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## *China Silences Critics Over Deadly Virus Outbreak*

Beijing has responded faster to the new threat than it did with SARS, but it still silences and punishes those who veer from the official line, with potentially damaging consequences.



Chinese children waiting to board trains in Beijing on Tuesday. Kevin Frayer/Getty Images



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The SARS disaster was supposed to drag China into a new era of

openness and responsibility. The deadly disease rippled across the world 17 years ago, abetted by a Chinese government that [covered up](#) its spread. As the scope of it became clear, China's journalists, intellectuals and other critics helped shame Beijing into opening up about the problem.

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- **Should I wear a mask?**

The C.D.C. has [recommended](#) that all Americans wear cloth masks if they go out in public. This is a shift in federal guidance reflecting [new concerns that the coronavirus is being spread by infected people who have no symptoms](#). Until now, the C.D.C., like the W.H.O., has advised that ordinary people don't need to wear masks unless they are sick and coughing. Part of the reason was to preserve medical-grade masks for health care workers who desperately need them at a time when they are in continuously short supply. Masks don't replace hand washing and social

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