

**SOCIETIES CO-EXISTING WITH COVID-19:
NARRATIVES IN CHINA**

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Executive Summary

1. Western experts argue that COVID-19 is likely to evolve into an endemic disease. For medical experts, the pace of global vaccination will most likely shape coexistence with COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic in the near term.
2. Many countries in the West have transitioned from a zero-tolerance strategy for COVID-19 (also known as ‘elimination strategy’) to a COVID-19 co-existence strategy (also considered as a ‘mitigation strategy’).
3. The ‘mitigation strategy’ emphasises reduction in death rates rather than infections, thus the need to persuade a risk-averse public (like the Chinese) on its merits.
4. Against the backdrop of the Delta variant, ranking Chinese epidemiologist Zhang Wenhong (nicknamed “China’s Dr Fauci”) indicated a need to co-exist and live with COVID-19; the Beijing leadership however does not agree with this view.
5. Former Chinese Health Minister Gao Qiang in an article hosted on the website of the government-affiliated think tank China Health Economics Association blasted the laissez-faire approach to the pandemic and insisted that China should continue to remove COVID-19 through continued mass vaccination and strict control mitigation, especially at the borders.
6. Experts and opinion-makers in China in favour of a cautious and suspicious approach to virus co-existence narratives premise their argument on China having a track record of “largely containing the epidemic last year [2020] within just a few months, becoming the first country in the world to resume normal social life and economic activities”.
7. Other reasons are the low efficacy of Chinese-made vaccines (many of the early infected Nanjing cases were fully vaccinated).

8. The National Centre for Biotechnology Information data shows that there are fewer intensive care unit (ICU) beds per 100,000 people at 3.43 in China (data from the Chinese Society of Critical Care Medicine) than the 34.2 ICU beds per 100,000 people in the United States.
9. Outside China, there are politicians who adopted a middle path in opening up some areas. For example, Hong Kong tourism sector lawmaker Yiu Si-wing argues that even with a zero-infection approach, China could have comparatively more flexible policies for virus-absent areas that would allow Hong Kong to reconnect with selected provinces like Guangdong.
10. Professor of Bioethics at the University of Washington School of Medicine Nancy Jecker foresees a division in the world. Countries are split between those adopting a zero COVID-19 strategy and those promoting a pro-mitigation strategy.

SOCIETIES CO-EXISTING WITH COVID-19: NARRATIVES IN CHINA

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Co-existence and Zero-Tolerance Narratives in the West

- 1.1 Some experts in the West argue that based on the historical behaviour of pandemics, it is time to start conceptualising COVID-19 as an endemic and co-existing with it. In the 20th century, there were four influenza pandemics that had advanced into a new version of the flu that continued to circulate for decades, while the 1968 and 2009 pandemics have evolved into seasonal-flu strains today.¹ Scientists postulated that common-cold viruses are likely to have originated from previous pandemics, for example, seasonal coronavirus OC43 may have originated from the 1889 pandemic that led to the demise of 1,000,000 individuals in the world.²
- 1.2 History shows that in the transition from pandemic to endemic, the total elimination of viruses in the past appears to be the exception rather than the norm. Smallpox is the only human virus ever removed from the face of the Earth in 1980 after a long and sustained vaccination campaign while American childhood immunisations have built up herd immunity against previously common viruses like measles and mumps.³
- 1.3 Western experts thus argue that COVID-19 is likely to evolve into an endemic disease. For medical experts, the pace of global vaccination will most likely shape coexistence with COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic in the near term. Virologist Alex

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¹ Xue, Katherine S, "Coexisting with the Coronavirus" dated 21 July 2021 in the *Annals of Medicine The New Yorker* [downloaded on 21 July 2021], available at <https://www.newyorker.com/science/annals-of-medicine/coexisting-with-the-coronavirus>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Greninger at the University of Washington articulated: “The single best thing we can do is to vaccinate the world as fast as possible to limit viral evolution”.⁴ Therefore, many have transitioned from a zero-tolerance strategy for COVID-19 (also known as ‘elimination strategy’⁵) to a COVID-19 co-existence strategy (also considered as a ‘mitigation strategy’).

- 1.4 The chairperson of the Hong Kong Medical Association’s communicable diseases committee Dr Joseph Tsang Kay-yan also concurred that the complete removal of the COVID-19 coronavirus will be highly difficult to achieve and a zero-tolerance policy would delay border opening: “In that case, there will be no end in sight for reopening the border with Hong Kong in the foreseeable future...I can’t say it is unachievable. The matter is when? It’s highly difficult to prevent all imported infections...But with epidemic control measures in place – such as only vaccinated people who have tested negative for Covid-19 able to cross the border – I see no reason why mainland China can’t reopen the border with Hong Kong”.⁶
- 1.5 Research in Denmark and the UK have shown that a few months after testing positive for COVID-19 coronavirus, adults are 80% less likely to get infected by the virus and, when reinfections happen, the effects are likely to be mild or asymptomatic with body resistance mitigating the effects of the virus.⁷ From January to April 2021, 100,000,000 American adults were fully vaccinated; while the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDV) recorded approximately 10,000 breakthrough infections by April 2021, only 1,000 needed hospitalisation.⁸ Other challenges however remain. The challenge in transitioning to a ‘mitigation strategy’ has its own challenges.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy” dated 6 August 2021 in BBC News [downloaded on 6 August 2021], available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-58095909>.

⁶ Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now” dated 9 August 2021 in *South China Morning Post (SCMP)* [downloaded on 9 August 2021], available at https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3144374/china-warned-against-following-doctors-orders-live-covid-19?module=perpetual_scroll&pgtype=article&campaign=3144374.

⁷ Xue, Katherine S, “Coexisting with the Coronavirus”.

⁸ Ibid.

- 1.6 The ‘mitigation strategy’ emphasises reducing death rates rather than infections, implying that the risk-averse public (like the Chinese) would have to be persuaded of its merits according to senior fellow for global health at the Council on Foreign Relations Professor Huang Yanzhong⁹ who said that “[t]here was this massively traumatic experience they had, seeing what happened in Wuhan where their health systems were completely overwhelmed. If they reopen, they are afraid that the Chinese health system would not be able to handle [another surge], especially in rural areas”.¹⁰
- 1.7 In the United States, mitigation efforts at mass vaccination are challenged by non-vaxxers’ pushbacks.¹¹ Mass media reporting also adds to the fear of mitigation strategy or co-existence with the virus. Virologist Jin Dongyan of Hong Kong University (HKU) noted that Chinese state media depicted the coronavirus in a fearful manner, “presenting the Indian outbreak as if it was the end of days, and the situation in the UK and US was shown to be hellish”.¹²
- 1.8 Some Chinese experts based overseas as well as practitioners in Hong Kong articulated their agreement on this. They also examined the same issue from non-medical perspectives, focusing on its economic impact. For example, US news agency Associated Press quoted health economist at Yale School of Public Health Xi Chen as saying that “...even if you can lock down all the regions in China, people might still die, and more might die due to hunger or loss of jobs...[thus need to] allow the virus to exist”.¹³ Professor of Bioethics at the University of Washington School of Medicine Nancy Jecker argues that mass lockdowns impact the poor more than other socioeconomic groups and all groups’ mental health in the long run: “If

⁹ Yanzhong Huang is an associate professor at the John C Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, and a senior fellow for Global Health at the Council on Foreign Relations.

¹⁰ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Zhang, Yiwu, “West lecturing China on ‘co-existing with virus’ a disguised attack” dated 9 August 2021 in *Global Times* [downloaded on 9 August 2021], available at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1231005.shtml>.

China doesn't shift fast enough, the effects would be more severe at all levels of society".¹⁴

- 1.9 Some experts like ranking Chinese epidemiologist Zhang Wenhong (nicknamed "China's Dr Fauci") has weighed in on the debate. Against the backdrop of the Delta infectious variant, Zhang indicates that there is a need to co-exist and live with COVID-19; however, the Beijing leadership does not agree with this view and has reinforced its zero-tolerance support in managing a more infectious Delta variant since mid-July 2021 (shared on his three-million followers Weibo account posted on 29 July 2021).¹⁵ However, this is not in concert with Chinese official thinking.

The Chinese Disagreement

- 2.1 Former Chinese Health Minister Gao Qiang does not accept expert views of the disease turning into a seasonal flu-like endemic. He prefers to see the pandemic as a "battle between humanity and the virus" and his views are publicised by *People's Daily* and China Health Economics Association website (where he is a general counsel).¹⁶ China's zero-tolerance policy includes comprehensive containment measures like mass vaccinations/testing, quarantining of positive and suspected individuals, strong lockdowns of risky regions like parts of Guangdong province as the authorities consider these measures as low budget and effective.¹⁷ Shao Yiming from the Chinese Centre of Disease Control and Prevention articulated that while there is no vaccine that could prevent COVID-19 infection, "currently [vaccines] could still control all variants of the virus".¹⁸
- 2.2 Some voices in China like Gao Qiang have argued that such international eradication of COVID-19 should be the end goal before opening up to the rest of the world. Gao

¹⁴ Wong, Tessa, "China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy".

¹⁵ Baptista, Eduardo, "China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now".

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Xinhua*, "China right to stick to anti-pandemic strategy amid Delta variant surge: media" dated 19 August 2021 in *China Daily* [downloaded on 19 August 2021], available at <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202108/19/WS611dd053a310efa1bd669d10.html>.

¹⁸ Wong, Tessa, "China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy".

wrote in an article that “[t]he author believes that the interactions between China and the world must be healthy and safe, in line with national and people’s interests, not blind interactions, let alone reckless interactions. At present, whether my country can achieve normal interactions with the world does not lie in domestic epidemic control, but in the international epidemic situation”.¹⁹

- 2.3 Some Chinese critics based outside China cited cultural reasons that could obstruct a mitigation strategy. According to Professor Huang Yanzhong, ‘losing face’ may result from previous zero COVID-19 strategy “claim that this approach is superior to the Western approach, which is associated with general failure in containing the virus, and even claim the superiority of the Chinese political system....If they start abandoning it and turn to mitigation, they are basically endorsing a Western approach that they had trashed”.²⁰
- 2.4 There is also an ideological element to the maintenance of the zero-tolerance policy. From the initial COVID-19 outbreak in Hubei province that was mitigated by months of lockdown and mass testing, Chinese President Xi Jinping praised the “zero-tolerance” strategy as evidence of Chinese superior political system vis-a-vis liberal democracies in the West such as the pandemic-ravaged United States.²¹ Beijing is firm on implementing a “zero-tolerance” COVID-19 strategy of not re-opening its borders to Hong Kong or other countries thus far.²² In fact, the full force of the law is implemented on ordinary citizens opposing this narrative. On 11 August 2021, law enforcement officers detained a teacher in Jiangxi for 15 days for commenting on a news article on how China can “coexist with the coronavirus”.²³
- 2.5 HKU Virologist Jin Dongyan has voiced concern: “Experts involved in decision making should be encouraged to communicate with the public, and different

¹⁹ Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now”.

²⁰ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

²¹ Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now”.

²² Ibid.

²³ Gan, Nectar and Steve George, “China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous” dated 20 August 2021 in CNN [downloaded on 20 August 2021], available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/08/20/china/china-zhang-wenhong-mic-intl-hnk/index.html>.

opinions should all have channels to speak up...From a public health perspective, it is unhealthy and outright dangerous to only allow one kind of voice”.²⁴ Minority views in China have also surfaced. The Delta spread compelled China to accelerate vaccinations but top Chinese epidemiologist Zhang Wenhong argues that transmissions are still possible after full vaccination, albeit at a slower pace with fewer deaths: “What we’ve been through is not the hardest part. What’s harder is finding the wisdom to coexist with the virus in the long run”.²⁵

- 2.6 In a *Caixin* commentary, Zhang Wenhong noted that the Delta variant “once again reminds us of the ever-present virus...Whether we like it or not, there will always be risks in the future...[China should] promote a return to normal life while protecting its citizens from fear of the virus”.²⁶ Zhang Wenhong has his share of supporters. Public health expert Ning Yi posted Weibo photos of himself and Zhang saying, “If we can’t protect an expert as selfless as Zhang Wenhong, then our society is doomed”, while Fudan Chinese Literature Professor Yan Feng warns: “Who will dare to speak out, who will dare to take responsibility, who will act according to their professional judgment in the future?”²⁷ Some experts suggested other reasons for the reluctance in embracing COVID-19 co-existence. Professor Huang Yanzhong opines: “There appears to be this lack of confidence in their vaccines that justifies this continuance of strategy”.²⁸

Resistance against COVID-19 Co-existence and China’s Technocratic Position in This Debate

- 3.1 To countervailing opinions, virus co-existence in China would mean taking the American and British models of COVID-19 mitigation as a natural reference for China.²⁹ Such resistance is naturally strong argument for the authorities to override

²⁴ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

²⁷ Gan, Nectar and Steve George, “China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous”.

²⁸ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

²⁹ Zhang, Yiwu, “West lecturing China on ‘co-existing with virus’ a disguised attack”.

their own experts. There is also an ideological element to the debate on virus co-existence. To some in the Chinese mass media, successful zero-COVID strategy is equivalent to “an ideological and moral victory over the faltering response of the US and other Western democracies, which had struggled to control surging cases and deaths”.³⁰

3.2 Followers of this narrative fear the fast-spreading nature of the Delta variant. The Delta variant was found among cleaning staff of one of China’s most well-used airports, leading to the subsequent virus spread to more than half of China’s 31 provinces and resulting in more than 1,000 infections in less than 21 days.³¹ The Air China Flight CA910 arrived at Nanjing airport on 10 July 2021 with a passenger from Moscow with the Delta variant on board.³² The cleaners caught the virus while clearing the trash, which later spread to at least 16 Chinese provinces and municipalities.³³

3.3 Experts blamed the spread on citizens for letting down their guard, not wearing mask at all times and the more frequent mass gatherings, such as a theatre performance at touristy Zhangjiajie in Hunan with approximately 2,000 attendees and the potential of becoming a super-spreader event.³⁴ State media highlighted “glaring loopholes” at Nanjing airport where local authorities opined that the deplaning cleaners did not observe anti-COVID procedures/protocols, while the flight was allowed to land even though it was stopped from taking off several times for ferrying COVID-hit passengers.³⁵

3.4 When the Delta variant struck, residential sectors in Nanjing were quarantined to contain the virus spread and, in Henan capital Zhengzhou, health bureaucrats were let go after floods were followed by a COVID-19 outbreak despite specific

³⁰ Gan, Nectar and Steve George, “China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous”.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

instructions from President Xi to avoid the outcome.³⁶ There is extra caution implemented for certain groups, such as the elderly and those with immune deficiency diseases who are at higher risks of serious complications and perishing like those who have succumbed to influenza and pneumonia.³⁷

3.5 Given such fast spreaders, the establishment in China was quick in rolling back any ideas of virus co-existence. Shanghai-based Fudan University, Zhang Wenhong's alma mater for his doctoral degree, has formally received charges against Zhang on his thesis and has started a probe to examine the accusations.³⁸ Besides official rebuke, Zhang Wenhong had to face angry nationalists who called him a "traitor" for "blindly worshipping Western ideas" while others claimed he was colluding with foreign forces to sabotage China's COVID-19 measures; they dug out his academic credentials and PhD thesis for scrutiny of plagiarism.³⁹ Zhang had previously been the target of the nationalists on social media for "pandering to Western lifestyles when suggesting kids should have eggs and milk for breakfast for protein instead of traditional Chinese rice porridge".⁴⁰

3.6 West-sceptic opinions such as those of Chinese opinion maker, literary scholar and professor with the Chinese Department of Peking University Zhang Yiwu also exist. Zhang opines that densely populated China is unsuited for co-existence with COVID-19 coronavirus through herd immunity or vaccinations as vaccines have not stalled infection numbers.⁴¹

3.7 Former bureaucrats joined commentators like Zhang Yiwu in their denouncements of coronavirus co-existence. Gao Qiang blasted the laissez-faire approach to the pandemic in an article hosted on the website of the government-affiliated think tank China Health Economics Association and suggested that China should continue to

³⁶ Baptista, Eduardo, "China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now".

³⁷ Xue, Katherine S, "Coexisting with the Coronavirus".

³⁸ Gan, Nectar and Steve George, "China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous".

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Zhang, Yiwu, "West lecturing China on 'co-existing with virus' a disguised attack".

remove COVID-19 through continued mass vaccination and strict control mitigation, especially at the borders.⁴² As Director of Huashan Hospital Department of Infectious Diseases/Head of Shanghai COVID-19 panel, epidemiologist Zhang Wenhong is outranked by former minister/party secretary for the health ministry Gao Qiang who disagreed with his views.⁴³

3.8 Gao Qiang charges that “[The relaxation of Covid-19 measures] is an error in decision-making ... caused by the defects of the political systems of Britain, the United States and other countries, and it is also an inevitable result of advocating individualistic values”.⁴⁴ An economist by training, Gao Qiang highlighted this in his 7 August 2021 commentary in the *People’s Daily*.⁴⁵

3.9 Gao’s “zero-Covid strategy” is supported by National Health Commission official He Qinghua: “In the event of a resurgence of Covid-19 internationally, [China] must insist on implementing strict monitoring, isolation and other prevention and control measures for entry personnel. This is not about cutting contact with the world, but to be highly responsible for the health of the people and national security”.⁴⁶

3.10 Experts and opinion-makers in China who argued that China should be cautious and suspicious of virus co-existence narratives pointed out that China has a track record of “largely containing the epidemic last year [2020] within just a few months, becoming the first country in the world to resume normal social life and economic activities”.⁴⁷ Other reasons for not adopting a virus co-existence policy are the low efficacy of Chinese-made vaccines (many of the early infected Nanjing cases were fully vaccinated).⁴⁸ In addition, there are fewer intensive care unit (ICU) beds per 100,000 people at 3.43 in China (data from the Chinese Society of Critical Care

⁴² Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now”.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Gan, Nectar and Steve George, “China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous”.

⁴⁶ Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now”.

⁴⁷ Zhang, Yiwu, “West lecturing China on ‘co-existing with virus’ a disguised attack”.

⁴⁸ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

Medicine) than the 34.2 ICU beds per 100,000 people in the United States according to the National Centre for Biotechnology Information data.⁴⁹

- 3.11 Another important reason for the zero-tolerance policy is the 20th CCP Congress and Winter Olympic Games in 2022. Beijing does not want to take any risks in having outbreaks at these two events. It is much safer politically to continue with the zero-tolerance strategy that has kept infection cases at bay thus far. *Global Times* noted that the Games could be “another peak of the infections of coronavirus”, thus reinforcing Beijing’s determination to host the Games well and prevent infection to sportspersons of other countries.⁵⁰
- 3.12 The West believe that any easing of restrictions may only occur after China’s 20th National Party Congress (NPC) of top leaders in October 2022 when President Xi Jinping is expected to vie for an unprecedented third term.⁵¹

The Moderate Middle Path

- 4.1 Some moderate anti-nationalist Weibo users analogised Zhang’s denouncement of the coexistence with coronavirus with that of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution when scientists, scholars and cultural workers were shamed and attacked by the Red Guards for their views.⁵² According to Jin Dongyan, the strong rejection of relaxing measures and adoption of strict procedures are common Chinese governance style “where there is often little room for nuance”.⁵³ He said that “[w]e have the saying, ‘kill it when you catch it, chaos when you let go’. The Chinese style is very extreme”.⁵⁴ In other words, there are some moderate observers and experts

⁴⁹ Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now”.

⁵⁰ *Global Times*, “Dynamic zero-case route won’t get China ‘isolated’: Global Times editorial” dated 10 August 2021 in *Global Times* [downloaded on 10 August 2021], available at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1231124.shtml>.

⁵¹ McGregor, Grady, “China’s Delta outbreak tests Beijing’s faith in its homegrown COVID vaccines” dated 5 August 2021 in *Fortune* [downloaded on 5 August 2021], available at <https://fortune.com/2021/08/05/china-delta-outbreak-covid-vaccine-lockdown-growth/>.

⁵² Gan, Nectar and Steve George, “China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous”.

⁵³ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

who are urging for a rethink on extreme measures of COVID-19 elimination and move towards a staged, phased, gradualist or incremental system of mitigation.

4.2 Outside China, there are politicians who favour a middle path narrative to open up selected areas. For example, Hong Kong tourism sector lawmaker Yiu Si-wing argues that even with a zero-infection approach, China could have more flexible policies for virus-absent areas such as allowing Hong Kong to reconnect with selected provinces like Guangdong.⁵⁵ He said, “Hong Kong could fight for reopening to some mainland provinces and cities first, such as Guangdong and Macau. The reopening of the border could be done in a progressive manner”.⁵⁶ Professor of Bioethics at the University of Washington School of Medicine Nancy Jecker argues for a more ‘nuanced approach’ in the form of localised lockdowns and prioritising certain sectors like schools to remain open while locking down gyms and restaurants.⁵⁷

4.3 Nevertheless, the confidence in how the country has put COVID-19 cases under control runs strong in China’s anti-virus co-existence narrative. *Global Times* stated that “China’s containment of the epidemic is way better than countries like the US and the UK. So is the degree of normalization for our social and economic development”.⁵⁸ With relatively few deaths since the Wuhan outbreak and a recovering economy (China was the only major economy to grow in 2020), some in China may not feel the need for change.⁵⁹

4.4 Finally, Zhang Wenhong spent 21 days in social media silence before he aligned his views with the majority narrative on his Weibo account of 3.8 million followers to recant his earlier argument on coexisting with the virus.⁶⁰ Ultimately, the verdict is still out as to which narrative will come up tops in this debate. A moderate view

⁵⁵ Baptista, Eduardo, “China sticks with zero Covid-19 approach, leaving borders closed for now”.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

⁵⁸ Zhang, Yiwu, “West lecturing China on ‘co-existing with virus’ a disguised attack”.

⁵⁹ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

⁶⁰ Gan, Nectar and Steve George, “China insists its zero-Covid strategy is correct. Challenging it can be dangerous”.

within the powerful COVID-19 coexistence narrative faction suggests that it may be possible to have a “controllable window” to the outside world.⁶¹

4.5 Singapore appears to have taken a moderate approach. Since June 2021, Singapore has followed a strategy of ‘living with Covid’ against the backdrop of fully vaccinated individuals dining in groups of five in restaurants, households/workplaces receiving designated number of guests and re-opening to specified countries.⁶²

4.6 Singapore’s COVID-19 multi-ministry taskforce co-chair Lawrence Wong declares that the island-state is transitioning into a new phase of “living with Covid and becoming Covid-resilient” without strong restrictions unless “as a last resort to prevent our hospital system from being overwhelmed”.⁶³ This is done because “[t]he bad news is that Covid-19 may never go away [but] The good news is that it is possible to live normally with it in our midst” according to Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong, Finance Minister Lawrence Wong and Health Minister Ong Ye Kung in June 2021.

4.7 Professor of Bioethics at the University of Washington School of Medicine Nancy Jecker foresees a division in the world. Countries will be split into two categories: between those adopting a zero COVID-19 strategy and those opting for a pro-mitigation strategy.⁶⁴ She opines that “ultimately we may not have a choice but to accept it - in a post-pandemic phase, deaths will recede but the virus may reappear annually like the cold...If that’s right, then China will have to live with it”.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

⁶² Wang, Jessica, “Singapore to continue living with Covid, despite 187 new cases” dated 5 September 2021 in News.com.au [downloaded on 5 September 2021], available at <https://www.news.com.au/world/coronavirus/global/singapore-to-continue-living-with-covid-despite-187-new-cases/news-story/dd4cf060807353800fc8fddbd8be9876>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Wong, Tessa, “China: How Delta threatens a prized zero Covid strategy”.

⁶⁵ Ibid.