
Why Vietnam is being emphasized as the main subject of the acceleration of vaccine diplomacy from leader countries?

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Abstract. The Covid-19 outbreak has poses a global health crisis to the world regarding the global economy, trade relations and polarization of globalization. This pandemic also demonstrates the high rate of vulnerability of the international community. From this moment, leadership and crisis management are being challenged towards world leaders and heads of state. Several countries are symbols for the Covid-19 pandemic contamination. On the contrary, some are put under big question mark for their leader capability due to failed policies. The US, one of the great economies and market leaders, was struggling difficultly to handle the pandemic. Although, the time was hard, but the vaccine development race had been launched since the first outbreak. Vaccine diplomacy shall be based on sharing and sympathy. This step means that vaccine, drug, and medical equipment will be equally distributed to less developed and developing countries in need, which do not have the technologies and capability to produce their own vaccine. Eventually, vaccine diplomacy is also used as a sub-element of public diplomacy of soft power which is to gain more influence in a specific targeted region and to enhance national branding. Vietnam is being one of the countries receiving the largest batches of vaccine from the United States (the US), European countries, Japan, and China. Why the two countries in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue group are donating tremendously to Vietnam? How will Vietnam diplomatically tackle this “Sinophobia” while China pledges to support the country in the future right after the visit of the US’s vice president Kamala Harris and during the visit of Japanese Minister of Defense Kishi Nobuo? This article will dig deeper into the implication hidden behind the tremendous generosity from leader economies.

Keywords: Vietnam, Covid-19, Vaccine diplomacy, global health, politicization

Introduction

“HEALTH IS GLOBAL”. This is a strategy of the UK’s government implying the intersection of global health and interests of foreign policy. It ([UK Department of](#)

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Health 2008) set out the framework for every related governmental department operating as an international cohesion for the health of the UK and overseas. And this strategy would implement in three areas of action: “Global health”, “International Development” and “Trade for better health”. The level of international cooperation is raging from the partnership between government and non-governmental institutions to bilateral and multilateral relationships. And the term “global health” was remarked that a new term needed to be attached to the foreign policy of each nation when international negotiations implemented among nations. From there, global health diplomacy will be prioritized and launched on every occasion of the emergence of a global pandemic or avian. In the Covid-19 pandemic, vaccine diplomacy is fully taken spotlight by countries developing vaccines via vaccine race. All other nations, who do not have the access to vaccines, would be subjected to public diplomacy and the development of national brands via vaccine donation operations implemented by big countries such as China, the US, Russia, etc. And Vietnam is not behind the trend. Questions were raised by the public and the press as Vietnam is being a priority of vaccine donation operations with a large number of vaccine doses distributed. Those questions are related to the Vaccine diplomacy is implemented tremendously in Vietnam by the EU, the US, China. Recently, Vietnam is facing the surging cases of Covid-19, which has put the country under full lockdown. As a small power country aiming to become medium power country in close future. The country has proved its capacity on achieving that desire by firstly symbolizing it as a successful model of fighting the covid. Before this heavy outbreak in April, the active cases were under 3000 cases, and most of the cases were detected during the quarantine period after entering from abroad. Vietnam has tightened the country entering rules for foreigners and only a few rescue flies could operate. From that point, the country kept the number of cases lower than most western countries but with a high proportion of the population. Many countries, even those from the super and middle power considered Vietnam as a model. Nevertheless, the number of positive cases is soaring. As consequence, Hanoi must put the country’s largest economic hub, which is Ho Chi Minh city, under extreme sanitary measures. At that time, the western countries have been making their efforts to accelerate vaccine donation to countries with low vaccination rates which Vietnam is standing among them. This vaccine donation initiative, either through COVAX Facility or bilateral agreement, is so-called vaccine diplomacy. EU and the US are rushing to transfer a large portion of vaccines to Vietnam and other ASEAN countries under the COVAX scheme or bilateral relations, especially the US. This vaccine diplomacy is another key strategy nowadays for one country could gain influence in the international arena.

This research will be studying the current position of Vietnam and try to answer the question: “what is the vaccine diplomacy?”, “what makes Vietnam vital that the EU, the US, and China must donate their vaccine without lucrative returns to save this market?”. And furthermore, the author might get deeper insight from

political and economic standpoints, what is the implication of Vietnamese advocacy activities for getting the priority of the large supplier countries?"

Redefining the Position of Global Health Diplomacy in the International Relations

Vaccine and medical aids assistance have been uprising activities during the pandemic. The term “vaccine diplomacy” is coined during the pandemic where powerful states help other less strong states to get access to vaccines, or sources of vaccine. This type of diplomacy is quite controversial regarding the coordination between the political agenda and the global health crisis. Vaccine diplomacy and its activities are only deployed promptly in the period of a global health crisis. In the time of pandemics, vaccine diplomacy is playing a prominent role in the establishment and enhancement of diplomatic relations. The Covid-19 pandemic has torn the world apart, making countries alter the direction of diplomacy and international relations. If any state could access fully to vaccine resources, it would possess a high influential power impacting on other countries. And capable states have responded to the pandemic with the Covid-19 vaccine, which would an effective player in the international arena. Nevertheless, in order to gain that tool punctually, a vaccine race between capable countries must occur in the time of crisis. In such an emergency time, the redistribution of vaccine doses is often prioritized to those in need, but diplomacy’s nature has to launch its role as a political tool to express domestic interests. The political choice would be obvious at that time. The UK’s government weighed deeply the importance and the density of Global Health via the strategy of “Health is Global” in 2008 in the structure of international relations. The area of global health is emphasized partly transitions in the study of international relations. Sara E. Davies, Stefan Elbe, Alison Howell, and Colin McInnes defined three changes.

Where does vaccine diplomacy stand in the international relations?

In a broader sense, vaccine diplomacy is categorized as one tool of medical diplomacy or health diplomacy. In 1978, Peter Bourne ([Bourne 1978](#)) introduced medical diplomacy as a term where health and medicine could have

played an important role as a manner for maintaining good international relations. Especially several humanitarian and health issues could be the basis for establishing a dialogue for leveraging diplomatic barriers. Harley Feldbaum and Joshua Michaud discussed in their research that the public health community has a wide range of definitions concerning health diplomacy which is driven by globalization including state and non-state actors, health negotiations. Furthermore, they also mentioned that the highest governmental goal of health diplomacy is to navigate proper foreign policy for the purpose of supporting global health. International cooperation for the purpose of infectious diseases contamination has come to existence for a long time, we should see that global health is a priority as it is connected to economic development, national security, and foreign policy interest. For example, the infectious disease of HIV/AIDS has been always a hot topic in global health, the key international institutions such as G8 or WHO, United Nations seek together solutions to tackle global health issues. UNAIDS and Global Fund were formed with the international coordination of GAVI Alliance to seize and slow down HIV/AIDS. The past pandemics such as the SARS and two Influenza H5N1 and H1N1, putting the world at great stake, called out all international efforts to contain the diseases.

The Influenza pandemic actually reflexes another side of health diplomacy or medical diplomacy which is political dynamics and unequal distribution of vaccines. Firstly, In the larger concept of diplomacy, medical diplomacy is conceptualized into Global Health Diplomacy (GHD) as an international norm when the world is attacked by any worldwide disease. Sara E. Davies, Stefan Elbe, Alison Howell, and Colin McInnes clarified in their research regarding the global health in the system of international relations that the health challenges would be pushed to surpass any national borders and require any political demands in order to respond internationally for the sake of the human and societal well-being. And that could be equal to any environmental issue it is put on the international stage (Davies 2014). Coming back to the downside of the GHD, David P. Fidler highlighted the inequality in health diplomacy and the real face of developed countries' foreign policy (DP 2008) that "fears about avian influenza's spread and the emergence of pandemic influenza highlighted the weakness of international efforts to increase vaccine availability in developing countries. The resolution attempts to build a multilateral process to address the lack of fair and equitable access for developing countries to pharmacologic benefits derived from the sharing of influenza virus samples". This statement is coordinated with the statement of Sara E. Davies, Stefan Elbe, Alison Howell and Colin McInnes that in other conceptions of health diplomacy, it could have been deemphasized at both phases as negotiations and the primary role of global health. States would enhance their efforts to improve health within the of supporting state interests (Davies 2014). The vaccine diplomacy has been coined since the GAVI Vaccine Alliance as mentioned above for the purpose of

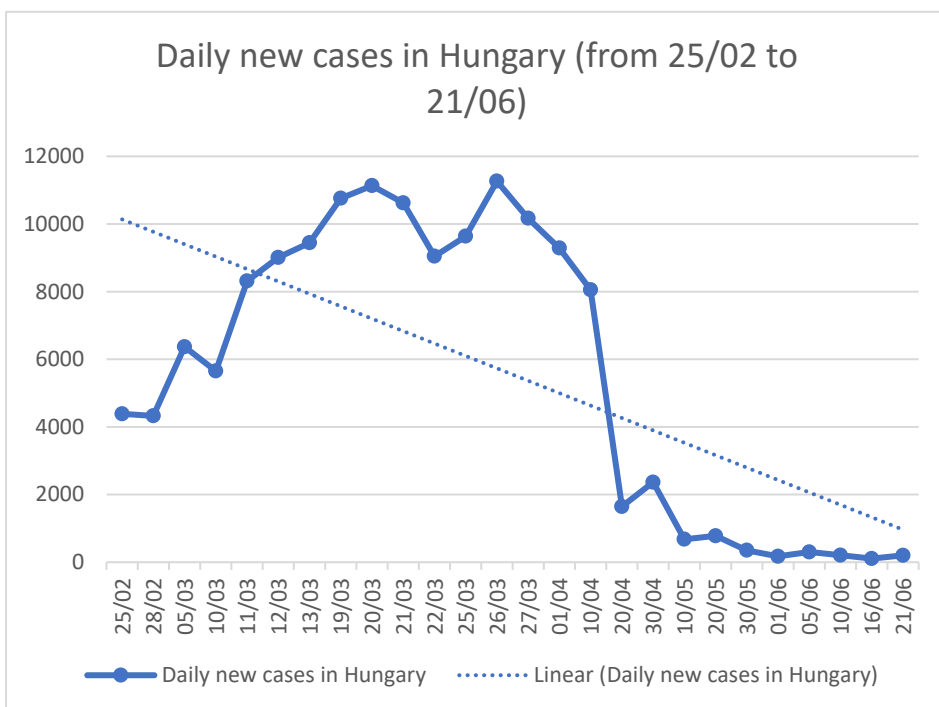
establishing the fair sharing and distribution of vaccine to the poorer countries. Hotez identified vaccine diplomacy consisting of almost every aspect of global health diplomacy that relies on the use or delivery of vaccines and navigate the vital work of the Gavi, which is the Vaccine Alliance, with WHO, the Gates Foundation, and other important international organizations” (Hotez 2014). Moreover, he also determined vaccine diplomacy as a branch of global health diplomacy promoting the use and delivery of vaccines to achieve objectives of global health and shared foreign policy interests. The pandemic of Covid-19 amplified clearly the political pressure of countries possessing Covid-19 vaccine aligned with economic development, production technologies, and vaccine technology. The mRNA is a newly emerged technology that is exclusively developed by two grant American medical enterprises. This tech was used for advancing and revolutionizing the vaccine against the Covid-19, which make the stock price of the two enterprises skyrocket. And the vaccine race has been launched for a political dynamic, where the vaccine serves as a tool for economic and public diplomacy as the US and China. But this tool is still utilized for hidden political purposes in the case of Vietnam when it is visited by two important political figures representing China and the US. Vaccine and vaccine diplomacy are on the debate table as they are used for assuring global health or achieving political propaganda rather than prioritizing global health.

Covid-19 vaccine as a debatable tool

With the regard to the domestic approach, the Covid-19 vaccines and vaccine distribution are recently considered the political tool for the ruling party to prove their effectiveness of crisis preparedness and management. From this point, the party shall have a significant advantage from the vaccine rollout operation. The most memorized example for this case is Hungary while the Hungarian Prime minister Orbán Viktor announced at the beginning of February 2021. The approval of Hungary’s National Institute of Pharmacy for the use of the eastern vaccines, which are Sinopharm of China and Sputnik Russia, have caused critical debates among EU countries. EU authorities and Hungarian opposition parties claimed the Hungarian PM for the politicization of the eastern vaccine over public health. According to the statement of German Chancellor Angela Merkel on German public broadcaster ARD that all vaccines would be welcomed to use in the EU once they had been approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) (DW 2021). Obviously, EMA has not approved these types of vaccine just yet. Apparently, the Chinese Sinopharm is facing challenges of controversy and confusion between China and the world when this country was

under investigation of Covid-19's origin. And the Russian Sputnik was not in any better condition due to the lack of data regarding the vaccine's effectiveness. Hungarian PM also clapped at the entire EU when he answered to the public radio that "I will wait my turn and when the time comes, I will choose the Chinese vaccine" (Davenport 2021). This issue arose when Hungary was the most hit hard among EU countries with the high death toll and extreme rate of infection, but the population is small with more than 10 million people. The decision of approval was taken in the context where the EU bodies were facing criticism about the slow vaccine rollout. Eventually, WHO Europe chief Dr. Hans Kluge blasted the EU regarding this unacceptable operation in an interview with BBC. The reasons behind this slow vaccine delivery are comprehensible, but it was clear that the politics played a most part in it. Unfortunately, the slow negotiation with the vaccine manufacturers is contemporary in the case of Vietnam also as its government did not have strong access to those sources.

Chart 1: Daily new cases in Hungary from February 25th to June 21st, 2021

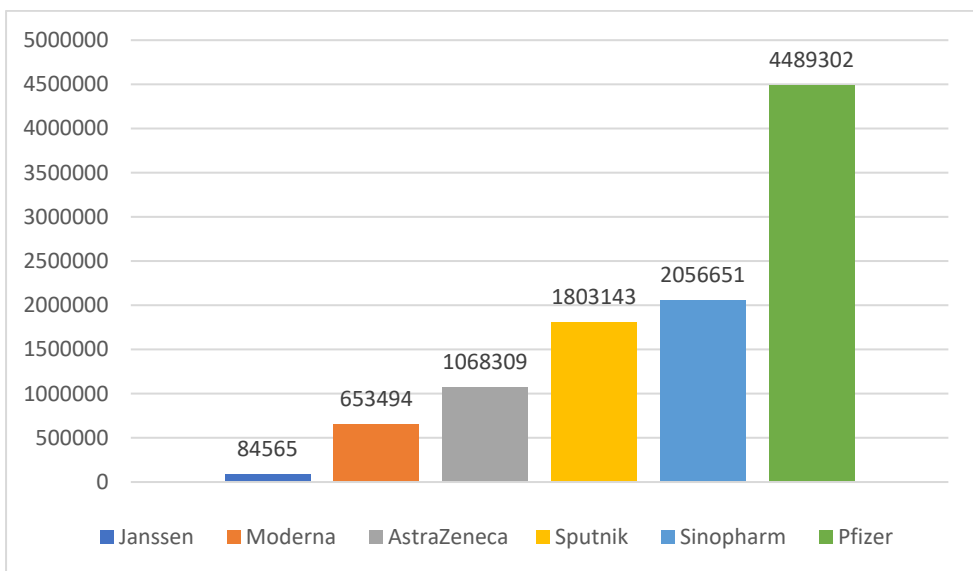


Source: Worldometers

From the chart above, we could see the trend of confirmed cases was rising significantly from February 25th, marking the urgent need for vaccine rollout

operation. The Hungarian medicine authority had approved two types of eastern vaccine. The Hungarian government has done its job well in crisis management with the diversification of vaccine sources and types despite the criticism from the EU body. The vaccination operation has been well organized including the communication strategy since the beginning as Hungary is always classed among the countries that have the highest rate of vaccination. Ironically, from the cases of Hungary and the EU, the access to vaccines is still on the political debate table and it will change fundamentally the system of international relations. The case of Vietnam could be regarded as another case of political influential expansion. Vietnam is having a very low rate of vaccination as it relies heavily on the COVAX Facility of WHO, which is sluggishly providing vaccines to other countries in need. But another reason is brought out to defend Vietnam's lagging behind in the vaccination rollout. This would be discussed deeply in the below session.

Chart 2: Number of COVID-19 vaccine doses by type administered in Hungary as of June 27, 2021



The government has proved the effectiveness of the vaccine since the Sinopharm doses were used mostly after Pfizer and Sputnik followed. The newly infected cases were dragged dramatically down to a very low level, allowing the country to re-open most businesses sector and surrounding disciplines. Moreover, it is classed second place among countries having the high rate of Covid recovery rate in the chart elaborated by Nikkei. Ironically, Hungary is being placed after China (Li 2021). It seems that the Chinese vaccine diplomacy has separated

the EU when many EU states approved its vaccine. And the creditability of China even increases when the World Health Organization approved the two vaccines Sinopharm and Sinovac for emergency use (World Health Organization 2021). As word given by the French Emmanuel Macron that this vaccine diplomacy of China is a “clear diplomatic success” regarding the maintaining diplomatic relations and expanding the geopolitical influence and “a little bit humiliating for us” as in the country’s ability of vaccine’s mass production and export (Nussbaum 2021). This is a move of China that has been evaluated as a thriving strategy when it comes to national branding and public diplomacy.

THE CRUCIALITY OF GLOBAL VACCINE DIPLOMACY TOWARDS VIETNAM

Before the outbreak of the fourth wave, which had a huge impact on Vietnam’s economic and societal development, Vietnam was considered as a successful model of putting out the pandemic inside the country alongside another Asian country. In the previous three waves, the Vietnamese government had launched very strict manners of infectious contamination from the inside and outside of the country. This method seemed to be very extreme, but they were fully granted with the consent of citizens. The task of propaganda regarding the pandemic around the world and restrictions of government had been effectively communicated to its citizens. And the citizen obeyed these restrictions with full consent and no questions asked. The credibility of Vietnam was increasing, which made the Vietnamese business environment more attractive. At the same time, the world was waiting for the result of the investigation of the virus’s origin from China led by the World Health Organization (WHO). Conflict regarding the act of hiding the virus origin has arisen between China and other world-leading economies such as the US and Australia and some EU countries etc. “Moving out of China” is considered as a meta-trend of the world of many big companies’ factories residing in China. Those big enterprises regarded two top destinations, which were India and Vietnam. These mentioned above reasons to form the massive foreign aids to Vietnam for striking the pandemic. This session would serve to analyse the context of Vietnam before and during the fourth wave in order to apprehend the implication behind this international assistance to Vietnam.

Before the fourth wave

The Vietnamese economy had a very bright side although the GDP stood at 2.9%. But when it was compared to other Asian economies, Vietnamese GDP was deemed to be classed among other GDP positive growth. According to the

economic report carried out by Yen Nee Lee of CNBC (2021), Vietnam had been ranked first place in the 2020 GDP growth of major Asian economies. And China obviously followed with second place due to its strict lockdown during previous waves since the first infected case. Moreover, China had the privilege of accessing first-hand the data of the pandemic as the virus was first detected in this country, China hence could invest heavily in the development of vaccines. However, China was being investigated for the act of hiding the origin of the virus, and the country was recently facing challenges of losing its stand in the international arena. In addition, the conflicts between China and other nations have basically existed for quite some time, and this event deepened it. The trade war between China and the US is the most remarkable memory of the world before the pandemic as it has provoked several serious changes in the world international logistics and fates of big companies who are having factories situated in China. Before the outbreak, the trade war between China-the US forces many multinational companies (MNCs) to pull their factories and branches out of China (2019), reporters of Nikkei Asia, identified numerous companies moving out as:

Table 1: List of companies considering moving away from China

<i>No</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>origin</i>	<i>Target country</i>	<i>Notes</i>	
1	Pegatron	Taiwan	India	May also relocate to Vietnam	
2	Skechers USA	U.S.			
3	Apple				
4	Iris Ohyama	Japan	South Korea		
5	Komatsu				
6	Toshiba Machine				
7	Keihin				
8	Sumitomo Heavy Industry		Japan		
9	G-Tekt				
10	Mitsubishi Electric				
11	Casio Computer				
12	Ricoh				
13	Citizen watch				
14	Panasonic				
15	Asutek Computer		Taiwan	Taiwan	
16	Compal Electronics				
17	HP		U.S.	U.S.	Partly relocated to Vietnam
18	Dell				
19	Mitsuba	Japan	Vietnam		
20	Asics				
21	Kyocera				
22	Sharp				
23	Nintendo				
24	TCL	China			

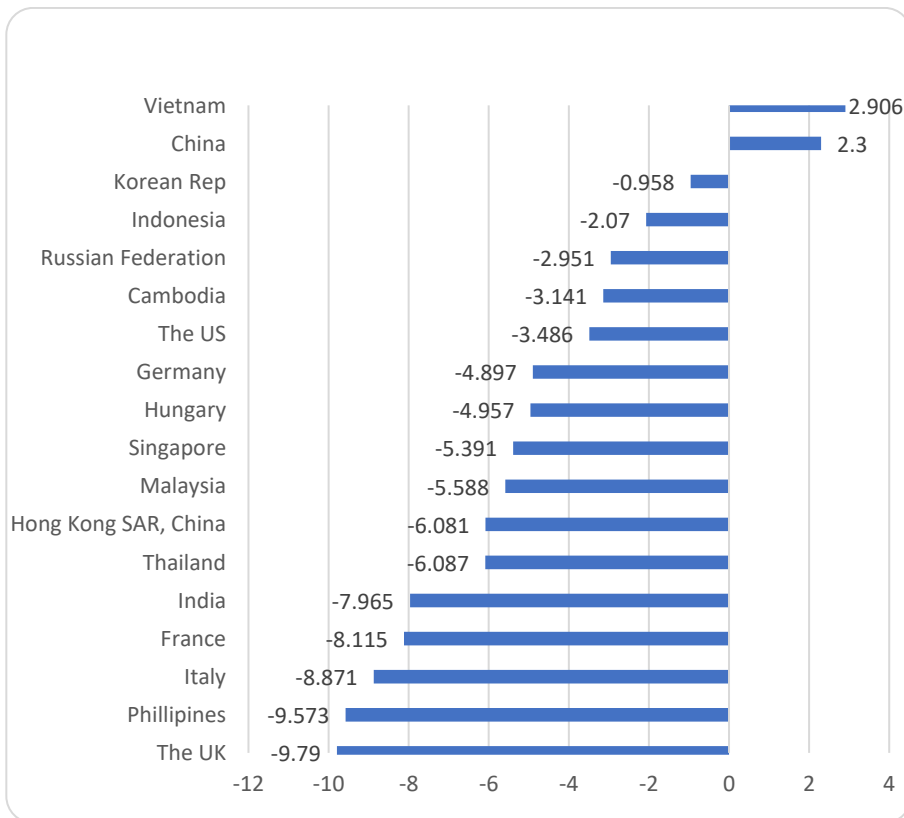
WHY VIETNAM IS BEING EMPHASIZED AS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF THE ACCELERATION OF VACCINE DIPLOMACY FROM LEADER COUNTRIES?

No	Company	origin	Target country	Notes
25	GoerTek			
26	Brook Sports	U.S.		
27	Nidec	Japan	Mexico	
28	Funei Electric			
29	GoPro	U.S.		

Source: Nikkei Asia

From having picked some examples of companies relocating, we could understand Vietnam is the most wanted destination for big companies, especially in the sectors of garments, shoes, and electronic devices. The US companies also were considering Vietnam as their destination of company’s relocation. It means that Vietnam weighted it as a popular economic hub for industrial sectors and big companies. The credibility of Vietnam had been enhanced internationally when its GDP growth was ranked 1st place with a positive rate among other strong economies.

Chart 3: GDP Growth in 2020 in percentage of specific countries



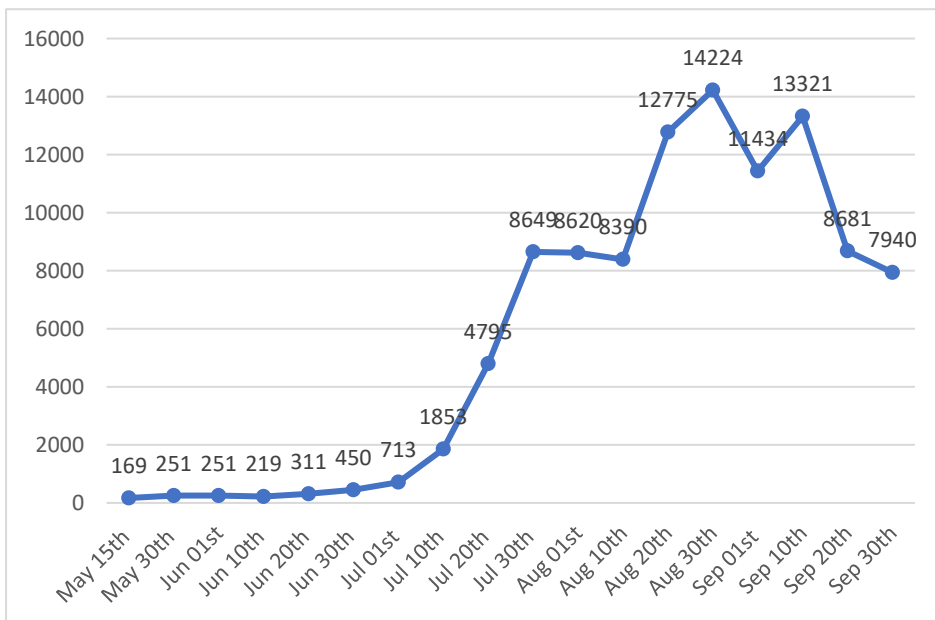
Source: World bank

This chart showed the implication behind the global transition of companies away from China to Vietnam. Before the fourth wave, Vietnam symbolized the successful national image in containing the pandemic at a very low level with no infection in the society. The credibility and leadership of Vietnam have been augmented on the international stage, drawing more FDI and projects into Vietnam.

During the fourth wave

The fourth wave of the pandemic has been marked as the real wave of Vietnam since the first outbreak began. Unfortunately, this dreadful situation comes for Vietnam with the hit at the biggest economic city which is Ho Chi Minh city. Vietnamese government put the whole extensive economic hub into full and restricted lockdown.

Chart 4: Daily new Covid-19 cases in Vietnam from May 15th to September 30th, 2021



Source: Worldometers

This chart drew a severe picture of Vietnam regarding the sky rocking number of daily cases. The cases had been jumping from 169 to 14,224 cases per day since the fourth wave started. Therefore, the government had to impose

restrictions as soon as possible. The government seems to avoid using the term “lockdown” and “restriction” is the term to use. This doing is to evade the massive panic-purchase and to reduce the public pressure on the government’s policy, logistics, and supply chain of essential goods for citizens. The government set the objective to limit the virus spreading in a two-week endeavour and pursued the “no Covid-19 transmission” goal. However, the combination of the new Delta variant spread and strict measures has put the whole country at stake with 4 months of lockdown. The spread at the high speed of this new variant poses inevitable enormous threats to the country’s economic and societal security. At first, we must understand the “zero COVID-19” strategy of Vietnam that helps the country effectively clash with the three previous waves. This policy emerged from China in the early of the break-out. Wuhan was the first battlefield and the prestigious experience for neighbouring countries as Thailand and Vietnam. The government seems to take every extreme measure to contain the virus spreading including people must stay at home 24/7 and only go out for essential needs, if breaching the law, the price is too high to pay. There was almost no loophole to exploit as the police checking bots were set up everywhere throughout the country. Furthermore, aggressive testing and tracing policy was imposed fully at every corner of the country. The entry for foreigners was limited to only exceptional cases with guaranteed acceptance from the local government. Most cases are experts or vital employees affecting the country’s economic development. Vietnam was once the most thriving case prevailing waves of covid-19 by using this policy. This policy was regarded as an effective measure for a central government with the example of China, Taiwan, Singapore, or Vietnam. Western countries were not in full capacity to deploy such a policy. But the emergence of the delta variant, the government has reconsidered to shift away from this strategy as the virus is dominant. Moreover, as a developing country, four months of lockdown were too much for this country to handle. The economy is on the brink of collapse as the GDP is immensely decreasing during the lockdown. According to General Statistics Office, Vietnam’s Ministry of Planning and Investment, the GDP growth shrink negative 6.17 in the third quarter of 2021 (Davies 2021). In addition, the impact of COVID-19 on businesses was vast as the report of the General Statistics Office (An 2021) estimated that the withdrawal of businesses from the market was accounted for 90,000 businesses. In that statistic, the number of enterprises suspending business for a definite time stood at 45,100 enterprises, and 32,400 enterprises stopped operating and waited for dissolution procedures. On average, approximately 10,000 businesses withdraw from the market. The economic vision of Vietnam was darkening because of the consequence of the “zero Covid-19” policy. Many factories must stop their manufacturing operations accordingly to governmental measures. Working from home or remote working is more suitable for the digital economy and administrative tasks. Vietnam is heavily industrialized with the advent of many factories moving

out from China as mentioned above. Therefore, the closure of factories for many months is difficultly achievable. Although, the government has updated its measure for factories as employees must stay at designated factories for assuring the continuity of operation. But the result turns out to be negative because many enterprises considering moving out of Vietnam. Actually, the other symbols have also highlighted the efficiency of the “zero Covid-19” policy such as China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. The common feature among these countries is that this measure must come with the high rate of vaccination which Vietnam did not possess at that time. Vietnam’s government was aware of the situation of vaccine distribution inequality throughout the world. This might be considered as one motivation for the international aids of Vietnam towards countries in need of supports. These advocacy activities will be discussed in the below section.

Vietnam assistance to the world as the first lobbying step

The equitable Covid-19 vaccine distribution has raised an obvious concern since the emerge of the vaccine opportunity. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned multiple times of the unequal Covid-19 vaccine distribution. The WHO chief has posed the challenge of unequal distribution of vaccines since the vaccine distribution started among big economies such as the UK, the US, or within the EU (Higgins-Dunn 2021). At the press briefing in Geneva, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus clearly stated that “low and most middle-income countries” had not been receiving the vaccine yet. Eventually, Vietnam was not an exceptional case in this regard. This statement was made in the context that all developed and advanced emerging economies were rolling out their initial vaccine doses at a high rate and high speed. Even on June 7th, 2021, the WHO general director must, once again, express this major concern on his Twitter. This was to happen if the vast majority of countries have the intention to ease restrictions. This is an unavoidable issue that Vietnam has noticed. Access to the vaccine resource is very limited sources. The government is relying heavily on the COVAX Facility Program. This program is implemented by the WHO and co-led by GAVI-vaccine Alliance, UNICEF, and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) for the purpose of assuring equitable vaccine access and distribution. But the process is still facing challenges from political pressure. From this foreseeable vision, Vietnam, as the successful case of isolating waves of covid, must launch the advocacy activities beforehand. The second reason for the delay in vaccine negotiation is that Vietnam is also a player

in the vaccine development race as the country is possessing 2 potential candidates which are Nano Covax in phase 3 of the experiment process and COVIVAC in phase 2 of the experiment process. It is expected that the first vaccine candidate would be approved at the end of 2021. In addition, the price is predicted at 120,000 VND (approximately 5,5 USD)/dose, which means this vaccine is classed as among the cheapest vaccine in the world. From an academic standpoint, the success of the Nano Covax will be strong leverage for raising Vietnam's economic competitive capacity. Secondly, this vaccine will increase Vietnam's position and national image on the international stage. Thirdly, the possibility of covid vaccine commercialization with opportunities of fuelling the economy, opening another competitive business sector for Vietnam. The state has contested the inequality in vaccine distribution that those initial batches of the vaccine were likely to be delivered firstly to large economies and advanced markets. During the first and second quarters of 2020, Vietnam implemented a series of international aid to countries that were in need, showing the tremendous contribution to the global attempt of fighting the pandemic. These contributions included masks and standard medical equipment, medical experts, or ventilators which were produced by Vietnam with high quality. Especially, at the beginning of 2020 when the world was facing an immense shortage of personal protective equipment. At that time, WHO had raised this issue at the global level as demand surged (Chaiz 2020).

Table 2: Vietnam's aids portfolio towards specific countries

	Countries	Products	Date of announcement
1.	Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the UK	550,000 masks.	07/04/2020
2.	Indonesia	500 Covid-19 test kits.	06/04/2020
3.	Myanmar	50,000 USD.	10/04/2020
4.	Brazil	10,000 masks.	11/05/2021
5.	Cuba	5,000 tons of rice and medical supplies.	20/09/2020
6.	China	Medical supplies including ventilators, antiseptic clothing, gloves and medical masks with a total value of 500,000 USD.	30/01/2020
7.	Cambodia	300,000 USD.	23/04/2020
8.	Laos	35 medical staff and experts, 500,000 USD, 2 million medical masks, 200 ventilators and 10,000 kg of Chloramine B disinfectant.	04/05/2020
9.	France	Vietnamese army to French army: 20,000 3-layers antibacterial masks; 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizer; 20,000	- 27/05/2020 - 01/10/2020

	Countries	Products	Date of announcement
		AKD08 antibacterial silver nano masks and 20,000 face shields.	
10.	USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 420,000 medical masks, including 120,000 masks of the Vietnam Red Cross Society and 300,000 masks of the Hanoi Vietnam United States Alumni Club (VUSAC Hanoi). - 450,000 sets of Dupont protective clothing made in Vietnam - 200.000 masks. - 3.500 masks donated from Vietnam to Washington. - 10.000 masks donated from Vietnam to Maryland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 29/04/2020 - 08/04/2020 - 16/04/2020 - 01/07/2020 - 07/07/2020
11.	Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting pack which is 100.000 USD in total including masks and medical supplies made in Vietnam. - 50,000 medical masks donated to the Cabinet Office of Japan on behalf of The Prime Minister. - 140,000 medical masks and medical supplies for the second time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16/04/2020 - 04/05/2020
12.	Sweden	100,000 masks.	17/04/2020
13	South Africa	Vietnamese Ministry of Police donated 20,000 masks to Ministry of State Security and Ministry of Police of the Republic of South Africa.	22/07/2020
14	Russia	150,000 masks.	13/04/2020
15	Hungary	20,000 3-layers antibacterial masks; 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizer; 20,000 AKD08 antibacterial silver nano masks and 20,000 face shields.	01/10/2020
16	South Korea	20,000 3-layers antibacterial masks; 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizer; 20,000 AKD08 antibacterial silver nano masks and 20,000 face shields.	01/10/2020
17	Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.	the supporting pack's value is 420.000 USD in total, including antibacterial cloth masks, medical masks, protective suits for prevention and SARS-CoV-2 testing kits made in Vietnam.	18/05/2020
18	India	A supporting pack's value is nearly 14 billion VND including 100 ventilators and 50 oxygen generators from the Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam.	12/05/2020

Source: Compiled by author, based on public sources

Vietnam as the prioritized state for vaccine aids

The Fourth wave has been a catastrophe for the country in terms of economic development and societal security. The state of Vietnam has been evaluated as severe in the context that the national vaccine candidate has not been ready yet for the vaccine roll-out operation. Additionally, the lack of vaccine and the inequitable vaccine distribution is still stinging issues of the globe despite the warning and the call for unity of the WHO general director. This situation is comprehensible as when it comes to disaster management, nationalism, the closure of borders, and the notion “protection of citizens” must be prioritized. Even the EU, the supreme symbol of unity and globalization, was somewhat polarized because of disagreement and division in lockdown and response policies of the whole bloc. Furthermore, disease prevention and control are very urgent while the world’s vaccine resources are scarce. Therefore, vaccine diplomacy is regarded as a very important battlefield. And the objective of campaigning for obtaining a vaccine is the first step that determines the successful implementation of the vaccine strategy.

The task force, which is in charge of deploying vaccine diplomacy has been established accordingly to the Government Decree. This task force, which is the biggest cooperation among designated ministries, aims at the promotion of vaccine diplomacy for accessing the various numbers of vaccines, treatment drugs, and medical supplies in the shortest of time. This mission is a top priority for all Vietnamese representative bodies from all over the globe such as ambassadors. It seems that the strategy of vaccine diplomacy would focus on three approaches. Firstly, the implementation of commitments under contracts of vaccine supply which are ratified by the Government with medicine enterprises such as AstraZeneca, Pfizer. Second, the bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels will be exploited. Moreover, the Working Group will take advantage of its relationship with crucial partners of Vietnam for the purpose of accessing vaccines from these countries in various forms such as aids, commercial acts, lendings, etc. Finally, the purchase of new vaccines with major companies as third parties. And vaccine production in the country is needed to have a stable and long-term supply.

Table 3: Vietnam's Covid-19 Vaccine Portfolio

No.	Country	Vaccine	Quantity (dose)	Date of announcement	Note
1.	Australia	AstraZeneca	400,000 300,000	August 26 th , 2021 October 06 th , 2021	Bilateral channel
2.	Belgium	AstraZeneca	100,000	September 12 nd , 2021	COVAX Facility
3.	China	Sinopharm	500,000 200,000 2,000,000 800,000	June 23 rd , 2021 August 23 rd , 2021 August 24 th , 2021 September 14 th , 2021	Bilateral channel
4.	Czech Republic	AstraZeneca Moderna	210,000 40,800	August 30 th , 2021	Bilateral channel
5.	France	AstraZeneca	672,000	September 14 th , 2021	COVAX Facility
6.	Germany	AstraZeneca	2,500,000 852,480	September 05 th , 2021 September 16 th , 2021	COVAX Facility: 852,480 doses Bilateral acts: 2,500,000 doses
7.	Romania	AstraZeneca	300,000	August 25 th , 2021	Bilateral channel
	Russia	Sputnik	1,000	March 17 th , 2021	Bilateral channel
8.	Italy	AstraZeneca	812,060 2,021,360	September 14 th , 2021 October 15 th , 2021	COVAX Facility
9.	Poland	AstraZeneca	501,600 890,000	August 20 th , 2021 October 13 rd , 2021	Bilateral channel
10.	USA	Moderna Pfizer	2,000,000 1.499.960 1.500.100 1,000,000 1,499,940 1,999,530	July 09 th , 2021 July 24 th , 2021 July 25 th , 2021 August 26 th , 2021 October 04 th , 2021 October 7, 8, 13	COVAX facility
11.	Hungary	AstraZeneca	100,000 100,000	September 23 rd , 2021	
12.	Slovakia	AstraZeneca	100,000	September 12 nd , , 2021	
13.	United Kingdom	AstraZeneca	415,000	August 03 rd , 2021	Bilateral channel
14.	Japan	AstraZeneca	3,000,000	June 16 th , 2021 July 02 nd , 2021 July 16 th , 2021	Bilateral channel

Source: Compiled by author, based on public sources

Eventually, the creation of the Working Group on Covid-19 vaccine diplomacy is bringing fruitful outcomes contributing to the contamination of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the high demands and shortage of supply, especially the inequality of vaccine distribution, the highly developed economies are donating vaccine doses to Vietnam. Not only the vaccine doses are sent, treatment drugs and medical supplies also are supplied with a tremendous amount of money. The form of vaccine transfer which is from the surplus of vaccine stock

of several countries is also considered, the purchase of vaccine from those sources will be on a non-lucrative basis at the governmental level. According to the report regarding COVAX vaccine rollout from GAVI -The vaccine alliance, Vietnam is classed among the largest vaccine recipients, standing with the less developed countries (Gavi - The vaccine alliance 2021). Since the Working Group on Covid-19 vaccine diplomacy was established in the middle of August, Vietnam has received massive generous donations along with various treatment drugs and medical equipment for disease prevention and control. As the gateway to Southeast Asia, Vietnam is defined as the geopolitical and economic key strategy for the EU, China, and the US. The table is proving the vaccine rollout race among countries to Vietnam, especially between the US, China, and Japan. The EU had been lagged behind in the vaccine diplomacy in Asia due to its orientation towards the African countries, and non-EU European countries with the spread of Chinese vaccine and influence in the region. Later on, the EU recognized the role of Vietnam in the EU economic market expansion and regain of influence in the Southeast Asian region. Many pledges are likewise to be given with a significant number of vaccine doses coming to Vietnam to the end of 2021.

Table 4: Pledges for vaccine aids towards Vietnam

No.	Countries	Vaccine	Quantity (Doses)	Time
1.	Australia	Astra Zeneca	400,000	To the end of 2021
2.	China	Sinopharm	3,000,000	To the end of 2021
3.	Russia	Sputnik V		
4.	Korea	Astra Zeneca	1,600,000	October
5.	Italy	AstraZeneca	1,225,440	To be defined

Source: Compiled by author, based on public sources

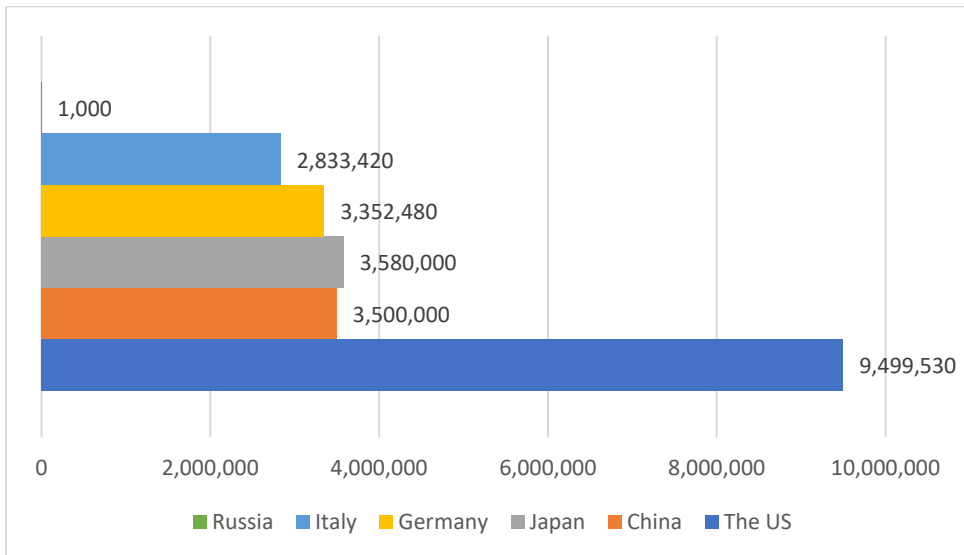
These figures emphasize the geopolitical standout and position of Vietnam have been enhanced in the international arena as many powerful economies donate large number of vaccine batches. Comparing to other countries receiving vaccine donations, Vietnam might be at first rank with bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels and COVAX facility.

Implication behind acceleration of vaccine supplies to Vietnam

Recently, the world is witnessing a large number of Vaccines donated to Vietnam by leading economies. The question mark is set to the real meaning behind these diplomatic activities to the Indo-Pacific region in general and Vietnam in

particular. Especially, The US is leading this vaccine race ahead of China while China pledged big support for Vietnam in the future. European countries do not stand behind this trend as their economics are being somewhat threatened by the lockdown of Vietnam.

Chart 5: Quantity of vaccine donation by country



Source: Compiled by author, based on public sources

The U.S. vs China

The vaccine donation race is speeding at high speed. Vietnam is. The US is currently dominated in the vaccine donation race with 9,499,530 doses. The rate of vaccine donation of the US is accelerated right after the official visit of the Vice President Kamala Harris to the Indo-Pacific region. This visit and the 1,000,000 hot vaccine delivery to Vietnam has engaged a new commitment of the world leader. Recently, the trade war between the US and China have been aggressively occurring and affecting the world. This step of vaccine donation is not only implying to the enhanced engagement of health cooperation to Vietnam, but also Vietnam was chosen to launch the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Southeast Asia Regional Office (CDC) in Hanoi, Vietnam. The open ceremony was attended by representatives from eleven ASEAN countries. This step coincidentally occurred in the context after the army withdrawal of the US in Afghanistan denoting the shift in concerned pivot to Indo-Pacific region. Especially, the US turns absolute focus to its utmost rival which is China when the Vice President called on putting more pressure on China regarding the South China sea dispute. Secondly, the US seems to aim at resuming its lead role in the

Southeast Asia region where is influenced immensely by Chinese FDI. Vietnam has the diplomatic style which is check and balance making the country establish and maintain friendly and cooperative relationships with neighbouring countries. As leading country of ASEAN and gateway to other member countries, the US apparently recognizes the need for a deep coalition with Vietnam, which has been jeopardized by the US's withdrawal from CPTPP under the Former President Trump's era. The US hiddenly confirms its aim to become an important part of Vietnam's foreign policies including the reinforcement of the US role and diversification of cooperation. The talk about the possibility of America's reconciliation with Vietnam is quite well acknowledged by political experts and researchers. Florian Constantin Feyerabend (2021) realized that the official visit of Kamala Harris was "a foreign policy signal to the geopolitical competitor in Beijing" as the rapidly expansive presence People's Republic of China is influencing the whole Indo-Pacific and European regions. He also mentioned that from the US American perspective, Vietnam is playing a crucial "strategic component of its Indo-Pacific strategy" than "its allies of the Philippines and Thailand or Indonesia". Vietnam is an explicit object which was remarked in the "Interim National Security Strategy Guidance", a foreign policy guide under the Biden administration. The guide pledges to address "common challenges, share costs, and widen the circle of cooperation". Furthermore, the US is undertaking the enhancement of deep partnerships with India, New Zealand, as well as Singapore, Vietnam, and other ASEAN member states for the purpose of achieving the above referred objectives (President Joseph R. Biden 2021).

On the other side of the battle, China would not stand still when Vice President Harris was paying a visit to Vietnam. Three hours before the arrival of Vice President Harris, China took advantage and sent its diplomat to Prime Minister for the sake of offering two million doses of Sinopharm (Mahtani 2021). These steps paved the way for the emergence of the "Sinophobia". The trust in Sinopharm vaccine is very low in Vietnam lately as its citizen opted for the Western vaccines rather than the Chinese ones. China donated its Sinopharm vaccine to Vietnam very soon in June with 500,000 doses. These initial doses had been administered to those specific people only: Citizens of the People's Republic of China working in Vietnam; Vietnamese people pursuing to study, work and do business in the People's Republic of China; Vietnamese people living in localities near the border with the People's Republic of China. This was the pledge of the Vietnamese government to the Chinese government as a policy for protecting Chinese people and Vietnamese involving Chinese affairs. The Vietnamese government did not clearly define its stand with China, but we could infer the check and balance policy of Vietnam from the roll-out operation of Sinopharm.

Furthermore, the Chinese vaccine diplomacy is being referred to a tool of Economic diplomacy and plays insignificant role in public diplomacy. Chinese

public diplomacy is a strategy of extending national branding on the international stage. For this country, national branding is a broad term for cultivating the national image, economy and culture to enhance competitiveness. Competitive Identity, as Anholt Simon defined (2007), “has more to do with national identity and the politics and economics of competitiveness than with branding as it is usually understood in the commercial sector”. Seow Ting Lee (2021) recognized the Chinese Vaccine Diplomacy as a tool for “not only for image repair and for expanding Beijing’s great power ambitions, but also to reinforce and leverage existing soft power programs, and to capitalize on new economic and geopolitical opportunities”. The reason behind the hesitation and delay in purchasing Sinopharm is comprehensible. Vietnam places the two big economies under the check and balance policy. Currently, Vietnam could not unilaterally cooperate with the US or China. China is the closest country to Vietnam in terms of geoeconomics and geopolitics. The strict border with China makes it hard for Vietnam to establish unilateral cooperation with the US regarding the enhancement of South Chinese Sea’s security. Vietnam is presently classed as a major trading partner with China concerning exportation and importation. According to data of The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC), exporting from Vietnam to China is worth \$40.3 billion, and exporting from China to Vietnam is worth \$91.1 billion. Vietnam becomes the 6th largest trading partners for China. Therefore, Vietnam has a high rate of economic dependency on China. This is not to mention that the two countries share the common ideology of communism, making them even closer. This pandemic and the vaccine favourable step towards Vietnam are the opportunity for the US to upgrade the relations with this country.

European Countries

The question mark is also set for the European countries in terms of donating various numbers of vaccine to Vietnam as these countries are on the list of the vaccine donation race toward Vietnam. Germany and Italy are close together right after Japan. The motivation behind this step from the leading economies of the European region and the EU in particular is by far a vague to identify. The lobbying activities of the Vietnamese government implemented in August have exploited fruitful results. In fact, having deprived data from Table 2 regarding the Vietnamese aids towards the European countries, this step is referring to the payback of those countries as Vietnam has helped those countries in the context that the shortage of medical equipment was the warning label. It is considered a beautiful gesture of Vietnam contributing to the unity of the international community as a value of the EU. The major driving force might be the economic viewpoint as the EU-Vietnam Free trade Agreement (EVFTA) was effective from August 01st. the President of the EU Commission stated that “The European economy needs now every opportunity to restore its strength after

the crisis triggered by the coronavirus. Trade agreements, such as the one becoming effective with Vietnam today, offer our companies a chance to access new emerging markets and create jobs for Europeans” (Leyen 2020). These words have confirmed the major role of Vietnam in the contribution to the world recovery after the pandemic. Several companies including European companies are threatened to find other markets if the lockdown is still in force. For the European countries, Vietnam is an emerging market with many potential growths for both sides.

Japan

The implementation of Vaccine diplomacy of Japan is another case of donating largely to Vietnam. The goals of Japan in this regard are the same as the US with the extension of influence to the Indo-Pacific region. Japan donates a large amount of vaccines to Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam where China is dominated in vaccine distribution. As a leading country in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue alliance, the country is proving that it is “a dependable partner for Southeast Asian countries, leading to more comprehensive security cooperation” (Beaty 2021). Japanese vaccine diplomacy is a strategy countering the Chinese vaccine diplomacy. Japan might be the only stronghold as there are many signs of concession of the Quad with China. The influence of the Quad is on the verge of collapse as the US President Joe Biden made a statement regarding abiding Taiwan agreement with China’s Xi Jinping and the approval of Sino-vac of the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. Vietnam is somewhat not the only targeted country but the whole Southeast Asia.

Final Remarks

A large amount of vaccine doses donated to Vietnam from big economies bear a foreseeable meaning. The step-in and extension of the influence of the Quad in the Indo-Pacific region pose a challenge toward China, and Vietnam is playing as a geopolitical and antagonistic strategic base going against China in the South China Sea. This is the consequence of the deep and direct involvement of Vietnam with China in the South China Sea dispute. The official visit of the US’s Vice President Kamala Harris and her statement about the call for Vietnam’s stricter opposition to China’s bullying action in the region. Vietnam plays the check-and-balance policy when this country welcomed the two strategic partners at the same time: Japanese Minister of Defense Kishi Nobuo and Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi. The official visit of Kishi Nobuo to Vietnam promotes stronger defence-

security cooperation between Japan and Vietnam in the context that regional security must be enhanced due to many complicated disputes in the South China Sea, especially disputes from China. It is not difficult to realize the essence of this visit to Vietnam by Mr. Wang Yi. The Tendency of China to entice Vietnam to move away from the US's influential regaining strategy in the Indo-Pacific region for the purpose of expanding globally with the strategy so-called "the belt and road initiative. In the context of a pandemic across the globe, vaccine diplomacy is a tactic to increase China's soft power to serve its expansion strategy. Not only increase the support in the vaccine distribution, but Mr. Wang Yi also brings the promise of supporting Vietnam in many aspects. The threat from China might be considered by many sanctions regarding economics, trade, etc, in this visit if Vietnam has any tendency of moving unilaterally towards becoming a strategic partner of the US. Since July 2021, Vietnam welcome Minister of Defence of the US and Japan respectively have posed hidden but obvious challenges to China. The policy of diversification and multilateralization in that direction is wise and needs to be continued. The US will continuously donate more vaccine doses to Vietnam as its public diplomacy in implementing soft power to regain its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In the meantime, China should apprehend Vietnam's "four-no" policy. In the case that the dispute in the South China Sea is escalated with China, Vietnam could completely call on other partners to support and protect its national sovereignty.

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