scientist found Wuhan corona virus i.e. the current pandemic is highly similar to bat SARS-like corona virus previously discovered by Nanjing Military Research Institute showing 100% amino acid nsp7 and 'E' protein similarity. Scientifically there is no way the virus can show 100 % similarity when it jumps from species to species bolstering the fact that the virus could have generated with reverse engineering process.

On January 23, a researcher from Institute Pasteur of Shanghai of Chinese Academy of Science published paper in *Science China* (Life Sciences) journal. In this paper, they have mentioned that the sequence of S- protein of Wuhan corona virus has high homology with SARS virus. The 'S-protein' also known as spike glycoprotein are the most important tool of corona virus to invade human cell. The S-protein can easily unlock the receptor on human cell and invade the cell to propagate it and destroy it. The high similarity between S-protein of SARS-1 and SARS-2 which is *lock and key* of virus to enter human body. So now with S-Protein, the access to human tissues is allowed though spike protein of natural strain don't infect human at all. The research on this was going on in Wuhan since 2007 and it was published in international journal which gives strong evidence the virus couldn't go though 'Huanan Seafood Market'. According to the *South China Morning Post*, a media outlet in Hong Kong reported that the Chinese laboratory which first shared corona virus genome with world was ordered to be closed by Chinese authorities for rectification hindering its Covid-19 research. Prof. Zhang Yongzhen who disclosed the gene sequence of corona virus was working in the same laboratory. According to *Caixin* website, on January 5 Prof. Zhang Yongzhen's team isolated and completed the genome sequence of previously unknown virus which is now known as corona virus. On the same day, the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center reported this discovery to National Health Commission and recommended preventive measures. But no response was received from authorities. On January 11, Prof. Zhang Yongzhen and his team decided to publicize the genome sequence and became the first to do so. On January 3, China's National Health Commission distributed Notification Letter number 3 in which they have directed that "Existing virus samples must be destroyed, information about the samples, related paper and data are all prohibited from release". After that once active Chinese science community fell into utter silence. All these indicates that Chinese government tried to hide, censor information about the novel corona virus which puts a question mark over the response of regime to tackle the pandemic.

THE SHOCKING DISCOVERIES OF DR. SHI ZHENGLI

Dr. Shi Zhengli is a well-known virologist who is a researcher at Wuhan Institute of Virology in Chinese Academy of Sciences. She was the first to locate the key as to how corona virus can overcome cross-species barriers in order to directly infect human bodies. She was the first to discover that the SARS virus was the result of restructuring the SARS like corona virus found in bats. She became figure of controversy since the pandemic. This is due to her paper

published in 2015 wherein she discussed her own research into synthetic viruses. She has now given an interview to *Caixin*, a media outlet with close ties with communist party and rejected all allegations from world. Since the first SARS outbreak in 2002-03, Dr. Shi Zhengli and her team have been conducting research on corona virus. Since 2010 onwards, the focus of her team was redirected to identify the capacity of corona virus transmission across species specifically putting spotlight on S-protein of corona virus, in short possible transmission into humans. In June 2010, Dr. Shi Zhengli and her team published a paper entitled “*Angiotensin converting enzyme 2 (ACE 2) proteins from different bat species confer variable susceptibility to SARS-CoV entry*” which demonstrated their awareness of special relationship between S-protein and ACE-2 receptor. It also indicates that Dr. Shi Zhengli had unearthed the passageway for corona virus into human bodies. In October 2013, she and her team published another paper entitled “*Isolation and characterization of a bat SARS like corona virus that uses ACE-2 receptor*”. In this paper they demonstrated the direct human to human infection of SARS like viruses to humans without the need of intermediate host. In November 2015 she and her team published paper in journal, ‘*Nature Medicine*’ in which they discussed creation of synthetic viruses. In this paper they have discussed creation of synthetic virus, a self-replicating virus which has SARS-like framework with S-protein replaced by one they found in bat corona virus mentioned in the 2013 paper. This new virus demonstrated a powerful ability for cross-species infection. Mice which was infected with synthetic virus revealed serious lung damage with no cure. This symbolized Dr. Shi Zhengli’s successful splicing of the SARS virus was a key to open the doors to the cross-species transmission. Although she did not conclude any results but her move to research on primates suggest that this was move to closely simulate the infection of humans with this new synthetic virus.

Her experiments quickly triggered widespread debates within academic community across the globe. Simon Wain-Hobson, a virologist at the Pasteur Institute in Paris pointed out that the researchers have created a novel virus that grows remarkably well in human cells and if the virus escaped, nobody could predict the trajectory. On November 14, 2018; Dr Shi Zhengli spoke at School of Life Sciences and Biotechnology at Shanghai Jiatong University. The topic was “*Studies on Bat corona virus and its cross-species infection*”. Reports of this event has since been deleted from the University website. In October 2014, the Obama administration had suspended funding of SARS, MERS and similar research considering the potential threats. The funding pause included Dr. Shi Zhengli’s research project ‘*Genetic engineering of SARS like corona virus in bats*’, a collaborative effort with University of North Carolina. After Wuhan outbreak, Indian researchers compared protein sequence between 2019-nCoV and SARS. They discovered 2019 nCoV had four new sequences inserted, all of which can be found in HIV in paper entitled “*Uncanny similarity of unique inserts in the 2019-nCoV spike protein to HIV-1, gp120 and Gag*.” Afterwards, Dr. Shi Zhengli discredited the doubts raised by experts but never denied the existence of four inserted sequences. The scientist from Gene bank found that there are only three viruses in globe which contains all these sequences i.e. HIV, bat corona virus discovered by Dr. Shi Zhengli and third is new Wuhan corona virus. The research direction of Dr. Shi Zhengli attracted wide criticism, as to why she was working on corona virus that can infect humans, whether it was meant for bioweapon or to create a vaccine to gain profit from globe.

However, we need extensive research and investigation within China to solve this mystery which seems impossible considering Chinese regimes potential cover up.

THE WUHAN P4 LABORATORY

Amidst the speculation that Wuhan corona virus is generated by reverse engineering, Dr. Shi Zhengli published paper on February 3, entitled “*A pneumonia outbreak associated with a new corona virus of probable bat origin*”. In this paper, they confirmed that 2019 nCoV uses the same cell entry receptor- angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE-2) as SARS-CoV. She also announced 2019-nCoV genome sequence was 96.2 % consistent with bat corona virus originating in Yunnan province called RaTG 13 signaling a natural source of Wuhan virus. However, the claims made by Dr. Shi Zhengli are doubtful because the outbreak occurred in Wuhan, the same location is the P4 lab in which she was based and the lab has housed highly similar viruses. By considering the natural response, the authorities should have inspected the laboratory for identifying potential leakage however they diverted public attention from P4 laboratory to ‘Huanan Seafood Market’ which sells no bats and designated it as origin of outbreak. At the same time authorities sealed all virus samples, prevented international experts from joining the investigation and used national television to suppress the whistleblowers like Dr Le Wengliang who tried to disclose the outbreak. If the Wuhan virus occurred naturally then why the government did censor relevant information and blocked investigation? Does the Wuhan P4 laboratory have some secrets to hide? Gordon Chang, a columnist and Asian affairs expert suggested that we should consider theory of lab origin until we don’t know anything about source of outbreak. After the outbreak, Wuhan Institute of Virology kept strange silence. Under normal circumstances being the best virology institute in country it should have been the first one to actively respond when entire country was fighting against pandemic. Here it should be noted that Wuhan Institute of Virology displayed series of abnormal events from the beginning of 2020.

On January 2, the Director General of Institute sent an email to all internal staff regarding the strict prohibition of disclosure of any information related to Wuhan unknown pneumonia. An email clearly stated that National Health Commission mandates all detection, data, results and conclusion related to this outbreak cannot be published on self-media or any other media including (State media). On January 21, a new drug ‘Remdesivir’ for treatment was patented by Wuhan Institute of Virology. On February 3, Dr. Wu Xiahua blew the whistle using his real name that Dr. Shi Zhengli and laboratory management might have led the Wuhan virus to leak from the lab. On February 4, Chairman of Duoyi, Xu Bo blew the whistle using real name that the Wuhan Institute of Virology was suspected of manufacturing and leaking this virus i.e. the Wuhan corona virus. On February 7, a top biochemical weapon expert of People’s Liberation Army, Chen Wei officially assumed control over Wuhan Institute of Virology’s P4 lab. On February 14, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for the inclusion of biosecurity into China’s national security framework and to accelerate the introduction of biosecurity law. On February 15, the institute refuted widely spread rumors on Chinese social media that female graduate Huang Yangling was patient zero and perished. However Huang’s photo, CV and thesis were all removed from institute’s official website leaving only her name. On February 17, an institute researcher, Chen Qianjiao blew the whistle using her real name that

the Director General of Institute Wang Yanyi was suspected of leaking the virus. The keywords like leakage of virus, a biochemical weapon expert assumes command over an institute and biosecurity law gives strong feeling that P4 laboratory is not an ordinary lab.

On January 23, the day when Wuhan was lockdown, a French website “*Challenge*” published one article which revealed many details about collaboration between France and China to establish P4 laboratory in Wuhan. In 2002-03 after SARS outbreak in China, the Chinese Academy of Sciences requested assistance from French government to build virology research center of high standards and agreement was signed between two governments. According to the contract, French architect was responsible for engineering and constructing the laboratory. However, the Chinese authorities handed over the work to the local Wuhan architect company IPPR which has close ties with subsidiaries of People’s Liberation Army. Knowing all these the French government delayed work repeatedly and tactically tried to halt the work. It was in 2017, the Wuhan P4 laboratory became operational. French security continues to suspect that Chinese regime is conducting biochemical weapon experiments. Considering all these, the question arises here that who really is in control of Wuhan P4 laboratory.

The P4 laboratory is subsidiary of Wuhan Institute of Virology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The director of P4 lab is Yuan Zhiming who is also head of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He was also in-charge for designing and funding of constructional responsibilities of institute under ex-Vice President of academy “*Jiang Mianheng*” from 1999 to 2011. Jiang Mianheng is eldest son of the Chinese Communist Party’s leader , Jiang Zemin who served as the President of People’s Republic of China from 1993 to 2003. Following the Tiananmen massacre, he ousted many senior leaders of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) before assuming Presidency. He sent his eldest son Jian Mianheng to Chinese Academy of Sciences where he created many institutes such as Shanghai Institute of Life Sciences, colleges and universities, Shanghai hospitals, Military hospitals and Military Research Institute. In this period, he controlled major life sciences project and allocated major funding for research. Jian Zhicheng, son of Jiang Mianheng is controlling share in Wuxi Apptec. Company which controls Fosun pharmaceuticals, China’s agent for ‘Remdesivir’. In 1999, when Jiang Zemin was in power, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) published book , ‘*Unrestricted War*’ in which strategy for weaker nation to combat stronger nation are discussed. The new strategy called ‘unrestricted warfare’ includes interalia various tactics such as military assault, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, bioweapon, drug trafficking, environmental destruction and computer virus dissemination. In 2015, an Israeli expert and formal intelligence officer Dany Shoham published paper in *Indian Journal of Defense Studies* which discussed about China’s biological program in details. In this paper he pointed out 12 facilities affiliated with defense establishment, 30 facilities associated with People’s Liberation Army that are involved in research, development, production, testing and storage of biological weapon. Federation of American Scientist indicated similar concern in their evaluation reports. The organization believes the Chinese regime possess: several biological warfare programs including research and development, manufacturing and weaponizing capability. That’s why many experts around the globe believe that the long-term planning of Chinese regime is to dominate on global stage by achieving these capabilities. Many experts

believe that global community should understand this doctrine and essential measures should be taken to stop this, otherwise thing can go out of control.

CONCLUSION

At Present the Corona virus pandemic has spread to 200 + countries with no sign to slow down. The United States has announced state of national emergency, Europe became the new epicenter of pandemic, tragic scenes previously seen in Hollywood movies are now playing out live at world stage. The role played by the World Health Organization (WHO) during the pandemic is doubtful. Initially, WHO refused to endorse human-to-human transmission of corona virus following instructions from the Chinese Regime and later on, it accepted human-to-human transmission. During the outbreak many countries such as USA, India etc. barred entry of flights from China, WHO got riled up and condemned this move. Till the time, it acknowledged inter-species transmission, the virus already spread to many countries. US President was exasperated by these and launched several attacks against the WHO and even threatened to halt funding. Finally, on 14th April 2020 he announced that his administration had stopped funding of WHO. Many world leaders and experts were shocked by this move in the middle of global corona virus pandemic. On 17th April, Trump tweeted and accused WHO of ignoring email sent by Taiwan authorities in December in which they had warned that corona virus could be transmitted in humans.

The WHO could have played active role to contain this pandemic but it has failed. Under mounting global pressure, China has relented its opposition and backed EU draft resolution tabled at the World Health Assembly (WHA). The WHA is a decision-making body of the Geneva-based World Health Organization which held virtual meeting on May 18 which was attended by all member-states and the resolution was passed. On the issue of the origin of the virus, all parties agreed to work in close collaboration with WHO for animal health and Food and Agricultural Organization with purpose to reduce future infections. In addition to that, all parties agreed that WHO should conduct an assessment over its response to Covid-19 with consensus also been reached about evaluating the role of WHO which came under sharp criticism of the US President Donald Trump. The customary practice of consultation between Director General and member-states to review lesson learnt and proposed suggestions for future was done. In the consultations vast majority agreed that the pandemic is not over yet and co-operation to fight against the pandemic is most urgent task. China agreed that all parties would enhance co-operation and engage in constructive dialogue in improving the public health. On the other hand, China pretends to be responsible member to the international community but in reality, they tried to cover up and allowed the virus to spread to create 'global pandemic'. On March 24, a Texas lawyer, Larry Klayman filed a complaint in federal court seeking at least \$ 20 trillion from Chinese government and asked to pay dearly. On April 14, 2020 British Think Tank "Henry Jackson Society" advocated compensation of 351 billion pounds from the Chinese Communist Party to United Kingdom. On the same day, the All India Bar Association filed a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Council seeking an unspecified amount of reparations from China over global spread of corona virus. The global corona virus pandemic has affected world economy badly with almost all major economies being under nation-wide lockdown. The United Nations has warned that the global economy

could shrink by 1% which is much less than previous forecast of 2.5 %. It is also said that it could be even worse if restrictions on economic activities would extend without proper fiscal responses. Evidently Chinese regime has violated the international health regulations and international community might take action against Chinese regime, as many experts suggest. US President Donald Trump has also indicated that he would be taking action against China during one of his daily press briefing at the White house. Whether it could be economic or other sanctions, has not yet been stated with clarity.

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