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Applying Ockham's Razor to COVID-19 Simplifies What Happened

By Matt A. Mayer

Other than a few hardcore warhawks, no one truly has an appetite to go to war with China. Given the weapons involved and the sheer size of both militaries, such a war would be globally cataclysmic. Nonetheless, it would be utterly irresponsible for U.S. policymakers to continue to bury their heads in the sand concerning China's acts and omissions related to COVID-19 beginning in October 2019. If you apply Ockham's razor to several events, it seems clear China's conduct bordered on an act of war against the United States.

Back in the 14th Century, William of Ockham propounded the idea that the simplest explanation of an unknown event is the preferred one compared to more complex theories. This idea became known as Ockham's razor, or the law of parsimony. When it comes to events starting in October 2019, the simplest explanations of these events implicate China.

First, for much of the last year, the experts and media pushed the idea that COVID-19 made an animal-to-human transmission at a wet market in Wuhan, China. It isn't an easy act for a virus to mutate enough for it to be transmissible from animals to humans. All attempts to find evidence supporting the complex animal-to-human transmission have come up entirely empty. Stripped to its core, China wants the world to believe a virus from a bat that lives over a 1,000-miles away from Wuhan somehow made more than a dozen mutations that allowed it to jump to humans at a consumer food market.

In contrast, based on records dating back to 2012, we know the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) was actively collecting bat coronaviruses and engaging in gain of function research that would make those coronaviruses transmissible to humans. We also know that outside agencies didn't find the WIV to be totally compliant with safety protocol required when operating such a dangerous lab. Critically, U.S. intelligence reported that in October 2019 at least three personnel at the WIV were hospitalized with COVID-19-type symptoms. Ominously, we know Chinese military research took place at the WIV.

So, which of the two explanations adheres to Ockham's razor – the complex and unverified “wet market” theory or the simple “it came out of the lab” theory?

Next, for over a year, the Chinese government has failed to explain why it shutdown domestic travel out of the Hubei Province, as it allowed international travel to the West to continue for at least a month while it hide the fact that COVID-19 was easily transmissible human-to-human. If the Chinese government was so concerned with the virus spreading within its country that it literally quarantined an entire province, why didn't that concern carry over to the rest of the world?

Again, Ockham's razor leads to the basic realization that China wanted the virus to spread to other countries. We don't have to know why it wanted that to happen—it wanted to hurt Donald Trump's reelection chances (it did), it wanted to weaken the West because the U.S. and other countries were pushing back on its mercantilism and IP theft (it did), or knowing it would be weakened by the virus it wanted to keep its place in the world by weakening others countries (it did). We just need to apply common sense that it acted to stop the spread within its borders as it intentionally allowed the virus to spread across the globe. We've prosecuted people who had a virus and knowingly engaged in conduct that infected others, yet we shy away from outright accusing China of malevolent conduct.

Finally, China has refused to provide and/or destroyed records from the WIV to prove COVID-19 wasn't developed at the lab; it has disappeared scientist, journalists, victims, and others who could shed light on the origin of the virus; it sterilized the wet market where the virus allegedly made the jump to humans preventing any outsiders from doing forensic work; it has failed to explain easily explainable events that would exculpate China; and it either keep quiet or withheld vital information about the virus until it was too late to contain it. Do those acts sound like the actions of an innocent party?

Once again, Ockham's razor tells us if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck, and sounds like a duck, it is a duck. Here, virtually every act or omission by the Chinese government over the last eighteen months screams guilt. Moreover, if it possessed proof of its innocence, why doesn't it just give the world access to that proof? It can't because it isn't innocent. Instead of buying into its attempts to blame frozen food or the U.S. military or some bat from a 1,000-miles away from Wuhan, the West needs to come together with one voice and hold China accountable for its conduct.

We aren't going to go to war with China over COVID-19, but the world should demand accountability for what it intentionally unleashed on the world. We also must demand international access and monitoring of the WIV and other labs in China going forward no differently than we demand such access to other rogue countries interested in developing weapons of mass destruction. We wouldn't tolerate a nuclear bomb launched from Iran. Why are we tolerating a potential bioweapon release from China that killed over three million and injured hundreds of millions more?

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