

Viewpoint: Reassessing the reassessments of COVID's origins — The Wuhan lab leak theory is still the less likely scenario but we may never know for sure

How did the pandemic start? From the early days, experts have considered two possibilities. Either the virus somehow escaped from a laboratory, perhaps the Wuhan Institute of Virology, or, like countless viruses throughout history, it arrived through zoonotic spillover, jumping from animals to humans.

More than a year later, we still don't know exactly what happened. Though governments and news organizations have focused more attention recently on the notion that the virus [leaked from a lab](#), it's unclear that we'll ever identify a theory that satisfies everyone as to how SARS-CoV-2 emerged. Ironically, given the recent prominence of the lab escape theory, the questions the world wants answered about the virus — and the astonishingly fast development of the vaccines that can quash the pandemic — depend entirely on research conducted in labs like the Wuhan Institute of Virology and across the world over the past several decades.

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Preparing for pandemics, global crises by definition, demands a global response. We must approach this collaboratively — and objectively recognize what the data shows. This virus is more likely to be a product of nature than a product of a laboratory. Letting politics lead us toward other conclusions won't help keep anyone safer.

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