

China dangling access to COVID vaccines to other countries in diplomatic power plays

Beijing's top officials and some of its drugmakers have begun promising early access to countries of strategic interest as it seeks to shore up its global standing after a pandemic that has strained geopolitical ties.

China's Foreign Ministry has promised the Philippines priority access to a Chinese vaccine, while privately-owned Chinese firm Sinovac Biotech Ltd. has agreed to work with Brazil and Indonesia to produce hundreds of millions of doses of its vaccine candidate for local use.

Pakistan, one of China's closest allies in the developing world, would receive doses to distribute to roughly one-fifth of its population of 220 million, [under a deal that allows](#) China National Pharmaceutical Group, also known as Sinopharm, to conduct clinical trials there.

Beijing's offers to provide vaccine doses to countries come after it donated masks and medical supplies to countries earlier in the year.

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Global health experts expect China, Russia and other countries to attempt to turn any successful vaccine into a tool of diplomacy amid intense global demand.

Compared with the supply of masks, vaccines will be much more limited in the early days of production, said Thomas J. Bollyky, director of global health at the Council on Foreign Relations think tank. "It will be on another level," he said. "That is why vaccine nationalism starts to bite."

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