

THE STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT IN GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH GOVERNANCE: BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF HEALTH FOR ALL

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The article discusses the strategy of the Chinese government's global public health governance strategy grounded in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which specifically focuses on the establishment of a global community of health for all. Three root causes are cited: firstly, humanity's inadequate understanding and disrespect for nature, which have led to environmental degradation and heightened pathogen risks; secondly, cultural disparities and populist sentiments that have obstructed global public health collaboration, thereby weakening globalization; and thirdly, political system differences that have given rise to divergent national priorities and policies in addressing public health crises, hindering international cooperation. Five viable pathways for building a global health community are proposed: prioritizing people and the sanctity of life, embracing scientific decision-making, fostering solidarity and cooperation, ensuring fairness and equity, and enhancing governance systems. Furthermore, it accentuates China's contributions to global health amidst the pandemic, encompassing vaccine assistance, support for public health infrastructure, and endeavors in managing chronic diseases and providing mental health services.

Keywords: global public health security; cultural differences; political systems; global health community; international cooperation; health equity.

СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКИЕ ИДЕИ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВА КИТАЯ В ОБЛАСТИ ГЛОБАЛЬНОГО УПРАВЛЕНИЯ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЕМ: СОЗДАНИЕ ГЛОБАЛЬНОГО СООБЩЕСТВА ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ ДЛЯ ВСЕХ

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В статье рассматривается стратегия правительства Китая по управлению глобальным здравоохранением, основанной на опыте пандемии COVID-19 и сосредоточенной на создании глобального сообщества здравоохранения для всех. Указаны три коренных причины: во-первых, недостаточное понимание и небрежное отношение человечества к природе, которые привели к деградации окружающей среды и повышению риска возникновения патогенов; во-вторых, культурные различия и популистские настроения, которые препятствуют глобальному сотрудничеству в области общественного здравоохранения, тем самым ослабляя глобализацию; и в-третьих, различия в

политических системах, которые привели к расхождениям в национальных приоритетах и политике в решении кризисных проблем в области здравоохранения, что затрудняет международное сотрудничество. Предложены пять жизнеспособных путей для построения глобального сообщества здравоохранения: приоритет человека и неприкосновенности его жизни, принятие решений, основанных на научном знании, укрепление солидарности и сотрудничества, обеспечение справедливости и равенства и совершенствование систем управления. Кроме того, подчеркнут вклад Китая в глобальное здоровье в условиях пандемии, включая помощь по вакцинации, поддержку инфраструктуры здравоохранения и усилия по учету и профилактике хронических заболеваний и предоставлению психиатрической помощи.

Ключевые слова: глобальная безопасность общественного здравоохранения; культурные различия; политические системы; глобальное сообщество здравоохранения; международное сотрудничество; равенство в области здравоохранения.

On March 21, 2020, Xi Jinping, in a message of condolence to French President Emmanuel Macron regarding the outbreak of COVID-19 in France, first introduced the new concept of “building a global community of health for all” [1]. In May of the same year, Xi Jinping, in his speech titled “Working Together to Fight the Pandemic and Build a Global Community of Health for All” at the opening ceremony of the 73rd World Health Assembly, deeply elaborated on China’s anti-pandemic approach and put forward a series of important initiatives [2]. On May 21, 2021, Xi Jinping attended the Global Health Summit via video in Beijing, delivering an important speech titled “Working Together to Build a Global Community of Health for All”, in which he proposed five specific recommendations and measures to fulfill international responsibilities, demonstrating China’s stance, embodying the role of a major country, and highlighting the great institutional advantages of the socialist public health system with Chinese characteristics [3, p. 37].

The background to the proposal of “A Global Community of Health for All” is the challenges to global public health security. The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide has sounded an alarm for all people. Its widespread impact and high mortality rate have made humanity increasingly aware that public health security is the core guarantee for healthy living. However, global public health security currently faces multidimensional, multi-layered, and complex challenges, which explain the strategic rationale behind the proposal of “working together to build a global community of health for all” [2].

First, human beings lack knowledge and reverence for nature. With the continuous progress of science and technology, human beings have become more capable of constructing and transforming nature, and gradually developed the idea of dominating the Earth and nature. However, things do not always go as humanity wishes. For example, humans invented antibiotics to eliminate bacteria, but this has led to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which are even more harmful to human health. Human activities have also severely damaged the natural ecological environment. The emission of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane has caused serious global

warming, with average global temperatures continually rising. The ice sheets in the Arctic and Antarctic are melting, and even the permafrost in Siberia is gradually thawing. This could potentially release ancient bacteria or viruses that have survived in cold regions for millions of years into human activity zones, posing serious health risks. Human activities have also caused severe environmental pollution. Epidemiological research by the World Health Organization indicates that the vast majority of human diseases are related to their living environment, and a polluted environment constantly erodes human health through breathing, eating, and other behaviors.

Second, cultural differences and populism impact global public health cooperation. Cultural differences lead people of different nationalities and countries to have different views on the same issue. For instance, during the COVID-19 prevention and control efforts, the Chinese government decided to impose a lockdown in Wuhan to control the severe outbreak there, and the pandemic was quickly brought under control across the country. However, James G. Hodge, director of the Center for Public Health Law and Policy at Arizona State University, claimed that “lockdowns violate human rights and are highly risky practices” [4]. Similarly, the Danish Prime Minister also stated that mandatory mask-wearing and lockdowns violated human rights and the spirit of freedom. Cultural differences among countries have led to different choices of strategies and measures in pandemic responses, making it difficult to reach cooperation and consensus. The undercurrent of populism has exacerbated this impact. Cultural differences and populism have made the trend of deglobalization more pronounced, weakening international cooperation and reducing the power of international organizations to address related issues. This has led problem-solving mechanisms to shift from multilateralism to unilateralism, making global public health cooperation increasingly difficult to carry out.

Third, differences in political systems lead to different motivations and attitudes toward public health security. China is a socialist country, and under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the Communist Party of China has always adhered to the principle of putting people’s health at the center of its public health work, sparing no effort to protect the lives and health of all citizens. The socialist public health system in China is fundamentally based on the leadership of the Party. In times of crisis, it can rely on unified, top-down leadership, to mobilize national resources, and effectively organize efforts to fight the pandemic. However, in capitalist countries, economic factors often need to be considered when maintaining public health security. When the protection of citizens’ lives conflicts with the interests of capital, governments tend to favor the latter. In capitalist countries, the government, as a tool controlled by capital, generally emphasizes checks and balances to prevent the government from gaining too much power, which might threaten the interests of capital. For example, the federal government in Washington and state governments in the United States are independent of each other. Each state has its own laws and regulations, and the federal government cannot control state governments, nor can state

governments easily get support from the federal government. This leads to a lack of effective coordination in the United States' pandemic response efforts. Different political systems result in different demands when dealing with public health crises, and varying levels of government control make it difficult to achieve similar results from the same public health policies across different countries, further complicating global public health cooperation.

What exactly is the Global Community of Health for All? How can we build such a community? Facing increasingly severe challenges to global public health security, Xi Jinping, in his speech at the opening ceremony of the 73rd World Health Assembly, called: "Let us join hands to protect the lives and health of people in all countries and to jointly protect our shared Earth. Let us work together to build a global community of health for all!" [5]. Building a global community of health for all is China's proposed solution to global public health governance and reflects Xi Jinping's strategic considerations from a global perspective on public health development. The practical path consists of the following five aspects:

First, "people first, life first" [4]. People's security is the cornerstone of national security, and public health is the foundation of national prosperity. People are the fundamental element of productive forces, and their health plays a crucial role in the development of productivity. The people are the creators of social wealth and the fundamental driving force behind global development. Regardless of nationality, political system, or culture, every country should prioritize the protection of its citizens' lives and health. The right to life is the most fundamental human right, and all other rights should yield to it. Governments should place the protection of human life and health above all other endeavors.

Second, "scientific policy making and comprehensive, systematic responses" [5]. Governments should avoid anthropocentric thinking and respect nature, protect the environment, and avoid species extinction and ecological disasters. It is essential to uphold a scientific attitude and adhere to scientific principles to effectively manage global public health governance. Countries should coordinate both pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical public health measures, clarify the roles of routine basic medical care and crisis emergency response, and balance pandemic prevention with socioeconomic development. Countries should also strengthen coordination among industries to ensure the normal functioning of global supply chains during public health crises.

Third, "solidarity and cooperation" [5]. Countries should avoid zero-sum Cold War mentalities in the face of potential public health crises. In today's world, no country can address all public health threats alone. Multilateral cooperation must be strengthened, and international organizations and regional organizations should be utilized to form a collective effort to maintain global public health security. Countries should actively engage in health diplomacy, enhance pandemic prevention cooperation, establish a global unified warning mechanism for infectious diseases, and leverage the strengths of diverse public health governance actors to build a new global public health governance order.

Fourth, “fairness and closing the ‘immunity gap’” [5]. Different countries are at different stages of development, and there are significant economic, political, technological, and cultural disparities among them. Some developing countries lack effective public health systems and vaccine production capacity. Developed countries with advanced healthcare systems have a responsibility and obligation to provide assistance to these countries to the best of their ability. All countries should uphold the values of the global health community, seeking shared interests and win-win results between developed and developing countries.

Fifth, “addressing both symptoms and root causes and improving governance systems” [5]. It is essential to recognize that disease prevention is the most efficient and cost-effective public health governance measure. A global long-term financing mechanism for public health security, a health monitoring, warning, and joint response mechanism, and a resource reserve and allocation system should be established. These cooperative mechanisms should contribute to the construction of a global public health system that benefits the health and well-being of all humanity. Countries should adhere to principles of consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, fully respect the voice of developing countries, and address their legitimate demands.

In order to build a Global Community of Health for All, the Chinese government has undertaken extensive efforts in global public health governance. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, China has adhered to the working principle of “solidarity and cooperation to defeat the pandemic” and has taken on its responsibilities, making significant contributions to the global fight against COVID-19 [6, p. 96]. China was the first country to openly share pandemic information and anti-pandemic experiences with the world. After controlling the domestic outbreak, China launched its largest humanitarian assistance operation since its founding, providing large quantities of anti-pandemic materials to countries worldwide, dispatching COVID-19 medical expert teams, and being the first country to commit to making its domestically produced vaccines a global public health product. China prioritized vaccine distribution to developing countries and established the largest global COVID-19 vaccine cooperation mechanism. By November 2021, China had supplied over 1.4 bln doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 100 countries and international organizations, aiming to supply 2 bln doses by the end of 2021. This is China’s solemn commitment to the world and a demonstration of China’s benevolence, treating developing countries equally. More than 90% of the vaccines provided by China were sent to developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, significantly improving their public health systems and pandemic response capacities. China has always upheld and practiced a diversified global governance system, injecting strong multilateralism into global solidarity and cooperation to defeat the pandemic. To date, China has provided 2 bln USD in funding to developing countries affected by the pandemic, helping them combat COVID-19 and rebuild their economies [7].

Over the past two years, significant progress has been made in building a global community of health for all, and the Chinese government has played an

important role in global health. After the COVID-19 pandemic, China actively promoted global cooperation. Since the outbreak, China has accelerated vaccine development and supported the world through “vaccine diplomacy”. By early 2024, China had supplied over 1.5 bln doses of vaccines to more than 100 countries and regions. Through platforms like the World Health Organization (WHO) and COVAX, China has ensured the equitable distribution of vaccines and treatment resources. In terms of global health security, China has strengthened its cooperation with the international community. In 2023, China participated in establishing a global health emergency platform and shared pandemic data and prevention experiences with other countries. Additionally, China has been involved in several international health initiatives, including the “China-Africa Public Health Cooperation Plan,” which aims to improve public health infrastructure and emergency response capabilities in Africa. Health equity has also drawn the attention of the Chinese government. In 2023, China announced an increase in international health aid, particularly to low- and middle-income countries. The Chinese government pledged to provide 1 bln USD in medical aid over the next five years to these countries, including support for healthcare facility construction and disease prevention programs to improve global health equity. In chronic disease management, China has taken several measures [8, p. 149]. The National Health Commission of China launched the “Chronic Disease Comprehensive Prevention and Control Demonstration Zone” program, aiming to reduce the incidence of chronic diseases by enhancing disease screening, health education, and management. In 2023, China released the “Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Plan (2023—2030)”, which aims to improve chronic disease prevention and control through nationwide health promotion activities. More attention has also been given to mental health. In 2023, the Chinese government released the “National Mental Health Action Plan (2023—2025),” which aims to increase the accessibility and quality of mental health services [9]. These measures not only reflect the Chinese government’s active participation in global health cooperation but also mark its continued efforts and contributions in addressing global health challenges.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese government has actively promoted the development of global public health cooperation, making great contributions to building a global community of health for all. In this special historical period, only by adhering to the working principle of solidarity and cooperation in public health can the “building of a global community of health for all” strategy be successfully implemented.

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