

Vaccine diplomacy: Already supplying 97 countries and counting, China is winning the public relations war

The country that can manufacture and distribute lifesaving injections to others less fortunate sees a return on its investment in the form of soft power: prestige, goodwill, perhaps a degree of indebtedness, even awe.

Today the country moving fastest toward consolidating these gains may be China, under President Xi Jinping, who [proclaimed](#) last May that Chinese-made vaccines against COVID-19 would become a “global public good.”

Since that time, top officials have promised many developing countries priority access to Chinese vaccines, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry has [announced](#) that the country is providing free vaccines to 69 countries and commercially exporting them to 28 more.

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Behind such lofty goals lie commercial objectives, too. Health-related development assistance has long offered Chinese pharmaceutical companies a [low-cost means](#) of expanding their market share in the developing world.

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Government leaders in the developing world are eager to see the United States play a more proactive role in global vaccine distribution and administration. By doing so, the United States will inevitably dilute the influence that China has gained by distributing its vaccines. But by far the best outcome of such competition will be for it to give the two countries a reason to work together toward more equitable vaccine access for all.

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