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 Research Article

ASSESSMENTS OF U.S. COVID-19 VACCINE DIPLOMACY AND BENEFITS FOR VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic originated in Wuhan, China in December 2019. Since then, it has rapidly widespread in almost every country around the world and has become a new global public health crisis. Since then, the demand for coronavirus vaccines and the supply of vaccine production becomes the most urgent strategic priority issues globally. Many governments have participated in the race of coronavirus vaccine production and distribution typically as the United States, China, Russia, and Australia. The United States marks as the leading vaccine supplier in this race. This country has delivered more than 682 million COVID-19 vaccine doses, all donated free of charge, to 116 countries - more doses than any other nation. The objective of the article is to analyze the vaccine diplomacy of the US base on the vaccine donation dataset, the location where the vaccine was given. The article indicates that the US has taken the lead in the race to produce and supply vaccination to the world. Vietnam, as a comprehensive partner of the US, has benefited from the US vaccine diplomacy policy. The paper has shown that the US. has given a significant amount of medical support and vaccines to Vietnam. These contribute significantly meaning for Vietnam's COVID-19 fighting.

KEYWORDS

COVID-19; U.S vaccine diplomacy; Vaccine supply; US-Vietnam relations.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 vaccines are the most important part of a strategy to arrest the virus. However, throughout 2021, the vaccine supply shortage was serious. Since the start of the global inoculation campaign, countries have experienced unequal access to vaccines. Improper vaccine distribution would pose a significant risk to an already uneven and fragile global recovery, so at that time, the COVID-19 vaccine has become a new diplomatic front between major countries to gain an advantage in this area. For the US, the Biden administration's vaccine diplomacy has taken place actively. Soon after taking office, President Joe Biden focused on cooperation to deal with the global pandemic. By May 2021, President Biden announced that the U.S. would be "the world's arsenal of vaccines" in the fight against COVID-19. He stated that U.S. vaccine donations don't include pressure for favors or potential concessions, and the United States is doing this to save lives, to end this pandemic. U.S. Secretary Blinken articulated the need for U.S. leadership in the global response as well, noting that: this pandemic won't end at home until it ends worldwide. That's why the U.S. is continuing to donate COVID-19 vaccine doses to countries around the world. In fact, the US takes advantage of all diplomatic opportunities from bilateral to multilateral levels to convey the message of "vaccine diplomacy". U.S. leadership and an unprecedented combination of political will that has made global collaboration and funding - that enabling the development and distribution rapidly of COVID-19 vaccines.

Vietnam is one of the countries benefiting the most from the US vaccine diplomacy, being one of the top 4 countries in the world to receive the most COVID-19 vaccines funded by the US. This has contributed to speeding up the process of vaccine coverage nationwide, helping Vietnam to be in a group of

countries with high vaccination rates, and creating a basis to transition to a new normal development stage.

Besides clarifying the U.S. vaccine diplomatic goals, this research also focuses on clarifying implementation measures and policy results, including COVID-19 support for Vietnam.

RESULTS

1. U.S. COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy

U.S. vaccine diplomatic goals: From mid-2021, the US has begun to step up and take the global leadership in COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy, this is because vaccine distribution poses national security issues - not just in the biological sense, but also in terms of strategic relations, foreign relations, and international influence.

In terms of American safety and prosperity: A proactive U.S. role is essential to secure the gains underway in the United States and ensure Americans' health, safety, and prosperity in the future. And even the U.S. get a successful domestic vaccination campaign, failure to adequately address critical vaccine shortages abroad means extended periods for COVID-19 transmission globally.

In terms of the biological sense: COVID-19 does not respect borders and boundaries, and new variants of COVID-19 are constantly emerging globally, including those with increasing transmissibility, high mortality rate, and worryingly, vaccine resistance. Therefore, donating excess vaccines and increasing funding to COVAX through vaccine diplomacy increases vaccination rates around the globe, reducing the global spread of the virus and the likelihood of new mutations.

In terms of foreign relations and international influence, taking a leadership position in vaccine diplomacy would demonstrate U.S. global leadership role and strengthen soft power, with long-term reputational and economic benefits for the United States. Furthermore, inequitable vaccine distribution would also jeopardize global economic recovery, including the resumption of international trade, investment, and travel. Vaccine distribution has been lopsided in the first two years after a pandemic, countries with the highest incomes have been vaccinated 25 times faster than those with the lowest¹.

In terms of strategic relations: The United States can't ignore the geopolitical aspects of this crisis because countries like China and Russia have early leveraged vaccine diplomacy to make geopolitical gains. Therefore, President Biden has continuously made many moves that are considered to regain the leading position in vaccine diplomacy, increase influence in strategic competitive areas, and compete with China's strong vaccine diplomacy strategy.

US vaccine diplomatic deployment:

- **Multilateral channels:**

Firstly, the US has coordinated with WHO to shape a stronger global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In working to strengthen the WHO and support its coordinating role, the U.S. will accelerate global vaccine development and deployment; work with industry to increase manufacturing capacity; improve

information, data, and sample sharing; bolster vaccine confidence... The United States has been the largest participant and contributor to the COVAX mechanism for global vaccine distribution and sharing. On June 10, 2021, President Biden announced that the United States will purchase and donate half a billion Pfizer vaccine doses to 92 low- and middle-income countries as well as the African Union via COVAX².

Secondly, President Joe Biden rallied G7 countries and Europe in the fight against COVID-19 and vaccine distribution. At the Group of Seven (G-7) Summit 2021, the US and other countries decided to provide 1 billion vaccine doses without economic and political conditions and consider reallocating \$100 billion from the International Monetary Fund's special drawing rights to help countries struggling to cope with COVID-19 crisis. In particular, President Biden has pledged to contribute more than 50% of the nearly 1 billion vaccine doses through the COVAX mechanism³. The US and Europe have committed to promoting equitable and affordable access, and delivering safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines. They encouraged more donors to make 2 billion vaccine doses available worldwide by late 2021, with the goal of vaccinating at least two-thirds of the world's population by the end of 2022⁴. They have established a Joint COVID Manufacturing and Supply Chain Taskforce to deepen cooperation and identify and resolve issues around expanding vaccine and therapeutics production capacity.

Thirdly, cooperation through the QUAD: The US and other Quartet members including Australia, India, and

¹ Tom Rall. (2021, April 9). The World's Wealthiest Countries Are Getting Vaccinated 25 Times Faster. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-09/when-will-world-be-fully-vaccinated-pace-is-2-400-faster-in-wealthy-countries#xj4y7vzkg>

² U.S. Department of State. (2022). COVID-19 Vaccine Donations. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/COVID-19-recovery/vaccine-deliveries/>

³ Betsy Klein, Kate Sullivan and Maegan Vazquez. (2021). Biden says US to buy and donate half-billion doses of Pfizer's Covid vaccine: 'We know the tragedy. We also know the path to recovery, June 10, 2021. <https://edition.cnn.com>

⁴ The White House (2021, June 15), U.S.-EU Summit Statement. <https://www.whitehouse.gov>.

Japan have raised high expectations for cooperation to lead the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. At the inaugural virtual Leaders' Summit in March 2021 and the first-ever in-person Leaders' Summit of September 2022, the QUAD raised high expectations for the cooperation to lead the distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, such as establishing a Vaccine Experts Group, pledging to provide up to 1 billion doses of vaccine to ASEAN, the Indo-Pacific, and other countries by the end of 2022. In addition to the doses financed through COVAX, QUAD countries have pledged to donate more than 1.2 billion vaccine doses globally⁵.

Fourthly, cooperation through the G20 Group: At the G20 Summit in October 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden and G20 leaders agreed on efforts to provide vaccines fairly, and widely, established the Joint Finance and Health Task Force (JFHTF) to enhance the collaboration and global cooperation on issues relating to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, thus leaving the international community better prepared in the eventual case of future health threats outbreaks. The World Health Organization's director-general thanked the US for "leading in vaccine sharing" and hoped other G20 leaders would follow.

Fifthly, U.S. President called on other high-income countries to make vaccine pledges and funding at the Virtual Global COVID-19 Summit on September 22, 2021. The Summit introduced ambitious targets in three critical areas for ending this pandemic and preventing and preparing for the next: Vaccinate the World, Save Lives Now, and Build Back Better. Biden announced bold new commitments from the United States to

supply an additional 500 million doses of Pfizer vaccine, bringing the U.S. total commitment of donated vaccines to over 1.1 billion. Also at this summit, Biden reiterated that America will be the arsenal of vaccines in our global fight against COVID-19, just as America was the arsenal of democracy in World War II. He called other high-income countries to donate doses to low- and lower-income countries, and that the donations come with no political strings attached...

The second Global COVID-19 Summit, co-hosted by the United States, Belize, Germany, Indonesia, and Senegal on May 12, 2022, also accelerated collective efforts to enhance access to tests and treatments, and protect the health workforce... The aim of the summit included finding ways to vaccinate the world - only about 16% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose at this time - to protect the most vulnerable people from COVID and prepare for the next pandemic⁶. The Summit garnered new financial commitments totaling \$ 3.2 billion, above and beyond pledges made to date in 2022⁷.

- **Bilateral channel:**

In addition to the multilateral channel, the US "vaccine diplomacy" also expressed through the bilateral channel. This was evident when vaccines were always one of the main topics of senior White House officials' trips. For example, the US immediately made commitments to support when Indonesia became the epicenter of the region's epidemic. In early July 2021, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan announced to deliver 4 million Moderna vaccine doses to

⁵ Joint Statement from Quad Leaders. (2021, September 24). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/joint-statement-from-quad-leaders>.

⁶ Kamala Thiagarajan. (2022, May 11). 5 big ideas for the White House's Global COVID Summit.

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/05/11/1098378802/5-big-ideas-for-the-white-houses-global-covid-summit>.

⁷ The White House (2022, May 12) 2nd Global COVID-19 Summit Commitments. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/12/2nd-global-covid-19-summit-commitments/>

Indonesia as soon as possible through the COVAX mechanism. After Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi's visit to the US, the US announced it would disburse \$81.6 million in aid to help the country deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Or during US Vice President Kamala Harris's visit to Vietnam in August 2021, she announced that the United States will donate an additional 1 million doses of Pfizer vaccine to Vietnam, the vaccines will start arriving within the next 24 hours⁸. However, the US currently only deploys aid under a bilateral mechanism with very few neighboring countries in Central America, due to complicated regulatory, procedural, and coordination issues from the US.

U.S. vaccine diplomatic results:

U.S. vaccine diplomacy highlighted American leadership in the global COVID-19 response. Worldwide, as of January 12, 2023, through coordinated efforts with GAVI and bilateral agreements, the US has delivered more than 682 million doses to 116 countries⁹. According to data from UNICEF - the agency that manages the supply of COVID-19 vaccine for COVAX mechanism, the US is currently the largest donor of COVID-19 vaccine globally, far ahead of other major economies such as China, Japan, and England. The United States has shipped millions of vaccines to over 44 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, 30 countries in the Western Hemisphere, and 26 countries in Southern and Eastern Asia. So far, the U.S. has continued to donate vaccine doses globally. They are also working with U.S. vaccine

manufacturers to increase vaccine supply for the rest of the world and with partners to expand global vaccine production and manufacturing capacity to beat this pandemic. The U.S. has also worked with other governments, and global initiatives including the COVAX and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT), and other partners to get COVID-19 vaccines to where they are needed most.

U.S. COVID-19 vaccine donation to Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the countries seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The US vaccine diplomacy has brought many benefits to Vietnam, not only vaccine donation but also other important COVID-19 support. In a congratulatory letter to Vietnam's National Day 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden affirmed that the US will stand with Vietnam in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁰. Cooperation in the prevention of COVID-19 has become a prominent highlight in Vietnam-US relations in the past years.

Vaccines:

On July 10, 2021, the first two million doses of the US-aided vaccine arrived in Vietnam, just as Vietnam was grappling with record-high coronavirus infections driven by the delta variant and stubbornly low vaccination rates in the country. During 2021 and the early month of 2022 - when Vietnam was struggling to secure an adequate supply of vaccines due to global vaccine constraints and shortages - the US was the biggest donor to Vietnam. Vietnam has received a large vaccine donation from the US that any country would

⁸ Phó Tổng thống Mỹ lên chuyên cơ rời Hà Nội, kết thúc chuyến thăm Việt Nam, <https://dantri.com.vn/the-gioi/pho-tong-thong-my-len-chuyen-co-roi-ha-noi-ket-thuc-chuyen-tham-viet-nam-20210826184815102.htm>, truy cập ngày 26/8/2021.

⁹ U.S. Department of State. (2023). COVID-19 Vaccine Donations. <https://www.state.gov/COVID-19-recovery/vaccine-deliveries/>

¹⁰ Duong Ngoc. (2021, September 3). President Biden: The US will stand with Vietnam in the fight against COVID-19. <https://nld.com.vn/chinh-tri/tong-thong-joe-biden-my-se-sat-can-hung-viet-nam-trong-cuoc-chien-voi-COVID-19-20210903203407155.htm>.

wish to have. To date, Vietnam is one of the countries benefiting the most from the US vaccine diplomacy, being one of the top 4 countries in the world to receive the most COVID-19 vaccines funded by the US (table 1). This has greatly contributed to supporting Vietnam in effectively deploying the vaccine strategy and the vaccination campaign.

By January 27, 2023, The US Government has shared 40,851,050 COVID-19 vaccine doses to Vietnam - free of cost¹¹. This includes 34,850,790 Pfizer and 6,000,260 Moderna doses. All these doses were donated in

partnership with COVAX. It accounts for nearly 40% of all vaccines that the US sponsors for East Asia and the Pacific. The US Embassy in Hanoi said on its Facebook fan page on April 19, 2022, that “This week, an additional 1.7 million doses of the #PfizerBioNTech vaccine arrived in Hanoi through the COVAX facility, bringing the total number of vaccines the U.S. government has supported in Vietnam to almost 40 million. But our work is not done - we will continue our partnership with Vietnam to provide COVID assistance to ensure a safe and strong recovery from this pandemic¹².

Table 1: Top recipients of U.S. COVID-19 vaccine donation deliveries by total doses received

Rank	Country	Total doses received (Million)
1	Bangladesh	114.6
2	Pakistan	79
3	Indonesia	42.3
4	Vietnam	40.9
5	Philippines	33.6
6	Nigeria	32.7
7	Egypt	29
8	Uganda	18.2
9	Mexico	16.9
10	Kenya	14.3

Note: Data as of January 27, 2023

Source: U.S. State Department

Funding, and technical assistance: the U.S. has provided \$27.28 million in American Rescue Plan and emergency funding through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to help Vietnam

expand the distribution and access to vaccines, combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and prepare for future disease threats¹³.

So far, the US has also transferred to Vietnam 111 deep freezers to store COVID-19 vaccines valued at \$1 million

¹¹U.S. Department of State. (2023). COVID-19 Vaccine Donations. https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/vietnam/#covid_map_link

¹² U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, April 19, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/usembassyhanoi/>

¹³ USAID. (2023). COVID-19 Assistance. <https://www.usaid.gov/vietnam/COVID-19-assistance>

and proposed to coordinate the transfer of the latest mRNA technology and therapeutic drugs to Vietnam. In October 2021, the Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology held a ceremony to receive the first 77 ultra-low temp freezers provided by the U.S. Department of Defense¹⁴. In March 2022, US Ambassador to Vietnam, Marc Knapper presented 34 ultra-low temp freezers for COVID-19 vaccine Storage to the Ministry of Health of Vietnam. In order to address COVID-19 hot spots, USAID provided Vietnam with two mobile oxygen plants that transform air into medical oxygen and transit between local health facilities to provide patients with life-saving oxygen¹⁵.

The U.S. opened a new CDC Southeast Asia Regional Office in Hanoi during Vice President Kamala D. Harris' visit in August 2021. This reinforced the U.S. commitment to regional health security cooperation and renewed previous calls to action on pandemic preparedness and response, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this office, the US will work closely with Asian partners to share strategies and strengthen each other's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious diseases and other emerging health threats.

All the above U.S. support has strengthened Vietnam's capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that the US has not only increased the frequency of transportation but also increased the number of doses of vaccines given out proves the importance of the partnership between the US and Vietnam. Vaccine diplomacy has become a factor that further

strengthens the Vietnam-US comprehensive partnership. Both countries highly appreciate this field of cooperation. Vietnamese Vice Foreign Minister Ha Kim Ngoc believed that the valuable support, effective cooperation, and timely mutual help during the pandemic have made an important contribution to strengthening the relationship between the two countries. That will be the basis for further development of the Vietnam-US Comprehensive Partnership¹⁶. Meanwhile, the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Marc Knapper stated that "We are very proud of our cooperation in the medical field with Vietnam. The two countries have a long history of medical cooperation. We have worked together to deal with many dangerous diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and now COVID-19. We provide COVID-19 vaccines, ventilators, and many other tools to Vietnam not because we expect a response. Because for us, that's the right thing to do. We care about the Vietnamese people"¹⁷.

Director of U.S.CDC in Vietnam, Eric Dziuban said that images of batches of COVID-19 vaccines with U.S. flags docked at Vietnamese airports are a beautiful and impressive image in Vietnam-US relations. In the future, Vietnam will continue to receive more doses of vaccine from the US to ensure that all Vietnamese people are fully vaccinated against COVID-19: "More shipments will be sent in the future. America is honored to cooperate with Vietnam in the fight against COVID-19... Together we will defeat this pandemic! The United States will continue to assist Vietnam in its

¹⁴ US donates nearly 40 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Vietnam. <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/us-donates-nearly-40-million-COVID-19-vaccine-doses-to-vietnam-2011236.html>. Accessed April 20, 2022.

¹⁵ U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, April 12, 2022. <https://www.facebook.com/usembassyhanoi/>

¹⁶ Ngoc, Ha Kim. (2022). Cooperation against COVID-19: A bright spot in Vietnam-US relations. <https://baoquocte.vn/hop-tac-phong-chong-COVID-19-diem-sang-trong-quan-he-viet-my-172143.html>

¹⁷ Minh Quan. (2022). US Ambassador: Supporting Vietnam against the epidemic is 'the right thing to do'. <https://baoquocte.vn/dai-su-hoa-ky-ho-tro-viet-nam-chong-dich-la-dieu-nen-lam-174645.html>

successful and effective deployment of the COVID-19 vaccine program”¹⁸.

In fact, U.S. COVID-19 support to Vietnam with a large number of high-quality vaccines has made a very important contribution to our early finish in the largest vaccination campaign in history. Vietnam has successfully implemented the vaccine strategy, becoming one of the countries with the highest vaccine coverage rate in the world. According to Vietnam’s Ministry of Health, by early March 2022, Vietnam has become one of the 6 countries with the highest vaccine coverage rate in the world¹⁹. The COVID-19 vaccine has changed the course of the pandemic in Vietnam, and the chance of hospitalization and death rates plummeted. U.S. support for vaccines and other health support helps Vietnam adapt to the 'new normal' leading to a positive forecast for Vietnam's economy in 2022. With support from USAID through the Vietnam Red Cross Society, hundreds of difficult families which have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic received assistance packages to overcome their challenges and get back to normal.

CONCLUSION

Vaccines are the most important anti-COVID-19 epidemic weapon. Vaccination is important in bringing all countries into a new normal of economic recovery and development. The United States has committed to leading the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming an arsenal of vaccines for the world, and helping every country build back better. The U.S. supports multilateral approaches to defeating the Pandemic. They have exercised diplomatic leadership to mobilize an international response to the COVID-19

pandemic while strengthening global biosecurity infrastructure to address both the current crisis and future health-related threats. Although starting slower than other countries like China and Russia in the COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy race, right from the start, the US showed its determination to lead this race with huge commitments to share vaccines. The US has donated more vaccines than all other countries combined. Most importantly, all the vaccines that the United States gives the world are free. This has shown the important role of the US in the global fight against COVID-19, showing the prestige in the way of deploying vaccine diplomacy, both the quantity and quality of vaccines. Therefore, the U.S. COVID-19 response in general, and U.S. vaccine diplomacy in particular, has strengthened a diversified and resilient global supply chain and closed global gaps in the availability and distribution of vaccines. The pandemic is far from over, therefore vaccines are still the best bet for staying safe. Currently, although the world moves from shortage to surplus of Covid-19 vaccine, for low-and middle-income countries, U.S. vaccine funding is still extremely important.

The United States always stands with Vietnam in the fight against COVID-19. During a period when vaccine shortages were serious, U.S. vaccine funding plays a very important role for Vietnam. The United States was the largest donor of COVID-19 vaccines to Vietnam, this contributes to speeding up the process of vaccine coverage nationwide and promoting the U.S. - Vietnam relations. After achieving vaccine coverage with the highest vaccination rate in the world thanks to a very successful vaccine strategy; improving medical capacity; Vietnam has shifted towards safe and flexible

¹⁸ U.S. Embassy in Hanoi posted on Facebook, April 5, 2022. <https://vn.facebook.com/usembassyhanoi>.

¹⁹ Ministry of Health Portal. (2022, March 8). Results of 1 year of vaccination against COVID-19 in Vietnam. [https://moh.gov.vn/tin-](https://moh.gov.vn/tin-lien-quan/-/asset_publisher/vjYyM7O9aWnX/content/thanh-qua-1-nam-tiem-chung-vaccine-phong-COVID-19-cua-viet-nam)

[lien-quan/-/asset_publisher/vjYyM7O9aWnX/content/thanh-qua-1-nam-tiem-chung-vaccine-phong-COVID-19-cua-viet-nam](https://moh.gov.vn/tin-lien-quan/-/asset_publisher/vjYyM7O9aWnX/content/thanh-qua-1-nam-tiem-chung-vaccine-phong-COVID-19-cua-viet-nam).

adaptation, effectively controlling the epidemic, confidently reopening, recovering quickly, and moving towards sustainable socio-economic development.

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