To: President Biden

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Subject: Improve US-China Relationship by Changing Global Covid-19 Policy

**Executive Summary:**

Former President Trump had a global Covid-19 policy to blame China as the source, not being transparent, and even deliberately allowing the spread of the virus. This policy, partly driven by some false facts and diplomatic exaggeration, led to exacerbated US-China relationship and domestic anti-Asian situations. Now with much better pandemic control and various kinds of available vaccines in the US, it is time to repair the toxic global Covid-19 policies. By stopping endless blame, recognizing some effective Covid policies from the Chinese government, and directing focus to the advantageous US-developed vaccines, the new administration could improve the US-China relationship and strengthen the global leadership position.

**Background:**

Here I define US global Covid-19 policy as to how the United States engage internationally about Covid-19, including how to describe, account for, and improve the global pandemic landscape. SARS-COV-2, as known as the Covid-19 virus emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Due to mishandling in the early phase, it quickly spread across China and to other countries. Former President Trump took this as an opportunity to further legitimate his opposing policies against China by holding the Chinese government accountable for the global destruction, mocking and disrespecting Chinese Covid-19 policies (after the early phase, most of them were successful as a result), and calling the virus as “Chinese Virus” multiple times. The Chinese government retaliated with tough diplomatic tones. The former administration’s global Covid-19 policy was simply blaming China. There was little, if any, US-initiated international cooperation or program to handle the pandemic, and President Trump even led the country withdrawal from the WHO (World Health Organization) after accusing the agency of being manipulated by China.

Such a global Covid-19 policy hurts the US significantly. Misled by the propaganda, the US government and the public failed to recognize and adopt China’s later effective Covid policies including quarantine, forced masking, and contact tracing which led to worsening domestic pandemic situation. It damages US-China relationship as well when ministry of foreign affairs from both countries spent huge amount of time rhetorically blaming and retaliating to each other instead of setting up real and practical discussions. This also damages the United States’ global image as a leader when the government could not control domestic pandemic, have no plan to help the rest of the world, and throw herself into diplomatic headache. At the time that the domestic pandemic was on the right track of being controlled, now it is the time to repair the damage made by inappropriate policies.

**Recommendations:**

1. Stop blaming China for being the source of Covid-19. It has been almost 16 months since the outbreak of Covid-19 in China. Since it is almost a global consensus that the Chinese government made some mistakes in the early phase, keep strengthening and blaming cannot receive enough benefits compared with the damage made to US-China relationships.

2. Recognize China’s effective pandemic policies as well. President Biden has spent resource on blaming Trump’s pandemic policies both during and after the election, and the new administration has truly corrected a lot of them which in return benefited the whole country and the government’s rate of support. To send a friendly signal to Beijing, the Biden administration could start by recognizing effective pandemic policies. Concrete practices can be praising China’s massive quick tests, required face-covering, responsive quarantine decision-making, and wide-covering contact-tracing systems. There are at least two channels that recognizing China pandemic policies can lead to better relationships: first, it shows the new administration has a different attitude and mindset compared with the Trump administration, which might reset the cumulative opposing attitude and mindset from China to start new effective conversations as well. Second, the Chinese government is quite proud of its successful pandemic policies, and this is exactly what they want to hear at this moment, which will be an efficient and effective approach.

3. Initiate and lead programs to distribute vaccines and rebuilt the world along with China. Moving into the repairing period of Covid-19, the world needs a leader as they did after World War II. As two great powers in the world, the U.S. and China have the resource to lead this period. Consequently, there are only two ends: cooperate to save the world or compete to form allies. Cooperation is a more humanitarian approach and can also help the U.S. win back international respect and the global image that has been losing since the Trump administration. Given that the U.S. still has better vaccines (with more advanced mRNA technology), financial systems, and global influence compared with China, it makes perfect sense for the Biden administration to take a leader’s position in any form of potential cooperation. The Biden administration can make an offer to cooperate with China in repairing the global Covid impact including distributing vaccines and financial investment. If China accepts, the U.S. can strengthen its global position as the initiator and leader of such programs and could also improve the relationship during friendly talks and cooperation; if China does not accept, it becomes another claim to criticize. Either way, it will help the United States.