

COMMENTARY

Covid 19 and why Donald Trump will likely lose the November 3 Election, and the Republicans the Senate

By Dickson Igwe



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October 9, 2020

Just under a year ago the biggest news story was trade wars, especially the USA versus China. Trade tensions between the super powers threatened the global economy.

Before the advent of COVID 19 the USA appeared to have its new and rising adversary- China- on the ropes. China appeared to be losing the trade war. China was being strongly checked by the USA. Its ascendancy was in question.

Then the Covid 19 Pandemic came out the blue first appearing in Wuhan, China. Whether China was guilty of deception or not in its untimely announcement that there was a big problem with this virus is today beside the point.

China- unlike the USA and UK- acted thoroughly and aggressively at the onset. And eventually China contained the virus.

Then a new criticism sparked. The western media, especially papers and sites

on the right and far right, began to blame China for the outbreak. The story was that China had purposely hidden critical information about the virus outbreak from the world. This was an alleged propaganda that was being driven by western leaders- especially the leaders of the USA and UK.

This may have been true to some extent. However it was the gargantuan "cock up" by Donald Trump and Western Leaders, who also knew of the potency of the virus, and who stupidly kept their countries open, that drove the pandemic to the place where the world was at threat and under lockdown.

Initially the western world believed Covid 19 was a disease unique to China.

When the virus arrived on western shores there was anger. Trump's USA, ignored the science, and denied reality. The result has been 7 million people infected and 220 000 dead.

Compared to the USA- with a China that has over four times as many people as the US- China has had a tiny fraction of infections and deaths as the USA.

Then, unlike western economies, the Chinese economy together with Pacific economies has returned to growth.

Pundits have asserted that a widespread adherence to the law as stated by the Communist party and

a culture of collective responsibility is the reason.

On the other hand in the USA and elsewhere, wearing a protective mask became contention.

Trump led a significant set of US citizens, mainly White Republicans, to mock the wearing of masks, declaring the wearing of masks a sign of weakness.

Scientists are clear that the wearing of masks significantly reduces the risk of contracting and transmitting the virus.

Trump's disdain for health protocols combined with a shrinking US economy- the IMF has predicted the US economy will shrink by 8% in 2020- shows why Joe Biden is 10 points ahead in the latest poll averages.

Then Trump contracted the virus in early October, and the virus has spread in the White House and places where Republicans have been campaigning. This is the great irony of the USA 2020 Election campaign.

The fact remains that good public health and a healthy economy are synonyms. There can be no healthy economy in the midst of a raging pandemic. Donald Trump failed to understand that fact and will very likely pay dearly in November.

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Sea Turtle Being Treated Locally for Fibropapilloma Virus

4 October 2020

Dr. Shannon Gore
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On Tuesday, 29 September, a green sea turtle was captured for tag and release in Little Harbour, Peter Island, BVI by the Association of Reef Keepers (ARK) as part of a new UK-funded Darwin Plus project. However, this particular turtle was highly infected with Fibropapillomatosis (FP), a tumour-causing disease that mainly affects green sea turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) and was not released back into the ocean due to potential transmission to other sea turtles. It was transported to a local facility for assessment and quarantine.

Outbreaks of this particular disease have been increasingly recorded around the world since the 1980s, most prominently in the Hawaiian Islands as well as Florida and Puerto Rico. Locally, observations of three turtles with FP at Deadman's Bay, Peter Island were first documented in 1996, with the last sighting of a turtle with FP in the early 2000s. No other observations of FP occurred in the BVI until small tumours were observed on a turtle that had stranded as a result of a deadly boat strike in 2018 and another turtle photographed in 2019 by a snorkeler in the North Sound appeared to also have tumours. The turtle that was recently captured is the first turtle to be assessed and confirmed to have FP in the BVI by a qualified veterinarian with specific training in sea turtle rehabilitation.

The cause of FP is not fully understood but evidence shows a Cheloniid Fibropapilloma-associated Herpesvirus is most likely responsible. The disease can range from being minor with only a few small tumours to being severely debilitated with tumours covering the eyes and within the mouth. This will reduce the turtle's ability to feed, eventually succumbing to death. However, there is documentation of the spontaneous regression of smaller tumours.

The sea turtle captured on the 29th of September is currently in a quarantine facility while Dr. Sarah Weston of Canines, Cats & Critters and Dr. Latisha Martin from the Department of Agriculture & Fisheries engage with sea turtle specialists within the worldwide turtle conservation community to



devise a plan for its rehabilitation, recovery and eventual release back into the wild. While COVID-19 has posed various constraints to dealing with this situation, it has prompted positive action within the community to act quickly and resourcefully to caring for this threatened species. Both the welfare of the individual turtle, and the BVI's turtle population are of paramount importance throughout this process. More information will be made available as this situation evolves.

The Darwin Plus project, "Building resilient, participatory management of marine biodiversity in hurricane prone BVI", locally renamed the STEEL Project (Sustainable turtles, environments, economies & livelihoods) is a three-year project aimed to gain a better understanding of the status of BVI turtles and their habitats, create a better local understanding of turtle conservation and, using the MCS Community Voice Method (CVM) of engagement, will work with BVI communities to develop new legislation recommendations and a conservation action plan to safeguard BVI's turtle populations for future generations.

The STEEL Project is being led by the Marine Conservation Society UK alongside local organisation, ARK and partnerships with the BVI Government's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Ministry of Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration.