

Viala-Gaufrey, J. and Lindaman, D. (2020). 'Donald Trump's 'Chinese virus': the politics of naming.' *The Conversation*. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/donald-trumps-chinese-virus-the-politics-of-naming-136796> (Accessed 23rd November 2021).

In this article, Jérôme Viala-Gaufrey, Assistant lecturer at CY Cergy Paris Université and Dana Lindaman, Associate Professor of French Studies at University of Minnesota Duluth argue that Donald Trump understated and played down the coronavirus pandemic for multiple weeks, January through March, by conferring it as a “minor nuisance” despite Alex Azar, the Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a public-health emergency and travel restrictions to and from China on January 31. The authors assumed that Trump did not address this threat as he was afraid of the repercussions that would follow after breaking this bad news to the public which might jeopardise and ruin his chances in reelection. However, there is no evidence provided to back up and prove this argument. Nonetheless, travel bans to and from Europe were put in place to protect America soon after. The president used the expression, “Chinese virus” more than 20 times in the time span of 15 days in March. To back up this statement, the authors included how a photographer managed to get a picture of the script wherein, Trump changed the wordings - “Corona” was changed to “Chinese”. It’s been called “Wuhan Virus” testified by joint G7 statement, moreover, China was accused by the secretary of state, Mike Pompeo for putting the world at risk. The authors agree with Mike Pompeo; evidently prove the argument by providing evidence on Chinese cover-up and repression of whistle-blowers and follow-up investigations. However, I do not agree with *The Conversation*, because it was more than just accusing a country which encouraged racism, hence, in-depth research is mandatory before making such a bold statement. The extreme detailing with dates and names is commendable, it definitely gives precise and accurate information. Trump feared putting US-China trade deal and relationship in danger by upsetting Beijing. This argument is later backed up by the authors through an investigation

conducted by the New York Times, “Trump resisted taking the hard line defended by many hawks in his administration (including Secretary Pompeo) – at least, until he was informed that a Chinese official had spread a conspiracy theory that Covid-19 had been imported by the U.S. Army personnel, which clearly upset him.” Just after this, he started using the term “Chinese Virus” and said, “*“It’s not racist at all. No, it’s not at all. It’s from China. That’s why. It comes from China. I want to be accurate.” (March 18)*” when accused of racism. Expressions like “Chinese Virus” or “Wuhan Virus” aims at racial and ethnic inequalities and epitomize as a threat. This naturally makes the public have a negative connotation and a preconceived notion for the particular community/group through feelings like anger, anxiety, guilt and disgust. The authors clearly state how Trump is not welcoming to immigrants and rather negative by the statement, “Donald Trump himself has associated immigrants with “disease coming into our country,” (June 11, 2019), “communicable disease” and “tremendous medical problem coming into a country” (Dec. 11, 2018), including during the 2015 primary campaign.” Social, racial and cultural impact can be huge when the virus is associated with foreigners wherein the supporters are tending to be more inclined towards being against immigrants. This argument is backed up by academic studies that show correlation between anti-immigration views, political conservatism and disgust sensitivity (Viala-Gaudefroy and Lindaman, 2020).