

# Chinese Communist Party embraces the global “forever COVID” policy

John Malvar

16 December 2022

A catastrophe of incalculable proportions is being consciously unleashed on the people of China by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which has completely lifted its Zero-COVID policy.

Each day, news reports from China reveal just how far the government’s policy changes have gone and how deep the resulting crisis has become. In the past two weeks, mass testing has stopped and the mobile app for tracking contacts and exposure to COVID-19 has been shut down. On Wednesday, China stopped counting asymptomatic COVID cases. After more than two years in which China had the most precise data on COVID-19, official figures no longer reflect reality. Quarantining protocols are also being lifted, and workers infected with COVID-19 are now forced back to work.

Adopting all the lies of the United States and other Western powers, the official rhetoric of the CCP stands reality on its head. It no longer presents a Zero-COVID policy as the solution to ending the pandemic, but claims rather that the pandemic is the solution to ending the Zero-COVID policy. Mass infection with the “mild” Omicron will lead to a surge of infections, termed the “COVID exit wave” by official state media. According to Zhong Nanshan, a pulmonary disease expert and a leading official voice of CCP COVID policy, by mid-2023 the wave will supposedly subside and China will return to “pre-epidemic conditions.”

In fact, China is reintegrating into the dystopian world of “forever COVID,” in which the mass infection of the global population has allowed SARS-CoV-2 to mutate and evolve into increasingly infectious and immune-resistant variants. With each new global surge, millions more people are being reinfected with the virus and experiencing compounding damage to their bodies, with growing sections of the population dying or being disabled by Long COVID.

The spread of COVID through the population of China provides the virus with a vast new pool of transmission in which it can mutate into new, possibly more virulent forms. The ending of Zero-COVID could redound catastrophically on the world in the form of renewed and worsened waves of

global infection.

While official data are no longer accurate, there is strong evidence that China’s public health infrastructure is already being overwhelmed by severe cases. Anyone with a supposedly “mild” infection has been instructed to remain home, but hospital and medical centers are unable to care for the mass influx of patients. The situation is dire enough that doctors with COVID-19 who present only “mild symptoms” are told they should remain at work but avoid contact with elderly patients. Such a policy will turn medical care into the primary vector of viral transmission.

The justification for this new policy was presented in an editorial in the *Global Times*. “There is a consensus that the virus is too contagious to avoid infection. Although their symptoms may depend on luck, almost everyone can survive the virus and the risk of death is negligible.”

Zhong quantified this “negligible” risk for the press on Friday, stating that “only” 0.1 percent of those infected would die. A fatality rate of 0.1 percent from a virus that is “too contagious to avoid” in a nation of 1.4 billion people could mean a death toll of a million or more.

The estimate of 0.1 percent is low, however. Singapore, with the highest vaccination rate in the world, suffered a 0.45 percent fatality rate from Omicron in 2022. A quarter million people died of COVID-19 in the United States in the past year. How many more may die as a nation of 1.4 billion comparatively immunologically naive people is opened to the ravages of the virus? Numerous scientific studies, including one released by Hong Kong University on Thursday, have been published in the past months. There is no uncertainty in their prognoses: hundreds of thousands, possibly as many as two million, face death as a result of the lifting of Zero-COVID.

Factories and businesses are deserted in Beijing and other major cities as a result of both mass infection and fear. News reports are full of accounts of workplaces in which 90 percent of workers are staying home with fever symptoms, with growing reports of businesses compelling sick workers to return to work and the government preparing to follow

suit.

While the CCP is repeating the criminal “herd immunity” policy of the US and imperialist powers, there is a critical difference: To carry out its mass infection policy, the Chinese government is compelled to roll back a successful and popular eliminationist strategy, which was not the imposition of the CCP bureaucracy on the population, but was in many ways the reverse.

Zero-COVID was the planned and coordinated expression of popular determination to take the needed measures to prevent mass infection and death. The success of the policy rested on the collective choice of working class communities to make sacrifices—including undergoing regular mass testing and enduring occasional lockdowns—to prevent the spread of disease.

It is not the Chinese population that has demanded the lifting of Zero-COVID, but international finance capital and its mouthpieces in the Western media. They brayed for this and did everything possible to poison international public opinion against China’s public health measures.

The *New York Times* ran editorials, op-eds and articles that denounced China’s “totalitarian” health measures, presented quarantine facilities as concentration camps, compared public health workers to Nazis, and in the name of “freedom,” “human rights” and “democracy” demanded mass infection. While China struggled to remain free of the global pandemic, Washington destabilized the world, provoked war in Ukraine, threatened war over Taiwan, and imposed trade war measures on China.

In late November, the western media latched onto small, upper-middle class protests in China to demand yet again the lifting of Zero-COVID. The blank-paper demonstrations on the campuses of China’s elite universities were not an upswell of defiant opposition by the Chinese people, but functioned rather as the interface between the strategy of the CCP and the demands of Western propaganda. They were staged before the cameras of the world press to dramatize “public demand” for lifting Zero-COVID, a policy decision that the CCP had already taken at the insistence of international finance capital.

The CCP carefully planned and launched the lifting of Zero-COVID long before the protests. By early November, it had brought in consultants for the process from Hong Kong, shifted budget priorities, and on November 11 announced the 20 measures that comprised the first stage in the rollback of Zero-COVID. Just one month later, the vast protective infrastructure, carefully created by the Chinese people, lies in ruins.

Zero-COVID organized, planned and formulated as policy the measures that emerged out of grassroots efforts in Wuhan and nearby cities to prevent the spread of the

pandemic in early 2020. Before the capitalist powers of the rest of the world had adopted a strategy for the pandemic, an eliminationist approach was already in place in China.

US imperialism then set the agenda for global capitalism, pioneering the techniques and lies of mass infection and death in service of sustaining profits. Country after country followed Washington’s lead, scrapping first elimination and then mitigation measures in a policy of “herd immunity” and “living with the virus.” It was this encircling regime of disease, this policy of “forever COVID,” and not Zero-COVID, that isolated China.

The power and privileges of the CCP leadership rest upon its ability to police and purvey the labor power of the vast Chinese working class for exploitation by global capitalism. The upper echelons of the party wield state power to ensure the successful interface of imperialist finance capital with the Chinese workforce, while preserving national sovereignty as the political basis of their authority. Their political outlook is an expression of this function and is entirely nationalist.

There is no possible national solution to a global pandemic. Either Zero-COVID will succeed as a global strategy on the basis of a socialist policy or COVID-19 will continue to spread globally for the foreseeable future. The CCP has no way out of China’s isolation and is capitulating to world imperialism.

Knowing that the lifting of Zero-COVID would be unpopular and could become the source of explosive class conflict, the CCP leadership deliberately resolved to forgo half-measures. With extraordinary rapidity, before opposition could be organized, it tore down everything that stood in the way of reopening to international finance capital. Seeking to atomize the Chinese working class and break up its social solidarity, the government has adopted a new slogan: “Be the first person responsible for your own health.”

It is imperative that the Chinese and international working class oppose the lifting of Zero-COVID and fight not only for its re-implementation in China, but throughout the world. Planned and coordinated public health as a common goal and collective right must be the guiding principles of a global movement of the working class, in order to save millions more people from death and debilitation.



To contact the WWSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**