

Section 8. Sociology

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CHINA'S VACCINE DIPLOMACY

Abstract. This research examines the difference in rolling out COVID vaccines in China and the United States amid increased political tension. Additionally, considered is the impact of these nations' actions on Latin American countries; for example, This research takes a closer look at the social and economic impacts in these countries as well as the manner and motivations in which China and the United States offered to help other nations during the pandemic. Examples include Venezuela, El Salvador, Paraguay, Brazil, Ecuador, and Honduras. Specifically, China used strategic diplomacy, and the United States disregarded regions it did not value. On the other hand, China seemed to have quicker responses and succeeded in filling empty power vacuums. Furthermore, has the success of these nations' vaccine policies changed the global power distribution? As a result, China was able to benefit from deteriorating international relationships. Additionally, China flexed its influence to leverage diplomacy over the countries as the United States struggled with execution. Has the pandemic revealed a global power shift or the strengths and weaknesses of dominant nations?

Keywords: Covid, China, Vaccine, Distribution, Diplomacy, United States, Political Tension, Global Power.

Following the U.S.-China Trade war, the competitive and arguably antagonistic relationship between the two states is becoming increasingly clear both economically and politically. As the world's largest economies and countries of considerable global influence, the U.S. and China have entered an age of rivalry far past economic competition. Enter the pandemic: ravaging communities, decimating economies, and ultimately changing the world as we know it. The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted every country in the world. Almost two years after the initial discovery of the virus, this global health epidemic's lasting effects are observable today. The pandemic results have been particularly harsh in developed nations, where the intercon-

nectedness of their modern societies has allowed for a more intense virus spread. However, developed nations progress past COVID-related issues with preventative medicine more readily available to the public, as the spotlight on COVID prevention shifts toward developing nations with the resources and technologies necessary to combat the pandemic in countries that are still in need of vaccines. Unfortunately, high-income countries have been faulted for gatekeeping lifesaving medication and supplies, "instead of facing up to their international obligations by waiving intellectual property rules for vaccines, tests and treatments, and sharing lifesaving technology, G-7 leaders have opted for more of the same paltry half-measures" [8]. Even months before the

first COVID vaccines were approved, wealthy nations like the U.S. had secured billions of doses. At the same time, developing countries were ultimately left with insufficient supplies [13]. Furthermore, the drastic need for vaccines in the modern world has paved the way for a new field of international politics: Vaccine Diplomacy. As defined as the ability to “project influence through donations or loans of their home-grown vaccines and the inking of vaccine purchase agreements with countries who have less access to vaccines”, vaccine diplomacy brings countries who donate vaccines “prestige, goodwill, perhaps a degree of indebtedness” [13; 7].

COVID: background:

China’s extensive use of vaccine diplomacy aims to decrease American influence and reshuffle regional power in Latin America. China’s strategy in Latin America is twofold: first, by using cheap vaccines to win over low to middle-income American allies, and second, to use the vaccine to strengthen bonds with existing Chinese partners.

Since Trump’s presidency, America’s relationship with China has become much more confrontational, as evidenced by the trade war and Trump’s administration’s blatant disapproval of China’s human rights affairs in Xinjiang and Hong Kong. The U.S.’s complaints about China don’t end there, as America has become increasingly concerned with China’s rapid economic and military growth, illiberal approach to human rights, and growing authoritarianism. In addition, the U.S. voiced its opposition to various Chinese activities, including their involvement in Taiwan and Hong Kong, their theft of American intellectual property, militarizing the South China Sea, and more. Above all, the U.S. believes it is necessary to curb Chinese growth to preserve the liberal world order that it has established internationally, concerned that it might create a new world order that better supports authoritarian regimes. Alternatively, China pits the imbalance between the two countries with the U.S.’s active involvement in hindering Chinese growth and development, believing that the U.S. is attempting to

contain and limit China’s power in the Indo-Pacific region because it is afraid of Chinese influence. China views the U.S., while still a powerful international player in the status quo, as a declining power at the beginning stages of an inevitable fall. Furthermore, the two countries also define the nature of the relationship differently. The U.S. characterizes the relationship as one of great power rivalry, concentrating on confrontation and competition rather than cooperation and trust. China, on the other hand, has openly expressed frustration about this characterization, as they prefer to define the relationship as “a peaceful coexistence guided by shared principles, consensus, and possible cooperation.” The two contrasting viewpoints have made progress and agreement undoubtedly tricky, as both sides continue to push for international dominance and influence.

The increase of Chinese influence in Latin America in correlation with China’s vaccine diplomacy demonstrates this new wave of global power. China’s engagement with Latin America began in the early 2000s with an economic interest in Latin America’s vast market of raw materials and natural resources needed to fulfill China’s intense growth [2]. In turn, China helped spur rising economies in Latin America by expanding their markets to sustain more commodities and goods. Yet China has not fully explored its economic and diplomatic possibilities with Latin American countries because the region is still referred to traditionally as the U.S.’s sphere of influence. Nevertheless, because of NAFTA, China remains the region’s biggest trading partner, except for Mexico. The U.S., for the most part, has made little to no restrictions on economic activity between China and Latin despite their quickly progressing relationship. This inactivity is because they see economic growth for Latin American countries as a net good both for the U.S. and the respective countries [2]. However, the U.S.’s lack of political strategy to counter the growing Chinese presence in Latin America represents a fraction of the U.S.’s overall lack of definitive policy in Latin America in general.

The U.S.'s inattention to their close neighbors has led to a consensus in Latin American countries of the U.S.'s benign neglect of Latin America, or "its prioritizing other regions of the world less tangentially related to its security and prosperity." China is actively taking "advantage of existing Latin American resentment towards the U.S. after a long history of asymmetric relations and exploitation" to wedge its way into stronger ties with countries in Latin America, hoping to ultimately establish stable economic relationships that will guarantee them long term access to the region's resources and markets [12].

To the credit of the U.S., China faces numerous benefits as a country geographically connected to Latin America, allowing it to deploy such ambitious diplomacy. For example, while the U.S. is subjected to innumerable issues like illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and corruption networks that stem from its close geographic location, China can more freely explore economic pursuits and interests in the region without simultaneously dealing with such matters. In Latin America, "China has sought a region that is more developed than Africa, less institutionalized than Europe, bountiful in natural resources, and naturally consumer-driven" [2]. Similarly, China's best strength is its ability to facilitate ties with Latin America is its "ideological agnosticism." China is willing to work with any country regardless of its political affiliation and beliefs, as shown in the 300 meetings China's International Liaison Department held with seventy-four different political parties in twenty-six other countries in Latin America [2]. Comparatively, the U.S. is strong with its intent to "spread democracy," is a lot more selective in who it decides to partner with, commonly prioritizing other democracies.

Playing an integral role in this new vaccine frontier is China, which has been on a "reputational rollercoaster" since the initial discovery of the Coronavirus in Wuhan [13]. China has been at the center of a multitude of accusations, including intentionally manufacturing the virus to gain a geopolitical advantage by weakening its competitors, or on blast for not

handling the spread of the virus adequately and consequently being at fault for letting it spread into other countries. While most of these allegations have either been proved wrong or remain speculation, China has received widespread criticism and extensive sympathy from the international community. Given the mixed attitudes, China has since then been trying to revive its reputation by attempting to "turn its health crisis into a geopolitical opportunity," with the distribution of vaccines, masks, and Covid tests being the cornerstone of this strategy [13]. In fact, China has already delivered nearly 1.1 billion vaccines to more than 100 countries scattered around the world, aiming to provide 2 billion vaccines by the end of the year [21; 8]. Comparatively, the U.S. has only donated 140 million vaccines to 93 different countries, with the majority of those vaccines, or 50% being donated in July [21]. This stark difference between the number of doses donated by the U.S. and China exists for a variety of reasons, including vaccine nationalism and clashing values in vaccine distribution. When China was able to rapidly pump out its vaccines and export them to countries in need, its control of the virus domestically was far better than that of the U.S., allowing China to utilize a more significant portion of its vaccines for alternative purposes. For example, in March of 2021, China was producing 33% of the world's supply of vaccines while exporting 62% of that to other countries [13]. The greater need for American vaccines in America created a sense of vaccine nationalism in the U.S., where the U.S. government found it more necessary to supply Americans with vaccines before those in other countries. Secondly, the approaches to vaccine distribution vary between the two countries. The U.S. claims to take a more humanitarian approach to vaccine donation. President Biden has pledged to provide vaccines to countries with the most considerable need, asserting that America's "vaccine donations don't include pressure for favors or potential concessions. We're doing this to save lives, to end this pandemic. That's it. Period" [20]. The U.S. accomplishes this by giving vaccines through COVAX, a global initiative that aims to provide more equitable access

to vaccines internationally established by the GAVI vaccine alliance, the World Health Organization, and the Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. Conversely, while China has tried to frame its vaccine donation program in the same light, the country has had the intentions behind its program repeatedly questioned for having ulterior motives. Such an accusation is not hard to see as China isn't even "donating" its vaccines, with only 1.31% (8.6 million doses) of the 656 million doses going to countries free of charge. The other 647.4 million were all purchases made by governments [14]. Furthermore, China is selectively choosing which countries it wants to give vaccines to, as only 10 million of China's donation doses went through COVAX, as compared to the 560 out of 580 million doses of vaccines that the U.S donated through COVAX [20]. Thus, it is hard to argue that China is not intentionally picking countries to give vaccines to base on political strategy and economic gain. There is some evidence that China has explicitly tied its vaccine donations to Chinese interests, as its provision of aid is often paired with national ceremonies thanking the Chinese government and public messages in favor of putting China in a positive light [14].

Additionally, China was able to accomplish these milestones despite having vaccines that are far less effective than the vaccine created in the U.S. China's leading Covid vaccine manufacturers, Sinopharm and Sinovac's vaccines only have an effectiveness rate of 79% and 51%, respectively [8]. Yet in many countries around the world, not only are Chinese vaccines more accessible, but they are also preferred more than American vaccines. This preference is because Chinese vaccines are practical and more economically feasible for lower- and middle-income countries. For example, China sold Indonesia its Sinopharm vaccine at 13.60 dollars per dose. In comparison, it would have cost Indonesia around 15 to 20 dollars per dose for Pfizer or Moderna vaccines [20]. In addition, storing and transporting Chinese vaccines is more accessible, as mRNA vaccines like Pfizer and Moderna need to be stored in a -70 to -10 degree environ-

ment, which is difficult for a resource deprived low-income countries. In contrast, China's Sinovac only needs to be kept in a two to 8-degree environment [20]. Unfortunately, many countries' preference for Chinese vaccines stems from a lack of willingness from Western countries to supply vaccines. While China's vaccine diplomacy model focuses more on the middle to low-income countries that generally do not have the resources to source their vaccines as easily as high-income countries, Western countries like the U.S have been far more prone to vaccine nationalism and thus giving low-income countries little to no other options than China's vaccines that are accepted as they are "better" than nothing.

While China has been able to not only maximize but also take advantage of this model of vaccine diplomacy, the U.S has massively lost out on this opportunity to boost American influence and strengthen ties further. It is the "vaccine vacuum – a perceived failure of Western states to help in the provision of vaccines," that has allowed China to capitalize on the immense need that countries were facing amid the pandemic [5]. By reverting the initial belief of China's mishandling of the Covid outbreak to "a reliable friend of lower- and middle-income countries in their time of need", China has made a substantial difference in rebuilding China's reputation of being a global superpower while simultaneously restoring confidence in a Chinese partnership [24]. Jason Marczak writes that "from a public relations standpoint, China has sought to shift the narrative from China being at the center of the Covid problem to China being at the center of the Covid solution" [4]. China's vaccine diplomacy is just one example of a grand scheme of the country utilizing soft power. Defined by Harvard professor Joseph Nye as the "ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion or payment," to increase Chinese influence internationally [17]. Chinese efforts to bolster their reputation and image through consistent diplomacy and aid follows a specific agenda of pushing back on and balancing America's international dominance

and power. In the past decades, China has been seen to be more cognizant and responsive to the changing dynamics of the international community, not only striving to become a more active player in the international environment but also countering and challenging America's position in the global hegemon [26].

China's vaccine diplomacy campaign in Latin America was early and ambitious, starting even before the initial development of an actual vaccine. China's foreign ministry began to advertise its vaccine diplomacy campaign to various leaders in the region, going as far as to offer a billion dollar loan to the area for the sole purpose of buying the Chinese vaccine when it was available [2]. China delivered its first vaccine in March of 2021, as compared to the U.S., who sent their first donation in June of the same year. During this time, China continued selling vaccines to Venezuela in March, El Salvador in April, and then Ecuador in 2021 [22]. Moreover, China's diplomacy was not exclusive to vaccines, as its donations of ventilators, masks, and other medical equipment and supplies played an essential role in Latin America's pandemic response [22]. Furthermore, China's vaccine campaign doesn't stop at distributing one-off shots as the country has even gone to establish vaccine production facilities around the world, a strategy that Demarais bets that "will boost their presence on the ground for decades to come" [5]. Even though the U.S. has doubled down in its international vaccine distribution, raising a four billion dollar commitment to COVAX (more than any other country), the slow response in the U.S. took to help Latin America at a time when Latin America, making up five percent of the world population but 25 percent of the world's total cases, was in extreme need of COVID relief led many to question whether it would give the U.S. a permanent lousy image [10]. However, the U.S.'s lack of engagement during times of COVID is just a fraction of the bigger picture of neglect. Washington is increasingly starting to exploit and prioritize relationships with foreign countries in more distant regions rather than prioritizing its ties with Latin American countries that are right next to

the U.S. [10]. However, Latin American countries are not oblivious to the U.S.'s disregard for the region. They are very much aware of it. When India requested help from the U.S for resources necessary to make vaccines, the U.S responded quickly, lifting its export ban of such materials, an action that it did not do in Latin America despite the relatively equal need. "Brazil lacks the same strategic importance", said Rubens Ricupero, Brazil's former ambassador to the U.S. [19]. Carlos Alberto Madero, the chief cabinet coordinator from Honduras, best summarizes this increasing frustration amongst Latin Americans: "The Honduran people... see that China is helping its allies and we start to ask ourselves why ours are not helping us" [10]. Paraguay's Minister of Foreign Relations shares the same sentiment, expressing that Latin America is waiting for the U.S to demonstrate "proof of their love" [2]. Contrasting the previous messages to one that Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez gave on a television broadcast in appreciation of China, saying, "from Venezuela's soul, we want to thank the People's Republic of China and President Xi Jinping for this generosity", it is clear that China, directly because of its vaccine diplomacy, is increasingly gaining a larger presence in the region, in place of the U.S, that allows China to "project itself as Latin America's most trusted ally in times of hardship, when other powers failed to respond" [2].

Furthermore, Latin America's growing positive attitude towards China is starting to manifest in the material benefits to China. For example, in March, several countries, including the United States and its allies, came together to accuse China's atrocious human rights record in status quo, particularly highlighting its genocide in Xinjiang of Uyghur Muslims. Accordingly, they worked to sanction China economically until China showed the initiative to enact change. However, amidst the collaboration to pressure China to recognize its human rights abuses, President Iván Duque Márquez of Columbia came out to not only ignore such efforts but praise China's human rights record to the United Nations at a time when Columbia had imported 75% of its vaccines from China [9].

China has undoubtedly already started using this newfound influence in Latin America for its benefit. While China has distributed to a long list of countries in Latin America, many countries, namely Honduras and Paraguay, were intentionally left out of this list. What is uniquely different between these two countries? Their diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Whereas China sees Taiwan as a part of China, Taiwan recognizes itself as an independent country separate from China. In an attempt to politically isolate Taiwan, China is trying to use vaccine diplomacy to weaken the state economically and politically. Consequently, Honduras has not received any offer to be provided with vaccine doses because they supported Taiwan. In the words of Jason Marczak, the Latin American Center at the Atlantic Council, “China has used this moment to flex its muscles” [4]. By picking and choosing which countries will receive much-needed vaccines, China can force countries to follow in its interests for potentially life-saving medication. Honduras reported talks in which China explicitly promised Honduras access to Chinese vaccines in return for cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Recognizing the immense importance of obtaining vaccines, discussions in the Honduran government have already occurred debating whether the relationships between Honduras and Taiwan outweigh the benefits of a relationship between Honduras and China [19]. Facing a similar situation, the Paraguay government is actually under pressure from citizens to reevaluate their ties with Taiwan and potentially recognize China [3]. In both cases, China has been able to use their vaccine diplomacy to leverage Chinese interests on other states. Just for the possibility of Chinese medical aid, these senators in Paraguay were willing to overlook nearly seventy years of partnership with Taiwan [2].

Moreover, China has used vaccines to uphold its economic interests in Latin America. Specifically, this can be seen in Brazil’s change in policy about Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei. Despite Huawei having operated in China for more than twenty years, the majority of the networks that it provided to Bra-

zil’s telecommunications companies were 3G and 4G. When Huawei presented the possibility of establishing 5G networks in Brazil, backlash began to unfold for two reasons: firstly, allowing such networks to exist in Brazil further widens the digital divide that exists in Brazil, a country where 20 million households still lack access to the internet; secondly, then-President Trump argued that more significant Huawei presence in Brazil creates a more extensive security threat that could potentially enable Chinese espionage in the Western Hemisphere [2; 18]. In fact, the Trump Administration pushed so hard for displacing Huawei out of allied countries that it “threatened to sever the access of any ally that allowed Huawei to operate within their borders to all American intelligence”, and went as far as to directly asking sixty one countries to ban Huawei all together [18]. Thus through the U.S.’s use of explicit threats, Brazil was kept in line with American interests until late February of 2021, when Brazil’s Ministry of Communications publicly announced their approval of Huawei’s initiation of 5G network construction. What changed? The pandemic. As Brazilian cases and deaths started to surge, Brazil’s government began to get desperate, looking for any way to mitigate the spread of the virus [2]. Brazil’s Communications Minister Fábio Faria was sent to China in early February to participate in talks and “advantage of the trip to ask for vaccines”. Ultimately agreeing, China promised Brazil 100 million doses of vaccines two weeks later [2]. While the specific connection between China sending vaccines and Brazil changing its stance is not explicitly defined, the New York Times’ journalists Ernesto Londoño and Leticia Casado agrees that “the timing is striking,” representing “a part of a stark change in Brazil’s stance toward China” [15].

Perhaps China’s most significant material win from its vaccine diplomacy initiatives was the commercial expansion many Chinese companies took advantage of throughout the pandemic. For the many Chinese companies involved in China’s international operations amid the pandemic, it was also an opportunity

for them to “showcase their capabilities to foreign audiences or demonstrate their commitment to the countries and communities where they work” [16].

For Latin American countries like Argentina and Brazil, China’s interest in donating vaccines was synonymous with an interest in closer economic ties. Particularly in Argentina, where China-Argentina ties politically and economically were on the rise, Argentina has been a primary recipient of vaccine donations and economic engagement. Such projects have included “China Machinery Engineering Corporation’s investment in a train car production facility in Santa Fe, Argentina; the approval of Phases 4 and 5 of its Cauchari Solar project; and talk of a China-financed gas pipeline running from the Vaca Muerta shale field in Argentina to Brazil” [16]. Likewise, heavy commercial interest in Brazil has also landed the notable country aid from Chinese companies for covid relief. From large-scale Chinese corporations such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China to smaller but significant *business* players in Brazil such as electronic appliance supplier Gree Electric and travel database Trip.com, Brazil has been the recipient of donations amid the pandemic [16]. In emphasizing their commitment to both the Brazilian markets and communities at a time of such economic struggle, Chinese companies are taking advantage of this moment to strengthen its relationship with the country in hopes of securing future markets and economic expansion. Particularly notable when Chinese-Brazilian relations are not the strongest, given Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro’s relationship with Xi Jinping, China is reasserting its strong economic ties with the country as a foundation for more cooperative future political development. In some cases, this rhetoric is explicitly shown by donation boxes that read “[w]e stay together through storms and tensions” about China’s willingness to be there for Brazil during times of extreme need despite the two countries’ strained relations [16].

Perhaps most prominently, China’s vaccine diplomacy has also “amounted to something of an international debut for China’s pharmaceutical compa-

nies” [16]. The pandemic presented the opportunity for unprecedented collaboration between China and Latin American countries under the common objective of fighting Covid-19 infections. Examples of collaborative research and development included trials and analysis of the vaccine between China and Argentinean organization Fundación Huésped and Brazilian organization the Butantan Institute [16]. Several treatments, including the Interferon Alfa-2B, developed by a joint project between Cuban and Chinese scientists, demonstrate the growing relationships between Chinese industry and that of Latin American countries [16]. Given the extensive use of Chinese vaccines in respective regions, Chinese manufacturers have gained widespread recognition that will be beneficial for Chinese biomedical and pharmaceutical industries for decades to come.

However, the vaccine race in Latin America has not been a total loss for the United States, most notably seen in Central America, where the U.S has vastly outpaced China in the present when it comes to providing shots. Perhaps because of its extensive relationship with Central America (often referred to as the U.S’s southern border), the U.S was quick to announce its plans to support the region, pledging more than 310 million dollars in humanitarian aid to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras [1]. In terms of vaccines, total U.S donations to Central America (inclusive of those that were donated through COVAX) came to almost 16.8 million doses, compared to China’s 1.75 million doses [1]. With that said, China was much more selective of the countries to which it was donating to, which was namely its ally El Salvador, the recipient of 1.5 million Sinovac vaccines to which it sold to El Salvador [1].

Despite numbers supporting America’s more significant effort to come to the aid of Central American countries during times of crisis, the entire story reads differently. Even though U.S vaccine donations to central America have been more significant, they have been geo-strategically less competitive than those made by China, thus allowing Chinese vaccine

shipments to leave a much more robust public impression than American shipments. Senior Fellow María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila at the Atlantic Council urges the U.S to “rethink how it communicates shipments, and identify more political or economic accompaniments” in future global events [1]. Two important factors have allowed China to come out on top despite having donated significantly lower amounts of vaccines: timing and diplomacy.

Time is a crucial crux of this situation. Despite donating a substantially more considerable number of vaccines, Chinese donations received more public attention because they arrived faster and easier to administer. Between March and April 2021, Dr. Keith Rowley, the prime minister of Trinity and Tobago, wrote to President Joe Biden, spoke with Congresswoman Maxine Walters, and talked to other senior members of the White House about the Caribbean’s need for vaccines [1]. Similarly, he engaged in conversations with Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Chinese Ambassador to Trinity and Tobago about the same condition. The differences between the two countries’ respective reactions to such a conversation forebode the existing attitudes of the countries surrounding vaccines. While discussions with the U.S only led up to a letter from Biden acknowledging the country’s need for vaccines, talks with China resulted in decisive action, with China providing Trinity and Tobago with 300,000 Sinopharm vaccines between May and June and a 204 million dollar loan to purchase Chinese vaccines [1]. Furthermore, when the U.S finally got around to providing Trinity and Tobago with vaccine donations, they sent a mere 480 doses, an arrangement that occurred on the very same day Trinity and Tobago received 200,000 doses from China [1]. Riyad Insanally argues that the Caribbean could have been an “easy win” for the U.S in the scope of vaccine diplomacy, given the region’s relatively small overall need for vaccines due to population size, had the U.S chosen to help their neighbors earlier [1]. Especially in the domain of vaccine diplomacy, China’s quick response to coun-

tries in Latin America becomes especially important because it made Latin America more dependent on Chinese-made vaccines in the future and also made Latin Americans question why the U.S, arguably Latin America’s more traditional ally, did not come to its aid faster.

Additionally, China’s strategic use of diplomacy and the press allowed them to maximize the impact that their vaccines had diplomatically. Xi Jinping pursued more direct forms of engagement with Latin American leaders during the peaks of their COVID outbreaks to offer vaccine donations and negotiate loans to purchase vaccines, a strategy miles different from that of Biden’s, which was more limited to specific partner countries compared to China’s much more bilateral approach. With publicity as a cornerstone of its vaccine diplomacy strategy, China utilized media headlines and photos with national figures in conjunction with its aid to bolster media attention to its domestic and international actions. China’s more significant efforts to meet with local leaders and officials made a significant difference in public perceptions and headlines. Furthermore, China didn’t allow vaccine purchases to end their diplomatic strategies in Latin America, but the starting point. Take Mexico, for instance, as it was one of the first countries to benefit from China’s export of vaccines. Following Mexico’s purchasing of Chinese vaccines, Mexico and China participated in diplomatic conversations that led to new agreements and collaboration, which included a notable medical deal that expedited the processes of medical shipments [1].

Consequently, China’s aggressive policy-making toward vaccine diplomacy further exposes both the power vacuums that exist in regions that are supposed allies of the U.S and China’s willingness to fill up those vacuums. Without careful consideration of pursuing closer engagement with its partners in programs that prove the U.S is willing to support its allies during times of hardship, the U.S may find itself in an increasingly antagonistic light with a reshuffling of regional power.

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