

The Current Situation, Challenges and Countermeasures of China's Health Governance Mechanism Construction under the Background of "Belt and Road"

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Abstract: *At present, the "the Belt and Road" health governance mechanism complex has taken shape, including the global health governance mechanism, the health governance mechanism embedded in the regional security mechanism, and some specialized mechanisms focusing on some aspects of health governance. Nevertheless, different mechanisms are decentralized, with insufficient integration and a lack of clear common goals, resulting in poor overall governance effectiveness. In the future, there is still a need to strengthen coordination and integration among mechanisms. The "2030 Sustainable Development Goals" of the United Nations provide a normative target for the "the Belt and Road" health governance. Referring to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, it not only promotes the coordination and integration of different health governance mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of governance, but also provides opportunities for promoting the transformation of global health governance. At the same time, we will improve the national public health security strategy, uphold the concept of a community of human health, promote global health diplomacy, and actively contribute to public health products. Therefore, this paper analyzes the current situation and challenges of China's health cooperation mechanism in the context of the "the Belt and Road Initiative" to constantly consolidate the reform of the global health governance system.*

Keywords: *Regional cooperation; Health assistance; Health cooperation; Global governance; United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Goals*

1. Introduction

After the "SARS" public health crisis in 2003, China actively participated in the global public health governance system, especially with the proposal of the "Healthy Silk Road" initiative under the "the Belt and Road" framework, China has gradually become an important provider of public goods for global health governance and an advocate of the mechanism.

2. Practice of China's health cooperation in the context of the "the Belt and Road" initiative

The development of globalization has led to an increasing number and types of global health challenges, which have had an impact on international cooperation between countries and other non-governmental actors. Firstly, globalization has led to or exacerbated cross-border health risks; Secondly, the number and degree of influence of non-state actors in health governance are constantly increasing; Thirdly, globalization is difficult to sustain or even exacerbate existing economic, political, and environmental issues; Fourthly, globalization has led to a decline in the political and practical capabilities of governments in addressing global health challenges alone or in collaboration with other countries.^[1]

Global health governance refers to the response of countries, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental actors to health challenges that require cross-border collective action through formal or informal institutions, rules, and procedures. ^[2]Global health governance encompasses international health and public health, emphasizing the determinants and solutions of cross-border health issues and issues.^[3] Public health issues should still be within the framework of the 'post Westphalia system', Analyze the effective construction of global human health and global environmental safety protection management mechanisms, as well as the potential significant impacts of public health events.^[4]

Currently, global health includes three major components, namely health security, health diplomacy, and health development.^[5]

The driving force for cooperation among actors directly or indirectly involved in health work at the national, regional, and global levels lies in the common health threats that transcend national borders and require cross disciplinary and multi-level governance solutions.^[6] Therefore, in summary, cooperation in health governance stems from a "mixture of common interests" and the number of participants involved.^[7]

With the development of global epidemics, international cooperation and gaming in the field of public health will also enter a new cycle. In different stages of public health development, China's role in participating in public health governance varies, and there are also different characteristics in different periods.

In 2003, the outbreak of the "SARS" epidemic led to a significant leap in China's public health governance philosophy, which led to the recognition that global health governance must be adopted to address the public health crisis, and that increasing regional and even global cooperation is the only way forward.

With the significant improvement of China's own ability to respond to public health crises and its deep participation in multi-level and multi-disciplinary global health governance processes, China's role in the global health governance system has also undergone a significant transformation from being a "latecomer" and "integrator" to a "supporter". In 2015, China released the Three Year Implementation Plan for Promoting Health Exchange and Cooperation along the the Belt and Road (2015-2017) and achieved initial results. In 2017, China and the World Health Organization signed the "the Belt and Road" health cooperation memorandum. We have strengthened health cooperation under multilateral mechanisms such as China Central and Eastern European countries, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China ASEAN, APEC, and BRICS countries, and established regional multilateral ministerial dialogue platforms such as the China ASEAN Health Cooperation Forum and the China Central and Eastern European Health Cooperation Forum. In the same year, Director General Tan Desai of WHO visited China for the first time. Director General Tan Desai of WHO will lead a WHO delegation to participate in the "the Belt and Road Health Cooperation and Healthy Silk Road High level Seminar" held in Beijing from August 18 to 19, 2017. More than 30 health ministers and relevant international organizations gathered in Beijing to reach the "the Belt and Road Health Cooperation and Healthy Silk Road Beijing Communique", It clearly pointed out that exchanges and cooperation in the field of health are an important part of the "the Belt and Road" initiative, and described a clearer and more detailed road map for jointly building the "Healthy Silk Road", indicating that "China has taken an important step in consolidating its role as a major participant in global health policy".^[8]As China's first initiative with global health governance significance, the brewing, proposal, and implementation of the "Healthy Silk Road" also marked China's becoming an "active advocate and practitioner of global health" and an important provider of regional and even global public health products. It can be seen from the health cooperation mechanism in which China participates that in the context of global public health, especially the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, it is particularly important to use the "the Belt and Road" initiative to protect people's health and promote universal health coverage in countries along the Belt and Road, and extensively discuss China's role in the field of global health.

Under the framework of the "Healthy Silk Road", China has signed numerous bilateral and multilateral health governance agreements with countries and international organizations along the route to jointly address public health crises. At the initial stage of the outbreak, many countries along the "the Belt and Road" actively extended a helping hand to China. With significant achievements in China's anti epidemic efforts, and given the relatively backward public health governance systems and many deficiencies in emergency response capabilities in many countries along the route, China has begun to actively provide a large amount of medical supplies and various forms of health assistance. China also held expert video conferences with international organizations such as the European Union, ASEAN, the African Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and countries affected by the epidemic, and sent medical expert teams to countries along the "the Belt and Road" such as the Middle East, Europe, Southeast Asia, and Africa to assist in the fight against the epidemic.

Overall, the 'Healthy Silk Road' initiative is a significant innovation in China's development of public health governance capabilities to a certain stage. Faced with increasingly complex global health risks, the 'Healthy Silk Road' is becoming an important public product provided by China to deepen global health cooperation. With the continuous promotion of the "Healthy Silk Road" initiative, China's innovation in global health governance plans and concepts continues to accelerate.^[9]This not only fully

reflects China's important contribution to global health governance, but also has a profound impact on the global health governance system and process.

3. Challenges to China's health cooperation mechanism in the context of the the Belt and Road Initiative

3.1 China's foreign health assistance is not systematic

China's foreign health assistance has long relied on bilateral models and lacks cooperation with international organizations with rich experience in health management, such as the World Health Organization. Although the Chinese government has actively participated in global health protection actions through various forms of cooperation with international organizations, other regions and countries, as well as providing health relief assistance to other developing countries, most of these measures are scattered and unable to form a system, with poor effectiveness. It reflects the weak practical ability of China's current global health governance and the serious lack of implementation of national health governance strategies. China's huge contribution to the global health governance system lacks endogenous motivation and external trust. There are many differences between China's implementation of external health relief assistance and traditional trade cooperation methods, and there is a lack of institutional norms and practical experience. At the same time, China's foreign relief system is still not mature enough. There is no independent institution engaged in commercial aid, and the act of aid often accompanies trade and investment, making it difficult to clearly distinguish between commercial aid and foreign behavior.

3.2 The health cooperation system for epidemic prevention and control is fragile

Countries along the "the Belt and Road" have different internal economic levels, and the gap between rich and poor is large, so public health cooperation in some countries is difficult to sustain.^[10] On the one hand, China's health cooperation capacity for epidemic prevention and control is relatively strong. For example, China's public health system is gradually taking shape, the level of health investment is constantly increasing, the level of medical services is continuously enhancing, and we actively cooperate with similar international organizations such as the International Health Organization and participate in global public health cooperation. On the other hand, most countries along the route have weak public health governance capabilities and are unable to improve their domestic epidemic prevention and control health cooperation systems. For example, the underdeveloped country Laos, which is still recognized by the United Nations, is limited by its economic level, low public health investment, low medical insurance coverage, and relatively relies on external health assistance. Due to the different measures taken by various countries to handle public health events, certain deficiencies have gradually emerged in public health information management systems, such as limited coverage of health information, distorted information in hospitals and treatment service systems, and difficulties in establishing health administration and supervision management systems.

3.3 Lack of investment mechanism for public health cooperation funds

From the data on the WHO official website, based on the GDP values of 11 countries from 2013 to 2019, Cambodia fluctuated between 5 and 7, decreasing from 7.1 in 2013 to 5.9 in 2017. In 2018, it increased to 7.9 and then decreased to 5.9 in 2019; Brunei increased from 2013 to 2.5 in 2016, then decreased to 1.5 and remained at the level of 1.5; Laos has been fluctuating between 2.3 and 2.5 from 2013 to 2017; Vietnam decreased from 6.3 to 5.5 from 2013 to 2017; Myanmar fluctuated slightly from 3 in 2013 to 5.2 in 2015, and finally to 4.7 in 2017; Malaysia has remained between 3.6 and 3.9; China experienced a linear increase from 2013 to 2019, from 3.7 to 6.6.^[11] Overall, due to the impact of economic level and the domestic environment of countries along the route, the proportion of public health expenditure to GDP in each country has always been low. The size of economic strength determines the strength of the public health cooperation fund investment mechanism of each country. In general, the fund investment of countries along the "the Belt and Road" is insufficient and the investment mechanism is missing.

3.4 Weak awareness of epidemic information exchange among countries

Some countries along the route are neither willing nor able to bear the cost of public health cooperation, and the domestic epidemic information sharing mechanism is absent, so they can only passively respond to the threat of the epidemic. Firstly, the country does not attach enough importance to epidemic information. Due to the different economies of different countries, some countries have underdeveloped development capabilities, generally lacking public health governance capabilities, and varying levels of understanding of the epidemic. This situation is not conducive to the long-term development of cooperation mechanisms, leading to numerous obstacles in epidemic prevention and control health cooperation among leading countries. Some regions have not attached great importance to public health issues, making it difficult to detect the epidemic in a timely manner, and have not taken reasonable isolation and centralized treatment measures. Usually, in order to prevent the spread of the epidemic, there are certain deficiencies in the defense and inspection of the entry and exit epidemic, as well as in the publicity work of the epidemic; Secondly, in various aspects such as epidemic information sharing, disease prediction and control, treatment, learning and research, and management of entry and exit affairs, standardized communication, consultation, and coordination mechanisms have not been formed, and communication with other international organizations is not highly valued. The intention to participate in global or regional public health cooperation is weak. From this, it can be seen that some countries' public facilities have certain defects in both hardware and software, leading to weak public health cooperation among countries along the route.

4. Countermeasures for establishing China's health cooperation mechanism in the context of the the Belt and Road Initiative

The pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of the public health governance mechanism. Through the epidemic notification mechanism, the regular exchange mechanism, the expert inspection mechanism and the technical exchange mechanism, China has maintained close communication and cooperation with WHO, and timely informed WHO of China's real-time epidemic data, COVID-19 related information, China's epidemic prevention and control work progress and other important information, so as to avoid misunderstanding caused by poor information communication. We have taken on international responsibility and demonstrated the responsibility of a major country. The biggest enlightenment brought by the COVID-19 is that people of all countries share weal and woe in terms of life, health and safety, and development interests, and human society is actually a community with a shared future.

4.1 Actively participating in the global public health governance system

In a community with a shared future for mankind, China should still greatly advocate the legislation of healthy global health care. It is necessary to make full use of relevant international legal systems, legalize the development idea, cooperation principles and medical and health governance model of the "the Belt and Road", and formulate national development strategies and relevant international legal frameworks for cooperation in the field of health public health care.^[12] First, through active participation in or leading international legislation, our country's political stance and social values have been reintroduced into the international legal system, promoting good law and good governance in global health and environmental governance. Second, we tried to explore new models and policy systems for developing regional health security cooperation at home and abroad, signed international regional multilateral treaties in the field of public health security governance with regions and countries along the "the Belt and Road", urged countries around the world to actively improve their public health security capabilities and strengthen the construction of their public health security systems. On the other hand, we made commitments to the public through words and norms, Provide support and relief assistance for international public health security. Thirdly, participated in global health management law enforcement. On the one hand, we should actively abide by the global public health related laws and policy systems that have been promulgated in China, strengthen the core functions of public health under the International Health Regulations (2005), and build a warning mechanism for major public health emergencies. On the other hand, we should also establish international regional public health consultation and cooperation treaties or related legal instruments that need to be created by ourselves in the future, actively exercise one's rights and fulfill obligations in accordance with the law.

4.2 Strengthening China's Public Health Cooperation Capacity

With the continuous development of public health crises, China is prone to problems such as the lack of epidemic prevention and control mechanisms when facing public health cooperation with other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance China's public health cooperation capabilities in terms of personnel, funds, technology, resources, and other aspects. Firstly, personnel should strengthen their awareness of epidemic prevention and control. For individuals or enterprises with a high awareness of cross-border economic and trade, training on epidemic related knowledge can be provided to other personnel or employees of enterprises; The general public also believes that it is necessary to enhance the awareness of prevention and control of domestic environmental sanitation, better enhance the level of domestic social health development, and promote international cross-border trade exchanges; Secondly, the ability to allocate resources has been optimized and the utilization rate of funds has been improved. Corresponding resource optimization allocation plans can be developed to better allocate resources. Thirdly, enhance the public health cooperation technology of various countries. From a domestic perspective, select personnel with experience in infectious diseases and have some research on infectious diseases.^[13] In addition, by establishing cross-border scientific and technological exchange and cooperation teams, we can enhance our ability to conduct basic research and collaborative research on infectious diseases, and build a research and development mechanism for combined drugs and vaccines.

4.3 Establish a network mechanism for sharing epidemic prevention and control information, consultation and cooperation

The prevention and control of emergencies in a country or region is related to the common interests of all humanity, such as the fragility of the medical system and the enormous pressure on the medical team. The threat of the epidemic has not only had a certain impact on the economies of various countries, but also caused serious obstacles to people's normal lives. Public health emergencies have strong social and temporal characteristics, and relevant entities should promptly release information to society.^[14] Under the "the Belt and Road" initiative, regions and countries along the line cannot simply emphasize offline management, such as quarantine, cargo embargo and the establishment of international standards for reportable trade and mobile population involving the occurrence of various infectious diseases, focusing on border contact points between countries; Corresponding epidemic prevention and control information sharing mechanisms should also be established to inform countries along the route of the current epidemic issues, epidemic vaccine research and control, personnel mobility, and information consultation and cooperation. Due to the fact that epidemic prevention and control and information sharing are important links in international epidemic control, a comprehensive and accurate grasp of information trends can better promote economic exchanges and trade cooperation.

4.4 Establishing a regional public health resource allocation mechanism between China and leading countries

First, distinguish the health status and health system characteristics along the "the Belt and Road". From the European Economic Circle to the West Asia and North Africa region, from a higher level of population health to a lower level of medical and health technology, the population in other regions of the European Economic Circle has a higher level of health and relatively good medical and health technology. To other countries in the West Asia and North Africa region, the level of medical and health technology is relatively low, and the health situation of the population is fragile. Secondly, the rationalization of fund allocation. When China and countries along the "the Belt and Road" jointly manage and control public health issues, it can actively invest in public health equipment, water supply systems and other public infrastructure projects to build a sustainable medical and health system. Pay attention to the characteristics of public health environment between regions, carry out different health engineering and technical exchanges with each region, and better drive the health engineering and technical exchanges between regions along the "the Belt and Road".

4.5 Improving China's Foreign Health Assistance Mechanism

First of all, from the international level, as a leading country along the the Belt and Road, China can cooperate with international organizations (such as WTO, WHO) to create a corresponding platform and team for health cooperation among countries along the "the Belt and Road", and build an aid

system covering international health cooperation evaluation, treatment and other assistance systems; Secondly, strengthen the participation and cooperation of non-state actors. Global public health governance still requires a wider range of actors. Although international organizations, regions, or countries still hold a dominant position in current international public health cooperation, with the increasingly serious global public health problems at home and abroad, it is required that each country has new actors and patterns in all aspects of public health cooperation. Therefore, in terms of international health and cooperation assistance, in addition to the active participation of various countries, governments and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations can also use them to provide public health technologies and services, and promote health and cooperation assistance to the areas along the Belt and Road and other countries.

5. Conclusion

Under the current global public health governance, the occurrence of sudden public events has attracted strong attention from various countries, involving a country declaring a state of emergency, which has also had an impact on the World Health Organization. Its weakness and fragmented health rules are thought-provoking. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, China, as a part of the countries along the route for clinical vaccine assistance, it is crucial to fundamentally establish a health exchange and cooperation mechanism between China and countries along the route. It is a win-win result whether it fundamentally protects human and animal health, or fundamentally reduces the huge social and economic effects caused by the next world health crisis.

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