



MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

„China's Health Diplomacy 2020-2022: The Cases of India and South Africa“

verfasst von / submitted by

Garrison Littell

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Univ.-Prof. i.R. Mag. Dr. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik



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Abstract

As the People's Republic of China (PRC) increasingly asserts itself on the world stage, it has sought through various means to present itself as a responsible world power. One of the ways that the PRC has sought to reinforce this image is through the targeted—though broad—use of health diplomacy. As this is the case, this thesis seeks to understand the efficacy, or lack thereof, of Chinese health diplomacy efforts as they relate to COVID-19 from late 2019 to the middle of 2022 with deviations further to the past for context and closer to the present for analysis of the effects of Chinese actions. In order to do this, this thesis gives historical context on the broad directions of PRC diplomacy since 1949—with particular focus on 2013-2022--, describe Chinese health diplomacy efforts since late 2019 and analyze how Chinese health diplomacy efforts have affected opinions of China in two case study countries: India and South Africa as shown through newspaper articles from both countries. Automatic sentiment analysis was performed on a broad selection of China-related articles from English-language publications in India and South Africa with wide circulation (NDTV and News24 respectively) published in two periods: July 2019 to June 2020 and July 2021 to June 2022 with the goal of measuring shifts in tone regarding China between those dates. Findings indicated that over the period of study there was a slight positive shift in tone regarding China in India and a slight negative shift in tone regarding China in South Africa. Connecting these shifts to Chinese health diplomacy efforts, however, was not possible in the scope of this thesis.

Abstrakt

Die Volksrepublik China behaupt sich auf internationaler Ebene immer stärker und präsentiert sich dabei mit verschiedensten Mitteln als verantwortungsvolle Weltmacht. Eines dieser Mittel ist die zielgerichtete und umfangreiche Nutzung von Gesundheitsdiplomatie. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Wirksamkeit der chinesischen Gesundheitsdiplomatie in Bezug auf COVID-19 von Ende 2019 bis Mitte 2022 mit kontextuell notwendigen historischen Abhandlungen sowie einer gegenwärtigen Perspektive für die Wirkungsanalyse. Die Arbeit liefert historischen Kontext rund um die groben Richtungen der chinesischen Diplomatie seit 1949–mit einem Schwerpunkt auf dem Zeitraum 2013-2022–, beschreibt die chinesische Gesundheitsdiplomatie seit 2019 und analysiert, wie diese die Meinungen zu China in zwei Ländern beeinflusst hat: Indien und Südafrika. Für die Analyse wurden Zeitungsartikel beider Länder ausgewertet. Eine automatische Stimmungsanalyse einer weitreichenden Auswahl von auflagenstarken, englischsprachigen Veröffentlichungen aus Indien und Südafrika (NDTV und News24) in den zwei Zeiträumen Juli 2019 bis Juni 2020 und Juli 2021 bis Juni 2022 wurde mit dem Ziel durchgeführt, etwaige Änderungen im Tonfall bezüglich China zwischen diesen Zeiträumen zu messen. Die Erkenntnisse weisen im betrachteten Zeitraum auf eine leichte, positive Tonfalländerung bezüglich China in Indien und eine leichte, negative Tonfalländerung bezüglich China in Südafrika hin. Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit war es nicht möglich, eine Verbindung zwischen diesen Tonfalländerungen und der chinesischen Gesundheitsdiplomatie herzustellen.¹

¹ Translation credit and a multitude of thanks to Spencer Freudenberg

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I. Introduction

A world of increasing and accelerating—though not unchallenged—interconnections is a world that is both more vulnerable to the ravages of disease and a world that is, through the same interconnections that lead to its vulnerability, better equipped to combat said ravages. Although disease now has the ability to cross the globe in hours, the existence of the channels of infrastructure and relations that allow for such spread also allow for the distribution of the materials needed to combat disease and of the information needed to make best use of said materials. The COVID-19 pandemic is a case that maps directly onto the above-described dynamic, as is the international cooperation that has gone into combatting said pandemic. This thesis looks primarily at how the People’s Republic of China has used the opportunity of the COVID-19 pandemic to promote their soft power aims through the use of health diplomacy, the efficacy of said efforts and how these efforts have impacted opinions of China in two case study countries: India and South Africa.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (一带一路) is a globe-spanning set of infrastructure projects primarily aimed at developing two new trade routes for the People’s Republic of China. As of March 2022, 147 countries had signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with China.² The Belt portion of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) refers to plans to revitalize a series of overland trade routes between East Asia and Europe, primarily along the route of the ancient Silk Road that performed the same function and was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) in 2013. The road element of the BRI refers to the creation of sea trade infrastructure designed to circumvent the Malacca Strait, and Singapore.³ The scale and variety of infrastructure projects across several continents offers a fertile background to a discussion of how said infrastructure projects may be used for diplomatic ends, as they, with the ongoing

² Christoph, Nedopil. 2022. “Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – Green Finance & Development Center.” Green Finance & Development Center – Research, Advisory and Capacity Building for Greening Finance and Development. FISF Fudan University. 2022. <https://greenfdc.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/>.

³ Jie, Yu, and Jon Wallace. 2021. “What Is China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)?” Chatham House. Chatham House. September 13, 2021. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri>.

Covid-19 pandemic, have been in the form of various health and vaccine diplomacy initiatives—broadly categorized as “mask diplomacy”.⁴

For the sake of a more general application, I will use the term “health diplomacy” in the place of “mask diplomacy”. This choice of terminology is based on Seow Ting Lee’s 2021 article *Vaccine Diplomacy: nation branding and China’s COVID-19 soft power play*’s definition of “global health diplomacy” which the author splits into three levels of interaction around public health issues: core diplomacy between nations, multistakeholder diplomacy—that is, interactions between states and non-state actors--, and informal diplomacy between international public health actors, private companies, local and government level officials, and the public.⁵ China’s health diplomacy through the BRI falls under all three of these categories and thus the theoretical model of “global health diplomacy” may be useful in this thesis.

Late February 2020 largely marks when China shifted from a receiver of health aid to an exporter of health aid. In that period, it focused on using its significant—and largely uninterrupted—productive capacity, along with then-existing BRI projects around the world to become the primary supplier of Covid-19 aid in the world. This position was achievable as many countries around the world had delivered large amounts of health aid to China during the initial outbreak.⁶ Essentially, China was able to manufacture and distribute health aid to a world shocked at the severity of the initial stages of the pandemic and in so doing was able to engage in the above-mentioned mask diplomacy on a global scale. When China made this shift, it was in no way free from COVID-19 as it appears that the virus was spreading rapidly, particularly in the rural areas of China due to the departure of migrant workers from cities to avoid lockdowns.⁷

With a portion of the necessary background information out of the way, this thesis will analyze, through the use of two case studies (that of India and South Africa) to what if any extent Chinese health diplomacy initiatives since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic have been successful in giving China soft power and opinion gains in the two case study countries, for what

⁴ Moritz, Rudolf. 2021. “China’s Health Diplomacy during Covid-19 - Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik.” Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik (SWP). Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik -- Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit. January 26, 2021. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2021C09/>.

⁵ Lee, Seow Ting. “Vaccine Diplomacy: Nation Branding and China’s COVID-19 Soft Power Play.” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, July 6, 2021, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-021-00224-4>. 2.

⁶ Moritz, Rudolf. 2021. “China’s Health”.

⁷ Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, personal communication, September 16, 2023.

reason Beijing and the actors connected to Beijing chose the countries and health diplomacy efforts used, and what role the infrastructure and relationships developed during the development of the Belt and Road Initiative have played in said efforts.

The timeframe of this thesis lies between the middle of 2019 and the middle of 2022, with deviations farther back in time for the sake of context regarding the relevant history of Chinese health diplomacy since 1949, but particularly under the leadership of Xi Jinping, and broader context regarding the geopolitical positioning of China under said leadership and deviations closer to the present in order to assess the impacts that Chinese actions have had on the opinions of China held in case study countries. Sources used during research will be limited to English and Mandarin language resources. For example, official policy documents surrounding the Belt and Road Initiative as are available on Chinese government websites and transcripts of speeches by Xi Jinping concerning health diplomacy, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the overall geopolitical intentions of China, will be used. In addition, analysis of newspaper articles from India and South Africa from the most widely circulated English-language in each country will be used in an attempt to judge the efficacy of Chinese health diplomacy efforts in regards to soft power and popular opinion rewards.

Sentiment analysis is the primary methodology used in this thesis. Primarily of press releases from governmental and associated entities along with newspapers which will be analyzed using Google Cloud's sentiment analysis API (the details of which will be explained in the case study section). The analysis of Chinese government documents that have been published on official government websites and the analysis of speeches by Xi Jinping that are relevant to this thesis either as context or directly. As well as the analysis of key scholarly articles. This includes documents in Mandarin Chinese and in English as available.

The procedure for collecting data for this thesis involves generally, the collection of news articles and official press releases and official documents in Chinese and in English concerning the state of BRI projects, investments, and Chinese health diplomacy efforts in target nations. The news articles are to be compared with official press releases and official documents in order to tease out to what extent the two line up. The collection of news articles will seek to encompass the widest possible readership in the two case study countries. That is to say, this thesis will take as its sources those English language publications in India and China that have the widest

possible readership. In this case, that means NDTV Online in India and News24 in South Africa. In order to judge the reactions of the governments to the case studies, I will use the mouthpieces of the ruling parties in each country. That being Kamal Sandesh in the case of India and ANC today in the case of South Africa.

With the above said, the relevance of this thesis lies in its attempt to unravel the knot that is the analysis of the efficacy of Chinese health diplomacy efforts in two countries in disparate parts of the world. One, India, being a country that has a semi-active border conflict with China, and other being a country that lies in what the United States has long regarded as its back yard. The efficacy of these efforts being judged through the analysis of news coverage. This thesis will also provide elucidation with regards to how China has spread its health diplomacy efforts around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic and through the infrastructure and relationships established through the growth of the BRI. On a broader scale, this thesis is significant in that it will help describe how global-scale initiatives such as the BRI can be leveraged to influence nation states to the geopolitical advantage of the originators of the initiatives.

Keywords: health diplomacy, China, India, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), soft power, Xi Jinping

II. The Positionality of the Author

I find it important that the author of any work of research acknowledges their own positionality relative to their topic. Doing so allows the author themselves to examine any biases they may have, how said biases may influence their work, and in so doing allow the reader to take into account the biases and the positionality of the author in a way that can help the reader more fully understand the way that research was conducted, any blind spots or limitations due to the positionality of the author that may have emerged, and to correct for them. Essentially, because I see an acknowledgement of positionality to be a part of a work of research that can preempt some level of the biases innate in any writer, I have chosen to include one here.

I am a mid-twenties, white, American man who was raised in an upper middle-class household that has been able to allow me to pursue opportunities that many in this world have not. Chief among these opportunities in terms of relevance to this thesis is having had the opportunity to spend a significant amount of time study abroad in multiple countries. My first

significant experience abroad, and the experience that I trace the motivation for writing this thesis to, was my year abroad in Shanghai, China, during the 2014-2015 school year. During this time, I became familiar with life in China—though mainly life in an upper middle-class family in China’s largest city—and became increasingly interested in China and Chinese studies, achieved an HSK 5 proficiency level in Mandarin, and was pushed by the experience into the academic trajectory I now follow: that being global studies.

My training is in the fields of global studies and German studies, the combination of which being what led me to the Erasmus Mundus Global Studies program of which this thesis is a part. The content of my training in global studies has been broadly of a critical nature, which has led me to one of the main analytical lenses to which I find myself defaulting: a critical one.

My positionality gives me some strengths in relation to the topic of this thesis and the research process: namely a familiarity with China and Chinese politics, proficiency in Mandarin, and a knowledge of the theories of global studies. I was, however, raised and for the most part trained in the United States, and so my familiarity with the relevant literature is largely limited to English-language publications. This means that, especially in my case study sections on India and South Africa, I will be limited to English-language, and Mandarin-language sources.

III. Background and Historical Context

In order to set the stage for a discussion of the ways that the People’s Republic of China has deployed its health diplomacy efforts around the world, it is useful to take a step back and look at the history of China in relation to public health, global health governance, and China’s own history of health diplomacy efforts before those that are the primary focus of this thesis. In this background section, I will discuss the development of the ideas of public health and international health and its gradual development into the concept of global health as it relates to China, China as both receiver and sender of health diplomacy as far back as the beginning of the 20th century—with China entering the stage as a sender of health diplomacy mainly after 1949, the role that foreign powers on Chinese soil played in said efforts, the shifting of Chinese health efforts towards Western medicine as pushed by Dr. Wu Liande (1879-1960), the turn towards outward-facing health efforts after 1949 and how that has played a role in the competition between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC), the role that SARS played in shaping Chinese health efforts, and finally how China’s goals and methods have

developed during the Xi Jinping era (2012-present) with regard to the guiding ideology behind China's action and its material manifestations.

3.1 From 'Public Health' to 'Health Diplomacy'

The concept of 'public health', the first of the evolutions of the term on which health diplomacy is broadly based, first took shape in the 19th century around efforts to reform the way society was being run into a form that would, through interactions between society and medicine, put emphasis on sanitary reforms of various kinds and the control of infectious diseases. Late in the 19th century, scholars would interpret the concept more expansively, allowing for more perspectives.⁸ Dorothy Porter, in her 1999 work *Health, Civilization and the State: A History of Public Health from Ancient to Modern Times* provides the useful definition of public health as "the history of collective action in relation to the health of populations."⁹ Using Porter's definition, the actions taken under the aegis of health diplomacy fit squarely within the term being defined.

A closely linked concept that came into widespread use in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is that of 'international health'. 'International health', as Mary Augusta Brazelton of the University of Cambridge describes it, was at that time commonly understood to be a cover term for 'discussions and activities relating to the coordination of epidemic response and control across national and imperial borders.' In the late 20th century, the term was largely replaced by 'global health' in order to move away from a focus on the nation-state or empire and towards a concept of public health that took the planet's entire population into account.¹⁰ That is to say, the concept could be understood as a sub-concept of public health that was defined by its cooperative and border-crossing nature and that the term was originally conceived of under a methodologically nationalist framework but has since been used in a way that moves to decenter the nation-state to some extent—something that may seem somewhat contradictory to the nature of health diplomacy as being deployed by one state—China—with the intent of influencing both the people of and the governments of target states. Brazelton continues to explain that although

⁸ Brazelton, Mary Augusta. "China in Global Health: Past and Present." *Elements in Global China*, January 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009042666>. 3.

⁹ Porter, Dorothy. *Health, Civilization and the State: A History of Public Health from Ancient to Modern Times*. London: Routledge, 1999. 4.

¹⁰ Brazelton, "China in Global". 3-4.

the term found its origins in the practices of colonial medicine and in imperial neglect, projects carried out in its name have also been kept in developing revolutionary nationalism and anti-colonial socialist internationalism.¹¹

3.2 20th Century China, Health Diplomacy, and the ‘Sick Man’ Label

The beginning of the 20th century saw an ailing China, having been militarily and diplomatically embarrassed in the previous century and partially colonized by Western powers and the emergent Imperial Japan. China, at that time under the control of the last Chinese dynasty—the Qing (清)—was in such a negative state that, as early as 1896 the *North China Herald* dubbed the Qing the “Sick Man of the Far East,” a title that would be repeated in the *New York Times* in 1905. The Western world saw the Qing as an outdated entity incapable of handling the numerous crises facing it without serious reform—as did many Chinese intellectuals of the time (notably Liang Qichao (1873-1929) who saw China as an ailing national body, with its opium addiction, unsanitary conditions, and malnutrition pointing to a need for healing.¹² This title would remain important for much of the 20th century and be revived in a modified form with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed by Bard College political scientist Walter Russell Mead entitled “China is the Real Sick Man of Asia”.¹³

In a way, the application of the ‘Sick Man’ title to China has, in both of its iterations, but especially in its earlier form, added significant motive force to Chinese actions—in the first case in attempted reforms and the to-be-discussed adoption of Western medicine and in the second case as part of the motive force behind China’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In essence, fighting against the label of the ‘Sick Man’, became part of China’s goal of national rejuvenation and recovery from the predations of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

3.3 Dr. Wu Liande (伍连德): Laying the Groundwork for Chinese Health Diplomacy

One key figure in Chinese medical efforts during the early part of the 20th century is that of Dr. Wu Liande (伍连德) (1879-1960) who was a British-trained Malaysian-Chinese doctor whose efforts during the Manchurian Plague of 1910-1911 and post-1912 efforts to convince the

¹¹ Ibid. 4.

¹² Rogaski, Ruth. “The Manchurian Plague and COVID-19: China, the United States, and the ‘Sick Man,’ Then and Now.” *American Journal of Public Health* 111, no. 3 (March 2021): 423–29. 424.
<https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2020.305960>.

¹³ Ibid. 423.

Chinese government (by that time the Nationalist Government) to adopt Western medicine earned him the title of “Father of Modern Chinese Medical Services.” Dr. Wu Liande’s significance in relation to this thesis lies in the role his work played in the fight for a Chinese modernity and sovereignty that was characterized by medical competence and national health.¹⁴ In essence, the efforts of Dr. Wu Liande can be linked to the medical competence of modern-day China that has allowed it to participate in the health diplomacy efforts around the world that this thesis analyzes. Dr. Wu Liande contributed enormously to the ground upon which modern Chinese health diplomacy is built.

Dr. Wu Liande’s figure was revived during the health campaigns in China during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 as an anti-plague patriotic figure and, through his discourse with his Western colleagues, as a criticism of the West. In particular, the figure of Dr. Wu Liande was highlighted in relation to the need to wear masks in public spaces. He was highlighted as being the one to invent or at least to redesign the anti-plague mask in the context of the 1910-1911 Manchurian plague outbreak. With his story and example being used in Chinese propaganda efforts—especially online.¹⁵ In particular, Dr. Wu Liande’s encounter with the French Dr. Mesny—who spurned the use of masks and, according to Wu Liande, died as a result of a failure to use a mask—is an episode that is used to highlight the humility of Dr. Wu Liande and contrast it with the European arrogance of Dr. Mesny.¹⁶

An example of one such early 2020 Chinese article is Xinhua Daily’s Yang Siqi (杨思琪)’s *110 年前，他扑灭那场瘟疫还推动了分餐制 (110 Years Ago, He Extinguished That Epidemic and Pushed for a System of Separate Meals)* (translation my own). In this article, Yang lays out in glowing terms Dr. Wu Liande’s efforts in fighting the 1910-1911 Manchurian plague outbreak in Harbin, including the specific methods he used—such as the pushing of masking using surgical gauze and eating separately as opposed to the more traditional communal way—and social customs he was forced to break—namely in dissecting a plague victim’s corpse and

¹⁴ Tan, Kevin Y. L. “The Plague Fighter: Dr Wu Lien-Teh and His Work.” Accessed May 26, 2023. <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-16/issue-2/jul-sep-2020/plague/>.

¹⁵ Peng, Jia. “‘To Honour Cleanness and Shame Filth’: Medical Facemasks as the Narrative of Nationalism and Modernity in China.” *Social Semiotics* 33, no. 2 (March 15, 2023): 249–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2020.1810463>. 249-250.

¹⁶ Ibid. 251.

the burning of corpses to prevent animals from eating them and spreading the plague back to the human population, as well as, briefly, the interactions he had with the ill-fated Dr. Mesny. The article also links the situation in Manchuria in the early 20th century to that in China during the first days of the Coronavirus pandemic.¹⁷ The article is not outright nationalistic in its tone, but rather celebratory of the accomplishments and legacy of Dr. Wu Liande. It aims to show that the same anti-plague tactics that were used 110 years before the article's publication were still of use during the Covid-19 pandemic and, through reference to the successes of Dr. Wu Liande, to cast them in a positive, honorable light, much as they are described in Peng (2023).

Dr. Wu Liande's figure and writings are in the modern day reinterpreted to represent to the "wisdom and courage of the Chinese people against Western arrogance in a tradition in which active involvement in the hygienic campaign is seen as honourable and patriotic and ignorance of prophylactic measures is a source of shame."¹⁸ It is hence used in a way that promotes a self-affirming dignity for China in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak in early 2020 and is useful in setting the background for a discussion of the ways that China has approached external health diplomacy since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic as it gives a peak into the way that China views itself in relation to health and disease containment efforts that may influence the ways that it deploys health diplomacy and effect the messaging that is attached to said deployments.

3.4 China Post-1949: A Shifting Role in Global Health and Competition with Taiwan

Despite the decrepit state that China found itself in at the beginning of the 20th century, the century as a whole—even with its decades of near-perpetual conflict and social upheaval, would see a massive demographic change in China—particularly in the post-1949 People's Republic of China (PRC). This demographic change would take the shape of significant decreases in death rates¹⁹ and increases in life expectancies in the country, a change that, according to Brazelton, indicates a changing role for China with regard to global health.

¹⁷杨思琪 Yang Siqi. "110 年前, 他扑灭那场瘟疫还推动了分餐制 110 nianqian, ta pumie na chang wenyi hai tuidongle fencan zhi 110 Years Ago, He Extinguished That Epidemic and Pushed for a System of Separate Meals." *Xinhuanet 新华网*, March 27, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2020-03/27/c_1125774087.htm.

¹⁸ Peng, "To Honour Cleanness". 253.

¹⁹ Per Eurostat Statistics Explained, the "crude death rate is defined as the ratio of the number of deaths during the year to the average population in that year; the value is expressed per 1000 inhabitants." "Glossary:Death." Accessed August 24, 2023. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Death>.

According to Brazelton, the steep decline in disease-related deaths in China would, as a societal marker, be counteracted by the increasing perception of China as an origin of new diseases—particularly of flus and novel coronaviruses. Secondly, said demographic trends signaled a shift in China’s role in that it was becoming less a country that was a receiver of foreign medical aid and more of a country that was among the distributors of medical aid as its domestic medical system improved and was increasingly internationally recognized as having improved.²⁰ Both of Brazelton’s points are relevant to this thesis, but her second one is particularly useful and has, as will be discussed later in this thesis, played a large part in Chinese health diplomacy efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With Brazelton’s observation of the changing role of China in the international health system in mind and with reference to her work, it is useful to take a step back and—briefly—look at how the Chinese domestic healthcare system changed in the 1950s briefly after the establishment of the PRC, how the Sino-Soviet split effected this, and particularly how competition on the world stage between the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan and the PRC effected Chinese health diplomacy through the 1960s and 1970s. For background, up until 1972, the ROC was the sole representative of ‘China’—as both the PRC and ROC claim sovereignty over the entirety of China in the United Nations and thus in the World Health Organization. After 1972, the PRC was recognized as the sole representative of ‘China’ in both of those bodies and the ROC was expelled. Brazelton notes that this expulsion cut the ROC off from many of the networks that had previously been crucial to its health diplomacy efforts around the world and led many of the countries of the non-aligned movement to look to the PRC as a medical benefactor.²¹

The above is not to say that before 1972 China was not active in health diplomacy efforts around the world—especially in non-aligned countries, though it appears that the intensity of said health diplomacy efforts picked up after UN recognition for China in 1972. Of interest is that PRC diplomats, especially in Africa, emphasized shared experiences of anti-colonial conflict and professed a wish to build bilateral relationships based on friendship and equality rather than

²⁰ Brazelton, “China in Global”. 2.

²¹ Ibid. 44.

producing top-down relationships that would have seen the non-aligned states in the junior position.²²

For example, in as early as 1962, the PRC sent some twenty-one tons of medical equipment along with wheat and steel to the newly-independent state of Algeria, in 1964 the PRC provided medical assistance to North Vietnam to aid their fight against South Vietnam and the United States, and again in 1964, the PRC helped to establish a healthcare system in the United Republic of Tanzania that involved training local medicals personnel, building a laboratory, administering local hospitals, and going to villages for medical demonstrations.²³ All of this is to say that the PRC has a decades long history of engaging in health diplomacy with countries of the Global South, a history that has had repercussions in this most recent wave of Covid-19-related health diplomacy efforts around the world—with a marked focus on countries of the Global South that have for various reasons not had access to, or been able to afford, health aid—particularly Covid-19 vaccines—from countries in the Global North. In fact, in Africa alone from the beginning of the 1960s to the turn of the millennium, China deployed some 15,000 doctors and medical personnel to 47 African countries.²⁴

This goes to show that for decades, Chinese health diplomacy efforts have been wide in their breadth, applying to entire regions or even continents rather than heavily focusing on a subset of countries in a given region. It is, of course, important to note that during the 1960s and onward, Africa was the site of numerous decolonization movements that resulted in the creation of the majority of the countries with which China became medically involved. These newly-independent countries were looking for aid from somewhere other than their former colonial overlords and the non-aligned bloc as represented by China and the Soviet bloc were the natural ones to look towards at that moment in time.

Chinese health diplomacy efforts in Africa were fruitful in providing international partnerships and recognition for the PRC. Swiftly, that is by the end of 1960s, fourteen African states had established formal relations with the PRC as the sole legitimate representative over China (as defined by sovereignty over both Mainland China and Taiwan).²⁵ In the Covid-19

²² Ibid. 44.

²³ Ibid. 44.

²⁴ Ibid. 44.

²⁵ Ibid. 44.

pandemic as well China has seen some small gains over Taiwan in terms of recognition, with Nicaragua having broken relations with Taiwan, partially in order to access Chinese vaccines and partially due to the increasing isolation of the country.²⁶

3.5 Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the BRI and Health Diplomacy

During the second half of the 20th century, as they have during the Covid-19 pandemic, China has mobilized Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) as part of its health diplomacy efforts. During the Cold War, this deployment was often targeted at the highest levels of diplomacy, with TCM practitioners, in particular acupuncture specialists, treating many heads of socialist states such as performing cataract removal on North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Il Sung and Cambodian Prime Minister Penn Nouth. The success of which procedures, as Brazelton notes, gave a prestige boost to the practice of acupuncture in the socialist context.²⁷

One major exception to the diplomatic targeting of TCM during the Cold War was China's largely successful effort to use TCM to combat malaria. During the Vietnam War, North Vietnam asked China for aid in combatting malaria, which had been causing a large number of casualties in the North Vietnamese army. In response to this, on 23 May, 1967 Mao Zedong launched Project 523, which sought to find a cure for malaria, which by that point had developed resistance to the previously used chloroquine. In 1969, at the age of 39, scientist Tu Youyou (屠呦呦) was appointed head of Project 523, she immediately traveled to Hainan Province in the south of China to observe the ongoing malaria outbreak there. Tu Youyou studied pharmacology at Beijing Medical College and after graduating from there in 1955, was assigned work at the freshly established Academy of Traditional Chinese medicine, where she took a course on TCM meant for those with a Western-style training in medicine. After her time in Hainan Province, Tu Youyou returned to Beijing and along with her team sought insight in ancient Chinese medical texts.²⁸

²⁶ Nolte, Detlef. "Relativizing the Success of China's "Vaccine Diplomacy"| DGAP." Accessed June 1, 2023. <https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/relativizing-success-chinas-vaccine-diplomacy>.

²⁷ Brazelton, "China in Global". 44.

²⁸ "The Nobel Prize | Women Who Changed Science | Tu Youyou." Accessed July 12, 2023. <https://www.nobelprize.org/womenwhochangedscience/stories/tu-youyou>.

The situation was somewhat desperate by that point as some 240,000 different compounds had been tested for their potential anti-malarial effects to no avail. Tu Youyou's team, however, found a reference to sweet wormwood, which had been used in China around the 4th century CE to treat intermittent fevers, which were a symptom of malaria. In 1971, Tu's team isolated the active compound in sweet wormwood and began testing with no success. Tu's insight, gained from another ancient text, was that the extraction process itself, in which the sweet wormwood was boiled, was damaging the anti-malarial compound. She used an ether-based solvent, which boils at a lower temperature to extract the compound and tested it on animals with a 100% success rate. Tu and two of her colleagues tested the compound on themselves before returning to Hainan Province and administering it to 21 patients—all of which recovered. A year after the successful trial in Hainan Province, Tu's team was able to distill the active ingredient in the compound used, artemisinin, and published their findings. It took until 1981 for their findings to be published in English and other two decades for the WHO to recommend the use of artemisinin as a front-line defense against malaria. The discovery of artemisinin earned Tu the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2015.²⁹ To this day, artemisinin forms the basis of all major antimalarial therapies.³⁰

During the development of the BRI, TCM has been promoted more broadly than during China's Cold War-era health diplomacy efforts. Such a promotion of TCM has been officially sanctioned by its inclusion in the 14th Five-Year Plan covering from 2021 to 2025. According to a 2022 Chinadaily.com.cn article, the 14th Five-Year Plan calls for the establishment of 30 TCM centers in Belt and Road countries around the world. The same article repeatedly links TCM and the BRI through references to how people living in BRI countries have increasing access to TCM as a treatment option, claiming that TCM access has spread to 196 countries and regions around the world.³¹ Going a bit further back in time, a 2017 Xinhua article states that in the three years preceding the publishing of the article, China had already set up 26 centers for TCM overseas—

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Wang, Jigang, Chengchao Xu, Yin Kwan Wong, Yujie Li, Fulong Liao, Tingliang Jiang, and Youyou Tu. "Artemisinin, the Magic Drug Discovered from Traditional Chinese Medicine." *Engineering* 5, no. 1 (February 1, 2019): 32–39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eng.2018.11.011>.

³¹ 郭凯 Guo Kai. "China Focus: TCM Gains Popularity among Belt and Road Countries." Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202209/04/WS6314b629a310fd2b29e75d2f.html>.

mostly in BRI member countries.³² The official Belt and Road Initiative website—yidaiyilu.gov.cn—is full of articles, usually archived from Xinhua or People’s Daily—connecting the BRI with TCM, giving examples of how TCM has been promoted with BRI partner countries, and laying out a sample of the future role that TCM is meant to play in the BRI.

Some of the more recent articles on the site emphasize the role that TCM has played in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, describing the deployment of TCM specialists around the world³³, giving specific examples of said deployments such as in the deployment of TCM experts to Cambodia with the explicit aim of aiding the country in its fight against COVID-19³⁴, and claiming the efficacy of TCM practices in treating COVID-19.³⁵ Many of these articles tend to be rather short form, but are often quite information dense. They are written in a way that is clearly meant to connect TCM with the BRI and with positive COVID-19 treatment outcomes when used around the world. The exporting of TCM, then, can be seen as a less materially-driven form of Chinese health diplomacy—although there are certainly material concerns connected to TCM through the need for the acquisition of the materials used in TCM.

3.6 SARS (SARS-CoV-1) as a Watershed Moment for Chinese Public Health

The outbreak of SARS (SARS-CoV-1) in November 2002, and more specifically China’s experience of combatting the disease, was something of a watershed moment when it came to China’s understanding of what its own public health looked like—with the image of Chinese public health that it ended up developing being key to understanding the forms that Chinese health diplomacy efforts have taken in response to Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2). Once past the initial stage of semi-denialism and underreporting, the Chinese government responded to SARS

³² Liu Yue (editor). “China Strengthens TCM Cooperation with Belt and Road Countries-Belt and Road Portal.” Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/40898.htm>.

³³ Li Shimeng (editor). “TCM Specialists Sent to 29 Countries during COVID-19 Fight: Official-Belt and Road Portal.” Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/315165.htm>.

³⁴ Su Dan (editor). “China Sends TCM Experts to Cambodia to Help Fight COVID-19-Belt and Road Portal.” Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/228142.htm>.

³⁵ 黄格 Huang Ge (editor). “TCM Contributes to Improving Global Public Health-Belt and Road Portal.” Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/qwyw/rdxw/138976.htm>.

in a way that would be quite familiar to someone living in 2023—though quarantine and contact tracing as there was no vaccine for SARS.

The technical requirements of this approach to disease control cast Chinese public health as “a professional, biomedical, and highly technological discipline.”³⁶ A casting of public health that is thoroughly reflected in the ways that China has deployed its Covid-19 health diplomacy efforts around the world since 2020. The outbreak of SARS came at a moment of reform for the Chinese health system and allowed epidemiologists to take advantage of the situation to push for increased funding and support for epidemiological efforts in China with the aim of preventing another such outbreak. Centers for disease control modelled on the American Centers for Disease Control were set up to facilitate aggressive quarantine and contact tracing efforts.³⁷ It can be seen, then, that the outbreak of SARS near the beginning of this century allowed for a reformation of the Chinese public health system along epidemiological and technological lines that have, two decades later, shaped the way that Chinese health diplomacy has been deployed on a global scale—a topic which will be discussed in detail later in this thesis.

IV. Ideological Underpinnings of the BRI and Chinese Health Diplomacy

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, and particularly since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, health diplomacy has taken up an increasingly important role in both the BRI and in China’s larger geopolitical strategy. Here it is useful to take a small step back and examine the general political, economic and geopolitical projects of China under the leadership of Xi Jinping as described by Xi Jinping himself through his speeches, the idea of the community of common destiny (CCD) as a guiding principle in Chinese foreign policy in the last decade, and to discuss the framework through which China’s health diplomacy efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic have been primarily carried out: the Health Silk Road (HSR). There is, of course, only room in this thesis for a satellite-level view of these enormously complex and impactful topics.

It is useful to begin this subsection with Xi Jinping’s ideology, officially known as Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era (习近平新时代中国特色社会主义思想)

³⁶ Brazelton, “China in Global”. 58.

³⁷ Ibid. 58.

特色社会主义思想), but more usefully abbreviated simply as Xi Jinping Thought (习近平思想). Xi Jinping Thought was first unveiled to the public at the 19th National Congress in October of 2017 and was enshrined as part of the constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at the end of the same congress.³⁸ The speech in which Xi Jinping unveiled this new, or evolved, ideological direction for the governance of China, entitled *Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era*, which was delivered at the same National Congress, lays out first the broad strokes of the ideology and then goes into greater detail on each of said strokes.

In the speech, Xi Jinping makes it clear that Xi Jinping Thought is not a turning away from the guiding principles of his forebears, but rather makes it explicitly clear that Xi Jinping thought reaffirms and builds on said principles. The speech introduces the fourteen key principles of Xi Jinping Thought, which, due to the impact they have on the actions of China in broad terms and on Chinese diplomacy in more specific terms, are worth listing here. They are, in the same order as presented by Xi Jinping: (1). Ensuring Party leadership over all work, (2). Committing to a people-centered approach, (3). Continuing to comprehensively deepen reform, (4). Adopting a new vision for development, (5). Seeing that the people run the country, (6). Ensuring every dimension of governance is law-based, (7). Upholding core socialist values, (8). Ensuring and improving living standards through development, (9). Ensuring harmony between human and nature, (10). Pursuing a holistic approach to national security, (11). Upholding absolute Party leadership over the people's armed forces, (12). Upholding the principle of "one country, two systems" and promoting national reunification, (13). Promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, and (14). Exercising full and rigorous governance over the Party.³⁹

³⁸ Xiang Bo (editor). "Backgrounder: Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era - Xinhua | English.News.Cn." Accessed June 7, 2023. https://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-03/17/c_137046261.htm.

³⁹ Xi, Jinping. "Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous." Speech presented at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Beijing, October 7, 2017.

Of the above-listed tenets, (13). “promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind”, is the aspect of Xi Jinping thought, as outlined in this speech, that is the most relevant to this thesis in that it represents in microscale the leading ideological force behind the Belt and Road Initiative and Chinese health aid, at least as it is publicly stated to the world, that is: the development of a community with a shared future for mankind.

4.1 The ‘Community of Common Destiny (CCD)’ as a Guiding Principle for the BRI

The slogan ‘a community with a shared future for mankind’, which is the official translation of ‘人类命运共同体’, more often translated as ‘community of common destiny (CCD)’, encapsulates the broad outlines of Chinese international relations—despite its vague meaning. As this is the case, the term itself warrants a description of its history and uses as well as a discussion of its usefulness in understanding the way that China has deployed its health diplomacy initiatives. The term was first used to describe the relationship between China and Taiwan but was relatively quickly adapted to apply to Chinese foreign relations more generally. The first use of the term in this broader sense appeared in *China’s White Paper on Peaceful Development* in September of 2011 and then in a more official capacity in the report of the Chinese Communist Party’s 18th National Congress in November of 2012.⁴⁰ As can be seen by these dates, the concept of CCD and to a limited extent its relevance to Chinese foreign policy predate the Xi Jinping era, though its prominence has risen markedly under Xi Jinping.

Xi Jinping has used the term numerous times from the beginning of his time in office. For example, in October 2013, he applied called for the spirit of the CCD to put down roots in China’s neighboring countries as part of China’s pursuit of a good border environment.⁴¹ Since then, Xi Jinping has reinforced CCD’s use as a slogan during multiple trips abroad and at the 19th party congress in October 2017.⁴² The phrase, even before its usage during the COVID-19 pandemic, had achieved such significance in the context of Chinese foreign policy that it was

⁴⁰ Zhang, Denghua. “The Concept of ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in China’s Diplomacy: Meaning, Motives and Implications.” *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 196–207. <https://doi.org/10.1002/app5.231>. 197.

⁴¹ “习近平：让命运共同体意识在周边国家落地生根。” Accessed June 8, 2023. https://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-10/25/content_2515764.htm.

⁴² Mardell, Jacob. “The ‘Community of Common Destiny’ in Xi Jinping’s New Era.” Accessed June 9, 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/the-community-of-common-destiny-in-xi-jinpings-new-era/>.

enshrined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China in 2018, notably before reiterations of China's opposition to imperialism, hegemony, colonialism, and unity among the peoples of the world.⁴³ The term, or a variant of it, has also been applied to China's health diplomacy actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The variant that has been used is health and wellness community for mankind (人类卫生健康共同体).⁴⁴ As CCD and closely related terms have played such a central role in Chinese foreign policy over the last decade or so, and in particular during the Xi Jinping era to date, an understanding of the meaning and deployment of CCD and its sister term is beneficial for the purposes of this thesis.

4.2 The Meaning(s) of the CCD According to Beijing

With a history of the above-described term out of the way, the question of the actual meaning of the term comes up. Meaning, in this case, is multi-sided in that a discussion of the meaning of the term must account not only for the intended meaning on the part of the Chinese government—or rather, the way that the Chinese government deploys the term in its domestic and foreign efforts, but also for the meaning of the term as interpreted by other countries and the meaning of the term transmitted through the impact of Chinese foreign policy initiatives that have fallen under the aegis of said term.

To begin with this discussion of what the term 'Community of common destiny' (CCD) and its variants mean in practice, it is useful to see how the term has been used by Xi Jinping in his speeches and to discuss the connotations of such usages. On September 28th, 2015, Xi Jinping addressed the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly with a speech entitled *Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind*. As can be seen, the official translation of CCD is in the title and what, in broad strokes, Xi Jinping means by the phrase is the core subject of the speech. Namely, Xi Jinping says that in order to "renew [member states'] commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, build a new type of international relations featuring win-win cooperation, and create

⁴³ "Community of Common Destiny for Mankind - China Media Project," August 25, 2021. https://chinamediaproject.org/the_ccp_dictionary/community-of-common-destiny-for-mankind/.

⁴⁴ 阮宗泽 Ruan Zongze. "大变局下构建人类命运共同体历久弥坚_中国国际问题研究院." Accessed June 9, 2023. https://www.ciis.org.cn/yjcg/xslw/202107/t20210708_8020.html.

a community of shared future for mankind”⁴⁵, the international community must do the following (numbered for ease of future reference though they were not numbered in the speech as delivered): “[...(1).] build partnerships in which countries treat each other as equals, engage in mutual consultation and show mutual understanding, [...(2).] create a security architecture featuring fairness, justice, joint distribution and shared benefits, [...(3).] promote open, innovative and inclusive development that benefits all, [...(4).] increase inter-civilization exchanges to promote harmony, inclusiveness and respect for differences, [... and (5).] build an ecosystem that puts mother nature and green development first.”⁴⁶

The above calls to action can be seen as the overarching goals and structures that give the concept of the CCD its shape. Xi Jinping goes into some more detail on each of the goals in the same speech. Namely, (1) is a call to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, choice of social systems and development paths, as well as a call for dispute resolution through dialogue and consultation and a call for the formation of a new kind of international relations that embraces multilateralism and “seeks partnership rather than alliance”⁴⁷.

(2) is an acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of global security in the age of economic globalization, a renunciation of the idea of countries being able to reap a stability reward out of the instability of other countries, a call to abandon the Cold War mentality and replace it with a security system with the United Nations and its Security Council at the core of the effort of keeping peace, a call to enhance international cooperation in both social and economic fields, and perhaps most interestingly in the context of this thesis, a call to embrace a form of international security cooperation that is holistic in its approach “to addressing traditional and non-traditional security threats, so as to prevent conflicts from breaking out in the first place.”⁴⁸ As non-traditional security threats essentially means any threat to a state that is not another state, this likely means efforts in combatting extremism and terrorism across borders. The holistic part of this approach is the most interesting part. Instead of the more traditional and violent methods of suppression of extremism, this seems to be suggesting things such as

⁴⁵ Xi, Jinping. “Working Together to Forge a New Partnership of Win-Win Cooperation and Create a Community of Shared Future for Mankind.” Speech, New York, September 28, 2015.
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/zyjh_665391/201510/t20151012_678384.html.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

development as a way to combat extremism under the idea that if a community is well off in a material sense, it is likely not a potent breeding ground for extremism.

(3) is a call for market regulation in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, a reminder that the growing gap between the rich and the poor is both unfair and unsustainable, and a call “to use both the invisible and the visible hand to form synergy between market forces and government function and strive to achieve both efficiency and fairness”⁴⁹, and finally a call for an inclusive and sustainable development. Inclusive not just in the form of each country having access to development, but in a form that allows everyone to live free from want and with dignity. The reference to the “invisible and the visible hand” in Xi Jinping’s speech is a rejection of the largely handsfree approach many Western states have taken in their economic affairs. Xi Jinping is, as would be expected for a leader of modern China, advocating for a more state-centric economic model while still leaving space for private enterprise.

(4) is a call for respect, parity, cooperation, and mutual learning among the various civilizations of Earth with no civilization put forward as being in any way superior to any other. Xi Jinping, however, does not define what he means by ‘civilization’ in this speech.

Finally, (5) is a call for sustainable development on a global scale, a reminder that humanity, though it can transform and benefit from the environment, is not separate from it, a commitment that China would do its part in the effort, and finally a call for developed countries to honor their emissions agreements and help developing countries mitigate the effects of climate change.

4.3 The Scholarly Understanding(s) of the CCD and its Meaning

A discussion of the way that Xi Jinping has deployed the concept of CCD and its meaning in that context out of the way, it is useful to take a look at how the scholarship on the subject has characterized the concept and its meaning—both inside and outside of China. As the idea of CCD and of the BRI are often interlinked, the scholarship on one often bleeds into a discussion of the other. To begin with Chinese scholars, the late Professor Zeng Lingliang of Wuhan University, writing in 2016, characterized the concept of CCD as being, in essence, the core principle of the ambitions behind the construction of the BRI. In his 2016 article, he

⁴⁹ Ibid.

characterized the BRI as not simply being a project of regional economic integration and partnership arrangement, but rather as being the far more ambitious attempt to create a community of common destiny for the whole of humanity. To support this claim he points out that this new community differs from existing communities in that it takes as its aims not only the creation of a community of shared interests, but also that of a shared destiny and that of a shared responsibilities, that it has no fixed institutional structure—preferring to make use of mechanisms on the national, multilateral, bilateral, regional and sub-regional levels—and finally a reiteration of the idea that this community of common destiny is not meant to be limited to the region around China, but rather to the globe. That is to say, the BRI and CCD represent a new model of global governance rather than simply an ambitious development initiative.⁵⁰

Tao Wenzhao of Renmin University interprets the CCD in a way similar to the interpretation put forward by Zeng Lingliang and has characterized CCD as a conceptual innovation that has to do with Chinese leadership's vision of global governance, while noting that “要科学辩证地把握习近平命运共同体思想，命运共同体是复杂的、矛盾的，构建命运共同体是一个长期的过程。” “To scientifically and dialectically grasp Xi Jinping's thinking on the community of common destiny and the community of common destiny itself is complex and contradictory, building the community of common destiny is a long-term project. (translation my own).⁵¹ The above two authors, both writing in 2016, take the CCD as having more to do with a new model, or vision, of global governance being put forward by Chinese leadership.

The above seems to characterize one part of the debate in Chinese academia over the meaning of CCD and the BRI. Others such as Xu Jin and Guo Chu of the China Academy of Social Sciences approached the topic on a more pragmatic level, investigating the CCD in different regions and countries and coming to see the CCD as a set of bi- and multilateral arrangements with partner countries that takes the form of political cooperation and security

⁵⁰ Zeng Lingliang, "Conceptual Analysis of China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Road towards a Regional Community of Common Destiny," *Chinese Journal of International Law* 15, no. 3 (September 2016): 517-542.

⁵¹ 陶文昭 Tao Wenzhao. “科学理解习近平命运共同体思想 kexue lijie xi jinping mingyun gongtongti sixiang To Scientifically Interpret Xi Jinping's Community of Common Destiny.” *中国特色社会主义研究 Research on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics* 1, no. 2 (May 3, 2016): 10–15.

support.⁵² Others, such as Liu Zongyi of the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, writing in 2015, argue that CCD is more limited in scope than Zeng Lingliang and Tao Wenzhao suggest, claiming that it is meant to establish a new economic order within Asia through economic, cultural, and security projects.⁵³

The above set of scholars, then, represent something of a divide in Chinese academia with regard to the meaning and directions of the CCD and the BRI more broadly. One camp sees the CCD as leading toward a new model of global governance envisioned by the leaders of China, while the other sees it as a more limited initiative that aims to create a new economic order in Asia and/or with partner countries in specific regions around the world.

The concept of the CCD has been a subject of non-Chinese scholarship as well, usually viewed with a level of skepticism. For example, Björn Ahl of the University of Cologne, couches the topic as a competing master narrative for the international legal order with the concept of global constitutionalism in his 2021 article *Chinese Positions on Global Constitutionalism, Community of Common Destiny for Mankind, and the Future of International Law*. As implied in the title, the article is mostly a review of Chinese scholarship on the subject of the CCD, but it also contains useful analysis of said concept. To begin, Ahl notes that although authoritarian systems often impose limits on the freedom of academic expression, it cannot be assumed that Chinese scholars present a homogenous front, nor that they will precisely reflect the positions of the CCP.⁵⁴ As can be seen by the above-described debate between Chinese scholars, this seems to hold true. Ahl notes, further, that Party officials may take Chinese scholarship on the subject as a source of inspiration for policy actions and, importantly, as the scholarship in China was produced to an extent under the auspices of the Party, it can be assumed to be influenced by the ideology of the Party. As this situation leads to the production of a literature with which Chinese

⁵² 徐进 Xu Jin, and 郭楚 Guo Chu. “‘命运共同体’概念辨析 ‘Mingyun Gongtongti’ Gainian Banxi [Research on the Conception of the Community of Common Destiny].” 《战略决策研究》 *Journal of Strategy and Decision Making* 6, 2016. Title translation my own.

⁵³ 刘宗义 Liu Zongyi. “亚洲命运共同体的主要内涵和构建思路 Yazhou Mingyun Gongtongti de Neihan He Goujian Silu [The Meaning and Ways to Build the Asian Community of Common Destiny].” 《国际问题研究》, August 31, 2015. Accessed through: <https://www.siis.org.cn/lw/582.jhtml>

⁵⁴ Ahl, Björn. “Chinese Positions on Global Constitutionalism, Community of Common Destiny for Mankind, and the Future of International Law.” *The Chinese Journal of Comparative Law* 9, no. 3 (December 1, 2021): 304–27. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjcl/cxab011>. 308.

foreign policy actors may agree, Chinese scholarship on the CCD may be useful in determining Chinese preferences for a future international legal order.⁵⁵

Ahl, on the topic of the CCD itself, is generally critical. He notes that, although Chinese scholars say that the concepts within the CCD are in general in line with the already existing principles of international law, one of the pillars of the CCD that is universal security and inclusiveness, as described, would require changes to international law. In Ahl's view, this principle is closely related to authoritarian political systems in that it seems to be an extension of China's domestic stability doctrine to the international system due to the concept being broad enough to include security against threats to the political system.⁵⁶ Further, Ahl states that the CCD takes as its primary focus sovereign states as the main subjects of international law, stressing the idea of a state-centered international order with emphasis on an international order based on loose multilateral agreements outside of the economic sphere and less strictly enforced implementation of international obligations as opposed to that represented by the concept of global constitutionalism, which takes as its main subject the individual and stresses the value of the rule of law, democracy, and human rights.⁵⁷

For another non-Chinese perspective on CCD and its meaning, the shared work of Dr. Raoul Bunskoek of the University of Bayreuth and Dr. Shih Chih-yu of the National Taiwan University is useful. In their 2021 article, *'Community of Common Destiny' as Post-Western Regionalism: Rethinking China's Belt and Road Initiative from a Confucian Perspective*, Bunskoek and Shih argue that conventional explanations of China's BRI are limited in that they are confined to Western international relations lenses. The article argues that, through the discursive fields of China's elites, China—due to its domestically-produced economic miracle in the last few decades, has become convinced of its moral position and is ready to export its self-proclaimed benevolence outside of its borders. With this as the basis for analysis, Bunskoek and

⁵⁵ Ibid. 308.

⁵⁶ Ibid. 326.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 327.

Shih argue that the value framework of the BRI is a mixture of Western and Confucian values that is leading toward a post-Western, post-Chinese regionalism.⁵⁸

In setting up their argument Bunskoek and Shih point out that the prevailing international relations lenses in the West, particularly those of (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism have a difficult time accounting for China's actions in relation to the BRI and have an even more difficult time accounting for the way that the Chinese elite has chosen to frame the BRI. Scholars using said lenses tend to delegitimize the idea of the BRI or of the CCD as being unrealistic, or even tend to characterize the CCD and the BRI as a threat to the current international order as they see China as wishing to take over the role of the United States as hegemon.⁵⁹ Ahl (2021), seems largely to agree with this analysis of the BRI/CCD as a threat. Bunskoek and Shih, drawing on Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept of provincializing Europe, point out that the above IR lenses lead to views that are problematic in that "they effectively impose upon Chinese actors a worldview that is no different from their own Western-centric and 'provincial' perspectives, all the while ignoring or discarding as 'irrational' signs that suggest alternative ways of understanding the world (i.e. Chinese political narratives).⁶⁰

In support of the above assertion, Bunskoek and Shih cite an article from *The Economist* that claims that the end goal of the BRI is essentially to split the world into two blocs, one dominated by the United States and taking the shape of the transatlantic region, and the other dominated by China and taking up the bulk of Eurasia. In so doing, the article essentializes the differences in the regions while negating the legitimacy of the Chinese position.⁶¹

4.4 *Tianxia* (天下) as a Framework for Understanding the CCD and the BRI

Perhaps most interesting in relation to this thesis broadly and the concept of CCD more specifically is Bunskoek and Shih's assertion that the concept of *Tianxia* 天下 (All-under-Heaven) forms the underlying structure of the concept of the CCD itself. The concept of *Tianxia* warrants a brief discussion in itself as it has formed the backbone of many Chinese worldviews

⁵⁸ Bunskoek, Raoul, and Chih-yu Shih. "'Community of Common Destiny' as Post-Western Regionalism: Rethinking China's Belt and Road Initiative from a Confucian Perspective." *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, June 1, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.954744>. 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 86.

⁶⁰ Ibid. 86-87.

⁶¹ Ibid. 87.

for several thousand years. The history of *Tianxia* that is relevant to this thesis is helpfully provided by Bunskoek and Shih. The concept, despite its longevity, fell out of use with the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911, being replaced by *shijie* 世界. Bunskoek and Shih attribute this change of terminology to a fundamental shifting of how China thought about itself in relation to the rest of the world. During the days when *Tianxia* was primarily used, China saw itself as being at the center of All-under-Heaven. With the fall of the Qing and the adoption of *shijie* as the world descriptor, said center or exemplar, shifted from China to the West. Importantly to this thesis, the concept of *Tianxia* referred less to a bounded area of land—a state—and more to a ‘oneness’.⁶² Bunskoek and Shih go into significantly more detail on the concept, its uses, and its form, but to recount it in this thesis would not be relevant.

What is relevant is the relationship between the concept of *Tianxia* and that of the CCD and how that relation has influenced Chinese diplomatic actions and stances. In order to look into this, a brief discussion of China-as-nation and China-as-*Tianxia* in the context of the 20th and more importantly 21st centuries is needed. Bunskoek and Shih explain that the concept of *Tianxia* fits not only with Marxism, but also can fit a rising China in the 21st century. Their argument for this centers around the idea of China-as-*Tianxia* being exemplified by the BRI and China-as-nation as being exemplified by economic development within China and as having been formulated to oppose imperialism in the 20th century. They explain that in the 21st century, the framework of sovereignty as contained in China-as-nation is not sufficient to describe the influences of China in the 21st century and that the role obligations contained in China-as-*Tianxia* allow for the construction of a skeleton of a post-Western regionalism centering around the BRI.⁶³ It should be noted that when referring regionalism in this context, the scope of the ‘region’ in question is not particularly limited to a certain region or continent of the Earth, but is meant more as a ‘region’ in relation to obligations under the concept of *Tianxia*—that is a ‘region’ that is “substantiated by ‘connectivity’ through which localities can enrich themselves and be able to provide in their ‘basic means of existence’ ”.⁶⁴

China-as-*Tianxia*, then, forms a core part of the ideological underpinnings of the BRI in two main ways. Firstly, in that China-as-*Tianxia*, conceiving of itself as being once again at the

⁶² Ibid. 93.

⁶³ Ibid. 95.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 95.

center of *Tianxia*, “obliges its agents to aim at selfless leadership and seek to ‘help out the needy’, as if, together, they share sensibilities of regionalism” as described above.⁶⁵ That is to say that in some ways, the BRI is a modern-day material application of the concept of *Tianxia* as expressed—not without change—up to the fall of the Qing Empire in 1911. The PRC is at the center of the BRI network of agreements, investments, diplomatic efforts, and projects, in a way that is analogous to the way that Imperial China was at the center of the concept of *Tianxia* in previous centuries. This is not a perfect analogy, of course, as the system as represented by the BRI is not as top-down as was the system under Imperial China, but the casting of China in this central role may be useful in understanding their positionality and decision-making when it comes to the BRI and to health diplomacy.

Secondly, China-as-*Tianxia* is inherently inclusive in its application and scope.⁶⁶ In 2018, Xi Jinping stated that “the Belt and Road Initiative is an economic cooperation initiative, not a geopolitical or military alliance”, and that “it is an open and inclusive process, and not about creating exclusive circles or a China club.”⁶⁷ From this we can see that the BRI is being presented by its Chinese representatives essentially as a modern day manifestation, or perhaps regeneration, of the concept and system of *Tianxia*. With the BRI cast as the material manifestation of *Tianxia* in the modern world, the concept of CCD then takes on importance as the guiding diplomatic principle by which the concept of *Tianxia* in the modern world is made manifest as a post-Western regionalism.

What differentiates the CCD from various ‘western’ regionalisms lies in the requirements for membership in the CCD. Like ‘Western’ regionalisms, Bunkskoek and Shih explain, the CCD seeks to materially and socially connect communities around the world through modern means, but in order to join the CCD, a member community does not need to convert to the ideology of the CCD or change its own identity. Instead, a member community must acknowledge China-as-*Tianxia*—or at least pretend to—and demonstrate this acknowledgement through ritual. In return, China will guarantee the ‘autonomy’ of member communities and give gifts.⁶⁸ The authors do

⁶⁵ Ibid. 95.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 95.

⁶⁷ Wong, Catherine. “Xi Says Belt and Road Plan Isn’t about Creating a ‘China Club.’” South China Morning Post, August 27, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2161580/xi-jinping-says-belt-and-road-plan-isnt-about-creating>.

⁶⁸ Bunkskoek and Shih, “Community of Common”. P. 96.

not explain precisely what is meant by ‘ritual’ and ‘gift’ in this dynamic, but this is a clear reference to the functioning of *Tianxia* as it manifested through the tributary system that Imperial China maintained with many of its neighbors for much of its history.

The concept of *Tianxia* as expressed through the CCD is relevant to this thesis in that it helps to provide a framework for understanding China’s perspective on and execution of, firstly, the BRI broadly, and secondly, its health diplomacy initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving away from looking at the actions and motivations of China and its elites purely through Western lenses, as called for by Bunskoek and Shih, and supplementing said lenses with Chinese concepts such as that of *Tianxia* allows us to more accurately analyze and discuss China’s motives in that it allows us, partially and only so much as the published information allows, to step into their shoes and catch a glimpse of their thought processes with, I would argue, a reduced level of distortion that could be introduced by looking at Chinese issues through theoretical lenses developed under the influence of Western modernity in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is because, in combination with using sources published in China—in Mandarin or English—we can partially sidestep many of the theoretical assumptions on the behaviors of states that rely on said theoretical lenses developed under Western modernity that may not fit perfectly onto the thought processes and actions of China and its elites as they relate to health diplomacy on a global scale. It must be noted, however, that this relating of the BRI and CCD to the concept of *Tianxia* is not at present at or near the center of the international discussion of the topic.

4.5 The BRI and The Health Silk Road (HSR) (健康丝绸之路)

A discussion of the sub-mechanism of the BRI that has been most key during Beijing’s deployment of its health diplomacy initiatives throughout the world is—the Health Silk Road (HSR) (健康丝绸之路) —needed. In brief, the HSR is simply the application of existing BRI networks and infrastructure to “provide medical and health care assistance to partner countries and assert China’s leadership in global health.”⁶⁹ Of particular import to China’s efforts has been the existence of BRI transportation infrastructure around the world. The concept of the HSR

⁶⁹ Huang, Yanzhong. “The Health Silk Road: How China Adapts the Belt and Road Initiative to the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *American Journal of Public Health* 112, no. 4 (April 2022): 567–69. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306647>. P. 567.

dates back as far as October 2015, when it was put forward by China's National Health and Family Planning Commission (now the National Health Commission) in response to Beijing's call to contribute to the construction of the BRI.⁷⁰ This was the domestic debut of the HSR concept, with the international debut of the concept coming in 2016 with Xi Jinping putting the idea forward during a trip to Uzbekistan. In 2017, China and the World Health Organization (WHO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China that committed both parties to supporting the HSR and more broadly health outcomes in BRI countries. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, however, the HSR remained more a conceptual than a concrete aspect of the BRI, although some aspects of HSR proposals, like the Greater Mekong Subregion Disease Surveillance Network—which was included under the HSR but had existed before it—were in operation.⁷¹

In order to carry out the mission outlined in the MoU with the WHO, China has worked to foster health partnerships with a majority of countries and international organizations that are involved in the BRI project. The emphasis in these initiatives has been on strengthening international public health capacity. In order to push forward the institutionalization of the HSR, China has been involved in organizing numerous high-level health forums such as the “Silk Road Health Forum, the China-ASEAN Forum on Health Cooperation, The China-Central, and Eastern European Countries Health Ministers Forum, and the China-Arab States Health Forum.”⁷² In addition to these high level meetings, China has signed numerous bilateral agreements with HSR countries that focus, mainly, on “(1) strengthening cooperation in the prevention and control of acute infectious diseases and provision of technical support; (2) strengthening infrastructure building; (3) enhancing medical personnel training; [and] (4) promoting international cooperation in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).”⁷³ In essence, China has been deploying its know-how from dealing with SARS and H1N1 in the form of

⁷⁰博玉 Bo Yu (editor). *新华丝路 Xinhua Silk Road*. “《国家卫生计生委关于推进‘一带一路’卫生交流合作三年实施方案（2015-2017）》《guojia weisheng jisheng wei guanyu tuijin ‘yidaiyilu’ weisheng jiaoliu hezuo san nian shishi fangan (2015-2017)》 National Health and Family Planning Commission’s implementation plan for promoting ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ health exchanges and cooperation,” May 28, 2018. <https://www.imsilkroad.com/news/p/97802.html>.

⁷¹ Huang, Yanzhong, “The Health Silk”. P. 567.

⁷² Zeng, Weiwei, Mengli Ding, and Hongsong Liu. “China’s Health Silk Road Construction during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Global Public Health* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2023): 2185799. P.3

⁷³ Ibid. 3.

medical teams sent to HSR countries as well as pledging large amounts of money (namely, \$20 million after the Ebola outbreak in 2017) for pandemic control even before the outbreak of COVID-19.⁷⁴

In more concrete terms, China has aided in the establishment of actual, material infrastructure around the world to aid in combatting disease under the framework of the HSR and has aided in training new medical professionals. For example, China aided in the establishment of the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)⁷⁵, and aiding in the construction of the headquarters for the Africa CDC in the suburbs of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.⁷⁶ Finally, in terms of material implementation of the above goals, China has, as previously discussed, invested significantly into the propagation of Traditional Chinese Medicine resources in countries along the HSR, with a significant number of TCM institutions in 30 countries, 86 TCM cooperation agreements with HSR countries, and, in June 2018, the establishment of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Foreign Exchange and Cooperation Alliance.⁷⁷ This is all to say that China, as has been extensively shown in this background section, had been actively and materially implementing its intentions in countries involved in the BRI and the HSR, even before the outbreak of COVID-19.

4.6 COVID-19, the HSR, and the BRI

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the construction of the HSR was greatly accelerated and was catapulted from being a relatively minor part of the greater BRI project, to being near its head. Even being directly described as a part of building the community of common destiny for mankind by Ma Xiaowei, Minister and Secretary of the Leading Party Members' Group of the National Health Commission of China.⁷⁸

As described above, China was able to quickly retool its industrial capacity towards the production and distribution of health aid quickly after containing the initial outbreak in Wuhan and begin shipping medical materials abroad—taking advantage of the global health situation to

⁷⁴ Ibid. 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 3.

⁷⁶ Hua Xia (editor). *Xinhuanet* 新华网. "China-Aided Africa CDC Headquarters Main Building Marks Structural Completion." November 27, 2021. http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/27/c_1310337402.htm.

⁷⁷ Zeng, Weiwei, Mengli Ding, and Hongsong Liu. "China's Health Silk". P. 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 1.

both make use of and build the HSR and the BRI. In 2021, the HSR began to emphasize vaccine distribution and by November 2021, had committed 1.6 billion vaccines to more than 100 countries around the world—with some 40% thereof going to Southeast Asia.⁷⁹ Notably, this distribution of vaccines did not only take the form of an outflow of vaccines from China through donations (roughly 7% of vaccines shipped overseas as of November 30, 2021 were donations)⁸⁰ and sales, but also took the form of helping target countries grow their vaccine production capacity, with China having helped build plants in Africa, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.⁸¹ Importantly, on August 31, 2021, China announced new foreign aid guidelines that placed the construction of the BRI as the main objective is sending aid around the world.⁸² The August, 2021 announcement provides us with some insight into China's motives for pursuing health diplomacy projects around the world as it directly links the pursuit of such projects under the aegis of the HSR to the promotion of the BRI. From this we can see something of a feedback loop building, with the promotion of the HSR, as part of the BRI, itself promoting the construction of the BRI.

Not only did China significantly increase its output of medical materials and vaccines with the outbreak of COVID-19, it also accelerated the construction of the HSR through diplomatic means—both with partner countries and organizations around the world and with the WHO. For example, in June 2020, the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China issued a statement that said that the “HSR should be strengthened through the sharing of timely and necessary information and best practices and treatment of the COVID-19, the equitable access to health products, and the investment in building sound and resilient health-related infrastructures”.⁸³ In essence, this announced the retooling of the HSR to focus its resources on the controlling of the COVID-19 pandemic through information sharing and increasing accessibility of treatment. Later in 2020, China declared its continued support for the WHO in its

⁷⁹ Huang, Yanzhong, “The Health Silk”. P. 567-568.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 568.

⁸¹ Ibid. 568.

⁸² Xie, Yan, and Shenfang Yu. Eds. “国家国际发展合作署 外交部 商务部 令（二〇二一年第1号）《对外援助管理办法》 guojia guoji fazhan hezuo shu waijiaobu shangwubu ling (erlingeryinian di 1 hao) 《duiwai yuanzhu guanli banfa》 Measures for the administration of foreign aid.” 国家国际发展合作署 China International Development Cooperation Agency, August 31, 2021. http://www.cidca.gov.cn/2021-08/31/c_1211351312.htm.

⁸³ Zeng, Weiwei, Mengli Ding, and Hongsong Liu. “China's Health Silk Road Construction during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Global Public Health* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2023): 2185799. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2023.2185799>. P. 4

role leading the world in the fight against COVID-19 at the 3rd China-ASEAN Forum on Health Cooperation Towards a Health Silk Road, in Nanning.⁸⁴

4.7 The BRI and Scholarly Interpretation

The HSR, in particular China's overarching intentions in constructing it, has been a subject of debate in the literature with two broad camps forming: those that see the HSR as a part of the China-U.S. geostrategic competition with the intent of challenging Western norms when it comes to international health governance, and those who see the HSR largely in a light that is not directly connected to China-U.S. competition.⁸⁵ The second group of scholars, broadly, sees the HSR not as an attempt by China to replace or dominate the existing international health governance order, but rather to supplement it and through that supplementation to promote itself. With this as the lens, the HSR is cast as an attempt by China to design the BRI in such a way that it "shoulder[s] the responsibilities of a great power with no intention of replacing the existing liberal order [... and to enhance] health cooperation under the existing system."⁸⁶ Also noted is that China may simply not have the ability—due to lack of personnel or technology—to meaningfully challenge the U.S. in a way that would upset or reorient the international health governance order, hence, Beijing has neither the ability nor the intention to upset the existing order.⁸⁷⁸⁸

Zeng et al. 2023, broadly falls within the second group of scholars in that they argue that the HSR is neither meant to supplant the existing system of global health governance nor is it designed to keep the system in precisely the shape that it now holds. Instead, they contend, the HSR is meant to improve the already established global health system by gradually layering upon it. They define this layering as adding new rules on top of or alongside existing ones, with layering—in contrast to displacement, drifting, and conversion—allowing for the coexistence between new and old systems.⁸⁹ Zeng et al. 2023 bases this concept of layering heavily upon the

⁸⁴ Li, Min. "China-ASEAN Is Responsible for Strengthen Health Cooperation Under the Epidemic - China ASEAN Media." Translated by Jing Zhang and Xinyue Zhao. China-ASEAN Panorama, April 3, 2021. <http://en.china-asean-media.com/show-45-1047-1.html>.

⁸⁵ See Clarke, 2020; Demir, 2020; Hong, 2017; Silvius, 2021; Hillman & Tippet, 2021; Zoubir, 2020; and Zoubir & Tran, 2022 for examples of scholars in the first camp.

⁸⁶ Zeng, Weiwei, Mengli Ding, and Hongsong Liu. "China's Health Silk". P. 2.

⁸⁷ Ibid. 2.

⁸⁸ For examples of this second camp, see Jones, 2020; Qin & Wei, 2018; Zheng & Zhang, 2016; Cao, 2020; Tillman et al., 2021; Huang, 2022; and Tang et al. 2017.

⁸⁹ Zeng, Weiwei, Mengli Ding, and Hongsong Liu. "China's Health Silk". P. 2-3.

work of Mahoney & Thelen, 2010, which describes the phenomenon of layering as actors grafting new components to already existing institutions as they are not able to reform the institutions themselves due to legal lock in.⁹⁰

To move from the conceptual to the more concrete, Zeng et al. 2023 present the interactions between China and the WHO as an example of the layering nature of the HSR—both before and after the outbreak of COVID-19 and the institutional reorientation that the HSR underwent with said outbreak. In support of this, the author describe how WHO officials are regularly invited to meetings related to the HSR such as the “China-Central and Eastern Europe Countries Health Ministers’ Forum, the China-Arab Countries Health Ministers’ Forum, the BRICS Health Ministers’ Meeting, and the BRICS High-Level Meeting on Traditional Medicine”⁹¹, the signing of formal agreements between the WHO and China such as the March 2016 China-WHO Country Cooperation Strategy (2016-2020) in which Beijing declared that it “has always attached great importance to cooperation with the WHO, and China is willing to actively participate in global health with the support of the WHO and work with the majority of developing countries to achieve sustainable development”⁹², and more directly tied to the BRI, the January 2017 signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between China and the WHO on BRI health cooperation by Xi Jinping and former WHO Director-General Margaret Chan, in which she said that the WHO was willing to increase cooperation with China, under the BRI, to work on improving health and hygiene in countries along the BRI.⁹³ This commitment has been reiterated by Margaret Chan’s successor and current WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus⁹⁴ through his leadership of the WHO delegation to the Belt and Road High-Level Meeting for Health and Cooperation in Beijing in 2017 and through his 2017 *China Daily* article entitled “Building a Safe and Healthy Silk Together”.⁹⁵ In essence, despite a changing of the leadership of the WHO, it appears that cooperation between China and the WHO

⁹⁰ Ibid. 3.

⁹¹ Ibid. 5.

⁹² Ibid. 5.

⁹³ Ibid. 5.

⁹⁴ I thank my advisor, Dr. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, for pointing out the importance of how Dr. Ghebreyesus was elected to his position. Dr. Ghebreyesus was elected to the position of WHO Director-General with the support of Beijing. This is particularly relevant to handling of the early stages of the pandemic and the WHO’s investigation into the origin of the pandemic.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 5.

has not only intensified in recent years, but has been more and more under the framework provided by the BRI/HSR—even before the outbreak of COVID-19.

The cooperation between the WHO and China has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. This cooperation has taken the form of cash donations to the WHO—as early as August 2021, China had donated \$100 million to the WHO—and through aid in acquiring personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as stockpiling medical supplies within China. China has also donated to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, and taken part in WHO programs such as, importantly, the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) program.⁹⁶

V. China and India

As India is the subject of the first of the case studies in this thesis, a brief overview of the relationship between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of India since 1949 is needed—with special emphasis on the relationship between the two most populous countries in the last ten years. The relationship between the PRC and India is complex and often fractious, that being said, the two countries celebrated seventy years of bilateral relations in 2020 as India was the first non-socialist country in Asia to recognize the PRC as the legitimate government of China on April 1st, 1950.⁹⁷ Before 1950, India had maintained diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (ROC) since India’s independence from Britain on August 15th, 1947.

Despite the early and somewhat optimistic start to Sino-Indian relations, it did not take long for the relationship to become rocky—mostly over territorial disputes and the issue of Tibet. Even as India and China signed an agreement on Tibet that saw India relinquishing its rights to the region in 1954—an agreement that included the five principles of peaceful coexistence, called Panchsheel, as a hopeful base for peaceful relations between the countries—suspicions about potential Chinese expansionism in the near future began to rise.⁹⁸ To greatly simplify a complex topic only tangentially related to the topic of this thesis, these tensions and Indian policy around said tensions, in combination with ideological changes within China led to the

⁹⁶ Ibid. 5.

⁹⁷ The Week. “Xi to Kovind: China-India Relations Are at a New Starting Point.” Accessed July 17, 2023. <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2020/04/01/xi-to-kovind-china-india-relations-are-at-a-new-starting-point.html>.

⁹⁸ Raghavan, Srinath. *War and Peace in Modern India*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230277519>. P. 241.

Sino-Indian War of 1962.⁹⁹ This war, however, did not decide the issue and there have been bouts of lower level violence in the disputed territories over the decades. Most recently in the form of a brawl between Indian and Chinese soldiers in the Galwan Valley that saw numerous deaths on both sides and sparked fears of escalation between two of Asia's major nuclear powers.¹⁰⁰

5.1 A Significant Trade Relationship, Yet Poor or Middling Mutual Opinion

In spite of the above-described border conflicts, China and India maintain a significant bilateral trade relationship. As of 2022, China is India's second largest trading partner, with the United States as their largest trading partner. That being said, India maintains a significant trade deficit in China's favor.¹⁰¹ In 2021 alone, trade between the two semi-rivals grew by 44%.¹⁰² Despite this significant trade relationship, the populations of both countries view the other country with significant suspicion. In India, a 2023 poll found that roughly 43% of those surveyed (n = 1,000) viewed China as the greatest threat to India¹⁰³, while in China a 2022 survey by Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy found that only 8% of those surveyed held a positive view of India. The major caveat of this aspect of the survey in China, however, is that roughly 41.5% of the respondents held a neutral view of India—a result that contrasts starkly with the above-mentioned Indian survey. When held in comparison to a similar pole that took place in 2020, which found that about 26.4% of respondents held a favorable impression of India as a neighbor, the opinion drop in the intervening years is made clear.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Ibid. 298.

¹⁰⁰ Stephenson, Alex. "Why We Should All Worry About the China-India Border Dispute." United States Institute of Peace, May 31, 2023. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/05/why-we-should-all-worry-about-china-india-border-dispute>.

¹⁰¹ NDTV.com. "US Becomes India's Biggest Trading Partner, Surpasses China." Accessed July 18, 2023. <https://www.ndtv.com/business/us-becomes-india-biggest-trading-partner-surpasses-china-3018969>.

¹⁰² Khalid, Dr Imran. "India's Challenge to Belt and Road in Asia." *Geopolitical Monitor* (blog), August 9, 2022. <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/indias-challenge-to-belt-and-road-in-asia/>.

¹⁰³ Najafizada, Eltaf. *Bloomberg.com*. "Indians View US as Biggest Threat After China, Survey Shows." January 17, 2023. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-01-17/indians-view-us-as-biggest-threat-after-china-survey-shows>.

¹⁰⁴ Brar, Aadil. "More Chinese Now Regard India as a Security Threat. Only 8% Consider It Favourable." *ThePrint* (blog), May 29, 2023. <https://theprint.in/opinion/chinascope/more-chinese-now-regard-india-as-a-security-threat-only-8-consider-it-favourable/1599378/>.

5.2 India and the BRI: Territorial Conflicts at the Core and India's Counterpoint

India is not a participant in the Belt and Road Initiative and has been critical of it. For example, the first Secretary at the Indian Embassy in Beijing, Priyanka Sohoni, directly condemned the BRI and in particular the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as violating India's sovereignty as part of the CPEC goes through the Pakistan-administered part of Kashmir province at the second UN Global Sustainable Transport Conference in Beijing in 2021.¹⁰⁵ The Kashmir province has been at the heart of not only the territorial tensions between China and India, but also between Pakistan and India. Pakistan and India both claim the entirety of the province, with a de facto border roughly splitting the province (other than the relatively smaller Aksai Chin area which is administered by China and in which much of the Sino-Indian border conflict has taken place) in two between India and Pakistan—who have fought two wars over the province.¹⁰⁶

On the surface level, then, India objects to the BRI and more particularly the CPEC as it crosses land that India considers to be its own. Officially recognizing the BRI would, by New Delhi's logic, be tantamount to recognizing the territories in Kashmir province that are administered by Pakistan and China as legitimately being parts of Pakistan and China, thus nullifying India's claims to them.¹⁰⁷ This makes India the sole member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) not to endorse the BRI.¹⁰⁸

With the above being said, some argue that, despite official non-recognition of the BRI in New Delhi, India is not a non-player in the BRI—their involvement is of a proxy nature and even less directly through the amount of Chinese investment in India. For example, India is a significant player in several BRI-themed projects such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in which it is the second largest investor following China, through its involvement

¹⁰⁵ Mishra, Anshuman. "India's Strong Opposition to China's BRI at UN Conference in Beijing Hit by 'sudden Technical Snag' | DD News." DD News, October 20, 2021. <https://ddnews.gov.in/national/india%E2%80%99s-strong-opposition-china%E2%80%99s-bri-un-conference-beijing-hit-sudden-technical-snap>.

¹⁰⁶ *BBC News*. "Kashmir: Why India and Pakistan Fight over It." August 8, 2019, sec. India. <https://www.bbc.com/news/10537286>.

¹⁰⁷ Briefing, Silk Road. "Belt & Road Initiative: India." Silk Road Briefing, June 20, 2019. <https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/news/2019/06/20/belt-road-initiative-india/>.

¹⁰⁸ Deccan Chronicle. "India Plays down China's Belt and Road Initiative at SCO," June 16, 2019. <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/in-other-news/160619/india-plays-down-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-at-sco.html>.

in the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and through its very membership in the SCO. Although the source also mentions that India's choice to align itself with AIIB and NDB may be a way of obscuring the extent to which China is involved in infrastructure development in Asia.¹⁰⁹ It can be argued, then, that by institutional affiliation India does take part to an extent in the BRI, although it is up to debate whether membership in BRICS or the SCO (as both China and India are members of both organizations) can be fully counted as meaning a given nation is partaking in the BRI without said nation having signed an MoU. China and India have also directly worked together on at least one project that Beijing sees as part of the BRI while New Delhi sees as predating the BRI: the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor, which Beijing has named as one of the "six essential China-Asia overland routes as part of the Belt and Road Initiative."¹¹⁰

In addition to the above, India has infrastructure projects of its own with no Chinese money involved which are often described as being among India's answers to the BRI. One such project that both goes around the BRI and can be seen as part of a generalized and multinational effort to link Eurasia together with transportation infrastructure is India's financing and developing aid in the Chabahar Port in Iran, which is aimed at connecting to the North-South Transport Corridor (which passes through Iran, north to Armenia, west to Europe and east to Afghanistan) and will directly link India to Iran and Afghanistan for the first time since 1947 as Pakistan's location has made the overland route untenable.¹¹¹ The project centered around the Chabahar port also includes a free trade zone, the Chabahar-Zahedan railway project (extending some 628 kilometers) and the 1,000 kilometer rail project extending to Sarakhs on the border between Iran and Turkmenistan. This project also serves the strategic purpose of providing a counter to China's CPEC project, which has its head at the Gwadar port in Pakistan, some 170 kilometers from the port of Chabahar.¹¹²

On a broader scale, India has, under the aegis of the Act East Policy, been working to improve relations with ASEAN countries, as demonstrated by its June 2022 co-hosting of the foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries in New Delhi to make clear its intention to "rekindle

¹⁰⁹ Briefing, Silk Road. "Belt & Road Initiative:"

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Khalid, Dr Imran. "India's Challenge to".

its involvement in multiple initiatives and joint ventures in the region, ranging from public health, IT infrastructure, agriculture, defense, and trade. Currently there are 30 dialogue mechanisms between India and ASEAN involving various sectors.”¹¹³ In a more physical representation of India’s attempts to court the member states of ASEAN, the country has been working on the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, a project spanning some 1,400 kilometers (with intentions of expanding the project to include Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) and seeking to physically link the northern states of India with the region occupied by the ASEAN states.¹¹⁴ The author of the article here cited, Dr. Imran Khalid, argues that the “Trilateral Highway is being built with a sole purpose of building a “parallel” structure to the BRI in the ASEAN region. In addition to infrastructure projects involving ASEAN member states, India has also stepped up its activity in the South China Sea with regard to oil and gas exploration.”¹¹⁵

5.3 The Relationship between India and China as it Now Stands

In all, the relationship between China and India, as it now stands, could be described as contentious due to the ongoing border dispute, but still deeply interconnected through trade. At the same time that trade between the two most popular countries on the planet has stepped up so significantly, however, there has been a significant level of geopolitical maneuvering on both sides—particularly in regard to the infrastructure projects described above.

The border conflict has spilled over into other areas of relation between the countries in ways that further insulate the populations of India and China from each other—namely through the banning of social media apps in India. In 2020, the Indian government banned nearly 60 Chinese-developed apps, most famously Tiktok, citing national security concerns after a deadly border clash in the same year.¹¹⁶ It must be mentioned that the version of Tiktok that is used outside of China differs significantly from the version used inside China—called Douyin—and while technically the two apps are segregated from one another, there is a level of spillage of content between the two related apps.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Abi-Habib, Maria. “India Bans Nearly 60 Chinese Apps, Including TikTok and WeChat.” *The New York Times*, June 29, 2020, sec. World. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/29/world/asia/tik-tok-banned-india-china.html>.

At least as far as infrastructure projects and border disputes go, the relationship between the countries is both contentious and to a level cooperative. This, of course, is a satellite-level view of the topic and the impact of the Chinese health diplomacy efforts, especially with regard to public opinion in India, will be discussed in the Indian case study section as well as in the general discussion and analysis section that will follow the case studies.

VI. China and South Africa

South Africa, being the second country chosen as a case study in this thesis, also warrants a discussion of its history with and relations to China since their establishment of diplomatic relations, and a discussion of their bilateral relations and the multilateral relations in which they are involved under the BRICS and BRI frameworks.

6.1 Positive Relations and Growing Trade

In contrast to the somewhat rough relationship between China and India described in the previous section, China and South Africa enjoy significantly smoother relations. January 1st, 2023 marked 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries as formal diplomatic relations were established on January 1st, 1998 as a result of the signing in 1997 of the Agreement on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between South Africa and China.¹¹⁷ In that time, China has come to be South Africa's largest trading partner by a wide margin while South Africa is China's largest trade partner in Africa as a whole. To give the massive increase in trade between South Africa and China during their 25 years of formal relations some impact, in 1998 at the onset of relations, trade between the two countries stood at about \$1.4 billion, as of 2022, the trade relationship stood at about \$56.7 billion—an increase of nearly 40-fold.¹¹⁸ In the main, South Africa primarily exports products such as steel, iron ore, assorted chemical products, and wood and wood pulp to China and China exports more finished products such as steel products, various chemicals, textiles, mechanical equipment, and vehicles to South Africa.¹¹⁹ In essence, raw or semi-finished products are exported to China and in return finished products are exported to South Africa. In addition to the import-export relationship between the countries,

¹¹⁷ Grobler, Gert. *Chinadaily.com.cn*. "25 Years of Sino-South African Ties Celebrated," September 1, 2023. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202301/09/WS63bb69f4a31057c47eba8670.html>.

¹¹⁸ 夏媛媛 Xia Yuanyuan. "A Burgeoning Partnership-- ChinAfrica." *Chinafrica*, May 5, 2023. http://www.chinafrica.cn/Homepage/202305/t20230505_800330244.html.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Chinese companies maintain a significant presence in South Africa, with some 180 companies having conducted business in the country, primarily in the mining, energy, automotive industry, technology, heavy equipment, and financial services sectors.¹²⁰

6.2 Cultural, Tourism, and People-to-People Ties

In addition to the business relationship between the countries, China and South Africa maintain a significant cultural and tourism-based relationship. South Africa, for example, has become the foremost destination for Chinese tourists in Sub-Saharan Africa and many cities and provinces in the countries have designated themselves sister cities or sister provinces.¹²¹ South Africa also hosts the most Confucius Institutes of any African nation, with a total of six as of 2023.¹²² In 2017, China and South Africa launched the China-South Africa High Level People-to-People Exchange Mechanism, making South Africa the first country in Africa to have such an arrangement with China—with such mechanisms already existing in the United States, Russia, France, Indonesia, and in the EU. The goal of the mechanism is essentially to make the peoples of China and South Africa more familiar with each other and in so doing to enhance the relationship between the countries, particularly “in the areas of culture, education, communications, health, science, technology, sports, tourism, women, and youth.”¹²³ All of this is to say, the relationship between China and South Africa appears to be growing not only in economic terms, but also in human-to-human and cultural terms.

6.3 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

Not only has the trade relationship between China and South Africa in the past 25 years significantly increased, so too has the formal strength of the relationship. According to an April 27th, 2023 speech given by the South African Ambassador to China—Siyabonga Cyprian Cwele—since the establishment of formal relations between the two countries, the relationship had been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and that the countries had adopted a 10-Year Strategic Programme of Cooperation for the years between 2020 and 2029.¹²⁴ Indeed, as

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Sawahel, Wagdy. “Confucius Institutes Increase as Another Opens in Djibouti.” University World News, June 4, 2023. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=2023040505021956>.

¹²³ Ebrahim, Shannon. “China, SA Launch People-to-People Exchange Mechanism.” Independent Online (IOL), April 25, 2017. <https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/china-sa-launch-people-to-people-exchange-mechanism-8802955>.

¹²⁴ 夏媛媛 Xia Yuanyuan. “A Burgeoning Partnership”.

recently as June, 2023, Chinese State Councilor and (as of July 2023 former) Foreign Minister Qin Gang and South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Naledi Pandor vowed over the phone to deepen the already existing comprehensive strategic alliance between the two countries. This indication of a strengthening of China-South African relations comes after Xi Jinping and the President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa met in 2022 at the G20 summit in Bali to negotiate the path that ties between the countries would take in the future.¹²⁵

According to the South African government, the relationship between South Africa and China “supports South Africa’s foreign policy objectives towards the achievement of its domestic development imperatives, as well as promotes the broader socio-economic development goals of the African continent. The collaboration goes beyond bilateral relations to also include regional and multilateral cooperation to advance the agenda of the Global South. [...] the two countries remain committed to close cooperation and partnership within the context of the Forum on China – Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which drives joint continental development initiatives.”¹²⁶

6.4 South Africa and the BRI: Largely Positive, but with a Point of Contention

South Africa is one of China’s major African partners in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). South Africa was among the first African nations to join the BRI, having joined in 2015.¹²⁷ Ambassador Cwele has also stated since joining the BRI, the state of South Africa’s infrastructure has been significantly improved and that BRI projects “have played a vital role in strengthening South Africa’s connectivity with other countries and the development of the African Continental Free Trade Area.”¹²⁸ As Ambassador Cwele is an official representative of the government of South Africa, we can see through this speech that the South African government either wishes to portray itself as having a positive impression of the BRI or as actually having such an impression. In the same speech, Ambassador Cwele expressed part of

¹²⁵ Hua Xia (editor). *Xinhuanet* 新华网. “China, South Africa Vow to Further Deepen Comprehensive Strategic Partnership-Xinhua,” June 6, 2023. <https://english.news.cn/20230606/ec686e7862284ab3a7ffd55d617be0a3/c.html>.

¹²⁶ “International Relations and Cooperation on South Africa and the People’s Republic of China Commemorate 25 Years of Diplomatic Relations | South African Government.” Accessed July 19, 2023. <https://www.gov.za/speeches/international-relations-and-cooperation-south-africa-and-people%E2%80%99s-republic-china>.

¹²⁷ Nedopil, Christoph. Green Belt and Road Initiative Center – Research, policy, and analyses for a green Belt and Road Initiative. “Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - Green Belt and Road Initiative Center,” April 19, 2021. <https://green-bri.org/countries-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative-bri/>.

¹²⁸ 夏媛媛 Xia Yuanyuan. “A Burgeoning Partnership”.

South Africa's position with regard to the BRI both in South Africa itself and with regard to the entirety of the African continent, expressing a wish to "align the BRI with [South Africa's] national development plan. [And that the] BRI should also be aligned with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which is the development plan for the whole continent."¹²⁹

The above comment by Ambassador Cwele brings up a potential point of contention between China and South Africa through hinting at somewhat conflicting development and positionality goals with regard to the rest of Africa and South Africa's position in it. Tamara Naidoo of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung South Africa argues that the BRI and South Africa's participation in it, has "deliver[ed] a tough blow to South Africa's international standing, especially as China forges its path alone through the rest of Africa".¹³⁰ Naidoo's argument revolves around a conflict of strategy between BRICS in Africa and the BRI, with the BRI exposing cracks in BRICS as a group. She relates opinions of other scholars such as Yu-Shan Wu of the South African Institute of International Affairs—who sees the BRI as a positive development for Africa as, as Wu argues, it aligns with the objectives of the African Union's Agenda 2063—and Ronak Gopaldas of the Institute for Security Studies, who warns of the danger of China's debt trap diplomacy for African nations. She argues that China's execution of the BRI in Africa goes around South Africa's role as the BRICS member that is the gateway to the African continent for other BRICS members and in so doing undermines South Africa's ambitions and position in Africa. To support this argument, she notes that China has been growing relations with other African states such as Kenya, Tanzania, Djibuti, and Ethiopia, has been insisting on including the BRI in forums such as BRICS and Africa-centric forums such as the FOCAC, to which there has been no coherent African response that has been able to control Chinese influence in African development—a lack of coherency that, she argues, is typified by the African Union's signing of an MoU with China regarding continental development with unclear regard to national interests and authority—and that China has been reaching beyond the BRICS framework in its actions in Africa, notably by expanding from the BRICS framework to a 'BRICS plus' framework that brings countries like Egypt and Kenya to the fore in a way that

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Naidoo, Tamara. "South Africa's Dilemma in the Belt and Road Initiative: Losing Africa for China?" Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, February 26, 2018. <https://connect.fes.de/people/south-africas-dilemma-in-the-belt-and-road-initiative-losing-africa-for-china>.

competes with South Africa's Standing in BRICS.¹³¹ Notably, in August 2023, the BRICS bloc admitted two countries in Africa, Ethiopia and Egypt. This was part of the bloc's first expansion in 13 years, which also saw the admittance of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Argentina, and the UAE.¹³²

VII. BRICS and the BRI in Relation to China, India, and South Africa

As the three countries that are most centered in this thesis—China, India, and South Africa—are all members of BRICS, a brief discussion on the relationship between BRICS and the BRI is needed. Broadly speaking, the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), take as their goal economic growth, development, and the promotion of national sovereignty and so are hesitant to sign on to any legally binding commitments. China is, due to the political and economic weight it has on the world stage, something of an outlier in BRICS that “exerts great weight on the BRICS exceeding that of its partners.”¹³³ China's outsized weight has given it a degree of freedom to pursue other initiatives such as the BRI that has created friction with its BRICS partners—in particular with India as described above. Naidoo's work, mentioned above, describes how China's increasing presence in Africa through the BRI—while somewhat going around South Africa's self-appointed role as gateway to Africa—has the potential to create friction between the two BRICS countries. It seems, however, that this has not entirely been the case as, per Ambassador Cwele's speech described above, the relationship between China and South Africa has been becoming increasingly strong as opposed to becoming more fractious with the growth of the BRI in Africa.

7.1 Contention with the BRI: India and Russia

The two members of BRICS that see the BRI as a challenge to their interests are Russia and India. India, firstly, due to the above-described China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project that runs through territory that India sees as its own. Secondly and more broadly due to fears in India about the strategic relationship between China and Pakistan, in particular with

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Plessis, Carien du, Anait Miridzhanian, Bhargav Acharya, Anait Miridzhanian, and Bhargav Acharya. “BRICS Welcomes New Members in Push to Reshuffle World Order.” *Reuters*, August 25, 2023, sec. World. <https://www.reuters.com/world/brics-poised-invite-new-members-join-bloc-sources-2023-08-24/>.

¹³³ Hooijmaaijers, Bas. “China, the BRICS, and the Limitations of Reshaping Global Economic Governance.” *The Pacific Review* 34, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 29–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2019.1649298>. P. 30.

regard to China's assistance to the Pakistani nuclear weapon and missile programs. Thirdly, India sees China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI)—which involves a series of Chinese-sponsored ports stretching across the Indian Ocean—as a way to build a “string of pearls” across said ocean in order to eventually become the dominant naval power in the region.¹³⁴ That is to say, India tends to see the BRI as something of a clandestine effort to assert power in what India sees as its sphere of influence and, as a part of said power assertion, to aid its strategic foe-Pakistan.

Russia's skepticism around the BRI lies in what it perceives to be Chinese intrusion into what Russia sees as its traditional sphere of influence in Central Asia. This presence in Central Asia takes the form of increasing Chinese investment and infrastructure projects—essentially entailing a competition between Moscow and Beijing through the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU or EEU) and the BRI.¹³⁵ Partly as a way to balance Chinese influence in the region, Moscow has advocated for the expansion of the SCO and India's inclusion in the organization in 2017. Beijing, as a response, takes the position that the EAEU is aligned with the BRI's goal of increasing connectivity in Central Asia “and can be integrated into a regional free trade agreement and BRI projects.”¹³⁶ In all, the conflict of interests between Russia and China in central Asia is not nearly so contentious as that between China and India in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, but still represents a point of tension and potential blockage for Chinese BRI ambitions in Central Asia.

With the growth of the BRI and the increase in Chinese power overall, the relationship between China and BRICS as an organization has begun to take a new form. China has, in line with its economic and geopolitical weight, attempted to position itself as something of a leader in BRICS, seeking to integrate BRICS and the BRI. For example, as early as 2017, the Belt and Road Portal (yidaiyilu.gov.cn) in reference to the 9th BRICS Summit in Xiamen, China, which saw the introduction of the BRICS+ proposal by China and the inclusion of representatives from non-BRICS countries such as Egypt, Mexico, Thailand, Tajikistan, and Guinea, said: “Although China's economy has surpassed the other four members of the BRICS bloc combined, China is willing to share its development premiums with them and the other developing countries. An

¹³⁴ Ibid. 45.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 45.

¹³⁶ Ibid. 46.

important way is to form an extensive partnership network. BRICS and the Belt and Road Initiative are both striving in the same direction.”¹³⁷ This clearly attempts to frame China as being both at the head of the BRICS countries economically and in terms of power, and to push together the BRI and BRICS bloc through the inclusive of said extensive partnership network.

VIII. Theoretical Framework

As health diplomacy is essentially a special case of soft power diplomacy, the theoretical framework for this thesis revolves around said concept¹³⁸. The term was first coined by American political scientist Joseph Nye Jr. in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. Nye himself states that he developed the concept in 1989 as a response to the conventional wisdom regarding the decline of American power. In the process of writing said book, he noted that the conventional view of power lacked a theoretical explanation for the ability of a country—in Nye’s case the United States—to influence others to take the courses of action desired, or, as Nye puts it, the ability of the United States “to attract others and thus increase the probabilities of obtaining the outcome it wanted.”¹³⁹ Nye notes that while the political concept of soft power is relatively new, the practice of it has been present throughout human history. In defense of this idea, he chooses the examples of Laozi’s concept of governance—that the best leader is not one that has his commands obeyed, but one that the people are barely aware exists—and that of the soft power dividends that the spread of the French language gave France in the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁰

Soft power is just one of the forms of power that any actor—in the case of this thesis states can employ to reach their ends. The definition of power in its most basic form is “the ability to influence others to obtain the outcomes one wants.”¹⁴¹ Nye breaks this definition of power down into three subparts: coercion—sticks—inducements and payments—carrots—and

¹³⁷ Zhang, Junmian. “BRICS’ Synergy with Belt and Road Initiative - BELT AND ROAD PORTAL.” Belt and Road Portal, July 9, 2017. <https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/p/26990.html>.

¹³⁸ I thank my advisor, Dr. Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik, for suggesting the interpretation of Chinese health diplomacy as a special case of soft power diplomacy.

¹³⁹ Watanabe, Yasushi, and David L McConnell. *Soft Power Superpowers*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Ix.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. ix.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. x.

attraction that makes other actors do what an actor wants.¹⁴² It is to this third form of power that he gives the title ‘soft power’. To flesh out this definition of soft power he writes: “a country may obtain the outcome it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, and/or aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. In this sense, it is important to set the agenda and attract others in world politics, and not only to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons. This soft power—getting others to want the outcomes that you want—co-opts people rather than coerces them.”¹⁴³ Soft power, to an extent, is about framing and agenda setting. If a political leader or a country can frame an issue in a way that supports its goals, then it is practicing a form of soft power.

Nye differentiates between soft power and influence. In Nye’s formulation, soft power is one source of influence for a country as influence can also be gained through threats or enticements. He further states that soft power is not just persuasion or the ability to influence people through argument, though he says that such persuasion can play a vital role in soft power efforts.¹⁴⁴

In describing soft power, he states: “It is also the ability to entice and attract. In behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. Whether a particular asset is an attractive soft power resource can be measured through polls or focus groups. Whether that attraction in turn produces desired policy outcomes has to be judged in each particular case.”¹⁴⁵

In the case of Chinese health diplomacy efforts surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the soft power assets in play would be deliveries of medical materials, vaccines, medical and technological know-how and the deployment of Chinese medical professionals either in on medical or educational missions. Judging the efficacy of said health diplomacy efforts will, just as Nye writes, have to be done partially through analyzing polling data when it comes to the effect of said efforts on public opinion of China in India and South Africa, but also through the

¹⁴² Nye, Joseph S. “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, AAPSS, 616, no. 1 (March 2008): 94–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>. P. 94.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 94-95.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 95.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 95.

analysis of newspaper articles—of those publications that fall closest to the official governmental line of the case study countries and of official government or party publications—in order to attempt to gauge the efficacy of Chinese health diplomacy efforts on the stances towards China that the governments of India and South Africa take. China wishes to portray itself as a responsible major power and its health diplomacy efforts are one of the many soft power tools it is using in order to enhance that image of itself in the minds of the populations of other countries and to an extent in the eyes of the governments of other countries—particularly those in the Global South.

Nye has also explicitly linked the concept of soft power to international politics. Saying that:

“In international politics, the resources that produce soft power arise in large part from the values an organization or country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others. Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than [sic] merely their governments. Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth. But if the content of a country’s culture, values, and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that “broadcasts” them cannot produce soft power. It may produce just the opposite.”¹⁴⁶

8.1 Chinese Health Diplomacy and Nye’s Conception of Soft Power

In the case of China during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly before China dropped its zero-COVID policy in late 2022¹⁴⁷, the low deaths and infection rates within China itself as a result of the harsh anti-infection measures that were part of said zero-COVID policy could be seen as a factor that would fall under Nye’s definition of “internal practices and policies” mentioned in the above quote. The very nature of said anti-COVID measures, despite their relative efficacy, could be seen as a detracting factor from any soft power advantage that their success may have yielded. The harshness of the practices, despite their effectiveness, may have reduced the soft power dividends that China was able to gain from them. That is, just as in the

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 95.

¹⁴⁷ Bradsher, Keith, Chang Che, and Amy Chang Chien. “China Eases ‘Zero Covid’ Restrictions in Victory for Protesters.” *The New York Times*, December 7, 2022, sec. World.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/07/world/asia/china-zero-covid-protests.html>.

last line of the above quote, the harshness of China's internal anti-COVID policies may have produced the opposite of soft power in some parts of the world.

A more direct example of how China has been projecting its internal soft power resources in order to gain international soft power dividends than the somewhat nebulous concept of health diplomacy may be its promotion of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) both through the framework of the BRI in general as represented through the above-described establishment of TCM centers around the globe and particularly in BRI countries and as a response and suite of treatments for COVID-19. TCM is, as suggested in its name, a thoroughly Chinese set of traditions and practices—its inclusion in Chinese soft power efforts represents an exporting of a potentially attractive set of traditions and practices from within China to the rest of the world, that is, the export or deployment of one of China's pools of soft power resources.

As this thesis focuses on China's health diplomacy efforts, something that for the most part involves actions taken outside of China, the concept of public diplomacy in the above quote is also of great use. The above quote describes a channeling of the soft power resources of a country from within it to the publics of other countries, which is an apt if surface-level description of the process that has been Chinese health diplomacy efforts around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Said efforts have involved a significant export of resources—both material and intellectual—to much of the rest of the world. What remains to be seen, which will be analyzed in the following case study and discussion sections, is to what extent China has been able to reap soft power dividends from their efforts in two countries with which China shares thoroughly different relations. This is all to say that, so far as this thesis will attempt to analyze the responses of the publics of India and South Africa to Chinese health diplomacy efforts and to analyze to what if any extent said responses can be interpreted as soft power gains for China in said publics, this thesis will do so through the lens of public diplomacy.

8.2 Nye's Conception of Soft Power in Context and Evolution

The concept of soft power as explicated by Nye stands in opposition to some of the other major schools of international relations—particularly that of realism. Indeed, Nye himself references those who adhere to the realist school of thought in international relations as: “Those self-styled realists who deny the importance of soft power are like people who do not understand

the power of seduction. They succumb to the “concrete fallacy” that espouses that something is not a power resource unless you can drop it on a city or on your foot.”¹⁴⁸

Nye, in his 2021 article, *Soft Power: The Evolution of a Concept*, however, states that he never fully rejected the realist approach as having explanatory value, but argued that the realist approach as it is often executed, with security as the main issue and military power as the primary source of power on the international stage, fell short of what was needed to explain the power dynamics of the international system in various contexts. In short, Nye and Keohane “argued that analysts should start with the overall structure of power and realism, but not stop there. However, this advice became lost in the fad of academics to use labels to sort concepts into pigeon holes.”¹⁴⁹ Essentially arguing that realism should be the basis from which analysts starts, but that they should not limit themselves to it. The analysis in this thesis will, so far as China’s physical ability to project health diplomacy efforts around the world could be counted as a traditionally realist form of power, align with what Nye says above. That being said, the main focus will decidedly be on the second half of the analytical equation suggested by Nye, that being the part that moves beyond realist thought.

Nye’s concept of soft power has been critiqued and clarified over the years since its inception. In response to criticism of his initial formulation of the concept of soft power, namely that his verbiage made it seem like soft power had essentially supplanted hard power in relative importance within international relations, Nye clarified the context-dependent nature of the difference between hard power and soft power resources. In conceptual terms, Nye uses the concept of agenda setting: “the use of force, payment, and some agenda-setting based on them I call hard power. Agenda-setting that is regarded as legitimate by the target, positive attraction, and persuasion are the parts of the spectrum of behaviors that I include in soft power.”¹⁵⁰ Explaining how depending on the context in which an action is taking place, it may be an example of hard or soft power. In terms of physical resources, he uses the example of a physical resource that is usually used to create hard power—US naval ships—providing relief in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia as having, according to polls in Indonesia, produced

¹⁴⁸ Nye, Joseph S. “Public Diplomacy and”. P. 96.

¹⁴⁹ Nye, Joseph S. “Soft Power: The Evolution of a Concept.” *Journal of Political Power* 14, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 196–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2021.1879572>. P. 199.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 201.

a soft power benefit for the United States.¹⁵¹ That is to say, a resource that is usually considered a hard power resource being used to create soft power. Nye uses the examples of the Marshall Plan in 1948 and the BRI in the current day as examples of resources that simultaneously create hard and soft power.¹⁵²

Another aspect of the criticism that Nye's concept of soft power has received that is particularly relevant to the topic of this thesis is the criticism of soft power not always being particularly soft. This comes in response to Janice Bially Mattern's 2005 article *Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics*, which takes as its premise that "in the context of world politics, it makes far more sense to model attraction as a relationship that is constructed through *representational force*—a nonphysical but nevertheless coercive form of power that is exercised through language. [...] soft power should not be understood in juxtaposition to hard power but as a continuation of it by different means."¹⁵³ In response to this, Nye explicates a series of distinctions between types of power, generally, on the degree to which the target of the power being exercised is afforded true agency, or volunteerism. Beginning with a describing power and power behaviors as existing "as a matter of degree along a spectrum of behaviors that range from the hard end of command to the soft end of co-option."¹⁵⁴ As an example of where this one dimensional spectrum would be accurate, Nye uses the example of agenda setting where the determining factor about where on the spectrum any agenda setting behavior falls is the degree of deception involved: "If an agent deceives the targets and deprives them of choice, the structural manipulation fits the category of hard power; if the targets regard the agent's agenda setting as welcome and legitimate, the behavior fits better in the category of soft power."¹⁵⁵ To apply this mono-dimensional framework to the topic of Chinese health diplomacy would be somewhat limiting and, to an extent, only be particularly useful when describing the way that Chinese health diplomacy efforts were presented to the publics of target countries before the

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 201.

¹⁵² Ibid. 201.

¹⁵³ Mattern, Janice Bially. "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics - Janice Bially Mattern, 2005." *Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (June 2005): 583–612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298050330031601>.

¹⁵⁴ ¹⁵⁴ Nye, Joseph S. "Soft Power: The". P. 202.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. 202.

efforts themselves took place. As this thesis focuses more on the aftereffects, the potential soft power dividends of said actions, this limited spectrum is not of particular use past its role as an intermediary stage on the path to a more useful model of power.

8.3 Alexander Vuving's Model of Power and Chinese Health Diplomacy

The above-mentioned more useful model of power is one with two axes. This model, suggested to Nye by Alexander Vuving, takes “symmetrical and asymmetrical voluntarism by the target on one axis, and direct or indirect manipulation by the agent on the other. This would yield four power categories: coercive, structural, transactional, and attractive. Hard power behavior would include coercion, manipulation of structure, and payment. Soft power behavior would include positive attraction and persuasion.”¹⁵⁶ The manipulation of structure which Nye here references can include the use of false or misleading information by the agent exercising power in order to shape the structure of the power interaction in such a way—regardless of the actual facts of the situation—that the agent’s desired outcomes are achieved. The use of misleading or false information would make this a case of hard power exercise.

Under the above two-axis framework, Chinese health diplomacy efforts, and the BRI in general, would arguably fall somewhere in the bottom left quadrant of a diagram of this model. That is to say, the complexity and scope of the project makes it so that aspects of it fall within the attractive, transactive, and structural quadrants, but not particularly in the coercive quadrant—depending on how one defines coercion. As the goal of Chinese health diplomacy is generally to reap soft power dividends and to promote China’s wished-for image as a responsible great power, transactional, structural, and attractive power have been used. For example, the donation (putting aside for the moment the matter of sales) of medical supplies and vaccines could be seen as a transactional use of power in that it is essentially a payment to the country receiving the donation with the hoped-for return of said receiving country aligning more closely with Chinese ambitions and as incentives for said countries to request greater health aid from China in the future. It should, however, be noted that Nye would likely regard such a transaction as an exercise in hard power behavior as the “transactional inducement alters the target’s choice by manipulating the prospect of positive sanctions.”¹⁵⁷ The transactional aspects of Chinese health

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 202.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 203.

diplomacy, then, could be thought of as a case of hard power behavior in the transactions themselves in service of soft power aims through a hoped for increase in attractive soft power by positively influencing the opinion held by the target country's government and public regarding China. This is part of what makes Chinese health diplomacy efforts a special case of soft power diplomacy. The transactions involved in said diplomacy could be framed as exercises in hard power, by, as Nye describes, manipulating the potential for positive sanctions in the future, but with the aim of increasing China's overall soft power through an opinion boost in target countries.

Said potential opinion boost could lead to an increase in attractive soft power for China, which can then be converted into more direct influence over target countries or partnerships therewith. Nye describes how attractive power can itself slip into coercive behavior depending on how it is communicated, as could easily become the case with said converted influence, should deception be deemed necessary to open widen the crack in the door created by Chinese attractive soft power:

“In soft power behavior, attraction can be direct with no deliberate action by the agent (‘a city on the hill effect’) or indirect and mediated by communication. Persuasion (or advertising) is mediated attraction where the agent intentionally frames the communication. Modest framing that enhances attraction in a way that preserves meaningful voluntary choice by the target remains soft power. Extreme framing (such as lies and deception) that severely distort reality remove the target's meaningful choice and shade into the hard power behavior of coercion.”¹⁵⁸

The issue of communication in the case of Chinese health diplomacy efforts and its impact on attractive power comes with both how the governments and media of target countries and of China itself frames said efforts. The degree to which falsehood is involved impacts the degree to which said efforts can be regarded as soft power efforts.

Chinese health diplomacy actions fall within the structural quadrant in through the manipulation of the structure of the narrative around health aid and COVID-19—particularly during the early part of said health diplomacy efforts and with regard to the West and China's accusations thereto of vaccine hoarding. For example, China at BRICS talks in 2021, accused the developed world of hoarding its vaccines, while praising the countries of BRICS for doing the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 203.

opposite.¹⁵⁹ This accusation by China contributes to the framing of Chinese health diplomacy—and in this case that of BRICS in general—as benevolent, while framing the actions of China’s strategic rivals—much of the developed world—as selfish. Said framing, regardless of what the truth of the situation may be, can increase the attractiveness of Chinese health aid and of China in general by helping to frame the global COVID-19 aid situation as one characterized by a generous China and BRICS bloc on one hand and a selfish bloc of developed countries on the other hand. Should target countries already have a mostly positive view of China, then the effect would be all the more potent. This last part will come into play during the analysis of the impacts of Chinese health diplomacy in South Africa and India as the two countries have had widely divergent views of China since well before the COVID-19 pandemic.

IX. China’s Global Position Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic

In order to analyze the impact that Chinese medical diplomacy efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic have had in terms of public opinion impact, it is important to situate China in the world in terms of global public opinion, Chinese presence, and Chinese influence abroad. As the broader trends in the global opinion of China are linked to Xi Jinping’s tenure in office, a discussion going back as far as 2012 is illuminating. To begin with opinion in the US, relevant as the main competitor to China on the global stage, opinions of China have fluctuated significantly, with roughly 42% of the US population holding a positive view of China and 40% holding a negative view at the beginning of Barack Obama’s second presidential term (2012-2016). During said term, favorable views of China fell to a low of 35% in 2014 and rising to a high of 44% in 2017 after Donald Trump took office—in part to his praise of Xi Jinping early in his presidential term. Since then, positive views of China in the American public have fallen significantly, with roughly 82% of the populace holding a negative view of China and 16% holding a positive view in 2022.¹⁶⁰ The reasons for this are multitudinous. Before the pandemic, there was the trade war

¹⁵⁹ Lo, Kinling. “Coronavirus: China Hits out at Vaccine ‘Hoarding’ Nations during BRICS Talks | South China Morning Post.” *South China Morning Post*, February 6, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3135783/coronavirus-china-hits-out-vaccine-hoarding-nations-during>.

¹⁶⁰ Greenwood, Shannon. “How Global Public Opinion of China Has Shifted in the Xi Era.” *Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project* (blog), September 28, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/09/28/how-global-public-opinion-of-china-has-shifted-in-the-xi-era/>.

between the US and China. Notably, the greatest drop in opinions of China in the US during the trade war was among those on the American right. Other major reasons for this opinion drop include China's partnership with Russia and concerns about human rights violations in China, and most importantly concerns about Chinese mishandling of the initial COVID-19 outbreak.¹⁶¹

9.1 Opinions of China among Its Neighbors

The above-described drops in opinion of China have in no way been limited to the United States. China's Western-aligned neighbors have also seen significant drops in public opinion of China. In South Korea, opinions of China have, since 2017, fallen to a historic low with some 80% of the population holding a negative view of the neighboring superpower.¹⁶² The situation in Japan is similar, if more sustained and stronger as, according to the Pew Research Center "for the past 20 years, Japanese views of China have always been among the most negative in Center surveys, if not *the* most negative."¹⁶³ With negative views of China reaching 93% in 2013 amid tensions in the East China Sea, and around half of the current adult Japanese population describing their views of China as "very unfavorable" in 2022.¹⁶⁴ Perhaps the most dramatic example of opinion change in China's Western-aligned neighbors took place in Australia. With the general opinion of China in the Australian population flipping from "broadly favorable to unfavorable between 2017 and 2019" and with a drop in favorability of 24 percentage points between 2019 and 2020 following the outbreak of COVID-19, Australian calls for investigation into the origin of the virus, which significantly added to the worsening of relations between the two countries.¹⁶⁵

9.2 Opinions of China in the Global North

This trend towards a negative view of China, predating the pandemic but largely sharpened by it, holds true in most of the developed world. For example, about 83% of Swedes, 74% of Canadians, 74% of Germans, and 69% of citizens of the United Kingdom now hold a negative opinion of China. In each of these countries, negative opinions of China have broadly been rising in the last decade, but the outbreak of COVID-19 has caused negative opinions to

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid. Emphasis original.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

surge massively.¹⁶⁶ The above is all to say that with the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, China has found itself to hold something of a historically negative place in the public opinion of the developed world.

9.3 Opinions of China in India and South Africa

Opinion of China in the Global South is somewhat more difficult to pin down as polling data is less accessible than it is for the countries of the Global North. The Pew Research Center does, however, provide recent data for both South Africa and India. According to the Center's Spring 2023 Global Attitudes Survey, in the period between 2019 and 2023, the percent of South African adults who held a negative view of China rose from 35% to 40% while the percent of Indian adults who held negative views of China in the same period rose from 46% to 67%. The Center describes the change in South African opinion as "somewhat more negative" while the change in opinion in India has "reached historic highs".¹⁶⁷ The survey this data is taken from was a survey of 24 countries on six countries that sought to analyze both the general global opinion of China, of Xi Jinping, of China as an economic power, and crucially of global perceptions of Chinese soft power. Notably, this survey is the first that the Center has been able to conduct on such a scale since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁶⁸

9.4 Global Opinions of Chinese Soft Power

The same survey revealed that global opinions of Chinese soft power—particularly as defined by technological appeal are, in stark contrast to the state of global public opinion of China in general, generally positive. Some 19% of respondents across all 24 countries said that China's technological advancements compared with other wealthy countries were "the best" while 51% overall said that said technological advancements were "above average". The above opinion was particularly prevalent in the middle-income countries surveyed (India, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, and Indonesia) many of which are reliant on Chinese companies such as Huawei for their 4G and 5G systems. The Center asked in particular about information technologies such as cell phones, tablets, and computers and among these

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Laura, Silver, Christine Huang, and Laura Clancy. "China's Approach to Foreign Policy Gets Largely Negative Reviews in 24-Country Survey." *Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project* (blog), July 27, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/27/chinas-approach-to-foreign-policy-gets-largely-negative-reviews-in-24-country-survey/>.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

eight countries, there was an overall impression that said products made by Chinese companies were well-made, though respondents were more divided when it came to the cost and safety of said products with a median of 44% of respondents calling them costly, 40% saying that they made their data unsafe. Notably the American public was asked a different but related question which yielded a large majority of respondents saying that they had little confidence in the privacy policies or data handling of Chinese companies.¹⁶⁹

The age of the respondents in about half of the countries surveyed appears to have impacted their view of Chinese soft power as represented by China's entertainment, technology, and universities in that those defined as young adults (18-39) generally rated said aspects of soft power higher than those above 40. Quite interestingly given the above mentioned Japanese opinion of China, young adults in Japan were "15 percentage points more likely to call China's universities the best or above average compared with older adults, 13 points more likely to say the same for technological achievements, and 8 points more likely on entertainment."¹⁷⁰ This speaks to an a potentially increasing opinion of opinion of Chinese soft power—if not of China as a whole—among the younger generation as the quality of Chinese goods has improved over the last decade or so. What is particularly interesting and relevant to this thesis is the opinion among young adults of the Chinese university system as a strong opinion of the educational system may lend itself to greater trust in the products of said university system, namely in the form of doctors and scientists specializing in medicine-adjacent fields. The data available, however, does not seem to directly address this potential link and so any such link must fall under the aegis of, at best, analysis, and at worst conjecture.

The relevance in the above opinion of Chinese soft power as expressed through its technological advancements lies in how said soft power may interact with opinions of Chinese medicine and infrastructure projects through the BRI framework. Namely, as mentioned above, through potential future gains in trust about the reliability and efficacy of Chinese medicinal products. This question of reliability and efficacy in the here and now, however, has been of significant concern with regard to Chinese-made COVID-19 vaccines.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. P. 5.

9.5 Global and Case Study Country Opinions of Chinese COVID-19 Vaccines

Since the beginning of the rollout of Chinese vaccines across the world, there have been significant concerns about their efficacy in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. As early as June 2021, Chinese vaccines had been deployed in some 90 countries around the world, and some of those 90 countries faced significant outbreaks after the rollout of Chinese vaccines. For context, the data available in 2021 put the efficacy rate of the Sinopharm vaccine, which was developed at the Beijing Institute of Biological products at about 78.1%, while the Sinovac vaccine had an efficacy rate of about 51%.¹⁷¹ Data from the WHO in 2022 gives more detailed information on exactly what is meant by efficacy here by differentiating between efficacy against symptomatic COVID-19 and efficacy against hospitalization. After two properly administered doses, the Sinopharm vaccine delivers 79% efficacy against both situations after at least 14 days after the second dose.¹⁷² According to the WHO, the Sinovac vaccine, with the same proper two dose administration regime and 14 day wait period, had a 51% efficacy rate against symptomatic infection, a 100% efficacy rate against severe disease, and a 100% efficacy rate against hospitalization.¹⁷³ The main Western competitors to the Chinese vaccines, Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna both have a 95% efficacy rate at preventing symptomatic COVID-19. Both vaccines have been shown to wane in efficacy over time, but a booster shot brings efficacy back up to the original number.¹⁷⁴

With the generally positive data about the efficacy rates of Chinese vaccines outlined above in mind, the question of what the opinion of said Chinese vaccines is on the world stage as said vaccines have been at the forefront of the Chinese health diplomacy effort during the COVID-19 pandemic. The developed world, broadly, tends to view Chinese vaccines with a level of suspicion. Among scientists, the skepticism around Chinese vaccines stems from the fact

¹⁷¹ Wee, Sui-Lee. "They Relied on Chinese Vaccines. Now They're Battling Outbreaks." *The New York Times*, June 22, 2021, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/22/business/economy/china-vaccines-covid-outbreak.html>.

¹⁷² "The Sinopharm COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know." Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-sinopharm-covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know>.

¹⁷³ "The Sinovac-CoronaVac COVID-19 Vaccine: What You Need to Know." Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/the-sinovac-covid-19-vaccine-what-you-need-to-know>.

¹⁷⁴ Yale Medicine. "Comparing the COVID-19 Vaccines: How Are They Different?" Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.yalemedicine.org/news/covid-19-vaccine-comparison>.

that China has failed to release its trial data in peer reviewed journals. Some of these concerns have been mollified by the fact that Chinese vaccines had been used within China before they were exported with no mass wave of ill effects resulting.¹⁷⁵ Epidemiologist Mike Toole of the Burnet Institute notes that there is something of a double standard when it comes to the issue of Chinese vaccines and data publishing as the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was approved in the US without having published their data in a peer reviewed journal.¹⁷⁶

On the less scientific side of things, as Graeme Smith of Australian National University's Department of Pacific Affairs notes, some skepticism has been fueled by suspicion of the top-down nature of the Chinese political system with the train of thought being that as there is the political imperative that China must have an effective vaccine, then there is incentive for those who developed said vaccine to rush the process and emphasize good news over any potential negative news. Smith also notes that there is doubtless an element of racism in skepticism around Chinese vaccines that, when paired with anger about China being the origin of the pandemic but not fully owning up to said role, has combined to create a media environment that may not be entirely fair to Chinese vaccines.¹⁷⁷

Dr. Minglu Chen, China studies lecturer at Sydney University, brings some more nuance to the debate around what is influencing Western perceptions of Chinese vaccines. Dr. Chen notes that the Chinese political system is complex and that there is no black and white picture (such as the narrative around a political imperative for an effective vaccine may suggest.) Dr. Chen notes too, that the Chinese government faces the same public relations issue of any government on the vaccine issue in that it also needs to convince its own populace of their safety and efficacy.¹⁷⁸ Dr. Chen touches on the issue of Chinese vaccines as tools in broader health diplomacy efforts by noting that if Chinese vaccines sent abroad as a part of said efforts turned out to be unsafe or ineffective, then they would not be useful soft power resources in that they would either fail to gain China any soft power dividends or worse could end up costing China

¹⁷⁵ Jackson, Will. "There's a Lack of Data on Chinese Vaccines – but There Are Other Reasons the West Has Rejected It." *ABC News*, March 25, 2021. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-26/why-is-the-west-so-sceptical-of-chinas-vaccines-/100026036>.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

soft power and influence abroad.¹⁷⁹ Dr. Chen, then, uses the above to argue that China has good reason to create and distribute a safe and effective vaccine instead of just rushing out a vaccine that may not be safe and effective. In sum, Dr. Chen is emphasizing that there is no monolithic narrative that can adequately describe the situation with Chinese vaccines—or the Chinese political system for that matter—in spite of how it is often presented.

Dr. Chen agrees that the lack of transparency from Beijing around vaccine data plays a role in Western perceptions, but also notes that the ongoing political rivalry between China and the West likely plays an important role in shading perceptions of both Chinese vaccines and China's actions around said vaccines saying that "When the tensions are so intense, it is very hard for any side involved to stay calm and take a more nuanced or subtle approach."¹⁸⁰

All of the above is to say that, in the scientific community, the trustworthiness and the evaluations of Chinese vaccines in comparison to Western vaccines is something of a hot button issue with a less-than-clear outcome. There is general suspicion of Chinese vaccines due to the perceived structure of the Chinese government and any political imperatives that may result from said structure, but there is also an acknowledgement that there is nuance to the Chinese political system and significant incentives for China to create a safe and effective vaccine before deploying it on the world stage. There is also an acknowledgement that the current geopolitical tensions between China and the West, racism, and anger towards China as the country from which COVID-19 sprung has potentially influenced the way that Chinese vaccines are depicted in the media in a negative way.

Chinese vaccines are also not fully trusted within China itself, as vaccine hesitancy has proven itself a major obstacle in Chinese efforts to combat COVID-19 domestically. While China reports that roughly 90% of its populations has been vaccinated, but those who are most vulnerable, the elderly, have a disproportionately low vaccination rate. As of the end of 2022, only about 69% of those above 60 had had three doses of any vaccine and only about 40% of those above 80 were had had the same.¹⁸¹ There appear to be two main reasons for this low rate:

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Davidson, Helen. "Vaccines Are Key to China's Zero-Covid Exit but Scepticism Poses Challenge." *The Guardian*, December 2, 2022, sec. World news. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/02/vaccines-key-china-zero-covid-exit-still-a-challenge>.

firstly, the Chinese government did not promote vaccination for the elderly population until November 2021, which left plenty of time for significant vaccine hesitancy to build up. Secondly, China at that time had not allowed the import of foreign vaccines and had relied exclusively on domestic vaccines, which in 2022 were all of inactivated virus make and seen among the Chinese population as being less trustworthy than foreign vaccines.¹⁸² Since then, China has allowed the limited import of Pfizer-BioNTech for the vaccination of foreigners living in China.¹⁸³ As of March, 2023, China has approved its first domestic mRNA vaccine and seemingly¹⁸⁴ abandoned the process of approval for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

9.6 Perception of Chinese Vaccines Among the Laypeople of the World: Turkey as an Example

The question of how Chinese vaccines and more broadly Chinese health diplomacy efforts are perceived by the laypeople of both the Global North and the Global South is somewhat more tricky to gauge with the available data on the subject being sparse—at least in the English language literature. The case of Turkey, as one of the first countries to purchase and deploy Sinovac, has been documented in terms of the domestic public debate that took place there with regard to the use of Sinovac instead of Western vaccines which many of its neighbors chose.¹⁸⁵ Turkey's choice of a Chinese vaccine over a Western vaccine was something of a diplomatic coup at the time. Turkey's generally Western alignment, as shown through its NATO membership and (perhaps somewhat stalled) EU candidacy, when combined with said choice, represented a significant propaganda and soft power opportunity for Beijing. China capitalized on this opportunity by praising Turkey's "independent diplomacy" in a December 2020 Global

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Escritt, Thomas, Alexander Ratz, and Thomas Escritt. "First Foreign COVID Vaccines Head to China from Germany." *Reuters*, December 21, 2022, sec. Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/germany-sends-first-batch-biontech-covid-19-vaccines-china-2022-12-21/>.

¹⁸⁴ Hong, Nicole, and Alexandra Stevenson. "China Approves an mRNA Covid Vaccine, Its First." *The New York Times*, March 22, 2023, sec. Business. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/22/business/china-mrna-covid-vaccine.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Üngör, Çağdaş. "The 'Chinese Vaccine' and Its Discontents: Turkey's Public Debate on Sinovac during the COVID Crisis." Middle East Institute, June 9, 2022. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/chinese-vaccineand-turkeys-public-debate>.

Times article.¹⁸⁶ The Chinese media or propaganda apparatus, however, does not have much reach in Turkey and so despite the possible global propaganda value of such stories, it came down to the domestic media and political apparatus of Turkey to promote Chinese vaccines within Turkey itself.¹⁸⁷ This set up a situation in Turkey which saw the mainstream news media—which is in no small part directed by Ankara—and, as the political situation is highly polarized in Turkey, saw the political opposition and its media positioning itself in opposition to Chinese vaccines.¹⁸⁸ Some of the lines of criticism against the Chinese vaccine included its price tag—which initially was thought of as cheap and representing poor quality but was later found to be more expensive than Western vaccines and an accusation that the vaccine was being brought into the country only in order to vaccinate the elite of the ruling party. Criticism of the Chinese vaccine quickly came to be a marker for criticism of the ruling party’s Eurasian foreign policy and authoritarian leanings.¹⁸⁹

The Turkish opposition media pursued a number of attacks against the government’s decision to purchase the Sinovac vaccine as well as attacking the vaccine itself in ways that followed a number of stereotypes surrounding China and Chinese products. For instance, the vaccine deal was cast as an attempt by the government to teach a lesson to the West, some questioned whether or not Turkey’s growing financial dependence on China may have influenced the government’s decision to purchase Sinovac, some attacked the vaccine itself as carcinogenic and of low quality, saying that only “useless” countries such as Brazil, Indonesia, and the Philippines purchased it and so on. Some critics were angry that the Ankara government did not choose the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which was developed by a Turkish immigrant couple in Germany. The BioNTech brand became popular in Turkey in part because of nationalist fervor, not just because of the better efficacy data that the vaccine has.¹⁹⁰ Essentially, the opposition media in Turkey, in somewhat kneejerk reaction to the pro-Sinovac position of the government in Ankara, positioned itself in start opposition to the use of the Sinovac vaccine and in so doing

¹⁸⁶ Hui, Zhang, and Liu Xin. “Turkey Shows ‘Independent Diplomacy’ by Purchasing Chinese Vaccine, Opposing Politicizing Counterterrorism - Global Times.” *Global Times*, December 15, 2020. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1210036.shtml>.

¹⁸⁷ Üngör, Çağdaş. “The ‘Chinese Vaccine’”.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

engaged in many of the stereotypes that have surrounded Chinese goods in the developed world for decades: that they are generally of low quality, are knockoffs of Western or Japanese goods, or are outright harmful to those that purchase and use them.

Even with all of the above being the case, China had a significant soft power opportunity in Turkey if, as the author of the above article—Çağdaş Üngör—says China was able to establish the superiority of Sinovac over its Western competitors and in so doing help to overcome the stereotypes that surround Chinese goods. The vaccine, however, did not end up having the efficacy that would have been required to achieve this soft power goal. Sinovac was not able to publish its trial data nearly as fast as were its Western competitors, which raised concerns and conspiracy theories around the possibility of data manipulation in Turkey. On top of this, countries that had purchased Sinovac began releasing their own efficacy data, and then modifying their initial numbers downward. For example, Indonesia at first released a 97% efficacy rate, but then retracted that announcement and revised down to 65.3% a month later. The largest blow to China's soft power opportunity in Turkey, according to Çağdaş Üngör, came not from within Turkey itself, but rather from Brazil which in January of 2021 released an efficacy rate of 78%, but then downgraded it to a somewhat dismal 50.4%. The Western vaccines were able to put out efficacy numbers north of 90% and so the soft power potential of Sinovac in Turkey was quelled.¹⁹¹

The Turkish case, in particular the failure of Sinovac to live up to its soft power potential because of its efficacy in comparison to Western vaccines, brings up a wider issue about trying to gauge the efficacy of Chinese health diplomacy efforts in terms of their soft power dividends. With Chinese vaccines being both less effective and more expensive (save possibly for the issue of transport and refrigeration) than their Western counterparts, they likely do not represent the best of Chinese health diplomacy in terms of effect. As they are the top-ticket item in Chinese health diplomacy, they cannot be ignored, but their effect must be analyzed in a context that includes other parts of the health diplomacy efforts such as the sale and donation of other forms of medical materials, the sending of medical personnel, knowledge transfer, and the building of medical infrastructure in target countries. The relative ineffectiveness of the Chinese vaccines when compared to their Western counterparts is easily among the highest obstacles in China's

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

efforts to use health diplomacy has a soft power tool. This is because of their high profile nature, with them being essentially the headline item in the Chinese health diplomacy efforts, the sheer immensity of the efficacy percentage gap between Chinese and Western vaccines, and especially during the beginning of the pandemic, due first to the buildup of hype around vaccines before they were distributed—a buildup which China was able to use to its own soft power advantage as it was able to distribute vaccines faster than the West—and the letdown as countries that used Chinese vaccines began to release their own efficacy findings and experience waves of infections.

With this initial data in mind, a discussion of how global opinions of Chinese and Western vaccines compare—especially in South Africa, but not in India as India appears not to have made use of Chinese vaccines in preference to indigenously produced vaccines. South Africa has approved both the above Chinese vaccines for use. Approval for Sinovac came in 2021.¹⁹² Approval for Sinopharm came in 2022.¹⁹³ Of the main Western competitors the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was approved for use in 2021.¹⁹⁴

X. Methodology and Data Collection

The data collection for this thesis took primarily two forms that were differentiated in order to be applicable to both case studies. In order to attempt to gauge the impact of Chinese health diplomacy on the outward-facing attitudes of the Indian government, articles were collected from the English-language website of the official news mouthpiece of India's ruling party—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) named Kamal Sandesh. Articles were limited to those having to do with COVID-19 and China, medical supplies (including vaccines) and China, the BRI so far as it involves touches on India, BRICS as far as it impacts China and India, and overall Sino-Indian relations from before and the outbreak of COVID-19 to gauge what the editorial line on China was at the time and in the period from mid-2022 to the present to see if

¹⁹² Kew, Janice. "South Africa Approves Sinovac's Covid-19 Vaccine." *Bloomberg.Com*, July 3, 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-03/south-africa-approves-sinovac-s-covid-19-vaccine>.

¹⁹³ *Reuters*. "South African Regulator Approves Sinopharm COVID Vaccine." February 7, 2022, sec. Africa. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safricas-health-regulator-registers-sinopharm-covid-vaccine-2022-02-07/>.

¹⁹⁴ Msiza, Ntokozo. "SAHPRA and the Pfizer/Biontech Comirnaty Vaccine." *SAHPRA* (blog), March 16, 2021. <https://www.sahpra.org.za/press-releases/sahpra-and-the-pfizer-biontech-comirnaty-vaccinesahpra-and-the-pfizer-biontech-comirnaty-vaccine/>.

there is any appreciable change in that line that can be linked to Chinese health diplomacy actions.

Data collected in order to try and gauge the effect that Chinese health diplomacy may have had on the opinions of the people of India was collected in two ways. The first being through the collection of articles published on the website of India's largest English-language online newspaper—NDTV Online—that were published immediately before the outbreak of COVID-19 and in the period from mid-2022 to the present.¹⁹⁵ The idea driving this choice is that, to some extent, such a large newspaper will need to represent the views of the populace in order to maintain circulation. The second method is more direct and involves recent polling data in India that directly seeks to see how the Indian populace regards China and through polling data from India preceding the COVID-19 pandemic.

The data collection method for the South African case study is similar to that of the Indian case study. Articles were collected from the website's two South African publications: ANC Today—the mouthpiece of the ruling party of South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC)—and News24, which is South Africa's most circulated online newspaper.¹⁹⁶ As with the Indian case study, articles chosen were limited to those having to do with China, COVID-19 and China, medical supplies (including vaccines) and China, the BRI, BRICS as it involves China and South Africa, and Sino-South African relations. Polling data, so far as it is available, was collected to see what the South African population thought of China before the outbreak of COVID-19 and since the middle of 2022. As has been described above, there is a gap in polling between 2019 and 2023 in both India and South Africa due to the difficulty of conducting polling in a pandemic that major polling situation such as the Pew Research Center have recently begun addressing.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Krishnan, Anjana. "India." Reuters Institute. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, June 23, 2023. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/india>.

¹⁹⁶ Roper, Chris. "South Africa." Reuters Institute. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, June 23, 2021. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/south-africa>.

¹⁹⁷ Laura, Silver, Christine Huang, and Laura Clancy. "China's Approach to".

XI. State of the Art

Lee (2021) and Urdinez (2021) stand out as of particular use in understanding the form and function of the BRI in relation to Chinese efforts at health diplomacy during Covid-19. Urdinez (2021) focuses on the form that Chinese health diplomacy has taken in Chile and emphasizes the decentralized nature of said diplomatic efforts. Urdinez (2021), that is, shows said health diplomacy, at least in Chile, not to be the direct result of centralized action on the basis of the Chinese government, but rather to be the result of the combined efforts of a constellation of both public and private Chinese organizations.

Lee (2021) provides an examines Chinese health diplomacy—in particular vaccine diplomacy) up to June 2021 and through the lenses of nation branding soft power efforts. In order to do this, Lee (2021) uses sentiment analysis of social media and international news in order to gauge reactions to—and thus the perceived effectiveness of—Chinese vaccine diplomacy. Lee (2021) concludes that China has gained significant soft power and image repair advantages through its vaccine diplomacy efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic. It should be noted, of course, that these conclusions were current as of June 2021.

Lee (2021) is also useful in that it provides a framework of three categories into which health diplomacy falls: the core diplomacy between that between nations, that between nations and non-state actors, and informal diplomacy—meaning diplomacy between officials in target countries, NGOs, the private sector, and the public.

Chen (2022) analyzes the effectiveness of Chinese vaccine diplomacy in regard to what aspects of countries made them more likely to, first, receive an offer of donation or sale of Chinese vaccines, and second to accept said offer. The study finds that Chinese offers of vaccines (donations or sales) do not appear to be meaningfully connected to political issues—in this case, geopolitical affinity to China, level of BRI investment received by target country, and political relations with Taiwan. However, acceptance of said offers does appear to be politically influenced, with those with close relations with Taiwan being the least likely to accept Chinese vaccine offers. The study also found that countries with lower development levels and an inability to produce vaccines domestically were more likely to become targets of Chinese vaccine diplomacy—suggesting that Chinese outreach was based more on perceived need than helping those countries with which China already has strong relations.

Moritz (2021) provides an overview of the way that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has been reoriented towards health diplomacy and Covid-19 aid since roughly February 2020, that is, since the containment of the initial outbreak in Wuhan, China. The article also details many of the varied sources of Chinese health aid, the mechanism that have been used to deliver said aid—such as BRI rail links and the Air Silk Road. The article also highlights how Chinese embassies have been putting out propaganda in target countries to show to the populations of said countries what their countries relationship with China is like and its advantages.

Overall, Moritz (2021) shows that the project of the BRI has not been halted by the Covid-19 Pandemic but has if anything expanded. Its adaptability as an initiative—as shown by the quick promotion of health issues to the front of the BRI—is also highlighted. Moritz (2021) also notes that European views of the efficacy of Chinese health diplomacy—which are largely negative—fail to take into account that the West is not the main target of said diplomacy. Outside of the West, it appears that Chinese health diplomacy initiatives have been successful and China’s goal of promoting itself as a “responsible great power” is making progress.

Hossain (2021) centers around a discussion of what motivated China to send medical aid around the world during the earlier stages of the Covid-19 pandemic—with a particular eye to what extent, if any, did China manage to turn its health diplomacy efforts into soft power rewards, and if they did, where. Hossain (2021) concludes that China has managed to reap significant soft power rewards—defined as, per Nye (2004a): “Soft power is the ability to attract and the attraction to shape the preferences of other people or state.” (600)—in the developing world, but quite distinctly not in the Western world, essentially agreeing with Lee (2021). Hossain (2021) also notes that China has not been explicitly attempting to cultivate soft power in the West but has been focusing on soft power in the developing world—with the result that the detractors of Chinese soft power efforts in relation to health diplomacy are significantly outnumbered by those who approve of it.

Hossain (2021) also includes a lengthy discussion of the theory of soft power, highlighting that the debate behind its definition and use is anything but settled. The article also touches on the difference between Chinese and Western definitions of soft power efforts, with Chinese efforts centering around material aid and health diplomacy, and Western definitions centering around human rights and ideas as attractors in soft power initiatives.

Kobierecka (2022) concludes that Chinese vaccine diplomacy has been key in both saving China's international recognition in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak in late 2019-early 2020, and in improving its reputation, and hence soft power, through supplying—through mostly non-donation means—vaccines and medical supplies to much of the non-western world. The article makes it clear that these vaccine diplomacy efforts were not undertaken out of simple humanitarian concern on the part of Beijing, but rather as a conscious strategy of increasing Chinese soft power around the world as well as suggesting that it was also done partially with the goal of enmeshing developing countries in Chinese networks—mostly Latin American countries through the use of Chinese loans given out to purchase Chinese vaccines.

This article is useful in this thesis mainly in its discussion of the differing effects between Chinese soft power from health diplomacy initiatives in the West and the developing world and through the numerous books and articles it links to go deeper into the subject.

Gauttam et al. 2020 argues that China has been able to turn its health diplomacy efforts during COVID into soft power rewards that have in essence yielded hard power benefits in a secondary sense. The failure of the US and EU to stand up as global leaders against COVID left a vacuum for China to fill and China did so. This, along with the success of Chinese global health diplomacy efforts, has put China on a footing to Challenge US hegemony as well as to take a more aggressive stance in the South China Sea, with India, and over territorial disputes with Russia and Tajikistan. While China's actions have been criticized by Western countries and the US alliance against China, those voices have been outnumbered by countries supporting China—in no small part because of the benevolent image China has been able to cultivate with its health diplomacy. China has also been able to convince more countries to take part in the BRI with its health diplomacy. This article also offers a concise overview of Chinese health diplomacy since 1949.

Brazelton (2023) provides an invaluable overview of health policy and diplomacy deployed by China during the course of the 20th century—with a focus on epidemic and infectious disease. Brazelton (2023) sees the 20th century as a period of remarkable social and medical change in China and the sinophone world more broadly. Each section moves more or less chronologically from the beginning of the century to its end. Brazelton (2023) begins with a section on the end of the Qing dynasty and beginning of the Republican era—with a focus on the

Manchurian Plague and the work of Dr. Wu Liande—, through the projects of the Nanjing decade, to the international competition between the ROC and the PRC after 1949 to the end of the Cold War era, and finally to the management of COVID-19 in the context of post socialism in China and Taiwan's exclusion from global health governance in the post 1972 recognition of China world. What sets this text apart from many others on the history of global health and global health government is its purposeful centering of the Chinese view on the matter, rather than centering the discussion on the efforts of the Global North or various international organizations. Brazelton (2023) has been greatly helpful in filling out the necessary context for this thesis and in understanding the way that the PRC has managed COVID-19 to date. As this is the case, Brazelton (2023) easily ranks as one of the texts that has been most crucial to the writing process of this thesis.

Bunskoek and Shih (2021) provides this thesis with a theoretical explanation for China's construction of the Belt and Road Initiative and for China's current outward facing, global, geopolitical stance. The article "This paper 're-worlds' China by using the BRI as a case study to illustrate how in the discursive field(s) of China's elite, China as a Westphalian nation state, and China as amorphous *Tianxia* under Confucianism coexist, struggle for recognition, and are interrelated."¹⁹⁸ The interrelations of the three discursive fields mentioned above, particularly that of China-as-*Tianxia* is particularly useful to this thesis in that it provides a glimpse into the worldview that may be motivating the elite of China both in their construction of the BRI, but also in their deployment of health diplomacy around the world through a lens that does not rely on the dominant Western theoretical frameworks used in international relations. The article concludes that "because of the economic miracle it created domestically over the last few decades, is now convinced of its own 'moral superiority', and ready to export its self-perceived 'benevolence' abroad. In this light, we read the BRI to be undergirded by a combination of 'Western' and Confucian values, suggesting a post-Western/post-Chinese form of regionalism."¹⁹⁹

The value in the above lies in how the article reveals how the elites in China may not be pursuing the association of China with the title "benevolent great power" simply as a ploy that

¹⁹⁸ Bunskoek, Raoul, and Chih-yu Shih. "Community of Common". P. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 1.

may cast China in a positive light on the world stage, but because the leaders of China, due to the above, are legitimately convinced of the benevolence of China and the applicability of parts of its developmental and political model to other parts of the world. The concept of *Tianxia* explained earlier in this thesis is particularly useful when attempting to fully understand the rhetoric coming out of Beijing, in particular that of a community of common destiny for mankind (CCD) in relation to the BRI and to Chinese health diplomacy. It is, essentially, a revival of a model of the world that died out with the fall of the Qing Empire that decentered the West as the world exemplar and centered China as such. Under this framework, the BRI can be seen as a material manifestation of this centering.

As this thesis understands Chinese health diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic as a special case of soft power diplomacy, the works of Joseph S. Nye, Jr have been of particular importance as he is the scholar that originated the term and has contributed to its development along with many other scholars in the field. In particular, Nye's articles *Public Diplomacy and Soft Power* (2008)²⁰⁰ and *Soft Power: The Evolution of a Concept* (2021)²⁰¹ have been of particular use.

XII. The Case of India and Chinese Health Diplomacy

12.1 Reasons for Selection

India was chosen as a case study country for several reasons, some of which may seem contradictory at first look. First and foremost, India was chosen because of its semi-adversarial relationship with China, which, as described above, is characterized both by border conflict, a level of saber rattling, and by an extremely intensive trade relationship that broadly balances out in China's favor. This semi-adversarial relationship provides fertile ground for any needle shifting in public opinion and official responses from the Indian government that may have been prompted by Chinese health diplomacy efforts. In addition, India's efforts at competition with the BRI through their own regional development programs—in particular targeting the countries of ASEAN—and India's own health diplomacy efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa, places India as a near-peer competitor to China in terms of health diplomacy efforts and

²⁰⁰ Nye, Joseph S. "Public Diplomacy and".

²⁰¹ Nye, Joseph S. "Soft Power: The".

developmental efforts. Additionally, the membership of both India and China in the BRICS bloc and the SCO gives more context into the broadly contradictory nature of the relationship between the two countries which appears to be characterized by bouts of hostility in rhetoric and in the disputed territories, ideological opposition from both sides, competition in developmental and health diplomacy with the other countries in the region, but also a massive trade relationship and shared membership in the BRICS bloc and the SCO.

Another reason why India was selected as a case study country is tied firstly, to India's own health and vaccine diplomacy efforts and to India's decision not to make use of Chinese vaccines despite having been offered them. The two countries have been actively engaged in a competition to use their vaccines to woo the countries around them. For example, as early as January 2021, the India and China found themselves in competition over vaccine distribution in the Seychelles. In January 2021, the Seychelles received 50,000 doses of the Sinopharm vaccine. Two weeks later, India sent an aircraft carrier carrying 50,000 doses of Covishield, which is the Indian-produced AstraZeneca vaccine.²⁰² Even before COVID-19 vaccine race began, India made up some 60% of world vaccine production capacity—a fact that India has made great use of in its own vaccine diplomacy efforts and efforts to counter China in the region.²⁰³ As the two countries are directly competing on the health diplomacy stage, it will be interesting to see if China's efforts are having any measurable effect on India both on the popular and governmental levels.

India was also chosen as a counterpoint, in terms of relationship with China, to the example of South Africa, which broadly enjoys significantly warmer relations with China and is, save for what is described above, not in direct competition with China. With this being the case, I am hoping that the differences in response to Chinese health diplomacy efforts between India and South Africa give a glimpse of how preexisting relations impact the efficacy of such soft power efforts.

²⁰² Biyani, Nitya, and Niels Graham. "COVID Vaccines: India and China's New Diplomatic Currency." *Atlantic Council* (blog), March 25, 2021. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/covid-vaccines-india-and-chinas-new-diplomatic-currency/>.

²⁰³ Ibid.

12.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

A total of 307 articles were collected from the archives of NDTV.com which contained the word ‘China’ or ‘Chinese’ in their headlines and were published in two time periods: from July of 2019 to June of 2020 and from July of 2021 to June of 2022.²⁰⁴ Selection of articles was limited to those articles published on the 1st and 28th days of each month due to time constraints. The collected articles were then culled of irrelevant articles, such as those having to do with sports, celebrity matters, non-political technology news like rumors around release dates and features of new products, fluff articles having to do with odd occurrences involving China, food articles, and multiple articles detailing the same events. The post-cull total came to 196 articles all broadly having to do with politics writ large and China. As NDTV routinely republishes articles from non-Indian outlets such as Reuters, Bloomberg, Agence France-Presse, and unedited save for headline changes from syndicated feeds not having to do with India, an additional round of culling to eliminate all non-Indian publications was performed, bringing the total number of articles down to 66. This second cull also had the effect of eliminating nearly all of the articles that did not focus mainly on India, China, or both countries. It also had the unfortunate effect of creating a significant imbalance in the data, with 51 articles having been published in the 2019-2020 period and 15 articles having been published in the 2021 to 2022 period. To create a more representative sample, NDTV articles published on the 15th and 20th of each month in the period between July 2021 and June 2022 were collected. This resulted in a new total of 96 articles. 45 published in the 2019-2020 period and 51 published in the 2021-2022 period.

After the culling process was finished, the texts of each of the remaining 96 articles were run through automatic sentimental analysis using Google Cloud Natural Language API in order to quickly judge the overall tone of the articles.²⁰⁵ This tool analyzes the emotional content of a text and produces a document sentiment score between -1 and 1 with -1 being entirely negative and 1 being entirely positive as well as a magnitude score between 0 and infinity, with a higher number indicating more emotional weight.²⁰⁶ The articles were then split into those published

²⁰⁴ <https://archives.ndtv.com/>

²⁰⁵ <https://cloud.google.com/natural-language/docs/analyzing-sentiment>

²⁰⁶ KUMAR, SACHIN. “Sentiment Analysis Using Google Cloud Natural Language API.” *Google Cloud - Community* (blog), July 3, 2019. <https://medium.com/google-cloud/sentiment-analysis-using-google-cloud-machine-learning-552be9b9c39b>.

between July of 2019 and June of 2020 and those published between July of 2021 and June of 2022. In both groups, the articles were categorized as positive (sentiment score between 1 and 0.2), neutral (sentiment score between 0.1 and -0.1), and negative (sentiment score between -0.2 and -1). The sorted list of articles including sentiment and magnitude scores can be found in appendix 1. The goal here being to see if the tone of articles published about China significantly changed between the middle of 2019 and the middle of 2022.

As for Kamal Sandesh, the mouthpiece of the ruling party in India, the process for collection of articles was somewhat different, while the sorting and analysis process remained the same. The reason for this difference is the somewhat unorganized structure of kamalsandesh.org (the main issue being a lack of a useful search mechanism that produces results in a chronological fashion) as well as to the nature of the content thereon published, which tends to broadly consist of aspirational stories about the progress of India under BJP leadership and occasionally to highly praising stories about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Kamal Sandesh was chosen for sampling as it is largely in English, while press releases on BJP.org (the official website of the ruling party) are in Hindi. As this is the case, the sample of articles from Kamal Sandesh is not nearly so comprehensive as that from NDTV. In fact, Kamal Sandesh has very little to say about China outside of the occasional mention in the context of BRICS meetings, or comparisons of industry between China, India, and other countries after June 2020. Nonetheless, the sentiment analysis of the 8 articles concerning China—all pre-June 2020, is included in appendix 1 below.

12.3 Findings

The average sentiment score for the NDTV articles that were published between July of 2019 and June of 2020 is -0.17, just barely negative in emotional content. The average magnitude score for the same articles is 5.81, indicating a low-moderate average emotional weight to the articles. The average sentiment score for the NDTV articles published between July of 2021 and June of 2022 is -0.05, which falls into the zone described above as neutral, if very mildly negative. The average magnitude score for the same articles is 4.89, indicating a low emotional weight to said articles.

The average sentiment score for the Kamal Sandesh articles published between July of 2019 and June of 2020 is 0.14, indicating a slightly positive neutrality. The average magnitude score for the same articles is 4.50, indicating a low emotional weight to the articles. No relevant articles were found between June of 2020 and June of 2022.

12.4 Interpretation

To begin with the NDTV articles, both the sentiment scores and the magnitude scores indicate a slight move towards neutrality of emotional content, on average, in articles written about China, Chinese actions, and relations between China and India. The reasons for this shift are not, based on the data in this thesis, clear, and it would not be justified to attribute said shift to Chinese health diplomacy efforts. This shift towards a slightly negative neutrality, however, conflicts with the above-described polling data in India, which sees a decline in public opinion of China over a similar period. Additionally, it should be noted that articles concerning China appeared to be significantly more scarce in the 2021-2022 period, enough so that it was necessary to add the 15th and the 20th of each month in that period to the collection dates in order to collect sample that would be comparable to that of the 2019-2020 period.

The Kamal Sandesh articles, due to the lack of articles after June 2020 are not useful in attempting to measure any tone shift on part of the Indian government in the period covered by this thesis.

XIII. The Case of South Africa and Chinese Health Diplomacy

13.1 Reasons for Selection

South Africa was chosen as a case study country for this thesis in large part as it provides a counterpoint to the Indian case study. As the continent of Africa writ large and the PRC have a relationship spanning nearly back to the creation of the PRC in 1949, a relationship that has involved a significant amount of health diplomacy in various forms, South Africa was selected for both its geographical location and for the history that the African National Congress (ANC) has with the PRC. According to George Washington University's David Shinn—an expert on China-Africa affairs—China has been pursuing closer relations with various African political parties, and despite their differences and the differences in terms of political and economic structure between China and post-Apartheid South Africa, the ANC has made it to the top of China's list for better relations. He also notes that the South African Communist Party (SACP)

aligns itself with the ANC and contributes to increasing links with China.²⁰⁷ The relationship between China and the ANC dates back as far as 1961 with Chairman Mao having supported the ANC's armed struggle to end Apartheid in South Africa. This gives China and the ANC something of a shared history in that they both have a history of fighting to overturn the dominant structures that preceded them in power and a basis in socialist ideology.²⁰⁸

The political history between China and the ANC creates an interesting basis upon which Chinese health diplomacy may have effect on the government of South Africa as the ANC has had positive relation with China since long before the end of Apartheid and the rise of the ANC to power.

South Africa was also chosen as a case study due to its present relations with China, which, as mentioned above, are largely positive. South Africa represents the 'S' in BRICS and is an active participant in the BRI. China and South Africa have recently reaffirmed their relationship during a state visit by Xi Jinping in late August 2023. The state visit resulted in a joint statement by the two countries which saw the two sides agreeing to "strengthen their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership henceforth, actively build a quality China-South Africa community, and play a meaningful, joint role in China-Africa relations and South-South cooperation."²⁰⁹ This statement also included a South African recommitment to the One-China Policy, an agreement by both sides that the BRI is a useful platform for international cooperation and to "consider working towards bilateral cooperation and synergy within the *BRI and the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) frameworks*."²¹⁰ China and South Africa agreed to continue to promote the development of the BRICS bloc as well. In all, in the post pandemic world, the relationship between China and South Africa, at least on the governmental level, appears to be stronger than ever.

²⁰⁷ Nyabiage, Jevans. "How the Political Seeds of China's Growing Africa Ties Were Planted Long Ago." *South China Morning Post*, December 25, 2022, sec. News. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3204290/how-political-seeds-chinas-growing-africa-ties-were-planted-long-ago>.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ "Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of South Africa," August 23, 2023. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202308/t20230823_11130511.html.

²¹⁰ Ibid. Emphasis original.

South Africa has been the target of Chinese health diplomacy efforts both through donations and through sales of medical goods. For example, in April of 2020, Business for SA, which is an organization that has helped to coordinate the corporate response to the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa was able to secure a shipment of PPE, mainly from China, that included “one million sterile gloves, 1.12 million N95 masks, 6 million surgical masks for healthcare workers, 8.5 million masks for patients, and 200 ventilators.”²¹¹ Also in April 2020, the province of Gauteng received some 30,000 units of PPE (exact types not specified in source article) from the Bank of China which helped to stabilize the PPE situation in the province.²¹²

In terms of the vaccine diplomacy part of overall health diplomacy efforts, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (Sahpra) approved the use of the Sinovac vaccines on an emergency basis in July of 2021.²¹³ Beijing also offered the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) around 300,000 doses Sinovac’s CoronaVac. Numolux Group, which is Sinovac’s South African partner for vaccine distribution acknowledged the existence of the offer, but SANDF refused to do so.²¹⁴ It is therefore unclear if SANDF accepted the Chinese offer at all, let alone used the vaccine doses.

13.2 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Articles were collected from news24.com by using the ‘China’ topic tag. As a result, The collected articles were put through a similar culling process to that used in the India case study with the intention of eliminating irrelevant articles and articles written by non-South African publications and republished by News24. 36 articles were collected that were published between July 2019 and June 2020 and 65 articles were collected that were published between

²¹¹ Wasserman, Helena. “SA Has Four Weeks’ Stock Left of Gloves, Masks – but a Big Chinese Shipment Should Land in Time.” News24, April 14, 2020. <https://www.news24.com/news24/bi-archive/south-africa-gloves-masks-2020-4>.

²¹² Karrim, Azarrah. “Coronavirus: Gauteng Health Buoyed by Huge Protective Gear Donation from China.” News24, April 14, 2020. <https://www.news24.com/news24/coronavirus-gauteng-health-buoyed-by-huge-protective-gear-donation-from-china-20200414>.

²¹³ City Press. “Sahpra Approves Use of the Vaccine Made by Sinovac,” July 3, 2021. <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/sahpra-approves-use-of-the-vaccine-made-by-sinovac-20210703>.

²¹⁴ Tshwane, Tebogo. “Beijing’s Soft Power: China Offers 300 000 Vaccine Jabs to SANDF Soldiers.” News24, December 14, 2021. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/beijings-soft-power-china-offers-300-000-vaccine-jabs-to-sandf-soldiers-20211214>.

July 2021 and June 2022 making a total of 101 articles. The texts said 101 articles were then run through the same Google sentiment analysis API described in the Indian case study with the data produced recorded in appendix 2.

ANC Today articles were collected from the ANC website.²¹⁵ The ANC website holds copies of ANC today from the years 2001, 2021, 2022, and 2023. There is no explanation given for the 20-year gap. In addition, there are significant gaps within the years themselves. As such, sampling was heavily restricted and only a single article in the year 2021 that relevantly mentioned (as in went into greater depth than just mentioning that an ANC historical figure or present member was in some way associated with China at some point) was found in the October 15th edition of the publication. In 2022, the accessible ANC today editions relevantly mentioned China a single time in an article in the June 24th edition of the publication. As these two mentions are both in the second period used for this case study, they are not of particular use when attempting to measure the impact of Chinese health diplomacy in South Africa. Nevertheless, they may prove useful in that they give a small level of insight to how the ANC views its BRICS partner and so have been put through the same Google API used above. The results are recorded in appendix 2.

13.3 Findings

As mentioned above, the News24 articles collected and analyzed were significantly more useful than were the ANC Today articles. The average sentiment score for the articles published in the period between July of 2019 and June of 2020 is -0.12, indicating a very slightly negative emotional content, the average magnitude score for the same articles is 14.75, indicating a significant level of emotional weight to the articles—especially in comparison to the NDTV articles above. The average sentiment score for the articles published in the period between July of 2021 and June of 2022 is -0.25, indicating a low-moderate level of emotional negativity. The average magnitude score for the same articles is 7.90, indicating a moderate level of emotional weight to the articles.

13.4 Interpretation

The difference in average sentiment scores between the two periods indicates that News24 articles, on average, became slightly more negative in terms of emotional content when

²¹⁵ <https://www.anc1912.org.za>

writing about China. The differences in average magnitude scores, however, appear to somewhat counteract this shift. Those in the 2019-2020 period held a significant amount of emotional weight, while those in the 2021-2022 period held only a moderate level of emotional weight—with the average magnitude score having nearly halved. Taking the data at face value, this indicates that News24 articles on China became slightly more negative over the relevant period but became less emphatically negative. As with the India case study, there is not enough data here to establish a causal connection between Chinese health diplomacy efforts in South Africa and this opinion/emphasis change.

XIV. Conclusion

In all, it has proved to be markedly difficult to measure the soft power impact that Chinese health diplomacy efforts may have had in the India and South Africa with data and methods used in this thesis. While opinion of China as represented by sentiment analysis of NDTV and News24 articles does appear to suggest that opinion of China has shifted in both case study countries (slightly positively in India and slightly negatively in South Africa), any significant relationship between Chinese health diplomacy efforts and these shifts has not been found.

XV. Limitations

The main limitations of this thesis are, of course, linguistic, access-based, and time based. Although I speak English and Chinese, which has allowed me to access and analyze sources from China, I do not speak any Indian language and my comprehension of Afrikaans is less than stellar. Hence, I have been limited to using exclusively English language publications from India, cutting out the most circulated newspaper in India—Dainik Bhaskar. This necessarily has the effect of making the results of this case study apply mostly to the English-speaking population of India. This represents about 10.6% of the Indian population, some 129 million people.²¹⁶ This, of course, is still a massive number of people that his thesis may have some applicability too, but any further research along this vein would benefit greatly from, at minimum, a fluent speaker of Hindi writing or willing to collaborate on said research.

²¹⁶ Kawoosa, Vijdan Mohammad. “How Languages Intersect in India.” Hindustan Times, November 22, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/how-languagesintersect-in-india/story-g3nzNwFppYV7XvCumRzIYL.html>.

This linguistic limitation is better in South Africa as, even though according to the 2011 South African census (the most recent that is accessible as of the time of writing), only about 9.6% of South African's speak English at home, English is the language of public life in the country, with government, business, and media primarily operating in English. The current estimate is that around half of the population has a speaking knowledge of English.²¹⁷ With this being the case, it can be assumed that enough people are reading English-language newspapers and government publications that said newspapers would need to, as mentioned above, somewhat reflect the overall tone of public discourse on the topic in order to maintain circulation numbers.

The next significant limitation of this thesis is that all of its data has been drawn from online sources and, due to the nature of, in particular the newspaper sources as they are the online editions of the publications, there may be a blind spot in the data in that it ignores those who primarily or only read their news in print form—increasingly rare as they may be—and it ignores those without a consistent internet connection with which to access the publications used in this thesis. A way to perhaps get around this limitation in any future research on this topic would be to make use of interviews with those described above.

The next significant limitation to this thesis is one of access. It has been difficult to gain access to precise records of things such as medical exports from China to India and South Africa, data that would greatly illuminate the scope and scale of the Chinese health diplomacy efforts that have happened in said countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

XVI. Future Research Directions

Future research along this vein would benefit, firstly, from being farther out in time from the events being documented so that there may be better documentation of Chinese health diplomacy and developmental efforts available in English. Future research would decidedly benefit from the selection of case study countries which have published more information about

²¹⁷ Alexander, Mary. "South African English: A Quick Guide." South Africa Gateway, September 2, 2021. <https://southafrica-info.com/arts-culture/dictionary-south-african-english/>.

donations and purchases of Chinese vaccines and PPE, and the presence of Chinese medical teams for health work or training.

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XVIII. Appendix 1: India Case Study Date, NDTV and Kamal Sandesh

18.1 NDTV

2019	Score	Magnitude
AMD Denies Report That It Improperly Shared Chip Technology With China	-0.2	2.4
China's BOE to Mass Produce LCD Screens With Fingerprint Sensor	0	1
"TikTok App Illegally Collecting Data Received By China": Shashi Tharoor	-0.3	2.8
Vulgar Videos Made on Chinese Social Media Apps Make Their Way to WhatsApp	-0.3	12.8
China Regional Bully At Doklam But We Stood Up To It: Army Vice Chief Designate	-0.1	7.8
J&K Move Has No Implication For LAC, China's Concerns Misplaced: Envoy	-0.1	8
In India's Reply To China's J&K Reference, A Swipe At Road Through PoK	-0.3	6.5
No Problem, Absolute Peace On India-China Border: Kiren Rijju	-0.1	4.4
US Tour Guide Charged For Spying For China's Intelligence Services: Report	-0.3	6.5
Weeks After Exchanging Blows, Indian, Chinese Armies Celebrate At Nathu La Pass	0	5.9
2020	Score	Magnitude
Army Chief Talks Of "Eventual Solution" On China Border Issue	-0.1	4.7
Coronavirus: Air India Jumbo Plane Ready And Waiting For Evacuation Of Indians From China's Wuhan	-0.1	5.2
Indians Evacuated From China To Be Under Mandatory 14-Day Quarantine	-0.1	4.8

Jammu and Kashmir Orders Screening Of People Arriving From China, Nepal	0	1.3
Nepal-China Rasuwagadhi Border Shut For 15 Days Amid Coronavirus Threat	-0.1	2.3
'Running Out Of Food, Water': Indian Students In China Amid Virus Scare	-0.2	10.6
Working To Evacuate Indians From China: Government As Coronavirus Outbreak Spreads	-0.3	7.1
2 Europeans Who Arrived From China Quarantined In Goa With Suspected Coronavirus	-0.1	1
Coronavirus: 6 Stopped As Air India Flies Back 324 Indians From China	0	6
Coronavirus: 104 Evacuated From China Admitted To Indo-Tibetan Border Police Facility In Delhi	-0.1	2.1
Coronavirus: Air India's 2nd Plane With "Same Doctors" To Fly To China Today	-0.1	5.9
No Chinese Parts In Reliance Jio 4G, 5G Networks: Mukesh Ambani To Donald Trump	-0.3	5.1
"Thank You For Sacrifice": Parents To Air India For Plane Dash To China	0.1	10.2
China "Deeply Concerned" As India Cancels Orders For COVID-19 Test Kits	-0.2	5.4
Chinese Organisations Donate Masks, Ventilators To India: Official	0	1.5
Coronavirus News Highlights: China Hopes India Will Resolve Testing Kits Issue "Reasonably"	-0.1	3.4
COVID-19 Figures In PM Modi's Message To China On 70 Years Of Bilateral Ties	0.3	5

Death Of Pigs In Assam May Have A Link With China, Claims Minister	-0.4	5.2
Need To Adopt Global Response To COVID-19: PM Modi Tells Chinese Premier	0.2	5.7
Need To Hold China Accountable For Spread Of Coronavirus: US	-0.3	11
Ties With India Will Emerge Stronger, Scale New Heights After COVID-19: China	0.2	11.8
Chinese Researchers Say COVID-19 Not Originated From Wuhan Wet Market	-0.1	4.4
Chinese Survey Team Summits Mount Everest To Remeasure Its Exact Height	0	3.6
COVID-19: No Ceremonial Border Personnel Meeting With Chinese Army Today	0	0.6
"Engaged With China To Peacefully Resolve Row": Centre On Trump's Mediation Offer	0.1	6.2
Mukesh Ambani's Jio Listing Can Profit from US-China Tech War	0	6.2
"WHO Like China's PR Agency, Should Be Ashamed," Says Trump	-0.4	12.4
Xiaomi Could Be Sending Your Browser Data to China, Even in 'Incognito' Mode: Report	-0.3	17
China Says Border Situation "Stable And Controllable" Amid Row With India	0	5.6
China Using Tactical Situation On Ground To Its Advantage: Mike Pompeo	-0.3	13.4
"Chinese Funds In PM CARES": Congress Hits Back After BJP Onslaught	-0.3	12.6

How China Built, Consolidated Key Galwan Position In 33 Days	-0.2	12.8
If Centre, Opposition Fight, When Will We Combat China: AAP	-0.2	7.5
India To Check Power Equipment Imported From China For Malware, Trojan	0	4.7
India, China Bring In Heavy Weapons To Bases Near Eastern Ladakh: Report	-0.1	7.8
Rahul Gandhi's "Surender Modi" Tweet Pleased Pak, China, Says Amit Shah	-0.3	7.8
Remove China Apps Crosses 50 Lakh Downloads Amidst Anti-China Sentiment	-0.2	11.9
Take Parties, Country Into Confidence Over China Border Situation: Congress To Centre	-0.4	9.8
Time To Forget Political Rivalry And Combat China: Shiv Sena	-0.2	5.1
US May Rejoin WHO If Corruption, Reliance On China Ends: White House	-0.2	6.6
Zomato Employees Burn Company T-Shirts to Protest Chinese Investment in Firm	-0.5	6
Average	-0.17	5.81

2021	Score	Magnitude
After Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's Firm Message On Ladakh Situation, China's Reply	0	7
Ready For Mutually Acceptable Solution On "Emergency", China Tells India	0	6.5
Pentagon Holds Talks With Chinese Military For First	-0.1	3.1

Time Under Joe Biden: Official		
"India Fighting Terror, Expansionism": PM's Swipe At Pak, China On I-Day	0	4
Indian Embassy In China Celebrates India's 75th Independence Day	0.1	1.2
Possible Axis Of China, Pak, Taliban-Led Afghanistan Cause For Worry: P Chidambaram	-0.1	4.1
"3 Mutuals": Foreign Secretary Lists What's Must For India-China Ties	0	8.7
RSS Chief Calls For Strengthening Border, Cites China, Pak With Taliban	-0.1	8
"How To Lose Friends": Rahul Gandhi's Jibe At Centre On Bhutan-China Border Pact	-0.1	2
Centre "Failed To Stop Chinese Soldiers" At Border, Alleges Asaduddin Owaisi	-0.2	10.7
China Launches Military Satellite That Will Test 'Space Debris Mitigation Technology': State Media	0	2.5
"Not That Quad Exists Simply To Counter China Or Their Influence": US	0	5
Won't Affect Existing Border Treaties: China On New Land Border Law	-0.1	7.6
China Defends Joining India On Coal "Phase Down" Instead Of "Phase Out"	0	7.7
"If India Had Strong Leadership In 1962...": Arunachal Governor On China	0	5.3
Tokyo Conveys Concerns To Beijing As Chinese Ships Enter Japanese Waters	-0.3	5.4

Rahul Gandhi Asks Government To "Admit Truth On Chinese Occupation"	-0.1	2.8
Chinese Cybersecurity Company Qihoo 360 Develops Crypto Mining Monitor for Government Agencies	0	3
Pradeep Kumar Rawat To Be India's New Ambassador To China	0	1.1
1st S-400 Squadron Deployed, To Tackle Pak, China Aerial Threats: Report	0	2
2022		
China Harvests Drones of Data From Western Social Media: Report	-0.1	0.7
Freedom Not Crime, Will Pursue Democracy Against Authoritarian China: Taiwan President	-0.1	4.2
Video: Indian Army's Exchange Of Sweets With Pak, China Soldiers	0.1	1.3
When Will India Get The Land China Has Occupied? Rahul Gandhi Asks Centre	0	5
Prominent Sri Lankan MP Wijeydasa Rajapakshe Accuses China Of Debt-Trap Diplomacy	-0.3	5.1
China's Foreign Ministry Says Not Aware Of Missing Arunachal Youth	-0.2	3.8
Arunachal Teen Given Electric Shocks In Chinese Custody, Alleges Father	-0.1	7.3
Centre's Budget Push To Develop Infra In Villages Along China Border	0	2.5
KCR "Agent Of Pak, China": BJP Amps Up Attack Over 'Surgical Strike Proof'	-0.5	8

"Act Of Intimidation": Australia Says China Vessel Aimed Laser At Aircraft	-0.5	5.3
India-China Relations Going Through "Very Difficult Phase": S Jaishankar	-0.1	14.3
Russia-Ukraine War Live Updates: Russia Claims Hypersonic Missile Use, Ukraine Asks China To Condemn "Barbarism"	-0.3	3.4
China Miner To Set Up Kabul Shop With Eye On Untapped Mineral Deposits	0	3.4
US' Indo-Pacific Strategy As "Dangerous" As NATO Expansion Near Russia, Says China	-0.3	11.9
PM Modi Discusses Ukraine, South China Sea With Top Vietnam Leader	0.1	4.1
US Human Rights Report "Slanders, Denigrates" Us, China Says	-0.5	7.9
BRICS Group Expected To Expand Soon: China	0.2	3.3
What Bangladesh Foreign Minister Said On Ties With India, China	0.2	5.5
"PM Must Defend Nation": Rahul Gandhi On China Bridge On Pangong Lake Report	-0.2	3.2
Nepal, China Belt And Road Projects Show "No Progress" In 5 Years: Report	-0.2	8
2nd China Bridge On Pangong In Area Under "Illegal Occupation": India	-0.1	4.8
Pak PM's New Proposal On China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Include Turkey	0.3	5.6
China Plans Yuan Pool To Counter Dollar's Reserve Currency Status	0	7

"Solve Dispute In My Lifetime" Approach Won't Work With China: BJP Leader	-0.1	6.6
China's Chang'E-5 Confirms Presence of Water on Lunar Surface	0	3
Average	-0.05	4.89

18.2 Kamal Sandesh (data limited to the end of June 2020)

2019	Score	Magnitude
India, China respecting bilateral pacts for peace at border: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh	0	1.6
'Chennai Connect' begins a New Era of Cooperation in India-China relations: PM Modi	0.4	3.3
PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping holding talks in Mamallapuram	0.1	2.6
Strategic communication has increased between the two countries : PM	0	0
BRICS Business Council created a roadmap to achieve \$ 500 billion Intra-BRICS trade target by the next summit : PM	0.2	15
2020		

Indians evacuated from Wuhan tested negative for coronavirus: Harsh Vardhan	-0.4	0.3
CONGRESS PARTY DID NOTHING BUT POLITICS DURING CORONA CRISIS: JP NADDA	-0.2	3.3
PM Modi talks to US President on G-7, COVID-19, Indo-China border & reforms in WHO	0.3	0.4
Average	0.14	4.50

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XIX. Appendix 2: South African Case Study Data

19.1 News24.com Data

2019	Score	Magnitude
Africa's China syndrome	-0.2	20.7
China is Africa's best bet, says ambassador to SA	0	14.8
China keen on investing in Eastern Cape	0.1	7.3
Merkel in Beijing says Hong Kong freedoms must be 'guaranteed'	-0.2	8.6
State-owned enterprises have built the Chinese economy. They can save SA too	-0.1	24.3
Campaigners outraged as Zimbabwe exports more than 30 baby elephants to Chinese zoos	-0.3	12.8
2020		
China reports 17 new cases of mystery virus in Wuhan	-0.3	6.9
Project fear: Misinformation spreads China virus panic	-0.5	14.7
China readies thousands of new hospital beds in virus outbreak epicentre	-0.2	10.1
China's ambassador to SA could be on his way out	-0.2	10.4
'Covid-19 can be prevented, controlled and cured. Learn from China'	0	8
Covid-19: China took the lead; no one followed	-0.2	24.2
Pollution over China drops during coronavirus shutdown, NASA images shows	-0.2	6.3
China confiscates faulty masks, disinfectants set to be exported worldwide	-0.4	7.8
China's former ambassador in new job	0	5.9
Coronavirus: Gauteng health buoyed by huge protective gear donation from China	0	5.3

'It's shocking how racist people are' - SA teacher in China on 'discrimination, forced quarantine' for Africans	-0.4	25.4
Russia, China willing to fund nuclear projects as several African countries explore controversial power source	0	9.6
SA has four weeks' stock left of gloves, masks – but a big Chinese shipment should land in time	0	2.3
China asks US to 'meet halfway' after Donald Trump threatens to cut ties over virus barbs	-0.2	6.6
China says virus pushing US ties to brink of 'Cold War'	-0.2	22.9
China supports WHO-led review of global pandemic response	-0.2	6.5
China tells US to stop 'unreasonable' suppression of Huawei	-0.3	2.4
China's mask boom takes fabric away for nappy makers	-0.4	15.6
OPINION China and racism: We too are not all the same	-0.1	19.2
Top Tibetan official caught in China's graft net	-0.4	4.2
US agencies, cybersecurity experts say Chinese hacking coronavirus vaccine research - reports accreditation	-0.3	8
Beijing cancels flights, shuts schools over new virus outbreak	-0.3	9.2
Beijing eases lockdown as mass testing gathers pace	-0.2	3
China passes feared Hong Kong security law	-0.2	10

China says 'we don't wish to see more clashes' on India border	-0.4	3.8
China warns it will restrict visas for some Americans over Hong Kong row	-0.5	3.9
Fresh Covid-19 concerns send parts of Beijing into lockdown	-0.1	5.2
Hong Kong national security law: Five key facts you need to know	-0.3	13.5
Over 100 cases in new Beijing Covid-19 outbreak - WHO	-0.1	5.9
Wuhan, China's punk capital, grows silent amid the pandemic	-0.2	11.4
Average	-0.12	14.75

2021	Score	Magnitude
China presses tech giants to conduct 'deep self-examination'	-0.2	4.2
Decision on Sinovac Covid-19 vaccine application expected soon - Sahpra	0	6.1
First spacewalk at China's new Tiangong station	0.1	7.6
US condemns 'harassment' of foreign journalists in China	-0.4	8.7
Biden says China still withholding 'critical' info on Covid-19 origins	-0.4	10.4
China's Wuhan completes citywide Covid tests on 11 million residents	-0.2	4.4
Millions under virus lockdown as China battles Delta outbreak	-0.4	7.7
US exploiting Covid-19 origin tracing for 'political manipulation', says China embassy	-0.5	9.2

China fully vaccinates more than 1 billion people	-0.2	2
China power cuts hit homes, factories and threaten growth	-0.4	10.9
China races to squash new Covid-19 cluster among schoolchildren	-0.3	3.8
It is a 'safe vaccine': SA kids taking part in Sinovac Covid-19 trials get their first jabs	0	2.7
Sinovac's South African partner plans for local shots by year-end	-0.1	6.8
Xi says 'critical' to reset US ties after 'serious difficulties'	-0.2	4.3
43 countries call on China to respect Uighur rights accreditation	-0.4	8.9
China orders mines to up coal production by nearly 100 million tonnes - state media	-0.3	3.5
China dominates Covid-19 diplomacy in Africa - economic report	-0.2	11.7
China downgrades diplomatic ties with Lithuania over Taiwan row	-0.5	4.7
New videos of Chinese tennis star emerge but global outcry grows	-0.1	17.9
Beijing's soft power: China offers 300 000 vaccine jabs to SANDF soldiers	-0.1	16.3
China reports first Omicron case	-0.2	2.8
China's Uyghur population control was genocide: report	-0.4	9.7
China's Xi'an imposes 'strictest' controls to halt Covid outbreak	-0.4	9.2
OPINION China's future growth path could look radically different	-0.1	16
2022		
Beijing battles virus as Xi'an emerges from lockdown	-0.3	7.5

China is not trapping Africa in debt: foreign minister	-0.2	11.2
China orders overseas mail disinfection over Omicron fears	-0.3	6
China to scrap subsidies for electric vehicles	0	3.3
Gay dating app Grindr disappears from China app stores	-0.5	7.8
How China is keeping to its strict 'zero Covid' strategy	-0.3	14.8
70 cases and China locks down city of 3.5 million in zero-Covid policy	-0.3	7.2
Chinese funding of sub-Saharan African infrastructure dwarfs that of West	-0.1	5.6
China backpedals on climate promises as economy slows	-0.2	10.8
China could eventually 'co-exist' with Covid: top scientist	-0.2	3.4
China does not want to be 'affected' by Russia sanctions - foreign minister	-0.4	8.3
China locks down millions more as Covid-19 spreads	-0.2	6.7
China reports first two Covid-19 deaths in more than a year	-0.2	6.1
China to 'stick with' zero-Covid strategy, President Xi says	-0.2	6.6
China's Xi tells Biden conflict is in 'no-one's interest': state TV	-0.3	5.9
Covid-19: Millions locked down as China wrestles worst virus outbreak in two years	-0.4	14.6
Dark days for troubled Chinese property giant Evergrande as it suspends share trading again accreditation	-0.5	7.6

Half of Shanghai in lockdown to curb Covid-19 outbreak	-0.3	6.4
Nearly 30 million under lockdown in China as virus surges	-0.2	9.6
Ramaphosa, Chinese president discuss need to end Russian-Ukraine conflict through talks	0	8.1
Shanghai to impose phased Covid-19 lockdown - government	-0.2	3.8
Beijing tightens Covid restrictions as long holiday begins	-0.4	6
China detects first human case of H3N8 bird flu	-0.2	3.2
China hands US citizen death sentence for murder	-0.5	5.1
China pleads for protection of citizen jailed for 20 years in Rwanda for whipping workers	-0.2	6.2
China reports 13 000 Covid cases, most since end of Wuhan's first wave	-0.3	8.5
Entire Shanghai placed under lockdown	-0.2	9.7
'Gold medal for epidemic response' - Xi Jinping praises China's Covid-19 response	-0.2	6.7
Shanghai defends policy of separating Covid-positive kids from parents	-0.3	10
Shanghai reports first Covid deaths since start of lockdown	-0.4	14
Beijing closes dozens of subway stations as Covid controls tighten	-0.5	6.1
Beijing hails 'democratic spirit' as John Lee take charge of Hong Kong	-0.3	15.6
China censors zero-Covid debate after WHO criticises policy	-0.4	11.2

China database reveals the thousands detained in Xinjiang	-0.3	26.6
China sends 30 jets into Taiwan's defence zone in the second largest incursion this year	-0.2	7.9
Chinese Covid testing firm probed after reports of false results	-0.4	7.7
'I feel very uncomfortable' - residents frustrated as Beijing enforces Covid-19 lockdown	-0.5	10.7
Xi hails 'new atmosphere' in Hong Kong, welcomes John Lee	0.1	6.4
China offers to mediate Horn of Africa disputes	0	2.8
Macau shuts almost everything but casinos to battle Covid-19 outbreak	-0.3	8.7
'We will fight to the very end' - China vows fight to stop Taiwan independence	-0.3	10.9
Average	-0.25	7.90

19.2 ANC Today

2021	Score	Magnitude
The G77 and China Group A strategic platform for South–South solidarity	0.1	7.3
2022		
BRICS PARTNERSHIP HAS GREAT VALUE FOR SOUTH AFRICA	0.3	12
Average	0.10	7.30

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