

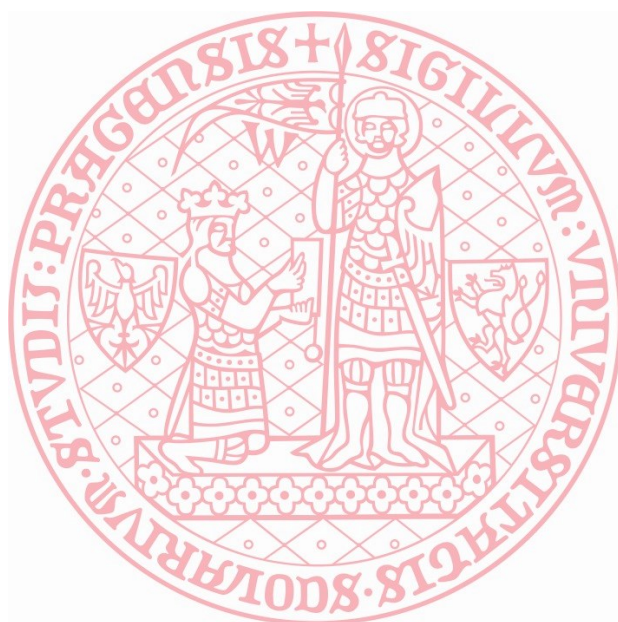
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“Make it last forever, friendship never ends?”: impact and implications of China’s foreign policy on China-LAC relations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Master thesis

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INTERNATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES



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Prague, 2022

Declaration of authorship

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Zhayra Geraldine Garcia Escalona

In Prague, on 1st of August, 2022

References

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Abstract

The geopolitical implications of China's rising influence, especially in regard to growing China-US tensions is often limited to the larger system level, disregarding the role that regions can play. Additionally, the focus of scholarship and policy on the China threat rhetoric as well as implicit biases of Western IR analytical frameworks have resulted in a deficient understanding of China's motivations and foreign policy. Moreover, there are not many studies accounting for the latter in the context of the Latin American and Caribbean region, which points at a shortcoming in the literature. As such, this thesis seeks to reframe the perspectives used to understand Chinese foreign policy and offer insight into its workings, positing that ideational components (namely narratives evoking commonalities) are intrinsic to it and economic ones are secondary, contrary to common knowledge. At the same time, this thesis sustains that there is value in acknowledging the regional sub-system level in any geopolitical assessment, as it pertains to the system level interplay. To this purpose, the thesis dissects China's influence aims by grounding them on Chinese and Latin American perspectives, and relates them to China's foreign policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on mask and vaccine diplomacy. It then assesses the impact of China's health diplomacy and its main components at work by analysing public opinion, under the assumption that media is reflective of it. As such, a longitudinal content analysis study of articles published in the most popular Chilean and Argentinian newspaper is employed to this purpose. Results demonstrate that the ideational components are indeed at play, but where successful, they do not remain so in the long run, with economic ones sustaining positive ideational gains rather than viceversa. Consequently, the thesis concludes that ideational groundwork for increased Chinese influence in Latin America and the Caribbean is indeed present, and while their efforts have been unproductive thus far, there is room to question future implications. This thesis hopes to become a valuable resource for growing scholarly interest on non-Western perspectives and to encourage future research on China-LAC relations.

Key words: Chinese foreign policy, China–Latin America relations, mask diplomacy, *tianxia*, narrative power

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This thesis has been on the making since December 2020, concerned by the uncertainties into the new year. It is only natural to want to navigate in the knowns to make the unknowns less daunting – and so I ended up throwing myself into researching the political implications of COVID-19 and measures around it. In some form or the other, most of the academic pieces I wrote throughout my degree somehow tied back to that pre-vaccines preoccupation, culminating in an amalgamation of interests that birthed this thesis. Having said that, I would like to thank Dr. Vanda Boštíková for allowing me to link my interest in public health with security, as well as professor Aliaksei Kazharski for fostering my interest in regional perspectives. I would like to extend a special thank you to professors Jan Bejkovský and Aleš Karmazin for the China-specific guidance, and professors Rob Geist Pinfeld and Jana Sehnálková for enriching my knowledge in grand strategy and China-US relations. Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Kateřina Březinová, for first bringing awareness to the topic of Chinese influence in Latin America.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact globally in all aspects of human life. Yet, it has also offered a collective glimpse of alternative possible futures and opportunities (Lambert et al., 2020). Arguably, the country to first meet the challenge should have been the one most affected by it early on. Nevertheless, the Chinese government considers 2020 a milestone not just in the national development front but also in the external relations, (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020), with some arguing that the regime's management of the pandemic has enhanced its legitimacy, namely at home (Wu, 2019), but also abroad, with particular success in official political circles (Wen, 2021). This has promoted the idea of the pandemic being a tipping point disrupting the status quo and building a new reality in the form of a new international order (Smith & Fallon, 2020). However, despite the emphasis on the pandemic and the role it could play in shifting the world order, to the author's knowledge, not many have accounted for regional intricacies and nuances, nor have they departed from interpreting China's objectives through a Western lens, which is a considerable limitation in the study of China's foreign policy toolkit, its divergent means for external acquisitions, and their expected general impact around the world. This is particularly true for the Global South, where the pandemic was not just concerning SARS-CoV-2 and all its variants, but even more stunted lives due to existing vulnerabilities, result of pre-existing disparities (Appiah, 2021). This is particularly true for the Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC), for which the pandemic was an added stress to chronic problems, with social frustration and by default civil discontent being one of the most inflammatory (Goldfajn & Yeyati, 2021).

As such, this thesis aims to shed light on the growing importance of accounting for different expressions of power, which tend to be disregarded in comparison to hard power, namely normative and narrative power, in the context of soft and sharp power. Moreover, it seeks to bridge the gap in the literature pertaining to LAC-China relations, bringing recognition to their study amid noise around hegemonic struggle and China's growing influence. This, advocating for the value and benefits of a regional perspective when studying system-level concerns, particularly around superpower competition. Research runs under the assumption that studying developments in LAC-China relations could offer insight into the prospects for the LAC region, the domestic origin of China's system balancing needs and the system-level calculations behind them. For this purpose, it departs from traditional Western

understandings of what a systematic worldview entails, using lesser-known notions more pertinent to China, such as relationism, and various pertinent Ancient Chinese concepts. It considers the pandemic to be a pertinent case study for assessing the nature of China's developing foreign policy toolkit, focusing on the logic and impact of health diplomacy in the form of mask and vaccine diplomacy. Consequently, it seeks to determine whether this foreign policy strategy is reflective of China's aims in years to come, theorising Chinese domestic stability as the priority of foreign policy, as opposed to hegemonic ambitions, contrary to common wisdom in recent years. Case study specific, this thesis employs changes in public opinion as a metric for both success and its further potential. The latter offers a different approach to the study of Chinese influence in the LAC region, as few studies on the matter have engaged with primary sources that could benefit inferences on the potential impact on individual state-level policies or public perspectives towards China. While there have already been attempts to study Chinese influence efforts by diplomatic means in the local political class of many LAC countries (Cardenal, 2021), few have considered the impact on the general population's view of China and its efforts. Therefore, engaging with prospects for public opinion is a novel approach and could offer insight into the true impact of Chinese engagement at the general population level, which opens room for an attempt at itemising the actual value attached to China's practices rather than speculating on their impact.

Hence, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: **To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic further the cause of Chinese influence in Latin America?**

Literature review

This section seeks to outline what is known already about China's aims, behaviour and how it has been misunderstood by Western literature. Based on that, the unknowns of China's behaviour will be explained, placing it in a culturally-sensitive context. Moreover, the factors of China's behaviour will be studied to determine which have the potential of playing a more prominent role and why this is the case. Ultimately, it will defend the value of a regional perspective to this purpose, using China-LAC relations as a background for revision.

Grand strategy – China's way

As noted by Leverett and Bingbing (2017), China's grand strategy, meaning its overarching foreign policy goals and associated judgments on how best to achieve them, has been increasingly contentious given scholarly disagreements on its trajectory. Up until recently, many scholars argued that China was not employing any grand strategy, and that it was not going to be contending the international order (Jisi, 2011). On the other hand, many believe that China has been employing grand strategy for a while now, but this literature has focused on how it is formulated based on perceived threats from adversaries, with the strategic objective being minimising them (find citation). This train of thought has led Western scholarship to place a big emphasis on policy decisions in the context of the broader U.S.-China long-term competition – as noted by a key body of work studying this by Scobell et al. (2020). While this is not necessarily wrong, it has led to a misinterpretation of China's primary objective being protecting itself from the US by expanding its foreign policy, resulting in a dilemma in which more engagement guided by defence, results in questions over whether its nature actually points at and encourages aggression. In turn, this results in scholarship getting China's position wrong, and China itself often misunderstanding the world too (Brown, 2016).

Although uncertainties in the international sphere and in turn reactions to them via policy are difficult to avert, going back to the very tenets of what grand strategy means could offer more informed guesses on the potential path China intends to follow. Grand strategy in itself is plagued by conceptualisation issues and various understandings of it that have led to it being seen as a buzzword (Silove, 2018). Nevertheless, there us one factor all understandings of it, be them broad or narrow, all agree on. This, that at its most general, grand strategy pertains to linkages between ends, means and ways – even if how they pertain to each other and to what extent they do is hotly contested (Miller, 2016).

As such, to speculate on China's potential, what it considers its ends (meaning its interests) and the means and ways for securing them needs to be addressed. And yet, this is a deficiency in most of the literature on China's interests. The author finds that most of the literature has focused on whether China *could* have hegemonic ambitions, and if so, whether this has a status quo maintenance or challenging orientation (Buzan, 2010, p. 12; Friedberg, 2011) rather than the reasons it could have for them and the ways to achieve them. Assertions on the latter have been largely made because of examples of the outcomes of more contemporary, major campaigns and policies – with the flagship Belt and Road initiative

(BRI) being the most infamous. However, not many observers have considered the historical trajectories that could explain it. This deficiency in literature can also be explained by the focus of many scholars on China as Communist China and the system implications of that. As noted by Brown (2016), many write as though Chinese foreign policymakers have an encoded, shared idea of where they are all heading and what they want from the world around them – but this is treated as something that needs to be “uncovered” by the outside world. This mystification of China due to the nature of its political system can be seen even in the writings by renowned grand strategy scholars such as Hal Brands, who considers that “the precise intentions of opaque, authoritarian regimes are difficult to discern” (Sullivan & Brands, 2020). This leads to China’s governance being essentialised for being authoritarian in its Western conception, which is ignorant of the Chinese context, in which authoritarian governance is considered an important mechanism for the country’s development (Gao & Zhang, 2021) – arguably making this a core interest.

Precisely, Jisi (2011) claims that any grand strategy must address what the nation's core interests are, the external forces threatening them, and what national leadership can do to safeguard them. Arguably, China’s core interests have been expanding under Xi Jinping’s rule, leaving previous leaders’ pragmatic, reserved external approaches as a distant memory (Goldstein, 2020). However, because of this, literature discussing China’s ambitions often disregard expanding national core interests and focus on Xi Jinping’s own political gains. In fact, Zhao (2013) postulates that the Chinese government is increasingly responsive to public opinion, and that interests are not necessarily those of leaders – instead, leaders’ power rests in being able to defend China’s national interests (p. 544). The difference in Xi Jinping’s rule is that he is less risk-adverse in policy than his predecessor Hu Jintao (Ferdinand, 2016, p. 941). In this case, China’s increased engagement abroad must be reflective of a changing domestic situation that need be accounted for but is rarely considered. Therefore, the emphasis on leadership’s personal interests fails to see that public opinion at large is what guides Chinese foreign policy. This is important, given that the public need to be appeased in order for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to secure the one interest that has survived leadership succession and continues to permeate every aspect of its behaviour: China’s political stability (Jisi, 2011, p. 71). In retrospect, Jisi (2011) argues that the Chinese government rarely saw its domestic affairs unsettled by foreign forces, which allowed it to focus on tackling grounds for domestic imbalance (p. 70), engaging only in foreign policy that safeguarded the interests of sovereignty, security and development, as their sustenance

pertained to China's political stability (p. 71). Therefore, the grounds for an expansionist agenda in recent years need to be identified.

Lai (2010) recognizes that the pathways for growth of China's foreign policy would indeed be domestic, given that leaders strive for a set of external conditions and international arrangements amicable to the preservation of the regime (Lai, 2010, p. 19). As for recent changes, Ikenberry (2015) suggests that there is a growing emphasis on stability and harmony nationally, given that they are seen as being intrinsically tied to the continuation of domestic improvement and economic growth (p. 8). As such, it is only natural that the CCP would seek to influence external conditions that allow for those two factors to be possible. With harmony and stability being ideals, they need to be understood and projected as such. This is much in line with the CCP's external aims, which are to make certain ideational principles intrinsic to the functioning of the international order all while sponsoring certain economic behaviour (Coco, 2020).

This ties to discussions on whether the primary focus of China's foreign policy is economic or ideational. Zhao (2021) argues that while China has become more assertive compared to the past when it comes to its economics, the principles behind its foreign policy have remained relatively stable across time. He argues that this aligns with the idea behind the Community of Shared Future for Mankind (CSFM), which promises to build an "open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity" (Zhao, 2021, p. 235). The latter is not much different to previous guiding principles, such as Deng Xiaoping's so-called 24-character strategy. The latter called for China to observe calmly, secure its position, cope up with affairs calmly, hide capacities and bide time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership – in itself an idea dating back to the tenth century Emperor Xuanzong II's Old Book of Tang (Atal, 2017). In the words of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), China has unswervingly pursued an independent foreign policy of peace (Naidu, 1997).

Considering the above, discussing China's external prospects, without understanding its general grand strategy culture and how this pertains to foreign policy aims is misguided. Moreover, not doing so affects the way its means and ways can be understood. As noted by Lissner (2018), grand strategy modes frame research agendas can hint at policy developments, thus suggesting that they all need to be considered for a comprehensive

understanding of how a country coordinates its resources to realise goals and whether this is observable, and therefore, potentially predictive.

Given the nature of this thesis, the ideational aspects will be discussed more amply in consequent sections. However, it is important to note the economic aspects that China values externally for its own domestic gain, as much of its potential has been grounded on that reason, even if increasingly contentious.

China's rise – a purely economic phenomenon?

China's potential in the international sphere has been primarily boosted by economic factors – which has resulted in an overarching emphasis on them when discussing the nature of China's ambitions and their expected result. For instance, Rodriguez Zapatero (2021) argues that domestic economic and social progress, global economic opening, and multilateralism in its international relations that concede favourable trade conditions have awarded China domestic rejuvenation that can improve its global standing too. This is supported by Zhao (2021), who contends that China has come out as a champion of globalization since the Western economically liberal countries that were supposed to lead it have become progressively protectionist (p. 237), making multilateralism a pillar to China's success.

Precisely, China's economic success has been remarkable. Since the 1978-1979 economic reforms that took it from being a centrally-planned economy with limited trade to becoming the world's largest manufacturer, on average, the country has been able to double the size of its economy in real terms every eight years (Morrison, 2019). Many believe China's economic rise and power will continue, and experts have forecasted that its share of global GDP will dwarf that of the United States and the European Union by 2054 (Fox, 2014, p. 90).

Externally, this has warranted China influence via economic clout, as exemplified by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Arguably, the subject is not short of criticism. As per Laurance (2017) the BRI has been deemed either as a positive move vis-à-vis the West's growing isolationism or framed as exploitative and predatory, with China's ambitions having some positive effects such as economic transformation, but simultaneously extremely

damaging ones in other fronts. Indeed, economic muscle has given China incredible leverage. However, the way that its benefits have been maximized is complex, namely because China's understanding of means for development account for variables beyond strictly economic means. For instance, Jisi (2011) notes that China's understanding of the core interests of development were expanding to include social dimensions (p.75). Following this train of thought, economic commitments have morphed to conform to those expectations – and as such, means for social leverage have been increasingly put in the spotlight, as will be explained in more detail later. Likewise, Myers (2020) argues that China's economic presence is only a precursor to more engagement in other fronts, namely diplomatic outreach with regional institutions. This is unsurprising given Beijing's recent realisations. Yu (2020) states that China recognizes that its economic rise need be coupled with efforts to promote Chinese culture and values, otherwise its continued success could be at risk. For that reason, looking at the ideational aspects of Chinese engagement abroad offers a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution to China's means for securing its core interests, as economic ones no longer offer the full picture, even if essential in hindsight and context.

Based on the latter, it is no surprise that research would focus on economic aspects as China's primary card for becoming influential. However, this perspective is deficient, as it fails to account for motivations. As established earlier, China's core interest is domestic stability to ensure maintenance of the CCP's rule. While continued economic growth certainly aids the cause, it is not enough. As noted by Zhao (2013) what constitutes "core interests", previously understood as the "bottom-line for national survival" have expanded (p. 546). Zeng et al. (2015) argue that because of this, Chinese society expects the government to take a tougher and less compromising line on foreign policy – an outcome of the CCP's ruling strategy of pushing the discourse of national rejuvenation in order to gain popular support (p. 251). As such, ideology and the political system are also mentioned by some as core interests, with the CCP proclaiming that it "must emphasize the struggle for values in order to prevent national core interests from being violated" (Zeng et al., 2015, p. 261).

Thus, it is only logical that ideational aims intertwine with economic ones in order to create an ideal environment for China to thrive at home – for which the international system needs to be morphed in order to benefit. Hence, China's ideational principles need to be paid more attention in any discussion of its grander aims. One of those principles is state sovereignty, self-understood through Chinese ancient thoughts such as that of *tianxia* (Coco,

2020), which will be discussed in-depth in a later chapter and its impact on state behaviour. Given its divergent understanding, China has increasingly sought to make its view more salient in international organisations, rallying states with similar perspectives to join its cause challenging the Western-led regime of norms. As noted by Zeng et al. (2015), the US is by far the biggest problem for China in respect of protecting its core interests in the international sphere (p. 262). Therefore, displacing or altering the system it sponsors is seen as a natural step towards securing core interests from the Chinese perspective.

Thus, those conditions play a role in external strategic orientation and by default the formulation of foreign policy (Ikenberry, 2015, p. 5). Given debate on whether they could make for the realisation of China's supposed hegemonic ambitions, has ignited scholarly interest aplenty. The theoretical aspect of this will be addressed in more detail in the theoretical framework. However, it is important to note that this is indeed a growing component in China's foreign policy and therefore, it is necessary to address it as such rather than focus on the economic aspects for increased clout.

The value of a regional perspective: the need to study China-LAC relations

China's rise and its implications on the international order have been hot topics of discussion in IR for sometime now. However, these tend to focus on Western IR and understandings born from it. This is a major deficiency, since not considering non-Western perspectives fosters limited understandings of the subject matter. As noted by Qin (2016), there is a fundamental difference between Western and Chinese IR when it comes to their respective understanding of the international system and the way interactions among members of the system work. The system-level as understood by Western IR, with some variation based on schools of thought, posits that the international system is inherently anarchic, that state actors form rational, self-interested decisions to achieve gains in an essentially unstable environment – all of which implies a degree of equality between everyone, since they are all due to struggle to maintain their relative power stance. This differs vastly from Chinese IR, which follows a logic of relationism to understand the system. As noted by Kavalski (2016), China values engagements, to which established binaries resultant from historical narratives uncover the foundations of Chinese grand strategy: processes. Qin (2016) argues that relationism holds that the international system is not equal but hierarchical: the relative standings of states vis-à-vis the central state (in this case China)

are based upon socially constructed relations which, taken together, contribute to the survival of the system. This system is different to the Western-conceived notion of the system, as its success and permanence is contingent on the relational interpretation of the promoter's agency by all other actors (Kavalski, 2016, p. 558). As posited by Qin (2016), this means that inherently, states are not functionally similar, despite being all part of a same philosophical, comprehensive entity – instead, they are subject to a complex system of socially-constructed rules which stress the importance of harmony and order, since that is what China values and seeks to promote. This can be historically traced to China's relations with its “region” in the Ming dynasty, in which Sino-Korean, Sino-Japanese and Sino-Mongol relations were ruled by such social processes (Qin, 2016, p. 553). As such, it is possible to argue that such a “regional” logic would be exerted on China's understanding of the global “system”.

Moreover, since this thesis seeks to bridge the gap in Western IR literature pertaining to the disregarded role of regions amid noise around hegemonic struggle, the general value of regional perspectives needs to be addressed. A regional perspective that accounts for security concerns at the sub-system level due to system level interplay of superpowers is not so widespread in IR – to the benefit of security studies (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 4). There are studies with a regional focus when pertaining to China's hegemonic prospects, but these are often limited to Asia, grounded on fears of regional hegemony (Lind, 2018; Sullivan & Brands, 2020). This thesis points at the value examining other regions could give in terms of perspective on how otherwise understudied sub-system level relations with a grander power are actually part of the system level interplay. This thesis proposes that LAC-China relations could shed light into the security concerns of the region as a whole, and how they are shaped by the security dynamics at the global level. Taking this into consideration, analysing China's interests in the region and their reasoning gives insight into their system-level calculations about their desired distribution of power – as expected from a great power in a grand pursuit (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 35). Moreover, the discourse around China being a hegemonic threat is particularly interesting from the LAC perspective, given that the region is more often than not thought of as being under US domain.

China-LAC relations – an overview

China's relationship with regions in Latin America dates to the Qing dynasty, marked by the slave trade and Chinese migration *en masse* (Creutzfeldt, 2019). However, for the

purpose of this thesis, China-LAC relations in the post-Mao era are the ones that need to be taken into consideration. This, given that the study will be discussing the People's Republic of China, also known as PRC. Analysing relations prior to its 1949 inception would be imprudent, because the relations with what is now known as the Republic of China, also known as ROC or Taiwan would then also need to be considered. Moreover, research can only be post-Mao since prior to that, the PRC had yet to open to the world – an essential fact to the study of China's rise and engagement. It was until the 1990s, under Jiang Zemin, that China embarked on its first major go-out policy, with state-owned enterprises going abroad in search for raw materials in resource-rich areas, such as Latin America – making trade explode there into the 2000s (Economy, 2010, p. 145). As such, developments of concern are only found from that period onwards, with this study focusing on recent developments under Xi Jinping's leadership. The focus on Xi Jinping is grounded on the scholarly agreement that Chinese foreign policy has been subject to extraordinary transformation in terms of comprehensiveness ever since he became the paramount leader – going from a low profile, to actively and extensively pursuing engagement in an arguably aggressive way (Rühlig, 2018).

Growing economic ties have often been seen as the main driving point of diplomatic relations China-LAC becoming closer, leading to them being viewed in terms of complementarity or dependency, often with negative connotations (Cypher & Wilson, 2015, p. 5). As pointed out by scholar Juan Pablo Cardenal, China's state capitalism allows for the extractive nature of China's economic strategy in Latin America but does not necessarily make it any less enticing to the region, given that it has fostered an explosive growth in a variety of industries that could not have been boosted otherwise (Cifuentes, 2022). While this might align with the dependency argument, it is important to note that the way this is perceived in the region is by positing it as a question that needs to be addressed once the negatives outweigh the positives – leading to a lack of strategy to affront it (Herrera, 2011).

This contrasts with China's attitude, which has sought to intensify its relations and augment its presence in the region over the past decade. This can be seen in the differences between the White Policy Papers published in 2008 and 2016. Arguably, these differences are the result of the changes in leadership, with foreign policy going from a more cautious, conservative approach under Hu Jintao to a more expansive, intensive one under Xi Jinping. The 2008 paper primarily outlined aims, namely to highlight the importance of cooperation to a proactive foreign policy in the developing world in years to come. To this aim, several

means to achieve it were set out. As per Osterloh (2018), they first focused on establishing cooperation associations. Secondly, focus went to promoting and carrying forward the five principles of peaceful coexistence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. And lastly, they sought to center them around China's four cooperation targets: political, economic, socio-cultural, and security and justice (Osterloh, 2018, p. 6).

Conversely, the 2016 paper does not just build on that framework but strives towards extended objectives given China's expanding core interests. In this case, objectives to the former means became more specific for the sake of grander aims. Of particular interest is the reframed interest in a platform that would allow China to cooperate with growing interregional bodies also working towards increased cooperation. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), was put under the spotlight, given its ideology-driven approach to regionalism compared to other bodies of that nature in the region (Torres, 2014). Thus, China created a cooperation platform with them in the form the China-CELAC forum – arguably forming an alternative to the Organization of American States, where the U.S. acts prominently, and has caused leaders of LAC countries to stray from it and push for CELAC's strengthening (Kilroy, 2022). Of particular relevance to this thesis, the 2016 paper also had a separate section for socio-cultural cooperation and added emphasis to international and joint cooperation unlike the previous – with the hope of improving the quality of the new cooperation framework being sponsored by Xi Jinping: the 1+3+6 scheme, pushed forward since 2015 (Osterloh, 2018, p. 7). The latter refers to the following. 1, meaning the China-CELAC Cooperation plan. 3, referring to the three economic engines in the region: trade, investment, and financial cooperation. And 6, referring to the industries China would focus on: energy/resources, infrastructure construction, agriculture, manufacturing, scientific/technological innovation, and information technologies (Myers, 2015). It is important to note that there is also an LAC-specific model that China pushed forward after the change in leadership: the 3x3 cooperation model. This model proposed cooperation between Chinese and Latin American enterprises, societies, and governments in logistics, power generation, and information technology (Myers, 2015) – placing societies at the forefront of potential intensification of cooperation.

Bearing all of this in mind, it is possible to gather that China-LAC relations, while initially fostered and driven by economic reasons, other factors have been increasingly at play

for securing their intensification. The purpose of this thesis is to explore them, how they are manifesting into the 2020s, in the context of the pandemic, and what this could mean for the future of the LAC region.

Theoretical framework

The goal of this section is to demonstrate the need for a different approach to Chinese influence and its prospects. For this purpose, several valuable concepts will be discussed, allocating a sub-section for each to demonstrate their relevance and applicability to the broader understanding of the subject matter. This will then be synthesised in the LAC context and the expressions of Chinese influence in that region, noting health diplomacy as a valuable component of China's foreign policy toolkit to examine. Ultimately it discusses its employability in the context of the pandemic and what this can say about China's foreign policy in general.

The power of re-defining power concepts

For understanding China's power, strength is only part of the equation. Intentions and motivations play into China's grander aim – and framing them as power is possible only with a culturally-sensitive assessment. In fact, as noted by Yaqing (2010) Chinese thought process is contextually-minded and process-oriented, meaning that it emphasises understanding the overall orientation of relational processes and how their direction is shaped by multiple factors, for example, power, interests, and morality (p. 148).

Bearing that in mind, Chinese thought needs to be observed when studying China's understanding of power and its ties to factors such as interests and morality. This is true even when looking into the trajectory of the PRC early into its history, when its engagements with political allies abroad were tinged with solidarity, support, and largesse (Brown, 2016) – despite this often resulting in misguided assumptions. Thus, when attempting to understand China's more contemporary ambitions, it is crucial to differentiate it conceptually from concepts used to understand traditional Westphalian state logic – especially as moral authority is unique to China's traditional reasoning (Kissinger, 2011, p. 64). As noted by Babones (2017), the goal is rediscovering classical Chinese philosophy and applying that to Western IR, since the latter has not brought morality into the analysis of relations. This is a serious shortcoming considering that relationism plays such a big role in Chinese logic.

Babones (2017) argues that relationism, meaning a focus on continuing relations and processes that unfold in time rather than on the attributes of cases at a particular point in time, is extremely grounded on morality.

Tianxia and Tianming: the Chinese “world”

As such, it is necessary to put Chinese concepts into perspective to understand China’s worldview and foreign policy, especially since the Chinese government has claimed, at least rhetorically, to be guided by Chinese traditional thoughts when formulating foreign policy (Yan, 2018, p. 9). Two valuable concepts to this purpose are *tianxia* and *tianming*. *Tianxia* meaning the “all under Heaven”, has had a tumultuous trajectory given China’s long and rich history. According to Zhang & Hu (2017), it originates in China’s last-generation historical period, where only China existed and there was no world but a Chinese region – a setting in which there was a lack of “outside”, and therefore the modern sense of ‘external communication’ or ‘international communication’ cannot be understood (p. 201). Nevertheless, the concept has found scholarly footing in a more contemporary sense with the *theory of the tianxia system*, where the world is the highest unit of analysis, and we currently live in a non-world fixated on the nation-state (Zhang, 2009). The *tianxia* theory recognises “world” as all lands under the sky, a common choice made by all peoples in the world, or a universal agreement in the hearts of all people and a political system for the world that ensures universal order (Zhang, 2009, p. 109).

This is complimentary to *tianming*, meaning the “Mandate of Heaven”, a concept that just like *tianxia*, has undergone multiple changes throughout China’s ample history. According to Theobald (2019), it was a metaphysical concept to legitimise rule invented in the Zhou dynasty which appraised the quality and performance of leadership. *Tianming* considered power as moral standards and virtuosity – factors which acted as a form of predestination of the fate of an emperor, and by default, the dynasty (Theobald, 2019). As such, virtuous rule was the one legitimate rule, since virtuous rule abided to Heaven’s ordinances, and not doing so would mean Heaven sending down signs of discontent with the emperor’s performance in rulership (Theobald, 2019), leading to the downfall of a dynasty and resetting the dynastic cycle. As such, *tianming* postulates that although a ruler cannot entirely determine his own destiny, he is able to influence Heaven’s will by good and moral conduct – causing rulers to work hard towards that aim (Zhang, 2009, p. 420). According to

Tong (2011), this has played an important role in the maintenance of regime legitimacy in modern China, given that the CCP has not only prioritised but augmented the relevance of the historically-rooted moral bond between the state and society and the societal expectation that the state would be responsible for the wellbeing of the population.

Thus, both reason how China sees itself at the centre of the world, and that it sees states based on their relevance to China's interests and their approximation to cultural and political forms that it seeks to guide (Woo, 2011, p. 202) for the sake of what it considers moral and therefore appropriate for ensuring ideal "world" conditions. In fact, Zhang & Hu (2017) confirm this, arguing that despite the many changes China has seen historically, its vision for world order has never deviated from historical traditions, which have been integrated into modern thinking (p. 203). Thus, it is fair to conclude that given that logic, China would seek to secure that position via power intrinsically tied to moral terms. The leadership component is confirmed by historical lessons on China's relations with its neighbours and the instrumental strategies it employed with them. In this case, according to Babones (2017), relations emphasised "trust as a genuine norm based on social practices". In the international sphere this translates to a process of negotiating socio-political arrangements that manage complex relationships in a community to produce order so that members behave in a reciprocal and cooperative fashion with mutual trust evolved over a shared understanding of social norms and human morality (Qin, 2011, p. 133).

As such, China's rhetoric around morality in reference to the international order is unsurprising, as much as its push to be the one ensuring it and asserting it. As per Sullivan and Brands (2020) China is gearing up to contest America's global leadership, and one of the roads it is trying to take is by developing China's economic, diplomatic, and political influence on a global scale. However, the modes it is using for achieving the latter defy common understandings of how a world's leading power comes to be. China's power aims, rather than focusing on hard power, meaning the use of military coercion and economic payment to influence others (Nye, 2009), have placed growing emphasis on exercising soft power with the concept of harmony (Hagström & Nordin, 2020) to secure influence via attraction.

Murky waters: soft power and sharp power

Considering the above, understanding two of the known concepts that are used to assess China's influence is necessary: soft power and sharp power. Nye (1990) conceptualises soft power as the ability of a country to get other countries to want what it wants, not via traditional military power or economics but by making its culture and ideology appealing, with the possibility of international norms eventually becoming consistent with those of the influencing party (p. 167). This framework has been developed over the years, gaining traction in China upon the realisation that its hard power would be more acceptable if it were accompanied by soft power (Nye, 2017, p. 2). As such, while payments are important for evaluating Chinese influence, pointing at hard power, it must be acknowledged that other sources have been progressively at play. China has increasingly invested in ideological and cultural exports to increase its appeal – but still complemented by economic opportunities.

The latter has led to questions over whether what China is doing actually constitutes soft power. In fact, soft power as a concept is often used to describe what China's strategy is not, which has led to observers preferring another concept as of late: sharp power. Sharp power refers to the authoritarian efforts for influence used by China and Russia (National Endowment for Democracy, 2017) which exploit the asymmetry between free and unfree systems (Walker, 2018) and lead to an asymmetrical balance between their aims and their features in democratic societies (Nye, 2018). As noted by Sullivan and Brands (2020), in China's case, this is evident in intrusive efforts to influence the political discourse in democratic countries and inflating its presence in multilateral international bodies to reshape the central norms of the international order, tilting them in a direction beneficial to the Chinese regime – at the expense of constraining the space for transparency and democratic accountability and expanding authoritarianism. Arguably, this has allowed China to cumulatively make its narratives and ideologies more appealing. Thus, while some aspects of China's growing influence could fall under the soft power label, given its motivations, it is often labelled under sharp power. However, the line is often blurred, and it is difficult to define which concept anything falls under.

Nonetheless, the impact of these tactics is palpable in the democratic prospects of many states globally, regardless of the conceptual landmine. Ortega (2020) states that China is building a network of pro-Chinese interests and influences, enticing certain countries bilaterally with economic incentives or via the BRI, to pursue China's development model and what it stands for: an alternative to the status quo, meaning the liberal democratic order,

which it scorns. And a particularly valuable tool for this rests precisely in that: values. Yan (2018) posits that as the most powerful rising state today, China's ideology may eventually challenge that of the United States (Yan, 2018, p. 10), the country which most sponsored the current international order. According to Yan (2018), this would entail Chinese traditional values of benevolence, righteousness, and rites taking a central stage in international politics (p. 10), as the ideological situation in China is complicated. He argues that while Marxism is the official ideology of the CCP, it has limited influence on foreign policy (p. 7), contrary to traditionalism, which has been gaining momentum (Yan, 2018, p. 8). Considering that, any mode of Chinese power would require foreign policies that prioritise reputation – a reputation that can only be secured with the ancient idea of “humane authority”, which promotes the values of benevolence (Yan, 2018, p. 8) to ensure peaceful development.

A harmonious narrative and appealing norms

This aligns with China's harmony discourse, grounded on the aforementioned principle of moral-based authority. China's argument is that it is predetermined to exercise soft power because it has a tradition of valuing harmony and that despite its rise, it will exercise power more softly than other great powers, past and present, presenting harmony as a virtue of the Chinese nation (Hagström & Nordin, 2020, p. 512). How this plays into influence and makes itself apparent in China's foreign policy will be explained in the following section. However, it is worth noting that this sort of discourse points at normative appeal being a central factor in China's pursuit and assertiveness of power.

Bearing that in mind, two concepts with close approximation to China's power aims rest in narrative and normative power. Hagström and Gustafsson (2019) identify the growing awareness over the power of narratives in international politics, with the Chinese government stressing the need to “tell China's story well” (p. 389) – an idea that will be explained further in following sections. They classify narrative power as *explanans* as concerning the question of what influential narratives do, meaning that by ascribing qualities, dispositions, and intentions to actors, they construct their identities and, by extension, their interests, culminating in a certain course of action because of the narrative (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2019, p. 395). As such, it is possible to infer on how values and norms could lead to the achievement of interests, and ultimately, courses of action. In the case of China, the course of

action being more countries aligning with its ideas of what the norms regulating the international order should be.

This is when normative power becomes pertinent. Diez (2013) conceptualises normative power as a novel kind of power, which pursues normative aims through predominantly normative means (as opposed to predominantly military and economic ones) – achieving normative results understood as reshaping conceptions of the normal (p. 195). While the concept is primarily used for understanding the EU’s role in the international system, applying it to China can offer insight into the effects its foreign policy could have. As noted by Kavalski (2013), the very premise of China’s peaceful rise is charged with connotations of “model behaviour”, which is imperative for commanding authority – aligning with the narrative that China, in contrast to Western powers, sponsors an order guided by a distinct understanding of peace (p. 256) that will result in harmony. Thus, if China were to successfully export the belief by making it appealing enough, it could result in China being able to become the authority that determines what is the normal in the international community. Conclusively, since the groundwork for this is present, whether there are examples of this in action in China’s foreign policy needs to be examined more closely.

Ideational influence as foreign policy and grand strategy

As noted by Kissinger (2011) China’s diplomatic strategy is a reaction to perceived vulnerability by magnifying defiance – most often by undermining the perceived enemy’s confidence, allowing China to be seen as having the psychological upper hand (p. 348). Moreover, given the deep basis on ancient Chinese thought, the “Beijing consensus” and resultant foreign policy considers morality as the essence to good political leadership, as it will boost national power by helping it have the moral higher ground to sponsor norms that can determine the hierarchy of the global order (Xuetong, 2011).

This becomes salient in China’s narrative and normative power endeavours. But to understand appeal, one must examine the reasoning behind it. China sees the need to tell its story well and reassert its position in the international sphere due to historical grievances. Dynastic downfall, the century of humiliation, and the shortcomings of the Mao era, particularly the Cultural Revolution, have all marked China, birthing strong anti-hegemonism sentiments and sternness towards the Western-led international order, strongly supporting

pluralist institutions of coexistence (Buzan, 2010, p. 17). This is much in line with the assertion that historical and ideological factors could shape or constrain policy preferences, interacting with a state's power and interests, ultimately reflecting on the desired structure and orientation of the international order (Ikenberry, 2015, p. 3). In the words of Buzan (2010), China's contemporary position is a reformist revisionist one, meaning one which accepts some international institutions for calculated and instrumental reasons but resists, and wants to reform, others given the primacy of an increased rank (p. 18). Thus, ideational components are at the forefront of China's discontent and consequently, what it seeks to change by promotion.

Under that logic, narrative power has sedimented as key to CCP legitimacy. Especially given China's adoption of nationalism as a state ideology in recent years for domestically fostering support for the CCP when signs of a slowing economy were becoming apparent and there was potential for social unrest as a result (Eves, 2022). In addition, as identified by Zhao (2013) the convergence of state nationalism with popular nationalism has resulted in the state having to pursue status, acceptance, and respect on the world stage (p. 540) due to the perception of China's relative power being large enough to warrant more assertive behaviour (p. 545). But said assertiveness still needs to be tinged with principles such as that of harmony and peace for furthering the narrative cause both at home and abroad with comparable determination. Domestically, for maintaining the façade of a rejuvenated and rising China as a result of the CCP's efforts that alleviated the harm done to China in the past. And abroad, for pushing against the liberal Western-led order that wronged it and rallying those with similar sentiments to join its efforts.

On that note, China has placed itself as a beacon of opportunity and alternative, changing the game for toolkits for influence in developing countries (So, 2014). One of the flagships of China's narrative power is the idea of a "Community of Common Destiny" or "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" (CSFM). The CSFM calls for all socio-political systems to be respected as equally valid, with a reading that suggests that democracies and their workings should not be seen a model superior to authoritarianism and thus to follow, but that the systems should peacefully coexist (Zhao, 2021, p. 235). This is in line with another narrative landmark: the "China Dream" rhetoric. The latter follows the logic that, a successful, modern China, rather than the success of individual Chinese, guaranteed liberation of China from imperialism – a narrative that could be attractive to countries which,

like China, find identity in ideals, aspirations and hopes before material expectations and see development as ideational (Ferdinand, 2016, p. 944). Ferdinand (2016) also notes that with China Dream, the country seeks to highlight how it differs from the American Dream – linking the country, the nation, and the people into an entity with a common fate as means to refute the individualism that characterises the American dream (p. 948). This aligns with the decline of liberalism in developing countries, in which people admire China’s policy of setting clear national priorities that invest greatly in a common future, which makes them more open to non-democratic forms of government (Yan, 2018). Thus, this exemplifies strategic narratives at work, with the potential of resonating enough to help China secure its core interests.

Arguably, China’s intentions and potential face a narrative dichotomy. On one side, China is seen as a “revisionist power”, trying to challenge the US as hegemon and overthrow the international system it promotes, and on the other hand, questions remain as to whether it is a “status quo power” with no intention to overthrow the current international system but simply make it more amicable for its domestic aims to be feasible (Chen, 2021, p. 112). The logic this thesis follows inclines more towards the former scenario, arguing that China is employing revisionist narratives in conjunction with its economic power to turn places with similar running beliefs in its favour. As such, aims are ideational, even if means can be economic still.

China-LAC relations – a sure success? The ideational component at work

China’s relations and presence in the LAC region are by no means perfect. While increased engagement in the region has facilitated economic growth and led to enhanced prosperity by extending to areas such as public works, it remains a double-edged sword due to this enhanced presence shrinking local manufacturing sectors and making it harder for them to advance technologically and socioeconomically (O’Neil, 2021).

However, it must be noted that despite the aforementioned tensions, China does not need to worry about the existence of starker grievances towards it from LAC countries. This is different from its prospects in more contentious areas, where relations have been historically tumultuous and where rejecting China’s authoritarian flare is a certain priority in

recent years. On the contrary, in LAC there are positive pathways for China's presence to continue growing and solidify relations.

In fact, in the LAC regional context, its historical and political trajectories offer opportunity aplenty for shared sentiments to arise and for China's story to ring not only true, but promising – confirming narrative power. Choo (2009) notes that both China and many LAC states were once colonized and struggled hard to win independence, which has turned the stances on their respective foreign policies very anti-imperialist, naturally encompassing anti-hegemonism and prioritizing autonomy (p. 74). Moreover, while most of the LAC region did not recognize the PRC throughout the 20th century, the US' artificially augmented influence in the region was a predominant factor in preventing it, as well as giving room for the opposite outcome after the end of the Cold War. Field (2019) states that due to a considerable proportion of countries in the region having leaned towards Communism, having then been subject to the US preventing the realization of political changes in that direction via military, psychological, cultural, and economic initiatives, amplified the need to secure what they had been deprived on moving forward, while denouncing the US' methods in the region, often branding them as neocolonialism (p. 18).

Indeed, as posited by de Esperanza (2019), the LAC region has been wary of America's brand of hegemony, given the region's negative experiences with American interventionism during the Cold War and disillusionment with neoliberalism and resultant questionable means for democratic promotion. As noted by Vadell (2019), trademarks of the liberal order, namely economic neoliberalism, caused cracks in the social fabric of the LAC region, due to it initially clashing with resurgent left-wing governments amidst third wave democratization, and its failures into the 2000s, when it became apparent that despite the global economic crisis of 2008, the networks of global power remained unaffected. They argue that this has strengthened resistance and probed the viability of the neoliberal model in the region in recent years – creating favourable conditions for the PRC to step in (Vadell, 2019, p. 110). Thus, strong anti-Americanism shaped by negative economic repercussions and long-standing grievances towards Washington's hand has often been seen through the lens of imperial abuses which the LAC region is no stranger to due to its colonial past (Baker & Cupery, 2013). These sentiments, while having receded throughout the 21st century, became more acute with the Trump administration's aggressive policy against growing authoritarianism south of the American border – which united LAC governments and

persuaded them to find partners that could balance the threatening influence, resulting in stronger ties with China (Stuenkel, 2020), which they saw as a more reliable partner that they had more in common with.

However, China's ability to attune with sentiments in the region alone would not explain the success of this increased engagement. Some scholars have argued that the belief in China-LAC relations could only become sedimented because of China's own success. China's alternative model is an example of how breaking away from what Washington sponsors can work. It is easy to compare China and the LAC region, as both were highly dependent on advanced Global North economies in the past and yet China was able to break away from that trajectory (Chen, 2021) much to its benefit. This development has been owed to what has now come to be known as the "Beijing Consensus". Coined by Ramo (2004), the latter offers a more equitable approach to development in which innovation, sovereignty, multilateralism, and a desire to accumulate tools of asymmetric power projection take a central stage, with the purpose of safeguarding a global peaceful environment that fosters national prosperity. In many ways, this works contrary to the expectations of the Washington Consensus, which places neoliberal economic reforms as necessary conditions for prosperity, understood as economic growth (Irwin & Ward, 2021). In fact, Vadell (2019) argues that China was able to grow by rejecting those conventional mechanisms of growth and relying on its unique, context-specific institutions (p. 110), following earlier conventional wisdom in the developing world that state-dominated systems were the way forward (Irwin & Ward, 2021). Interestingly, as pointed out by Williamson (), back in 1990 many of the policies behind the Washington Consensus initially gained traction because of support among LAC policymakers. However, considering latter repercussions of said model and China providing an alternative one in which those perils could be minimized makes it easier to understand its appeal.

All in all, it is understandable that a community-focus coupled with narratives of alternatives and opportunity would give China more room for influence in the region. This is not anything new. As theorised by Lai (2010), China would focus on expanding relations with developing nations if pressed into isolation by the West due to ideological strains, since the latter would mean compromising domestic aims, namely economic goals. In the current context however, minimising appeal to China's economic prowess would miss many of the intricacies described above which could help China grow. Indeed, the PRC has worked hard

to present itself as a great developing nation, part of the Global South (Vadell, 2019, p. 111) and therefore simultaneously be able to relate to them while also being a model figure. This two-thronged approach has resulted in major advantages for China, with narrative aims playing a sizable role in its augmented presence in the LAC region.

Arguably, once this link becomes apparent, it is possible to understand why China has shied away from making grand hegemonic claims despite a growingly extensive foreign policy toolkit that could be seen as proof of it doing otherwise. The truth of the matter is that developing countries embody the fundamental foreign policy outlook and values of Chinese foreign policy, and China acknowledges that it must embrace the developing world to develop herself. This rings true in the LAC context specifically, given that solidarity and cooperation there are dependent on anti-imperial and anti-hegemonic goals as well as commitment to multipolarity to diminish disparities vis-à-vis the Global North (Choo, 2009, p. 75). Therefore, downright declaring hegemonic pursuits is not in China's best interest if it seeks any influence in the region beyond the economic.

This is not to say that it does not strive for power due to domestic calls, and that those calls do not translate to potentially aggressive behaviour abroad. As stated previously, China's core national interest is maintenance of the CCP, for which satisfying public, nationalist calls for China's rejuvenation is essential. However, this does not have to translate to negative connotations for the LAC region, perhaps not even the international order. Choo (2009) argues that China's increased engagement in the LAC region is not grounded on a desire to displace the US as hegemon by taking its traditional sphere of influence away. Instead, China sees this just as part of the multilateral stance that can allow it to become a more active participant in the international sphere and by default realise its domestic goals, which are mostly grounded on the desire of a greater China for itself, not the rest of the world (Choo, 2009, p. 72).

Ultimately this can be seen in the way China has enacted foreign policy concerning the LAC region, aligning with the trend in literature that China's behaviour has resulted in understandings of power that have increasingly drifted further away from traditional conceptions. These have brought about new security concerns of different natures and are therefore worth analysing rather than downright demonising them based on the China Threat rhetoric. Given China's emphasis on soft power (arguably sharp power), looking at its

evolving diplomacy toolkit in that area is essential, especially in the context of the pandemic. Doing so would offer a different approach to studies of China-LAC relations which have predominantly focused on economic factors and have therefore missed many of the larger cultural nuances at play. Moreover, placing all of this at work in a contemporary example offers insight into how relations could develop moving forward amidst times of crisis, especially as these could inspire ideational contempt and an increased need to ensure core interests.

Diplomacy benchmarks

According to Juan Pablo Cardenal, China's diplomacy works at various levels, and in the LAC context, the CCP has opted for centring its efforts on individual agents that might sponsor its cause (Cifuentes, 2022). In this case, prominent actors have the task of expanding China's influence by promoting Chinese wisdom and China's approach to global governance, essentially placing China's political model and domestic aims for a better future as an export (D'Hooghe, 2021). As such, it can be argued that the principle of the CSFM as well as an emphasis on grounds for moral leadership are at the forefront of China's diplomacy modes.

Since the focus of this thesis is around health efforts during the pandemic, diplomatic developments on that front will be discussed. Indeed, the idea of community and its translation into solidarity was best seen in China's mask diplomacy during the pandemic and ensuing vaccine diplomacy, with both modes being refreshed examples of an older mode: science diplomacy, and by default its subset, global health diplomacy.

Global health diplomacy (GHD) describes the practices by which governments and non-state actors attempt to coordinate and orchestrate global policy solutions to improve global health (Ruckert et al., 2016). Because of increased interconnectedness dissolving the distinctions between domestic and foreign concerns, and the potential of a health concern in one state becoming a global one, states have had to integrate health into their broader foreign policy strategies – and reach other desirable outcomes in turn (Katz et al., 2011). Taking that into consideration, political objectives quickly become tied to the question of health, therefore health needs to be understood as such: not as an isolated phenomenon, but as part of a state's strategy.

Indeed, China's policy aims are part of a larger global shift in diplomacy. Science diplomacy and its by-products have been on the rise since the early 2010s, seeing responses during emergencies, namely health crises, as primordial, with conditions for health being framed as global commons (Hitchens, 2019). However, global public health has sedimented as a key element in China's foreign policy because of the CSFM being a guiding principle that warrants such an endeavor (Cheng & Cheng, 2019). Its capacity is worth noting as well, given that due to China's own domestic improvements, it can externally employ health to its benefit with more success than other countries. As noted by Husain and Bloom (2020), China has greatly benefitted from encouraging policy experimentation and innovation, which has allowed it to discover and cultivate appropriate institutions and policy approaches to underpin development. Arguably, this is in line with its domestic ambitions of improving its own condition and projected narratives of being a morally responsible potential leader. Because of this, China has shifted from offering material health aid bilaterally to those in need, to getting involved and sponsoring larger institutions with global purpose and reach, thus playing a role in global health governance. All this, while increasing its health commitments in individual cases where needed (Husain & Bloom, 2020). Moreover, this has been complemented by sharing its health service experience and transplant it according to local conditions, which has made it possible for it to become a role model for other developing countries (Cheng & Cheng, 2019). Indeed, this determination to play a more central role in global affairs is supported by the Chinese state's narrative of the CSFM, more often than not shadowed by the trademark BRI – thus suggesting that via diplomacy, China can later secure increased cooperation in multiple sectors across countries, extending beyond the original assistance (Husain & Bloom, 2019).

Hence, health diplomacy is particularly relevant to the China case even prior to the pandemic, but the pandemic exacerbated it. Health diplomacy in crisis provides opportunities to build new narratives of friends and enemies, victims and persecutors and helpers and adversaries – with the public as the target, to legitimize certain efforts already at play (Valenza, 2020). In the context of the pandemic, Müller et al. (2021) argue that health diplomacy was crucial to China's image crafting, fueling resentments towards Western influence and contrasting how it dwindled in times of crisis vis-à-vis China's successful management – pointing at narrative power in action. Moreover, Tuo and Yu (2020) credit China's pandemic behaviour for fostering new cooperation models between LAC and

Beijing, which begs the question as to what type of influence China was able to secure and employ to its favour the most.

Therefore, considering China's notions of power, consequent projections of it on external behaviour, and how they attune to sentiments in regions of interest, the pandemic can be seen as an opportunity to further shape narratives of opportunity – which arguably has the power of shifting public opinion to China's benefit. Hence, there is value in studying the phenomenon in context, to better understand China's foreign policy toolkit, namely its focus on normative and narrative power as influence, and the extent and reasoning for its success, namely ideationally. After all, the promotion of its image and interests have become crucial to the maintenance of the domestic political and economic regimes, which China prioritizes as it means legitimacy and therefore, continuation of the CCP's power (Lai, 2010, p. 168).

The pandemic – China's best stage for running a strategic narrative?

As noted by Valenza (2020) a key question in China's role during the pandemic arises: why engage in aid initiatives at times of global uncertainty? Considering all the above, motivations need to be accounted for if seeking to understand the reasoning behind actions. As per the discussion on health diplomacy, there is no doubt that China understands that relief operations in challenging days can have critical outcomes for both health and political objectives (Valenza, 2020). Especially when it comes to image crafting, which has been established to be one of the Chinese regime's influence aims that became crucial after the initial negative impact COVID-19 had on China's image. The following section discusses the initial negative impact of COVID-19 on China's image and its impact on domestic decisions about which narrative to pursue – which led to positives being reaped from its domestic handling of the virus and their projections abroad.

Early into the pandemic, fear-driven veritable content coupled with misinformation led to negative connotations of China and its cultural practice. A prime example of this were the theories seeking to explain the origin of the virus. The Wuhan wet market theory spurred their demonization in the West, and in turn inspired racist remarks pinning China's food culture as a civilizational issue responsible for disease (King, 2020). This was worsened by widespread misinformation online surrounding food practices, best encapsulated in the bat soup video claiming to originate from a restaurant in Wuhan, despite it depicting a Chinese

tourist trying a local dish in Palau – partaking in an adventurous behaviour not so dissimilar from other foreign travellers in the region, putting into question the arbitrariness of the standards for judgement (Palmer, 2020). Additionally, negative judgements were aggravated by the Chinese government’s response to the initial outbreak, ranging from failing to report promptly on the situation to the international community, to silencing whistle-blowers such as Dr. Li Wenliang – all enhancing distrust and negative sentiments abroad, but also at home (Horsley, 2020). The situation was far from ideal for China’s image abroad. But given the priority of the CCP being domestic stability, the government centred its efforts on tackling the epidemiological situation to settle civilian unrest around it – managing successfully. As noted by Kupferschmidt and Cohen (2020), China achieved what many public health experts thought was impossible, containing the spread, by performing “perhaps the most ambitious, agile, and aggressive disease containment effort in history”.

As such, the domestic success opened room for damage control abroad as cases began surging internationally and countries struggled to fight the virus. As noted by Smith and Fallon (2020), China stemming the tide against COVID-19 in less than two months was incredible vis-à-vis Western powers that were struggling to contain outbreaks months in. Because of this, China went from the accused, to being the country that had grappled with the worst of the illness yet and had the expertise and means to help. Economically, China was recovering while the rest of the world was only beginning to see negatives, and it was able to portray itself as having the virus under control, because of its surveillance abilities and civilian control – placing it in a position difficult to replicate, and therefore enticing (Smith & Fallon, 2020, p. 244). Since the domestic situation had stabilised, China could afford to share its expertise on social regulations, public health management, and health surveillance atop of research on the virus itself, benefitting other countries’ strategies – earning it praise from the World Health Organization (WHO) (Santos, 2020). This gave way to China crafting its strategic narrative around the pandemic, painting itself as a capable, responsible supporter guided by the belief in righteousness and benevolence (Smith & Fallon, 2020). This also opened room for China to push for its ambitions in the international order, by proving it could be relied on, since it has the capability and capacity for providing assistance and upholding the rhetoric of a “community of common destiny” (Verma, 2020).

Consequently, China’s emblematic mask diplomacy, and later vaccine diplomacy, went on to define China’s strategy for not only clearing its image, but attempting to fight

previous negative connotations of its growing presence, particularly in the Global South. It also bolstered sentiments that aligned with its wider agenda of making the international system more amicable to China's aims. Despite the ample criticism of Chinese influence in the Global South, via mask diplomacy, the country was able to deliver necessary medical supplies quickly because of those arrangements (Dinko, 2021) – all while pledging vast sums of money to international efforts. All of this gave China credibility as a partner, at a time when other great powers were struggling to cope and were indisposed to extend solidarity (Myers, 2020). Moreover, China was able to build goodwill with regional leaders and citizens because of said early timing – making the help that was extended later by other countries get suspected over their motivations (Brizuela de Avila et al., 2022). This resulted in a wider North-South divide that the Chinese government attempted to further with vaccine diplomacy. By highlighting the inequalities in vaccine distribution, with wealthy nations having hoarded vaccines and low- and middle-income countries struggling to secure them, the Chinese government was able to target the latter, aware that where vaccines went, those sentiments could become more acute, and influence could follow (Lee, 2021).

All in all, China was able to further a narrative because of the pandemic and health diplomacy: being a moral leader that can effectively deal with crises, and that the Western powers were doing the opposite – aiming to augment existing negative sentiments on the latter in recipient countries. As noted by Karásková and Blablová (2021), China's health diplomacy efforts during the pandemic, especially in the matter of vaccines, functioned as a tool to reinforce established relations and capitalize on new opportunities. As such, it is pertinent to see whether those new opportunities actually came to be because of its efforts – or whether the impact of these was overestimated. There are grounds to posit that the LAC region would make for a case in which China was successful at garnering more influence, based on the generally positive state and reasoning of China-LAC relations.

Research hypothesis

Based on all the aforementioned, the following is hypothesised:

H1 new: China's foreign policy in the region during the pandemic resulted in a positive growth in influence.

Moreover, any positive relation is based on the following elements, both in the context of the pandemic, the first economic and the second ideological.

H1a: Economic clout being strong despite crisis

In this case, referring to China's known economic competence conditioning responses to concerns raised by the pandemic

H1b: Ideational components becoming exacerbated

In this case, referring to narratives that attribute positive values to China and promote the logic of the West being exploitative of the Global South. In essence, exploiting assumed commonalities.

Research design

Given the circumstances in which this research must be carried out as well as the limited scope of the project, primary data cannot be used for quantifying changes in public opinion directly, aiming for insight into such changes instead. As such, this thesis employed content analysis, utilising traditional media sources from which inferences on public sentiments could be made. This is appropriate and viable for several reasons. Firstly, it is a way to indirectly measure public opinion. Secondly, it allows for the study of contemporary, primary sources that represent the general views of a sector of the population. Third, it is time and cost effective compared to other methods. Lastly, it allows for a greater number of nuanced yet concise views and opinions on the same topic. Besides, to the author's knowledge, few studies on increased Chinese influence in LAC have engaged with media sources that could help visualise the extent to which Chinese influence efforts trickle down to public opinion of China in the region.

As such, in this case, developments in influence gains from health diplomacy will be studied by performing a longitudinal textual content analysis of articles published in the most popular newspapers of the case studies in question. Following the methodological assumption proposed Saraisky (2016) that public opinion shapes governmental practices and policy, the initial ground for analysis will rest on official communications on changes in governmental relations with China in the context of the pandemic. As such, significant official diplomatic exchanges during the pandemic will be used for guiding purposes to determine particularly

momentous exchanges, whose impact could then be assessed at the public opinion level. This, under the assumption that media reports voice and contribute to the general discourse around said momentous exchanges. Considering that, the timeframes of study per momentous exchange will be set at a week's prior to the exchange, meaning the initial piece written on the subject matter in the chosen newspapers, seven days prior and all related consequent pieces in a week's time. Moreover, given the different nature of all the instances being studied, it is not possible to write explicit guidelines on the expected operational queues for each of the instances that will be described below. However, the decision on which instances will be studied is grounded on theoretical expectations as will be explained further in this section.

Case selection – countries and respective media

Countries

Comparative designs facilitate identifying patterns and recurrent themes (Pickvance, 2001). This is to the benefit of a thesis seeking to make inferences on public opinion patterns pertaining to China's growing influence regionally. Comparison allows for a smaller, limited design that can still be in-depth for each case, leading to the possibility of broader generalisations based on patterns without falling into the essentialization trap. Accounting for the diversity of political systems in the LAC, a Most Different Systems design is employed. The reference metric for differentiation being considered is the quality of democracies, placed in the context of extent of Chinese aid received. This follows the logic that Chinese influence is on the rise beyond the traditionally understood dichotomy of authoritarian/democratic and the pandemic's role in democratic backsliding.

As such, case selection is primarily based on the *Pandemic Backsliding Index* by the V-Dem Institute (Edgell et al., 2020). In alignment with a Most Different Systems design, choosing the countries that experienced the most and least backsliding respectively helps build on the argument that system type is not necessarily a precursor to how positive relations with China are but that there are other factors at play when it comes to securing influence.

Additionally, data from the *Mask Diplomacy Tracker* (Wilson Center, 2021) and the Pan-American Health Organization's *Vaccines administered by Country in the Americas* (AIS PAHO, 2021) helped itemise the extent of Chinese influence during the pandemic by means of health diplomacy. In this case, the assumption is that countries that were high

recipients of medical supplies and vaccines could develop more positive sentiments towards China.

The effective cases to this purpose are Chile (representative of a highly democratic state, with little pandemic backsliding risk) and Argentina (representative of a case with high pandemic backsliding risk) – both recipients of vast Chinese mask and vaccine diplomacy in their respective categories.

Respective media

The traditional media chosen were newspapers. Specifically, *El Mercurio* for Chile and *La Nación* for Argentina. They were chosen as they are the most popular in their respective country and have good online accessibility – attributes that are crucial under the assumption that higher accessibility results in a more widespread readership, consequently, meaning a higher likelihood of the articles being published representing public opinion. Additionally, another reason why a good online presence needed to be ensured is that enough content needs to be available in archives for a longitudinal study to be possible.

Momentous exchanges were determined by important diplomatic releases available in the press room of the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs website¹ and the newsroom of the Argentinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship². It is worth noting that these also serve as the starting point for making an opinion on a particular exchange from each case's state-level perspective.

Since the sources for this study are mostly in Spanish, a guideline of terminology of pertinence that would otherwise be essential in any content analysis was not employed. Using one would pose the risk of bypassing the importance of context and rhetorical details in this case. As such, the primary tool for choosing relevant media was first mention of the relevant subject of study in each respective country's official press room. The first mention method was also used for cross referencing the momentous exchange and later circumstance in each respective media source. The interpretation of each article was to the author's discretion, based on a broad analysis of themes and whether language was positive, negative, or informative and neutral around the topic of discussion. This can be accessed in the analysis notes in Appendix B.

¹ <https://www.minrel.gob.cl/sala-de-prensa>

² <https://www.cancilleria.gob.ar/es/actualidad>

Case selection: momentous exchanges

The first momentous exchange being considered is the initial diplomatic exchange around COVID-19. For that purpose, the websites of both the Chilean and Argentinian press rooms were employed to this purpose, starting from January 2020 until first mention was identified. The same method was employed for all other momentous exchanges, in a chronological manner.

The second momentous exchange being considered is the initial deployment of health diplomacy in the respective case study country. This was deemed pertinent, under the logic that the initial deployment of such aid should have been thoroughly documented in press, given that this had been the tendency in prior recipients – in some cases even pointing at its role in disinformation (Lequesne & Wang, 2020).

The third momentous exchange being considered is the first communication on reception of Chinese-made vaccines in either of the countries. This, under the logic that the vaccine inequity could easily be manipulated in the midst of crisis to align with the general discourse on the inequalities posed by the Global North-South divide. Out of all exchanges, this is most likely to be the one with the most potential for China's narrative and discursive power, considering that it was one of the few countries spearheading towards developing a vaccine that later advocated for a more equal distribution in distributions scheme that were inherently unequal, such as COVAX. As noted by Pilkington et al (2022), the scheme was based on financial competition for limited vaccine supplies which resulted in high-income countries getting first access to vaccines, while the rest were left to rely on voluntary donations that would only be possible once the former achieved high vaccination rates – which has translated to vaccination rates being as low as <10 % in parts of the developing world. Thus, in this case not only was China able to play advocacy cards in relevant international bodies, but it was also able to play its role as a beacon for opportunity, creating its own vaccines and being able to distribute them to those who needed them in a more prompt manner than through established schemes – both to the benefit to its image.

The fourth momentous exchange being considered is the first communication in relation to China following vaccine reception. This, under the logic that Chinese-made vaccines would have reinforced positive views on relations with China.

The fifth momentous exchange being considered is the latest communication on China in either press rooms. This, to see the most current state of affairs regarding relations with Beijing from each country respectively and determine whether positive or negative and if it could mean anything at the public opinion level.

Case selection addendum: momentous circumstances

Given more recent developments in China's management of the spread of COVID-19, there is value in examining opinions on China following the latest lockdowns. For this purpose, the same analysis method as for the momentous exchanges has been used, with the only difference being the time frame of analysis and the approach to first mention. Given the need for addressing potential opinion changes between initial communications on the lockdowns and later ones as negative conditions exacerbated, the time frame of analysis that has been considered is of one month following the instatement of each respective circumstance, rather than first mention in an official diplomatic communication. This auxiliary analysis seeks to address the Shanghai and Beijing lockdowns respectively in hopes to enrich the understanding of changing opinions and in a way, probe the sustainability and permanence of China's efforts.

Thus, the first momentous circumstance being considered is from April 2022, following the extraordinary lockdown of Shanghai – the largest since the Hubei province one in early 2020, and taking place in China's most populous city (Ni, 2022). This, to determine whether China's zero-COVID policy has casted darkness over its image once again since the rest of the world has started opening up.

Lastly, the second momentous circumstance under examination is the introduction of anti-epidemiological measures in Shanghai into June 2022. Differing from the hard lockdown more akin to the early 2020 images of Wuhan, Beijing's softer, slow lockdown has opened room for two possible scenarios, both of which offer insight into the fallacy of China's zero COVID policy. As noted by Liu (2022) on one hand, it has made the approach be seen as a purely ideological tool well beyond its public health aim, which confirms the authorities'

intentions of continuing to pursue the approach, potentially jeopardizing other areas that are important for CCP legitimacy, namely the economy and citizen's support of the measures. Secondly, and quite counterintuitively, the lockdown in Beijing is already a relaxation of rules previously seen before, which puts into question the true belief China's authorities have on sustaining the approach given the aforementioned costs – which then jeopardizes many of the image gains from its sustenance prior to 2022. Thus, in either of the scenarios it becomes pertinent to examine whether the situation in Beijing has inspired any public sentiments in the LAC countries being studied – to see whether the positive image of China remains in either case, and ponder on why it could be the case, if still positive, and why it could have changed, if not the case.

Case studies

The next section is structured as follows. Firstly, a brief overview of the relations of China with both Argentina and Chile will open the discussion. This will be followed by detailed descriptions of each of the five momentous exchanges being considered based on their respective press releases, firstly for Argentina, and secondly for Chile. Each of the press releases will be followed by general findings from the context analysis of all relevant newspaper articles. Lastly, an addendum covering the two momentous circumstances and the general findings from their respective analyses will conclude the section, before proceeding to overall results of the study and their discussion.

Argentina: most democratic backsliding case

Compared to relations with the ROC, Argentina has had considerably more exchanges with the PRC in the same period of established diplomatic relations. This points at a greater convergence of interests between Argentina and the PRC than its predecessor – although there is an argument to be made about the role the acceleration of globalisation played in this (Oviedo, 2010). These exchanges were always predominant in the cultural and economic spheres – the only difference being the extent of them increasing and intensifying exponentially as of late (Teruggi, 2022). It is worth noting that a defining factor in the relations between countries is their stance on anti-colonialism, with the British as their target. As noted by Teruggi (2022), they are united by shared experiences, with Argentina and the Malvinas, and China and Hong Kong – issues on which they have both supported each other greatly at the UN's Special Committee on Decolonization. Despite this grand ideational

component, Oviedo (2010) notes that the economy has been the primary driving factor in the formulation of Argentina's foreign policy where China is concerned (p. 61). This has all amounted to multifaceted, positive relations between Argentina and China overall – with considerable returns economically, but also culturally (Teruggi, 2022). It is one of the few countries in the LAC region that China considers a comprehensive strategic partner, meaning that they hold relations beyond economic and political realms and into technological and cultural ones in a multi-layered way, including both government-to-government cooperation and people-to-people diplomacy (Myers & Barrios, 2021).

Given the state of Argentina's democracy, it makes for a case study in which ideational components dependent on political systems could be more discernible, and therefore, the plausibility of more successful and intense Chinese influence. However, if results were to point in the other direction, it could mean that the ideational component is not as significant as originally thought of and other factors might have more prominence in the fate of Chinese influence.

Chile: least democratic backsliding case

Chile-China relations have been healthy ones overall, without bilateral past resentments nor present problems to threaten their potential – with any hint of difficulty being addressed through appropriate diplomatic channels marked by open dialogue and cooperation (Guilisasti, 2006, p. 169). Chile was the first South American country to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC, on 15th of December 1970, warranting that all PRC premiers to date pay a visit to the country and extend solidarity promptly whenever in need (Shubiao & Wengjun, 2010). Chile was also the first country in the region to support China's accession to the World Trade Organization, the first in the region to recognize China as a market economy, and the first country in Latin America to sign a Free Trade Agreement with China (Chile en el Exterior, 2022).

The trajectories of Chile and China are arguably similar, having placed emphasis on improving the quality of life of its citizens and looking for new opportunities, which have sedimented in a common view that has fostered cooperation in various areas (Ahumada Figueroa, 2021, p. 21). Bilateral relations are strong and based on both economic integration as well as mutual respect and trust, resulting in China considering Chile a strategic partner and

eventually formalizing it in the form of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (Chile en el Exterior, 2022). According to Echeverria (2021), China is currently Chile's largest trading partner, and cooperation between both has extended from the commercial to the scientific, technological, and cultural – much in line with what the comprehensive strategic partnership entails. In addition, both have strong stances on anti-hegemonism, with the U.S. as a focus.

As such, this makes for an interesting case given that despite it having one of the most promising democracies in the LAC region, Chile has one of the closest ties with China, leaving room to question the strength of ideational factors enhancing Chinese influence in the region.

Momentous exchange: initial diplomatic exchange around COVID-19

Argentina

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship pressroom, this initial exchange took place on 04/02/20. It was a brief post about the Argentinian government extending solidarity to both the Chinese government and population, as they were struggling due to the virus. It is important to note that the communication also expressed confidence on the Chinese government's efforts to stop the spread of the virus, in conjunction with relevant international organisations specialized on the subject matter, potentially referring to the WHO.

General findings in newspaper articles.

Both economic and health concerns were not high around this point at the domestic level in Argentina, with only one article dedicated to the risk the virus posed for the country being a “distant” one (Filipuzzi, 2020). There was an article on how the crisis could affect Argentinian exports to China, pointing at them not being too pressing as there were options for minimizing impact, such as exports to Russia, plus falls in exports being from the Argentinian production side (Martinez, 2020).

There is an air of positivity around China's government in relation to its grand successes during this time. This extends to China's successes in public health, namely the construction of a hospital in ten days, which the press reported as China “promising and living up to its word” (Así construyó China en diez días un hospital para tratar el coronavirus, 2022). Logistic capabilities of the regime were praised, deemed “amazing in their scale and

the speed of implementation” (Buckley & Zhong, 2020) despite also being subject to international debate over whether the strict measures would be successful or not. It must be noted that during this time, there were rhetorical devices being used to frame China heroically within that context. One example of this is the use of China “fighting the virus with cape and sword” (Se extienden en China las críticas al régimen por la gestión de la epidemia viral, 2020), with a similar meaning to the English expression of fighting “to the nail and tooth” for something. The attitudes of the Chinese population were also praised. In various articles narrating the efforts at the citizenry level, many positive attributes were noted, namely how the population was “attentive to official indications”, with “almost no one on sight outside” and “everyone wearing masks”(D’Arriso & Buss, 2020). This translated to the belief in the response, as it was “certain that there were the means” for their success (D’Arriso & Buss, 2020).

However, that positivity does not extend to concerns over civil liberties. There were questions in press as to whether the strict lockdowns could be serving a different “negative purpose” for the authorities (Coronavirus: La ira y la ansiedad se apoderan de Wuhan, 2020). Moreover, there were still negative perspectives on China’s management. This was the case on questions of the silencing of whistleblowers and how it signaled to the “failed response from Wuhan authorities in the first weeks of the coronavirus outbreak” (Coronavirus: el médico de China que intentó alertar sobre el virus (y que fue obligado a retractarse por las autoridades), 2020). Additionally, the official stance of the authorities in those early days was deemed “inept”, in a comparable manner to the failures of the USSR in its last years (Aredy, 2020). In addition, even the nature of the response at the citizenry level was questioned, pointing out that public opinion was subject to “whatever the propaganda machine offers to it” and how in that moment, its main purpose was “to protect Xi Jinping” (Aredy, 2020). Arguably, this is more of a criticism towards the government’s tactics, yet it still places the citizenry under a negative light.

There are inferences on allegiance in the grander scale of the China vis-à-vis the US debate. There were negative comments on the American efforts to cause a larger divide with China, victimizing China by saying it is “facing” the US in its economic war, placing the US as the instigator (Sued, 2020). Positive tone was extended to China in its relations with Argentina, such as tackling hunger in conjunction with the Food and Agriculture Association, all of which was discussed extensively. This was pitted against the role of the World Food

Program and the Argentinian president only meeting with its executive director to “avoid suspicions” – as the latter agency has “increased autonomy upon Washington’s insistence” compared to the more multilateral Food and Agriculture Association (Sued, 2020).

All in all, good relations with China at the official level are evident at this time, exemplified by what China means for multilateralism compared to the US. However, public opinion as seen in press is more ambivalent, with many of China’s attributes being praised for their effect, but still being questioned in their nature. This points at fundamental questions being prevalent in the Argentinian context compared to the positives of China’s response being amplified during this time.

Chile

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pressroom, this initial exchange took place on 18/02/20. On that date, the Chilean external relations minister met with the Chinese ambassador to Chile to extend solidarity to the country as China battled the virus, but also to tackle various items on the bilateral agenda. It is important to note that during this exchange, Chile was already expressing interest in sending medical teams to China, not to help, but for them to familiarize with how China was combatting the virus – with the purpose of acquiring valuable knowledge and experience that could then be disseminated in LAC. Moreover, the Chinese ambassador proposed that the Chilean minister meet with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, to discuss the subject matter. In addition, the Chinese ambassador reinforced that it was important for China to normalize the situation, for imports and exports China-Chile to continue.

General findings in newspaper articles.

Overall, prospects of China and its management of the epidemiological situation are good at this time, The Chinese response was portrayed positively by most newspaper articles in *El Mercurio*. This is based on the positive remarks on the believed efficacy of China’s containment efforts. Examples of this are the positive framing of “political might”, “organizational capabilities” and “intellect” (China: Otros frentes del coronavirus, 2020) as key to China’s success to containing the virus. Moreover, there were comparisons between China and other countries’ capabilities as a way of indirectly highlighting China’s positives, as per reporting on the situation in China improving because of measures while other countries struggled “despite doubling the efforts” to control the situation (Marcano, 2020).

Interestingly, even the WHO's acknowledgment of China's efforts is mentioned on occasion, despite it being controversial at the time given the many accusations of China being responsible for the propagation of the virus due to belated communications. During this period, the economic and political repercussions were salient in conjunction to health concerns. Half of the articles addressed economic concerns of the impact the virus was having and could continue to have. However, it is worth noting that in none of these articles, China's management was ever put into question. Instead, many sought to diminish concerns by choosing to reassert the trajectory of Chile-China relations pertaining to economics. This is seen in the belief that China's recovery would be fast, indicating the good relationship between Chinese and Chilean exporters up to that date (Undurraga et al., 2020). In fact, many of the economic negatives were apportioned to the Chilean authorities, blaming them for not addressing the adversities Chilean exporters were facing to access China during those days (Silva, 2020). Given hardship, two of the articles mentioned the need to extend solidarity to support China, such as by shipping necessary medical goods (Berrios, 2020; Undurraga et al., 2020). The only true negative on China's approach was based on its efforts to popularize Chinese traditional medicine as an alternative for treatment, criticizing the "unclear science behind the medicines", how its use could increase demand for wild meats, noting previous failures of Chinese traditional medicine in public health (Wee, 2020). Interestingly, the latter does not explicitly frame the Chinese government negatively, but it does so implicitly by contrasting its approach to the one in Hong Kong, implying openness to ideas in the latter due to it being a semi-autonomous region (Wee, 2020). Geopolitical implications were also addressed at this time – but in both cases, China was not framed as the main instigator. In reference to US-China tensions, the US is framed as the main instigator based on inflammatory comments by U.S. Secretary of Defense, and China as the one fostering cooperation (Secretario de Defensa de EE.UU.: China es una "creciente amenaza" para el orden mundial, 2020). In terms of military spending due to growing hostilities, most of the threat rhetoric centered around Russia, not China (Millán, 2020), with reporting on the latter being mostly descriptive and not putting it in context. As such, it can be concluded that given the positive trajectory of China-Chile relations, the early distrust of China at the start of the pandemic being voiced elsewhere had not become apparent in Chile at this point, with most aspects being framed positively and being held by the running belief in China, despite existing economic concerns.

Momentous exchange: initial deployment of health diplomacy

Argentina

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship pressroom, this initial exchange took place on 13/04/20. It was a communication on the first shipment of medical supplies from China, ahead of a second one expected two days later. In total, both shipments amounted to 10,000 medical-grade masks, 50,000 surgical masks, 1000 face shields, 200 digital thermometers, 1000 pairs of gloves, and 1000 shoe coverings – all of them destined for the national health services. The communication also noted that this was possible due to exchanges between the Argentinian president Alberto Fernandez and Xi Jinping, which encouraged COVID-specific bilateral cooperation. Moreover, this was done within the framework of the China-Argentina Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with hopes of deepening it, for safeguarding public health locally, regionally, and internationally. The communication noted that while these shipments were official in nature, meaning direct donations from China's Ministry of Commerce, aid was also to be received from Chinese provinces and municipalities, as well as Chinese enterprises. A special thank you was extended to the Chinese ambassador to Argentina, Zou Xiaoli.

General findings in newspaper articles.

Overall, the newspaper articles touched more on ideational differences than in the previous exchange. There were some very negative remarks on the regime at a fundamental level. As postulated in a published expert interview, the regime's "structure and ideology" made the pandemic response inherently deficient, hinting at them being a vulnerability (Pizarro Allard, 2020). There was the argument that since many epidemics "started in China" this was evidence of "the lack of regulations in terms of hygiene" in the food supply chains and as such, the virus was "no accident" (Pizarro Allard, 2020). Marxist theory was also put under a negative light for prospects for recovery, stating how because of it, Chinese government officials were focusing too much on production rather than consumption and how this was misguided (Mundo pospandemia. China vuelve al trabajo pero no a la normalidad, 2020). Additionally, China's triumphalist claims over its health successes were questioned, pointing at the potential of manipulation of statistics and the low levels of trust in the government from the Chinese population that the regime needed to tackle (Mundo pospandemia. China vuelve al trabajo pero no a la normalidad, 2020). This lack of trust is also evident in Argentinian press, as per the criticisms of the CCP's efforts to protect Beijing ahead of two upcoming assemblies of the CCP, pointing at health measures being to "protect

the elites of the CCP from the virus” (Asfour, 2020). It must be noted that some of the negatives stemmed from misinformation. An example of this is an article reporting on a documentary by The Epoch Times, a far-right media company affiliated with the Falun Gong, known for anti-China and pro-Trump media, theorizing that the virus was lab-made (Coronavirus: el documental que asegura que el PC chino ocultó su verdadero origen, 2020). The latter mostly points at there being grounds for seeking an alternative to “the official Chinese voice” on the virus, amply criticizing the censorship and disinformation campaigns by the Chinese regime (Coronavirus: el documental que asegura que el PC chino ocultó su verdadero origen, 2020).

At this time, there was more engagement of press with the US-China discourse. But, no inferences on allegiance to either side. Two articles covered the topic, and one of them was more positive of China, while the other was more positive of the US. As such, it could be argued that there is a balance of opinions in this regard. There were comments on balance shifting from the US and Europe to China because of its efforts to “mobilise diplomatically to augment its presence around the world” while the former “continued to fight the virus” (Canton, 2020), but no inferences were made as to how this was at play in LAC other than commenting on Argentina’s “commitment to multilateralism” (Canton, 2020). Conversely, Implicit allegiance from the positive perspective on the US made media inadvertently more prone to reporting fake news. For instance, framing the Falun Gong, and its ties to The Epoch Times, as positive due to it being banned in continental China and being founded by Chinese-Americans, and how claims in the documentary had to be veridic due to them being supported by various scholars and researchers from various institutions – most of which were American (Coronavirus: el documental que asegura que el PC chino ocultó su verdadero origen, 2020).

While ideational concerns were the primary ones during this period, economic concerns became more prevalent as they became more acute. In general, these were not opinionated nor framed China as responsible for them. In fact, when commenting on the role of China and the US in LAC economies, China facing economic downturn was framed as more concerning than the US, as it would affect more countries (Barria, 2020). Specific to the Argentinian case, China facing troubles would mean “extreme uncertainty” as it is its biggest partner (Matus, 2020). As a matter of fact, the one positive note on China was an economic one, with China’s trajectory and development framed positively, calling the country

“innovative in acceleration”, “the most innovative country in the world” and owing its economic growth to the “Chinese development model being explosive” (Cardenas, 2020). It must be noted that negative notes on China decreased towards the end of this time frame, and those that could have been negative based on previous trend on the same topics, became more moderate. This was the case of the last article covering the shortcomings of the regime in managing the outbreak early: it points at the “initial error being a crucial one”, but noting that it would have been “difficult to determine” this in hindsight and that acting too early could have “hindered the capacity to mobilise the population” (Seis días claves: la falta de advertencia de China sobre una probable pandemia de un nuevo coronavirus, 2020). Moreover, they point that even once the Chinese government provided the information, others “wasted time” and failed to address it (Seis días claves: la falta de advertencia de China sobre una probable pandemia de un nuevo coronavirus, 2020).

All in all, this points at ideational concerns still being very relevant to the Argentinian case but as economic ones became more pertinent, it is possible to conclude that press opinion can be malleable and turn less negative towards China. Based on this, it can be concluded that economic power plays a role in shaping Argentina’s opinion on China in all fronts, even if to varying extents.

Chile

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pressroom, this exchange took place on 14/05/20. This initial shipment was the first out of three bulk ones expected. This donation was valued at 6-8 million dollars in total, with the initial shipment alone at 2.5 million dollars. This was bestowed by China’s mega conglomerates: Alibaba, JDCom, China Minmetals, Chinalco, Youtong, Didi, and Dahua. Additionally, some of the donations came from state-funded University of Tsinghua. The initial shipment consisted of 60 ventilators, just over a million and a half respirator masks, and other components of protective equipment non-specified. The total donation included 215,000 gloves, close to 20,000 digital thermometers, 2500 test kits, just over 15,000 hazmat suits, 1800 protection goggles, three disinfection cabins, two temperature chambers, two infra-red thermographic chambers, and one quarantine unit.

Chile's subsecretary of economic relations Rodrigo Yáñez admitted that this was possible because of Chile's emphasis on trade and good relations with Asia-Pacific because of it. Furthermore, the Chilean ambassador to China used the opportunity to mark it as a celebration to 50 years of China-Chile diplomatic relations. All of this, under the campaign "China ayuda a Chile" (China helps Chile) with the help of air travel group Latam to deliver all of what was arranged in Beijing.

General findings in newspaper articles.

Overall, articles tended to frame China positively vis-à-vis the US, even if on its own there were only very few downright positive comments on China. This can be seen in various examples where both are criticized for growing tensions and their reputation exploits during the pandemic. For instance, when the efforts of the two are pitted against one another, China's are described more extensively, making them seem grander, even if the nature of the efforts is put into question (Garcia de Val, 2020). In the case of tensions, accusations of the US towards China for its poor handling early in the pandemic are questioned more in their nature than China's intentions. For instance, implicit comments hinting at the US claims being potentially inflammatory because of prior issues, since the US started the hostilities, and was responsible for the poor state of US-China relations prior to the pandemic (Garcia de Val, 2020). In fact, the US is framed as responsible for continuing to escalate tensions with China and as a driver of polarization, responsabilising it more than China in terms of technology and security concerns (Tenorio, 2020). Criticisms of the US agenda extended to the various failures by the Trump administration to curb the spread of the virus because of anti-China sentiments – all while China's perspective of the US being the instigator was highlighted, referring back to a seminar by the Chinese Ambassador to Chile at Chile's most prestigious university and his perspective on this (Garcia de Val, 2020).

Even when it seemed that criticisms would fall on China for their poor management at the beginning of the pandemic and lack of accountability about it, arguments were still put forward against the US. This was the case of an interview with Ai Weiwei, renowned critic of the CCP. He is critical of the West because of ongoing lack of transparency as well as own issues that it fails to address, such as the poor state of health systems in the US and UK, while admitting the same is his problem with China – outlining examples in which the truth was also concealed in the West (Alconada, 2020). The decision to publish this sort of articles points at issues with systems overall, rather than targeting one country specifically for its

faults. And based on the articles, it seems that Chilean press is tilting against the Western-led system. In fact, there was only one negative piece published in this period – but even that abstained from putting forward any opinion on the matter, remaining informative about how many activists and citizens that had brought attention to the reality of poor management in early stages of the pandemic in Wuhan experienced forceful disappearances (Lucas de la Cal, 2020). This would point at an implicit negative perspective on the subject matter, given the detailed, personal accounts of the struggles, showing that human rights are valued as a concern, as expected in LAC’s healthiest democracy. This is discernible in the piece dedicated to reporting on the struggles of Asian and Asian-descent people in the US and Europe because of racist attacks sparked because of the pandemic, also shedding light on the fact that discrimination also arose in China. However, even in this case, criticisms towards the West are heightened, with the US as prime target given Trump’s role in “reviving racial prejudices in the US, making it seem acceptable elsewhere” (Egoaguirre, 2020). Even in this context there is hesitancy in criticizing China. The latter can be seen in the use of “not even China is left unscathed by the pandemic of racism” (Egoaguirre, 2020), implying some sort of moral superiority in this regard. From this, it is possible to gather that Chile’s appraisal of China due to its values is higher than those of the US, which is reflected on wariness of intentions of one, but not so much the other. This hints at grounds for more future influence in an ideational respect, despite the state of Chilean democracy.

Momentous exchange three: initial reception of Chinese-made vaccines documented

Argentina

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship pressroom, this exchange took place 26/02/2021. The communication centered on the Argentinian charter plane acclimated for the safe transport of vaccines coming from China. The officials present for receiving the vaccinations were also noted: the cabinet’s chief of staff, the minister of health, foreign minister Felipe Solá, and the Chinese ambassador to Argentina Zou Xiaoli. The foreign minister remarked that this was part of a wider, intensive effort to secure vaccines from all countries that could provide them. On the other hand, the Chinese ambassador highlighted the importance of the agreement reached by their respective countries to make the shipment possible. Interestingly, according to the communication, this was the fifth flight that Argentina received that carried vaccines. However, it was the first documented of any kind

via an Argentinian diplomatic channel. Through this exchange, the health ministry's authorization of the emergency use of Sinopharm was also communicated, in conjunction to the Argentinian *Administración Nacional de Medicamentos, Alimentos y Tecnología Médica* (ANMAT), which has a similar role to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), having previously approved it for use in the mass vaccination campaign.

General findings in newspaper articles.

Only very few articles could be gathered about vaccines in this period. Moreover, vaccines in general were not necessarily under a positive light when discussed, with contention being high at the domestic level pertaining to the issues with the actual vaccination campaign rather than the vaccines themselves. For instance, there was an article reporting on the government's decision to extend vaccination to teaching staff as one of the first groups – but focus was on the scandal around the authorities proposing that public officials be considered a priority in vaccination (Dapelo, 2021). In addition, there was more focus on delivery delays from various vaccine manufacturers and how they would prevent Argentina from reaching its desired vaccination goals, in conjunction with domestic logistic issues (Costa & Marin, 2020) than Chinese-made vaccines.

Arguably, that domestic background helped promote Chinese-made vaccines and highlight its positives in the few articles available. All reports on the delivery of Sinopharm vaccines were informative and one was even dedicated to presenting a positive outlook on their efficacy, stating that it was “extremely safe, without considerable adverse side effects” and that the health ministry “guaranteed it” (Coronavirus: parte el primer vuelo a China en búsqueda de un millón de vacunas de la empresa Sinopharm, 2020). In fact, the Sinopharm vaccine was reported as being key to “allowing recovery and bringing normality that was taken away by the pandemic” (Dapelo, 2021). Moreover, the reports on the actual flight carrying the vaccines pointed at friendliness from key Argentinian entities towards China, as per the plane by *Aerolíneas Argentinas* bearing a special message commemorating the Chinese New Year (Coronavirus: aterrizó en Beijing el vuelo de Aerolíneas que traerá un millón de vacunas de la empresa Sinopharm).

However, the most extensive piece published during this period that discussed China was one that put into question the credibility of the Chinese regime. From this, it can be assumed that the newspaper reflects contention over it at the reporting level – a sentiment that

could be shared by the population. The article in question was founded on Xi Jinping's claims that China had eradicated extreme poverty, which the article countered by highlighting that the metrics used were not the standard ones by the World Bank and previous lack of transparency on successes (China: las dudas que despierta el anuncio sobre el fin de la pobreza extrema, 2020). It must be noted that the article also highlighted how these claims were the product of narrative gains that Xi Jinping has been pursuing, and discredited the very narrative the CCP has been pushing about how poverty in the country was the product of happenings prior to communism, arguing instead that the gap between rich and poor has been widening since the instatement of the market economy (China: las dudas que despierta el anuncio sobre el fin de la pobreza extrema, 2020).

Based on this, it can be argued that Argentina's government valued furthering its vaccination campaign, but it did not have to mean an increase of positive sentiments towards the Chinese regime at the public opinion level. On the other hand, there is room to ponder on private entities with different financial interests having a different opinion, as seen by *Aerolineas Argentinas* seeking to put forward a welcoming message by commemorating the Chinese New Year. Moreover, there were explicit concerns over narratives China has been trying to push, which could point at wariness on this front becoming more augmented as China's narratives started playing a bigger role in relation to the pandemic.

Chile

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pressroom, this exchange took place on 28/01/2021. In this case, both the foreign affairs subsecretary as well as the health minister and the Chilean president went to receive the first shipment of SinoVac vaccines. The shipment had two million doses, and was deemed key to starting Chile's mass vaccination campaign on the 3rd of February. This, ahead of another shipment expected that weekend, of also two million doses. With these initial doses, the government hoped to inoculate risk population. Interestingly, the approval of AstraZeneca's vaccine for use in over 18-year-olds was also announced in this communication. The communication was also to praise the government's efforts to secure vaccines all-round, having secured 10 million doses of both Pfizer and SinoVac for the future as well as reaching agreements for accessing 4 million AstraZeneca doses at a later date, an undisclosed amount from Janssen, and partaking in the COVAX distribution scheme. Altogether, this would have secured 30 million doses for

Chilean citizens for upcoming vaccination. They also used this communication to promote the vaccination calendar and reinstate the need for vaccination for seeing the way out of the pandemic and protecting the population.

General findings in newspaper articles.

In this period, economic concerns on Chilean exports to China, especially around cherries trampled attention put on communications about vaccines, with three articles dedicated to the cherries situation in comparison to one on vaccines. This would point at economic cooperation being valued as the utmost priority in China-Chile relations from the Chilean side. The cherry problems were framed as a considerable disruption, with Chilean producers losing market “in the midst of key weeks for the cherry season in China, a market to which, 90% of exports of the red fruit are destined to” (Herrera, 2021). It is worth noting that during this time, inconformity from the producers’ side was directed towards the Chilean government, not the Chinese one (Garcia, 2021) – despite strict measures in China hindering consumption due to distrust of contaminated food products with traces of COVID. Based on this, it is possible to infer those measures were not seen negatively up to this point from the Chilean side, and that there was a degree of agreement that Chile must be the one to work around them accordingly. This is confirmed by Chilean businesses expressing that the industry credited the success of a campaign to increase consumption in Chinese publications on food safety and their transmission in China’s main state-owned broadcaster (Undurraga, 2021).

However, there is room for influence because of vaccine diplomacy despite the little attention paid to vaccines at this time. This is based on the one article noting that the arrival of Chinese-made vaccines might persuade authorities to use them also in the elderly population because of the preeminence of jumpstarting the vaccination campaign (Chávez & Herrera, 2021). Based on this, it is possible to infer that the groundworks for influence in this respect were present, and there could be an influence gain in the future as the vaccination campaign moved forward because of Chinese-made vaccines.

It is worth noting that ideational exploits were only implicit, but present. This is most evident in the article reporting on the various remarks made about China in the 2021 Davos Agenda. There were direct references to how the EU had to rally for relations with China at the economic level to become more “just, reciprocal and transparent” (Merkel pone en “los

valores” el limite de la cooperacion con China, 2021). The article also pointed at how Xi Jinping holds a different understanding of multilateralism to Merkel’s and that “both conceptualisations clash due to fundamental values”, limiting cooperation (Merkel pone en “los valores” el limite de la cooperacion con China, 2021). The editorial emphasis on the remarks could imply that there are fundamental values at stake when engaging in the multilateralism that China sponsors, and it leaves room to ponder to which conceptualization Chile leans more towards. Ultimately, no inferences were made on this regard, nor was there an explicit opinion presented. As such, it is possible to conclude that while an ideational component was present, it was not as relevant as the economic one at this point in time for the Chilean context – even if vaccines could tilt the argument.

Momentous exchange four: first communication on China following the reception of vaccines

Argentina

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship pressroom, this exchange took place on 05/08/2021. The communication was about foreign minister Solá’s participation in the International Forum on COVID-19 Vaccine Cooperation. This event was organized by the PRC and was led by Chinese chancellor Wang Yi. This forum was part of a grander proposal by Xi Jinping during the G20’s World Health Summit back in May. The communication outlined Argentina’s position of universal vaccination being the only tool capable of minimizing the human and socio-economic tolls in the coming years, and vaccines should become global public goods as such. Therefore, Argentina would back propositions of making COVID-related technologies exempt of intellectual property rights. The communication also highlighted Argentina’s belief on international cooperation when it came to public health and public health strategies, as well as policy changes to ensure that recovery from the pandemic and economic growth would not hinder one another. They emphasized the need to remove barriers to the production and distribution of vaccines, to make sure there is a bigger global supply. According to the communication, all participants adopted a joint declaration to reaffirm the needs and interests of developing countries, to make access to vaccines and technology to combat COVID just and equal, as well as boost production in the Global South where possible by ensuring cooperation. Other than the respective authorities of participant countries, UN secretary general Antonio Guterres and WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also attended.

General findings in newspaper articles.

By this time, it was discernible in media that there was distrust of the Chinese regime in many fronts, namely transparency and violations of freedom of speech and human rights, but also tightening control over the private sector. This is evident from the reports on the Chinese government prosecuting prominent businessmen with dissident views because of grander political aims such as “dominating the private sector” with fear of retaliation (Celis, 2021) as well as Big Tech Chinese giants fearing more state control over that sector after various measures implemented and the reporting of them by the Chinese state news agency Xinhua (Serrano, 2021). Additionally, there were concerns over whether the Olympic Committee could be trusted on the Winter Games taking place without politics coming into play, given that in previous occasions, Beijing had made journalists fearful of reporting on sport events in China (Wade, 2021). The allegations of China’s human rights violations in Xinjiang were also put under the spotlight in this context, highlighting the many international bodies pointing at them and how China continued to negate them (Wade, 2021). Overall, all this points at fundamental issues being prevalent in Argentinian press, and it being more open to directly reporting on the negatives of China, with narratives from China’s side being increasingly put more into question.

This assumption is supported by the articles also pointing at the Argentinian press being increasingly more critical of China’s zero covid strategy. The latter was namely because of economic concerns at this this point, since the containment of the virus was becoming “increasingly more costly” (Liu & Woo, 2021) and how because of it “China needs to learn how to control the virus without shutting down its economy and its society” (Schiefelbein, 2021). When it comes to the economy, the articles pointed at a positive outlook on China’s role, but this positivity did not extend beyond tackling financial uncertainty via the “surprising resilience of its exports” (Donoso, 2021). Moreover, there were implicit negative sentiments from Argentina’s side on China-Chile relations deepening, even if some of the positive outcomes from it were acknowledged. This was the case of articles discussing China’s vaccination cause in the LAC region, with the construction of a Sinovac factory for producing vaccines in Chile, for all the region and how Chile was able to have a very successful vaccination campaigns because of Chinese-made vaccines (Felix, 2021). All in all, the discourse around Chinese-made vaccines remained relatively neutral, with no open criticisms despite noting their lower efficacy and the positives of inoculation on the whole,

continuing to be informative about the state of vaccination efforts and China's role in it without offering opinions.

Based on this, it is possible to argue that Argentina's primary concerns at this point were ideational and China was increasingly under a negative light. Even the positives of vaccination were demoted to being reported on neutrally compared to the previous exchange, which points at them being valued less vis-à-vis ideational differences.

Chile

Press release.

According to the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs pressroom, this exchange took place on 23/06/2021. This was in the context of the high-level meeting on international cooperation of the BRI, started by Chinese chancellor Wang Yi to promote cooperation that would help ease recovery from the pandemic. In this meeting, Chilean minister Alland emphasized the need to mitigate economic impact as well as the importance of guaranteeing health and safety to citizens. To that aim, he encouraged mutual efforts to make vaccines available to all countries and stimulate production of them globally, particularly when issues to supply both aid and vaccines arose from commercial barriers that made transparent exchanges difficult. Interestingly, he used the BRI as a good example of a mechanism to foster multilateral cooperation to address issues brought about by the pandemic and move forward in a sustainable, and inclusive pandemic recovery. There was particular emphasis on the latter, with sustainability and equality at the forefront of Chile's needs.

General findings from newspaper articles.

Chilean press did not shy away from publishing articles that could inspire criticism of the Chinese regime, with half of the relevant articles being analysed in this timeframe focusing on the darker sides of the regime from an ideational perspective. For instance, there were reports concerned over China's efforts to curve the virus enabling political purges and how they are key for the regime to "show off the zero covid policy" (de la Cal, 2021). Increased ideational wariness of China was also implied from the publication of an article detailing the raids on Apple Daily following the instatement of the Hong Kong national security law and its role in pro-democracy movements, as well as the decision to highlight that this was "just the tip of the iceberg of generalized repression of Chinese critics in Hong Kong" (Luna Gatica, 2021). In a more direct manner, there were concerns raised over Beijing's use of social media to create echo-chambers of what their diplomats post to

heighten or defend its actions, tying this to China's need to "tell its story well" and how this helped to diminish theories that made China responsible for COVID-19 and fight off accusations on Xinjiang. In that respect, the article suggested that this "poses a challenge for democratic states that value an environment of open information" (Middleton Benzanilla, 2021). While the latter points at increasing ideational concerns, it must be noted that the tone used was not overtly negative nor were there opinionated remarks on the subject matter, limiting to being primarily informative, with implicit criticism. Moreover, in some of the cases there were effort to balance the argument. For instance, in regards to claims of Chinese-made vaccines being less effective than Western-made ones, press used expert opinions to point at how the situation in the Global North could be better than the Global South not because of the vaccines used, but of other factors such as "climate" and "variant disparities" (Marcano, 2021). A similar trend was seen in regards to the use of echo chambers, where they pointed at China not being the only one using social media for narrative power. Moreover, in regards to human rights violations in Xinjiang, there was the use of "alleged" and "according to other countries" – hinting at Chile's position on the matter being unclear (Middleton Benzanilla, 2021).

This ambivalence can also be seen in questions over the need for strict health measures. For instance, the language used around China's pandemic management was more akin to the trend in the West at earlier stages of the pandemic, with measures being referred to as "draconian" (de la Cal, 2021). However, there were no signs of Chilean audiences thinking of measures as redundant, since the need for "self-care tactics such as mask-wearing and avoiding mass gatherings being on par with vaccination" was still highlighted and framed as key to ensuring protection (Marcano, 2021).

On the other hand, China still received praise for its accomplishments at this time, and there were pointers towards image-based ideational influence, as per two opinion pieces published in which the positives of China's characteristics were highlighted. Positive language was used when referring to China's system, comparing it to Chile's aspirations, admiring "Chinese mentality and discipline" (Vivanco, 2021) and the "valuable experience developed by Chinese practices" (Qingbao, 2021). One of the lengthiest pieces was in regards to China's role in poverty reduction in LAC, with the BRI framed positively, being the means to the "common goal" that is the "construction of a community of shared future for mankind without poverty and mutual development" (Qingbao, 2021). This praise of China extended

into its role vis-à-vis the US, as noted in the article reporting on China's space race. In this case, China's efforts were extolled, highlighting China's technological competence to prove "China is capable and advanced" while demonizing the US' role in rushing the Chinese, by not allowing Chinese astronauts to work in the International Space Station (Torres, 2021).

Those ideational gains were further supported by economic ones, in the form of increased wine exports to China being "very favourable for Chile" acting as an "impulse" for Chilean winemakers (Moraga, 2021). Even potential negatives in supply chains because of China's strict measures were minimized by comparing China's logistical prowess compared to LAC, for instance, in the case of port operations (Gutierrez, 2021).

All in all, during this timeframe, it is possible to conclude that while ideational concerns were becoming more apparent, in general, they were eclipsed by both ideational and economic positives experienced. Because of this, Chilean perspectives on China were still predominantly positive despite growing negatives.

Momentous exchange five: most recent exchange

Argentina

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship pressroom, this exchange took place on 30/06/2022. This was to communicate on chancellor Cafiero receiving the Chinese ambassador to Argentina with the purpose of discussing important items on the bilateral agenda ahead of intensifying the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. They committed to the items addressed in the last visit of the Argentinian president to China as well as the good state of bilateral relations amidst the Year of Argentina-China Friendship and Cooperation to commemorate the 50th anniversary since the countries established diplomatic relations. The communication also highlighted the Chinese ambassador's praise of the Argentinian president for his participation in the most recent BRICS Plus summit, and reiterated China's support of the country becoming more involved in that group as this would not only strengthen existing exchanges but amplify the voice and interests of the developing world. The communication then outlined the many economic benefits being yielded by positive China-Argentina relations. Additionally, the Argentinian president thanked China for its support in the Malvinas question, given China's recent involvement in the UN's Special Committee on Decolonization. The communication also alluded to the respective countries'

perspectives on their roles in regional affairs, especially in the context of CELAC, making pushes towards more joint action China-CELAC. Lastly, Argentina's recent addition to the BRI was also discussed, described as a positive for extended bilateral relations and strategic cooperation.

General findings in newspaper articles.

By this point, wariness over China's global reach had become apparent, as per five of the six selected articles addressing that subject, in different contexts. Only one of them was pertinent to the LAC context. This was in regards to Gustavo Petro's presidential win in Colombia, and Xi Jinping sending a congratulatory message that expressed wishes for reinvigorated bilateral relations. The article noted that this did not necessarily mean reciprocity from the new Colombian president's part in the long run, given that he responded to many world leaders (Xi Jinping felicita a Petro una semana después de su victoria y anticipa un "nuevo inicio" con Colombia, 2022) and therefore no inferences could be made about allegiances yet. However, it discussed the importance China allocates to Colombia extensively, despite the actual communication being quite short. This could point at implicit concern over China's reach in budding new governments in LAC and how that could impact regional politics. This is implicit as no negative language was used in reference to Xi nor the Chinese government.

Another article addressing another regional context touched on NATO concerns of the growing presence of China and Russia in Africa. There was not much mention of China beyond the opening statement on how it was "using its economic influence, coercion, and hybrid approaches to promote its interests" (Avances de Rusia y China en África inquietan a la OTAN, 2022). However, based on the decision to publish despite it not being the center focus of the article, it could be concluded that rising influence of China is a factor of concern regardless of location. On a more general note, an article addressing China's response to the G7 leaders criticizing its market practices and announcing the need to be less dependent on Beijing made inferences on China's narratives at play. This, given that it informed on how many of the remarks tie to the messages China has been seeking to amplify abroad. Some of these claims were that the G7 "wished to sow divisions and confrontation, without respect to responsibility or morality" and that it should "seek to nurture globalization rather than foster divisions in a critical moment for humanity" (China acusa al G7 de "sembrar la división" tras críticas contra Pekín, 2022) – the latter in reference to the pandemic. Yet the biggest highlight

of wariness over China's narratives was in reference to Xi's visit to Hong Kong. In this case, the published article condemned Xi's expansionism and patriotic tones in his speeches during the visit, linking them to Taiwan, accusing his aims on the island of being "continental aggression" (Xi viaja a Hong Kong para el 25 aniversario del "retorno" tras dos años sin salir de China continental, 2022). The latter also described extensively the losses in civil liberties and the grip of the Hong Kong national security law over the population, emphasizing freedom of speech losses.

As such, ideational concerns were more amplified than economic ones during this timeframe, and Chinese narratives were openly not just questioned but argued against in press. In fact, there was only one article on the Chinese economy, and it focused on the impact of measures at a domestic level, not the international one. Thus, in this case, it is fair to conclude that the ideational differences with China were a much more prominent concern than economic ones, pointing at the economic value of increased engagement with China not being as high as originally perceived. This is backed by the fact that contrary to previous exchanges, there were little neutral remarks on China despite times remaining turbulent.

Chile

Press release.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pressroom, this exchange took place on 03/12/2021. It was to commemorate Chile's participation in the China-CELAC forum, to discuss regional economic challenges as well as ongoing political and diplomatic ones in various member states. In this case, the Chilean minister called for joint action plans for common challenges over individual responses. He also put under the spotlight the great benefit achieved because of China-Chile collaboration during the pandemic to undertake one of the promptest vaccination campaigns in the world. Moreover, he outlined how this is to benefit the region moving forward as the collaboration of SinoVac labs and Chilean universities has allowed for the development of a vaccine manufactory in Chilean territory that could provide 60 million vaccines per year for the region. Lastly, he called for the region to look towards Asia, highlighting the Antipodas Project, which would build bring about a strategic alliance to export green energy technology to the continent, but also generally affirming the importance of China-CELAC dialogue to find more means for cooperation.

General findings in newspaper articles.

There were not many articles available for selection during this timeframe, providing a very limited output on the topics of discussion relevant for China-Chile relations. However, from the three articles selected, it is possible to conclude that economic aspects still overruled ideational ones. As a matter of fact, only one of the articles published at this time addressed an ideational clash between China and the US, pertaining to the situation in Honduras ahead of presidential elections. In this case, the article noted that both countries were “seeking to exert their influence in the Central American nation” (Tenorio, 2021). However, more negative connotations were directed at the US, referring to its support of Taiwan and how the “club” of central American countries willing to maintain relations with the island because of that was “getting smaller” (Tenorio, 2021). Moreover, the article highlighted that Honduras’ shift towards China became “less persistent” after a visit of a prominent American political authority (Tenorio, 2021). While this is not necessarily explicitly negative of the US, there are negative implications associated with that behaviour. Moreover, it is worth noting that while the article made evident that there is on-going competition for influence in LAC, it made no references to Chile, pointing at neutrality in this regard when pertaining to the domestic level. As such, the discourse about the battle for influence in the region does not seem to have a lot of traction in Chile, leaving room for potential influence, given that there are no explicit negatives to it.

This is not to say that there are no concerns over ideational differences, as these did become salient when discussing China’s demands on its technological companies. The use of “politics of control” and “organism of control” in this context points at wariness of China’s behaviour in this respect (China amplia su control a las tecnologicas: pediria a Didi dejar la bolsa de Nueva York, 2021). While the article that discussed this was primarily informative, the use of that language confirms that there are certain aspects of the Chinese regime that a Chilean perspective could hold in a negative regard.

However, given the overly positive language used when discussing economic exchanges, it is possible to infer that this was still Chile’s priority at this point. And even in this case, an ideational component at work is discernible. This was exemplified by discussions of the cherry market opportunities China-Chile. The article in question was on an interview with the Chinese ambassador to Chile, which highlighted the positive China-Chile relations historically and aligned interests between both countries. In this case, valued

narrative tools by China were put in display. In relation to strengthening economic exchanges, language pointed at “building a community of interests, to achieve mutual benefits and shared gains”, “promoting cooperation” and reaching “mutual respect” to “accelerate the development of the Strategic Comprehensive Partnership” (Vildosola, 2021). This tied to the more ideological need to strengthen China-Chile relations based on “sharing a traditionally-conceived friendship”.

As such, it is possible to conclude that economic and ideational aims are certainly intertwined from the Chinese perspective in regards to its behaviour in Chile. However, from the Chilean perspective, the economic positives outweigh ideational concerns, and in fact, could be reasoned that they inhibit them based on the little attention paid to them and the absence of considerable responses in that regard. Therefore, so long as economics benefits are in place, influence could be secured.

Momentous circumstance: Shanghai’s April 2022 lockdown

Argentina

General findings in newspaper articles.

Earlier in the month being examined, most concerns surrounding the Shanghai lockdown pointed in an economic direction. However, as the month went on, more focus was placed on personal experiences amid shortages, ultimately culminating in articles critical of the measures themselves and later, questioning the Chinese government’s motivations for maintaining the zero covid policy. It is worth noting that even at the stage of focusing on personal experiences, there were already implicit criticisms of the government and the approach, by choosing to publish remarks that shared those sentiments, such as “I don’t think anyone in their sane judgment could block off people’s homes” (BBC Mundo, 2022). Moreover, condemnation of the viability of the approach not only pointed at human costs, but also placed it in the larger context of public health approaches. Increasingly, more articles pointed out the inefficiency of keeping infection rates low because of newer variants being more transmissible, as well as how there are other options for preventing serious illness compared to 2020, such as vaccines, making strict lockdowns unnecessary. Additionally, points were raised about negative impacts of zero covid on the health sector, such as decreased availability of hospital resources to treat non-infectious diseases and provide care for non-covid patients (El Pais, 2022). Based on the divergent opinions on health measures, it

is possible to gather that the Argentinian perspective on how to deal with the virus shifted towards treating it similarly to most Western countries.

As ideational concerns became more heightened, there were more questions posited over the motivations behind China's approach, bringing forward transparency issues with data (AP, 2022) as well as the human cost of strict measures, such as the impact they were having on education. It is important to note that while initial economic concerns had more implications on the global situation, later articles commenting on the economic impact of strict measures centered on the domestic repercussions. Interestingly, even the domestic repercussions were framed negatively, especially once Xi Jinping's role to them was put in perspective. One particularly critical remark in this sense was on how the measures would lead to a "self-inflicted recession" that Xi Jinping would be responsible for and "impact China negatively to the extreme" (El Pais, 2022). Moreover, it was not only outside perspectives that were critical of the approach, but many articles also sought to highlight their unpopularity domestically, pointing at a lack of belief in zero covid all round.

All in all, this timeframe points at more doubts over the Chinese government's motivations as well as strategy from the Argentinian perspective – the latter increasingly aligning with the more Western narratives surrounding the pandemic as well as concerns over China. Economic impact seems to still be a popular topic in Argentinian press, but given the attention paid to ideational concerns as the situation worsened, it could be argued that Argentinian audiences perhaps no longer thought of China's economic concerns being as relevant to them as before vis-à-vis ideational differences.

Chile

General findings in newspaper articles.

There was a big shift on the implied primary concerns from the Chilean side as the situation deteriorated in Shanghai. Initial reports focused mostly on the economic toll the measures could have and negative criticism was limited to the measures themselves, not necessarily the regime's management. During the initial reports, there were no explicit concerns over civil liberties, pointing at these not being as big a concern compared to economic repercussions, which were highlighted the most. There were also efforts made to minimize economic concerns, pointing at extraordinary measures such as employees living in their offices as diligence towards avoiding operational disruptions that would have negative

economic impact, and valuing efficiency rather than personal discomfort (El gran “pajama party” de oficina en Shanghai debido a la pandemia, 2022). However, later reports started putting into question both the zero covid approach as well as the motivations of the Chinese government, namely what it entails for Xi Jinping’s leadership (Claro, 2022). As this began being more apparent, concerns over civil liberties also started being noted. Censorship concerns were being highlighted by the last article unlike any other prior, and “people living in fear” because of it (Entre inusuales cacerolazos en Shanghai, el gobierno defiende su política de zero covid, 2022).

All in all, the growing contention of China’s zero covid approach given questions of its viability for the economy as well as its implications for civil liberties points at Chile’s preference for moving in the more Western direction of not fighting the virus but dealing with it as an endemic disease, questioning the narrative China has been promoting. However, while concerns over civil liberties started becoming more acute, these are not enough to say there is an ideational difference with the Chinese regime, given that economic tolls still had primacy. Because of this, it could be concluded that if economic concerns were dealt with, perhaps potential ideational concerns would not have become apparent, once again pointing at the primacy of economic prosperity in maintaining good China-Chile relations.

Momentous circumstance two: Beijing’s May 2022 soft lockdown

Argentina

General findings in newspaper articles.

Overall, articles related to the health measures were not necessarily negative about it from a civil liberties perspective but economically. Positive language was used to refer to the ease of restrictions – such as that being a “blessing” for the economy (Mejias & Serrano, 2022). On the other hand, relatively negative language was used when referring to the continuity of measures, with them being referred to as a “hindrance” or “obstruction” to returning to normality (Shanghái registra cero contagios por primera vez desde el brote de covid, 2022). This is not to say that perceptions of the measures were necessarily explicitly negative. Most of the negatives were implicit, such as pointing out the contentiousness of testing, given that it is a financial burden (Giraldo, 2022), or it being extremely damaging for the environment while having little effect in preventing infections long-term (China se enfrenta a una montaña de desechos médicos y sanitarios, 2022). It is also worth noting that

none of these directly criticized the regime, and even hint at certain aspects of the repercussions of not following health protocols being seen as a good thing. For instance, reports on the criminal action the state took against the three people believed to have caused the bar-related outbreak plus the bar getting its license revoked since it did not abide to all necessary health codes for operation were emphasized (Quin & Woo, 2022). However, this is not to say that there was an outright preference for an authoritarian flare. For instance, one of the articles was very negative about all the methods the Chinese government can use for surveillance of its citizens because of technological advances, highlighting the huge issues they pose in terms of impunity and transparency, with the vast majority of the population being “unaware that they are being watched” despite being subject to “suffocating surveillance and privacy violations” (Mozur et al., 2022). This would point at Argentinian audiences caring about civil liberties and how China threatens them.

These ideational apprehensions become more apparent when democracy becomes concerned. Articles published throughout this time not only centered on the health measures in Beijing, but also touched on other topics not short of political contention: Xi Jinping’s communication with Putin, Xi’s visit to Hong Kong, and Xi’s aims in Taiwan. The starkest example concerned by violations to democratic principle were in the context of Hong Kong, regarding the political instability of the past three years, protests against the national security law and dissidents fleeing because of fear of imprisonment – all while questioning Xi Jinping’s claims about it. The situation was pitted against that under British rule, stating that while there was never a “full democracy” then, Hong Kong “has lost formal democracy as well as its substance” now – thus going against Xi’s claim that democracy has flourished there in recent years (“Tranquilizador” o “delirante”, las reacciones de los hongkoneses al discurso del líder chino, 2022). From the latter, it is possible to discern that there are explicit concerns over China’s claims, especially anti-imperial narratives that compare conditions to colonial times and placing China in a moral higher ground despite this not being the case. On a similar note, negatives around China’s rhetoric were mentioned in the context of China-Russia relations, with an article mentioning that there are “fundamental interests” at play in them, with motivations for a “strategic coordination” in the “construction of an international system that is truly multipolar and just” being questionable (Xi asegura a Putin el apoyo de China en materia de “soberanía”, 2022), pointing at reluctance to follow the order they are sponsoring. The tie between China and Russia conditioned further negative language to be used. This is discernible in reference to Taiwan, when parallels between the island and

Ukraine were drawn and inflammatory comments such as that “the Chinese are just like the Russians: what’s yours is mine, what’s mine is still only mine” (Conviviendo con la amenaza china en la primera línea de defensa de Taiwán, 2022) were made. The choice to publish this in the Argentinian case points at growing wariness and distrust of China’s general claims and how they contrast with their external behaviour, making ideational divides more apparent with every diverging aspect in regards to Argentinian interests.

Chile

General findings in newspaper articles.

Despite the month-long timeframe, there were very little articles on the subject matter being published. Arguably, this shows that China’s role in the pandemic is no longer a big concern from the Chilean side and therefore does not warrant much reporting. From the few articles available however, it is fair to assume that the change in relevance could be due to growing doubts over the viability of the zero covid approach in conjunction to concerns over China’s human rights record becoming more amplified. In the former, concerns over the environmental repercussions of mass testing in the form of medical waste were brought forward, with it being “unprecedented in the history of mankind” (China se enfrenta a una montaña de desechos médicos y sanitarios, 2022). This points at blanket health measures becoming less popular in the Chilean context, for an ideational reason. In this case, it could be argued that differences could be exacerbated, should China continue with pursuing zero covid. However, the biggest ideational difference rests in human rights valuation, with concerns over violations playing a bigger role than before based on the length of the one piece discussing them, as well as some of the remarks highlighted in it. It is worth noting that for the first time, China was overtly framed as a “fundamental concern” from a Chilean perspective (Yáñez, 2022), hinting at ideational differences becoming sedimented in this regard. Moreover, economic concerns in relation to China were not gauged, hinting at them being less relevant vis-à-vis ideational ones in this timeframe. From this, it is possible to ponder on whether that trend will continue into the future. Based on the fact that democratic health was also brought into the discussion for the first time, it would be fair to assume that there are grounds for the trend to continue, unless economic factors regain significance.

Results

This longitudinal study of how reporting on China evolved proved very fruitful in understanding how the pandemic crescendoing and rescinding also interacted with the

outcomes of Chinese foreign policy on public opinion, as presented in press. Moreover, it proved that there are more differences between official stances and the citizenry's perspectives in communications, which points at policy not necessarily being reflective of popular sentiment. This is a considerable outcome, as it disproves the running logic behind this thesis of policy reflecting public opinion. Nevertheless, this proves valuable in regards to potential grounds for Chinese influence continuing to permeate at the official levels, which is something this thesis was in fact interested in garnering more information on.

That being said, upon assessing all general findings, there were two key similarities and differences at the official level between the cases being examined. To start with, both countries extended solidarity to China from early in the pandemic. Diplomatic press releases reveal that this was done earlier by Argentina than Chile, which could suggest more amicable intergovernmental relations China-Argentina than Chile-Argentina. This is a significant observation, given that it could point at a higher level of pandemic democratic backsliding being at play. This is relatively confirmed by consequent official press releases from the Argentinian side being lengthier and in-depth overall than those from the Chilean press room. This assumption needs to be considered when determining where exactly is Chinese influence, pandemic-based or otherwise, is actually more successful.

However, the focus of this thesis is the findings in reporting trends in regards to China to make inferences on public opinion. In this case, there were considerably more differences than similarities between the cases.

Similarities between cases

The first similarity noted was that both media outlets reported mostly on economic concerns posited by the pandemic in its earliest stages, with the impact of the crisis on exports being a key topic of conversation during this time. It must also be noted that around this time, both media outlets held some of China's attitudes to a high regard, pointing at praises for Chinese regime's logistical efficiency, organizational capabilities and the citizenry's abidance to rules despite negative commentary on earlier response. This points at both countries believing that the harm could potentially be controlled, which in turn would explain why concerns were not high at this point in general. As such, it is implicit that both

shared an opinion on China being able to manage the crisis, pointing at a neutral, if not positive opinion on its capacities.

The second similarity worth mentioning is that as the effects of the pandemic became more acute and mask diplomacy was enacted, commentary on the China-US divide was the loudest in both countries. At no other time being analysed were there as many inferences on power balance shifts, growing tensions, or accusations based on systems. Based on this, it is possible to infer that crisis fostered the need to look for leadership and further engage in existing discourses on them. This is not an unsurprising response, considering that in disorder, it is only natural to navigate in the knowns to make the unknowns less daunting – a risk management mechanism to garner a semblance of certainty and security (Pawson et al., 2011). Therefore, with uncertainty arguably at its highest, both news outlets sought to make inferences on leadership as a result and it can offer insight into the state of mind of the population at large.

A third finding, and perhaps the most surprising, was in reference to the prominence of vaccines in discourse. Based on the Chinese perspective and the basis of narrative power, this thesis ran under the assumption that they would play a central role in the perception of China in both countries. However, they were not reported on considerably, with only few articles dedicated to them in both countries. In fact, most of the reporting focused on metrics and statistics provided in the press releases. This shows that in both cases, most of their relevance came from official sources rather than genuine concern at the citizenry level. And when reported on, in both countries these were met without much contention, neither positive nor negative, substantiating their inconsequence. This points at vaccine diplomacy not opening room for as much ideational influence as originally assumed based on China's motivations.

Finally, in both cases, ideational components became the most reported on by June 2022, pointing at them becoming more relevant as the pandemic stopped being at the center stage of discussions. In both cases, articles became scarcer and those that did comment on China did so with critical tones. This was most pervasive in relation to the zero covid approach's sustainability, with both Argentina and Chile displaying signs of preferring a lighter approach more akin to that followed by most of the Western world. While this in itself is not outright negative of the regime, it did pave the ground for criticisms pertaining to civil

liberties and their violations because of the strictness of measures. This extended to displays of wariness over China's more recent behaviour, with news outlets in both countries referring to "fundamental concerns" given engagement with Russia, as well as growing contention on its aims in Taiwan and Hong Kong. This finding would point at positive influence gains made throughout the pandemic not being solidified enough to constitute long term positives into the future. Therefore, it accounts for an important factor when evaluating the actual success of China's health diplomacy.

Differences between cases

The clearest difference between both cases is that ideational components came into play at dissimilar stages. In the case of Argentina, these were present much earlier, implicit since the first momentous exchange and becoming acute already by the second. In contrast, they only became pertinent in the Chilean case until the first momentous circumstance, even if there were limited implicit concerns posed since the second momentous exchange. This points at another key difference. The Argentinian stance in regards to China was always quite clear, generally tilted from a neutral to negative direction throughout the period of time being considered, with the economic pushing for neutrality whereas the ideational more often than not verged on the negative. On the other hand, the Chilean position was more ambivalent, with a constant implied neutrality despite both positives and negatives being addressed. In fact, even towards the end of the study, it would be difficult to conclude that the Chilean perspective on China has turned completely negative, as there are still economic aims being framed very positively.

The latter informs one of the differences between the two cases that actually goes against the assumption that as the more democratic, Chile would have more ideational concerns than Argentina. In the Chilean case, most of the concerns were actually economic in nature. Even at times that called for high ideational concerns in Argentina, such as momentous circumstance one, Chilean press was still more preoccupied with economic factors. This confirms that in this case, political systems do not precondition a country to become more positive towards China. Therefore, the authoritarian/democratic dichotomy does not help explain more positive tendencies towards China, which is worth considering when establishing the likelihood of ideational components penetrating a country.

Secondly, in assessing the success of mask diplomacy and vaccine diplomacy respectively in the most directly linked momentous exchanges, it could be argued that Chile was more prone to influence as their result. For instance, there was a noticeable change towards reporting on China more positively upon the reception of medical supplies, even if mask diplomacy in itself was not addressed considerably. This was not the case in Argentina, where language on China around this time was considerably more negative and centered on fundamental issues at play, even if there was slight moderation of negatives ahead of aid reception. A similar trend was followed by vaccine diplomacy. While there were still articles with negative tones published after the reception of vaccines, there was less reluctance to comment negatively on Chinese-made vaccines nor measures despite existing claims elsewhere that called for their questioning. As a matter of fact, some of the claims were refuted and engaged with the narrative of a global North-South divide in vaccination efforts and their results. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the narrative logic China had been pushing was actually being voiced in the Chilean case, proving a success in this matter.

Discussion of results

All in all, it is possible to conclude that China's foreign policy in the region during the pandemic resulted in a limited positive growth in influence. Firstly, because the differences in the extent of positives differed significantly between both countries, which makes it difficult to generalise the findings for the region. Secondly, as proven by the changes presented in the momentous circumstances, in both countries whatever positive influence efforts had been secured were eclipsed by ideational concerns. This questions the longevity of China's ideational gains and by default, affects the metric of measuring success.

However, as noted by the changes in opinions on China leaning towards positives despite many concerns being present, it is possible to infer that there were in fact influence gains being made in Chile. In this case, it can be concluded that narrative power was at play in the Chilean case, with many of the narratives that China has promoted being echoed in press and often being used in the defence of either China or Chilean circumstances. This points at H1b being proven, with exacerbated narratives informing discourses in press and by default, confirming their success in influencing opinion. However, it must also be noted that in many cases, these were preconditioned by positive economic experiences. As such, H1a is also confirmed, with economic clout still playing a prominent role in securing influence.

Nevertheless, these successes need be seen as partial at the regional level, given that the Argentinian case proved that neither economic clout nor exacerbated narratives evoking commonalities played a significant role in informing opinions on China. From the beginning, Argentinian press showed disdain towards China in the ideational front, with economic positives not drastically changing this, with opinions at best pointing at neutrality rather than an actual positive because of them. As such, in this case, both H1a and H1b are refuted, with the results impacting the general results of H1.

Conclusion

As the Western world continues to open and ease restrictions, it will be interesting to see how China's deeply contrasting approach could affect its image in the longer run. The strict lockdowns of major cities could continue to frame it in a negative light similar to that of early 2020 and potentially regress its pandemic diplomacy efforts that earned it a positive public opinion internationally, as shown in both the Chilean and Argentinian cases. Given different aims at present, both countries have developed a more negative opinion on China's health efforts across time. In the case of Argentina, it is worth noting that sentiments were not as positive to begin with and ideational differences were always implicit despite favourable economic components. However, regression of positive ideational gains made is very visible in the case of Chile, which has not only been growing doubtful of the viability of zero covid from an economic perspective, but has also increasingly voiced concerns over its impact on civil liberties. The latter has led to questions on the Chinese governments' motivations, fostering distrust and rendering many of the ideational gains from earlier futile as a result. From these cases, it is possible to gather that ideational differences at present are perceived as larger by the public than the commonalities that China amplified to create closer ties. However, how these changed priorities at the public opinion level will translate to the official interactions in the foreseeable future remains to be seen. After all, as evident from this study, official communications did not necessarily reflect public opinion in either case. As such, the potential for further Chinese influence remains a reality at the official level, and it is worth a study of its own right as such.

Nevertheless, the seed for doubt at the public opinion level remains, given its initial success. It will be interesting to see how many sentiments acquired from the pandemic could

come into play in future health crises. After all, there are regional resentments in LAC towards pandemic complacency in the developed world, since it has left the region more vulnerable to shocks from its consequences, with less capacity of dealing with economic and health concerns raised by unequitable immunization and health care stresses (Zhang & Engelke, 2021). And given China's narrative power, it would be unsurprising for it to manifest in such a way if desired.

Moreover, whether China's foreign policy efforts in the form of health diplomacy were successful is dependent on the metric used to evaluate them. If reframing the metric for success to one in which there is a distinction between to what extent China avoided a loss of reputation and, to what extent it has gained sympathy, shows that indeed, while the gains in sympathy have dwindled after increased engagement by the West in the region as well as decreased relevance of the pandemic and the negative connotations of the latest lockdowns in China, they have still had some geopolitical impact and prevented a blunt loss of reputation from the initial negative impact of China's poor management (Nolte, 2022).

Whether this was worth it for China remains to be seen. After all, observers argue that a continued implementation of its ambitious foreign policy toolkit could lead to China overburdening itself and diluting the impact of its influence efforts, risking "strategic overdraft" (Zhao, 2021). This would ring true for both ideational and economic expansion abroad. But ultimately, given that the Chinese government's core defining interest is domestic stability and the regime, if sustaining ambitious behaviour abroad could jeopardise the situation at home – China would be incurring a major loss.

Thus, future research could focus on examining China's domestic interests in more detail and how they have reflected on foreign policy. Additionally, analyses of previous domestic shocks and the government's efforts to quell them with actions abroad could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of China's foreign policy. This would be to the benefit of policy in areas where a rising China is a security concern, given that it would reduce uncertainties around it and result in a more varied understanding that enables flexibility around its behaviour – resulting in a better-oriented foreign policy. Moreover, failing to understand key differences in Chinese thought compared to the mainstream Western ones blindsides the true nature of challenges and by default, hinders potential responses to them, thus the value of assessing something from a divergent

perspective. Finally, while this is to the benefit of individual responses, the need to pay attention to regional needs must not be forgotten when seeking to understand future geopolitical challenges. This rings particularly true for the LAC region, which faces challenges aplenty as is, and therefore, ignoring its context is a serious scholarly and policy deficiency when discussing grounds for alignment amidst challenge.

As a final remark on public opinion-based studies, it is important to note that this research was limited and therefore its results might not be representative of the general state of public opinion. For that purpose, looking at more newspapers would help determine whether the particular sources that were chosen might have been outliers rather than the norm. Moreover, newspapers might not be the most representative for analysing public opinion. Given the primacy of social media, assessing public opinion in that sphere could yield more representative results. As such, an open-source network analysis could be very beneficial in future research interested in public opinion changes in general.

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Appendix

Appendix A: case election data

Pandemic Backsliding Scores

- Lowest scores
 - Bolivia: 0
 - Dominican Republic: 0
 - Chile: 0.04
 - Colombia: 0.06
 - Peru: 0.06
- Highest scores
 - Argentina: 0.43
 - Mexico: 0.32
 - Brazil: 0.31
 - Guatemala: 0.27
 - Paraguay: 0.27

PAHO Vaccination Index per manufacturer

- Bolivia: N/A
- Dominican Republic: N/A
- Chile:
 - SinoVac: 62%
 - 22,162,275 doses
 - Pfizer: 28%
 - 10,032,527 doses
 - Astra Zeneca: 8%
 - 2,863,568 doses
 - CanSino: 2%
 - 570,977 doses
- Colombia:
 - 91% N/A
 - 42,214,129 doses
 - Janssen: 9%
 - 4,008,436 doses
- Peru:
 - Pfizer: 52%
 - 17,724,023 doses
 - Beijing CNBG: 42%
 - 14,471,645 doses
 - Astra Zeneca: 6%
 - 2,040,642 doses
- Argentina:
 - Beijing CNBG: 32%
 - 18,957,760 doses
 - Astra Zeneca: 30%
 - 18,957,760 doses
 - Gamaleya: 28%
 - 16,749,878 doses

- Moderna: 5%
 - 3,291,257
- Pfizer: 3%
 - 1,885,121 doses
- SII Covishield: 2%
 - 653,627 doses
- CanSino: <1%
 - 106,307 doses
- Mexico:
 - Astra Zeneca
 - 79,500,000 doses
 - CanSino
 - 35,000,000 doses
 - Pfizer
 - 34,400,000 doses
 - Gamaleya
 - 24,000,000 doses
 - SinoVac
 - 20,000,000 doses
 - Sinopharm
 - 12,000,000 doses
- Brazil:
 - 42% N/A
 - 109,862,463 doses
 - SinoVac: 30%
 - 79,798,303 doses
 - Pfizer: 26%
 - 69,300,994 doses
 - Janssen: 2%
 - 4,815,770 doses
- Guatemala:
 - Moderna: 49%
 - 4,183,539 doses
 - Astra Zeneca: 25%
 - 2,120,120 doses
 - Gamaleya: 21%
 - 1,773,724 doses
 - Pfizer: 5%
 - 392,171 doses
- Paraguay:
 - Pfizer: 48%
 - 2,560,321 doses
 - Astra Zeneca: 20%
 - 1,034,980 doses
 - Gamaleya: 16%
 - 827,345
 - Moderna: 7%
 - 382,046 doses
 - Sinopharm: 5%
 - 251,394 doses

- Bharat: 4%
 - 194,430 doses

Mask Diplomacy tracker

- Chile:
 - 3,721,650 masks
 - 3500 test kits
 - 571 ventilators
 - PPE
 - 16000 protective suits
 - 10600 face shields
 - 265000 gloves
 - 2800 goggles
- Argentina:
 - 445520 masks
 - 25000 test kits
 - 21 ventilators
 - PPE
 - 235450 protective suits
 - 1600 face shields
 - 50000 gloves
 - 105700 goggles
 - One field hospital
- Mexico:
 - 947700 masks
 - 50000 test kits
 - 25 ventilators
 - PPE
 - 50100 protective suits
 - 20000 face shields
 - 10000 goggles
- Brazil:
 - 3712236 masks
 - 29600 test kits
 - 201 ventilators
 - PPE
 - 12000 protective suits
 - 3100 face shields
 - 81000 gloves
 - 10000 goggles
 - 13400 unspecified PPE
 - 6000 surgical gowns

Appendix B: notes on newspaper articles

Argentina

Momentous exchange 1

- **La efectividad de la cuarentena impuesta por Pekín ya es objeto de polémica**
 - 28/01/2020
 - Chris Buckley and Raymond Zhong, translated by Jaime Arrambide
 - Informative on whether the measures in China have grounds for success or failure
 - Starts off with the positives, finishes with the negatives – all based on several expert opinions
 - Would suggest that finishing on the negative without another conclusion could highlight the negatives as rebuttals to the positives.
 - However: logistic capabilities praised
 - "Desde el punto de vista logístico, es asombroso por su escala y por la rapidez con que fue implementado"
- **Se extienden en China las críticas al régimen por la gestión de la epidemia viral**
 - 28/01/2020
 - The Trust Project
 - Relatively positive towards both China and the US
 - Praises China's efforts but does extend the grounds for unprecedented criticism
 - "lucha a capa y espada contra el coronavirus" (hero rhetoric)
 - "las redes sociales se hicieron eco del descontento... Los comentarios sorprendieron, ya que China suele ejercer una rígida censura en internet."
 - Puts forward that Trump has offered to help Xi Jinping, despite the tensions that has grown to characterize his administration in regards to China
- **Ginés González García: "Hoy el riesgo en Argentina es lejano"**
 - 28/01/2020
 - Santiago Filipuzzi
 - Informative on the health minister's point of view in regards to the virus spread and what it meant for Argentina
 - Nothing to worry about on the territory yet, and risk distant – with risk being China-centric.
 - "Veo el riesgo por hoy, lejano".
 - "todos los casos son autóctonos de China"
- **"Estoy encerrada hace ocho días": cómo conviven con el virus los argentinos en China**
 - 29/01/2020
 - Julia D'Arrisso y Maximiliano Buss
 - Documents the experiences of 4 Argentinian nationals stuck in China
 - Highlighting abidance to the measures by the Chinese population
 - "todos usan barbijo"
 - "no se ve casi nadie en la calle"
 - "atento a las indicaciones oficiales"

- Interestingly, three of the cases discussed are of exemplary cases of talent exchange Chile-China
- Belief on the measures expressed
 - “Tengo esperanza porque sé que están los recursos”
- **Pekín intenta evitar que el brote sea el Chernobyl de Xi**
 - 30/01/2021
 - James T. Areddy, translated by Jaime Arrambide
 - Negative tone on china’s tactics to shape public opinion
 - “La opinión pública se hace la idea que la maquinaria de propaganda le venda, y en este momento esa maquina de propaganda está totalmente abocada a proteger la reputación de Xi”
 - Reports on the many examples of public backlash online in China
 - “Muchos compararon la actual ineptitud oficial de China con la Unión Soviética de sus últimos años”
 - Emphasis on “ineptitud” as this is not a quote referring back to the posts online, but the words of the reporter
- **Coronavirus: La ira y la ansiedad se apoderan de Wuhan**
 - 01/02/2020
 - La Nacion – Bienestar
 - Posted back from The New York Times
 - Informative in nature about the citizen’s concerns in Wuhan around the situation.
 - Not necessarily negative, but highlighting this could serve a negative purpose.
- **Fernández hizo equilibrio entre China y EE.UU. para conseguir ayuda para la Argentina**
 - 01/02/2020
 - Gabriel Sued
 - Relative negative tone when referring to the US’ stand against China
 - “hacer equilibrio en la guerra comercial que enfrenta a China con los Estados Unidos.”
 - China as the victim of the US in this phrasing
 - Positive tone on extending relations if it means tackling hunger in Argentina
 - "Compartimos la decisión de dejar de hablar y ponernos a resolver problemas" – in reference to the Argentinian president’s talk with Qu Dongyu, the director general of the Food and Agriculture Organization.
 - Similar positive note on talks with David Beasley, director of the World Food Program
 - However the newspaper notes that meeting him was mostly done as to not cause speculation, and noted the alignment of that organisation to Washington.
 - “...para evitar suspicacias, el Presidente se reunió anteayer con el estadounidense David Beasley, director ejecutivo del Programa Mundial de Alimentos, una iniciativa de la FAO que ganó autonomía en los últimos años, a instancias de Washington.”
 - More time spent on discussing the FAO’s work with Argentina than the WFP.
- **Coronavirus: desde la Argentina enviarán barbijos a China para ayudar en las zonas afectadas**

- 01/02/2020
- Tomas Cuesta
- Points at the efforts from Chinese wholesalers located in Argentina, together with the Chinese embassy, to send supplies back.
- Purely informative. No mention of the Argentinian government playing a role in this.
- **Así construyó China en diez días un hospital para tratar el coronavirus**
 - 02/02/2020
 - DPA
 - Praising China's success in building a hospital to treat covid in ten days, very positive language used
 - “Las autoridades de China prometieron y cumplieron”
 - Reports on how the situation in China is improving and in the meantime other countries have begun bracing themselves for spread
 - It credits the WHO's communications on this rather than China's initial management
- **Coronavirus. Cómo podría afectar a la exportación de carne a China**
 - 03/02/2020
 - Belkis Martinez
 - Overall, proof of economic concerns from Argentina's side being present when it comes to industries that are growing because of increased exports to China.
 - BUT there are options: in this case, Russia
 - “muchos de los frigoríficos ya se enfocaron en el mercado ruso para recuperar la baja en el precio sufrido en el último período.”
 - Moreover, it suggests that any changes can be incurred because of Argentina, not China
 - "Puede que caigan las exportaciones pero por la producción de carne en la Argentina.”
- **Coronavirus: el médico de China que intentó alertar sobre el virus (y que fue obligado a retractarse por las autoridades)**
 - 04/02/2020
 - Reposted from BBC Mundo
 - Discussing the silencing of doctors in Wuhan early in the pandemic, especially Li Wenliang – narrates his experience, informatively, no comments on it.
 - Negative language used around the role of Chinese authorities
 - “Lo que le ocurrió a este doctor revela la respuesta fallida de las autoridades locales de Wuhan en las primeras semanas del brote de coronavirus.”
 - But does not make more criticisms

Momentous exchange 2

- **Guy Sorman: "El gran perdedor con esta pandemia va a ser China"**
 - 06/04/2020
 - Cristian Pizarro Allard
 - Interview with renowned politics scholar that is very critical of China
 - Blames China for the pandemic, namely the regime and its ideology

- “tiene que ver con la estructura e ideología del regimen” – posing questions on ideological clashes
 - Outlines China’s vulnerabilities when it comes to health hazards
 - “es muy extraño que todas las pandemias comiencen en China, como la neumonía SARS en 2003. Esto deja en evidencia que hay un problema con el mercado de alimentos y la cadena de suministros en China. Es un mercado totalmente desregulado en términos de higiene. No es un accidente que el virus se haya originado allí.”
 - Overall, could point at the newspaper wanting to highlight critical voices.
- **Comienza la exportación de arvejas argentinas a China**
 - 07/04/2020
 - Marcelo Manera
 - Positive about the new development that is exporting chickpeas to China
 - "La Argentina se ubica dentro de los pocos países que tienen implementado un protocolo fitosanitario de importación con el principal consumidor mundial de esta legumbre.”
 - “una gran oportunidad para el país”
 - Result of 7 years of negotiations finally
- **Coronavirus: Wuhan, el epicentro de la pandemia en China, levanta la cuarentena**
 - Article taken from AP / Agencia AP
 - 07/04/2020
 - Reports on lockdown ending in Wuhan after 11 weeks and no new cases being reported in the official counts
 - Hinting at a negative with the use of “Si bien la veracidad del recuento chino está en duda, la cuarentena sin precedentes en Wuhan y su provincia, Hubei, resultó lo suficientemente eficaz.”
 - Puts into question the credibility of the Chinese authorities BUT praises their logistical aptitude
- **Coronavirus en China: un magnate que cuestionó a Xi Jinping por el manejo del brote está desaparecido y el gobierno admitió que lo investiga**
 - 08/04/2020
 - La Nacion Editorial
 - Reporting on the disappearance of Ren Zhiqiang: informative in tone, presenting all of the facts about the criticisms he voiced that caused him to be targeted by the Chinese regime.
 - Despite it being informative in tone, this is yet another report on a critical figure against the Chinese regime, which could be interpreted as amplifying that point of view in Argentinian press.
- **Coronavirus: Wuhan y su primer día de libertad condicional**
 - 08/04/2020
 - Macarena Vidal
 - Reporting on the various examples of going back to day-to-day life after lockdown in Wuhan
 - Negative tone based on type of language used when referring to the lockdown
 - “Libertad condicional” used to describe citizens being able to go out – term that would usually be used to refer to someone being on parole, inferences on policing.

- However, they note that the locals seem to have a positive opinion on the lockdown and how this is a good thing vis-à-vis the rest of the world
 - “las semanas de confinamiento estricto han merecido la pena”
 - “Al principio, otros países no se tomaron en serio el virus. Ahora que ven la gravedad de la pandemia, tomarán medidas como las nuestras.”
 - “Veo las noticias que llegan de fuera y me da la impresión de que otros países tienen un problema peor que el nuestro, porque no han tomado medidas tan drásticas como nosotros.”
- Overall, while the reporter puts the measures under a negative light from their perspective when describing what was happening, the fact that they included the local perspectives makes the article more balanced.
- **China avanza raudamente hacia la hegemonía económica, en todos los frentes**
 - 09/04/2020
 - Emilio Cardenas
 - Opinion piece from an Argentinian ex-ambassador to the UN
 - Very positive tone about China’s trajectory and development, particularly around technological advancement, measured by patent outputs
 - “el país más innovador del mundo”
 - “La innovación no se detiene sino que se acelera.”
 - “El proceso de desarrollo chino es explosivo según queda visto y se ha acelerado de modo realmente vertiginoso, confirmando el muy rápido ascenso chino en materia económica.”
 - Implying that economic growth and technological advancement reinforce and will continue to reinforce each other, for positives for China.
- **El coronavirus diseña el mundo del future**
 - 09/04/2020
 - Santiago Canton
 - Comments on how the global situation prior to 2020 was already precarious because of China-US tensions and seeks to make inferences on the outlook for global affairs in the context of the pandemic
 - Critical of many of the measures put in place
 - ¿Si hoy Big Brother está usando nuestra información para protegernos, qué le va a impedir usarla mañana para perseguirnos?
 - Points out that this is a concern for all regime types.
 - “Ya se trate de gobiernos dictatoriales, autoritarios o democráticos, la tentación será irresistible.”
 - Reinstates Argentina’s belief and commitment to multilateralism despite growing trends at the international level pushing otherwise
 - Comments on how the pandemic has been helping to shift power from the US/Europe to China
 - “Mientras Estados Unidos y Europa continúan combatiendo el virus, China movilizó su diplomacia para aumentar su presencia en todo el mundo.”
 - Describes instances of positives garnered by mask diplomacy in southern Europe and Africa – does not comment on LAC.
 - But does suggest that there is ground for more change.
 - “La política internacional de China para recuperar el liderazgo mundial perdido hace poco más de dos siglos

puede recibir un impulso significativo en el mundo pos pandemia.”

- Concludes by saying that as humans we are capable of shaping our own destiny, and uses the creation of the liberal international order as an example.
 - “... la arquitectura universal más importante de la historia, con un enfoque en la libertad, la paz y los derechos humanos. No hay nada que nos impida diseñar un mundo mejor.”
 - The better future in this case, still along the lines of freedom, peace, and human rights.
 - Could suggest these are values that the newspaper seeks to highlight by publishing the piece.
- **Mundo pospandemia. China vuelve al trabajo, pero no a la normalidad**
 - 11/04/2020
 - La Nacion – Economía
 - Puts into question Beijing’s triumphalist claims about having left the health crisis by having seen the worst of it and being able to focus once more on economic growth.
 - Describes the many scenarios in which the pandemic can still be felt despite the claims and points out the shortcomings of the approach.
 - Critical of starting by increasing production when there is no consumption – brings in Marxist theory
 - “Los funcionarios educados en la teoría marxista, que pone el énfasis en la producción antes que en el consumo, naturalmente se han concentrado en la primera, es decir, asegurarse de que se produzcan los bienes.”
 - Argues against Beijing’s claims that most enterprises are back to running normally
 - Manipulation of official numbers mentioned
 - "la tasa de reasunción del trabajo invita a manipular las cifras”
 - “adornen los datos de su recuperación”
 - States that health measures in place to curve contagion, while useful, hinder recovery
 - “Tales medidas son necesarias, pero complican”
 - Reports that for things to improve people need to have trust – which reinforces many of the hindrances
 - Again, could be seen as critical of the health measures
- **Coronavirus: el documental que asegura que el PC chino ocultó su verdadero origen**
 - 13/04/2020
 - La Nacion – Sociedad
 - Reports on the claims of a documentary that the theory of the coronavirus being of animal origin is extremely unlikely but that it was in fact lab-made
 - Article immediately argues against the Chinese government with the claim + invoking emotional language to amplify culpability.
 - “es altamente improbable que la causa de esta pandemia, por la que murieron más de 110.000 personas en todo el mundo, sea de origen animal, tal como insistió desde el primer día el gobierno de China.”

- The article is in reference to a documentary by The Epoch Times – a far right media company affiliated with the Falun Gong, known for anti-China, pro-Trump media.
 - The newspaper article then suggests that this means there are alternatives and room to question China’s official narrative
 - “deja an evidencia un camino alternativo a la voz oficial china al respecto”
- Article does acknowledge that there are links of the documentary to the Falun Gong, but does not put this under a negative light. It states that it is banned in continental China but places it in the context of it being founded by Chinese-Americans,
 - This would hint at US > China rhetoric
- Proceeds to explain all of the theory presented by the documentary and points at this being supported by various scholars and researchers from various institutions – most of these American.
 - Again, hinting at US > China rhetoric
- Highlights the fact that China concealed information for six weeks and once the virus was acknowledged, they promptly began a censorship and disinformation campaign
- Refers of Judy Mikovits to back the claims
 - Known for conspiracy theories
- Last remark is that none of these affirmations have been scientifically corroborated – but does not expand on it, remaining informative about the documentary’s affirmations.
 - Reporting on it as facts before disclaimer
- **Coronavirus: lecciones de Wuhan: empezar una cuarentena es difícil; terminarla, más aún**
 - 13/04/2020
 - Macarena Vidal
 - Purely informative on all the measures in place in Wuhan to contain potential for spread and avoid going back to lockdown. No opinion.
 - More emphasis on civilians abiding to instated measures rather than the regime’s role in this.
 - Could point at sternness from Argentinian media being directed at the regime, not the people nor the situation unless the regime is involved in the conversation.
- **Coronavirus: 5 efectos devastadores que la pandemia tendrá en las economías de América Latina (y 1 motivo para la esperanza)**
 - 13/04/2020
 - Cecilia Barria
 - Outlines the effects the pandemic will have in LAC economies.
 - Informative tone. Not opinionated.
 - When mentioning the role of China and the US, fears are more heightened with China facing economic downturn than the US as it would affect more countries.
 - But also fears about no influx of US dollars in the region
 - Does note that the pandemic would put into question the globalization model and have things move in a more positive direction in which the local public sector should play a bigger role.

- Pointing at regionalism rather than grander scheme at the international level.
- **Coronavirus: las estrictas medidas de Pekín por temor a un rebrote en China**
 - 14/04/2020
 - Nicolas Asfour
 - Informative about the spike in cases around China
 - BUT critical about China's efforts to protect Beijing, since measures were tightened because of two upcoming meetings of the CCP
 - “la decisión de la capital apunta primariamente a proteger del virus a la élite del Partido Comunista, en el poder en China.”
 - Protecting the elites as the priority
 - Again, pointing at press targeting the regime when it comes to any negatives.
- **Coronavirus: el FMI prevé en la Argentina la peor recesión desde 2009, con una caída del 5,7%**
 - 14/04/2020
 - Rafael Mathus
 - Informative about the economic downturn in the whole of LAC, emphasizing that it will be worst in Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela out of the region.
 - Says in the Argentina case it will be because of the economic troubles in 2018
 - Puts in context the economic troubles being faced by all its major economic partners. China as its biggest partner means uncertainty.
 - “extrema incertidumbre”
 - Notes Argentina's inability to secure foreign investment that could make public expenditure possible.
- **La pandemia pone en peligro la vida y la economía a la vez**
 - 15/04/2020
 - Alieto Guadagni
 - Talks about the effect of the pandemic on the economy and how that in turn has actually decreased pollution – having effects on the outlook for the pandemic.
 - Purely informative. Mentions that in LAC region this has a negative impact on the economy but on the other hand, it will help in reducing health complications and premature deaths due to pollution.
 - Outlines the need for policy changes that secure benefits long term
- **Seis días claves: la falta de advertencia de China sobre una probable pandemia de un nuevo coronavirus**
 - 15/04/2020
 - Europa Press
 - Reports on the delay to address the epidemiological situation in China, however, it has a less negative, critical tone than before.
 - Notes how it is not the only one, nor the worst, when it comes to failing to address.
 - “La demora entre el 14 y el 20 de enero no fue el primer error cometido en la gestión del brote por autoridades de China de todos los niveles, ni tampoco fue el retraso más grande, ya que gobiernos de todo el mundo tardaron semanas e incluso meses en responder al virus.”

- Does highlight the initial error as a crucial one – and that the Chinese regime could not have known.
 - “...podría haber sido difícil de determinar. Si las autoridades sanitarias dan la alarma demasiado pronto... pueden dañar su credibilidad al entenderse que han reaccionado de forma exagerada, mermando su capacidad de movilizar a la gente.”
- Does report on the fact that the authorities knew the situation could develop into a serious health crisis several days before they acknowledged it, which the newspaper refers to as a transparency issue.
- Does reprove of the regime for only reacting after they knew it had spread abroad, to Thailand, all while still downplaying the threat in public communications.
 - Says that these are grounds to back Trump’s accusations against the Chinese government.
 - “Esta demora podría impulsar las acusaciones del presidente norteamericano, Donald Trump, sobre que el secretismo del gobierno chino retrasó la respuesta global al virus.”
- However, the newspaper, once again, notes that even with the information, the US failed to address promptly.
 - “un tiempo que Estados Unidos desperdició.”
- States the statistics of how much the risk of spread could have been diminished if action had been taken more promptly but does not comment on it.
- Overall, less critical of the Chinese government than previous articles. More moderate approach.

Momentous exchange 3

- **Coronavirus: parte el primer vuelo a China en búsqueda de un millón de vacunas de la empresa Sinopharm**
 - 23/02/2021
 - Carla Vizzotti
 - Reports on the flight leaving Argentina to pick up Sinopharm vaccines in Beijing
 - Informative, relatively positive about the situation. Positive outlook on Chinese-made vaccines, not questioning anything about them.
 - Offers expert opinion on this to back the claims
 - "Es extremadamente segura, en los ensayos no hemos registrado eventos adversos serios, así que desde el punto de vista de la seguridad le puedo dar garantía".
- **Coronavirus: aterrizó en Beijing el vuelo de Aerolíneas que traerá un millón de vacunas de la empresa Sinopharm**
 - 24/02/2021
 - La Nacion – Política
 - Reports on the journey of an Aerolíneas Argentinas flight to Beijing to pick up the vaccines.
 - Hints at friendliness from Argentinian authorities’ part to China
 - The plane commemorated the Chinese New Year
 - “...especialmente planteado con un mensaje por el Año Nuevo chino.”

- Overall, just informative on the situation. No emotive language nor reference to either the Argentinian or Chinese government.
- **El Gobierno anunció el comienzo de la vacunación de los docentes**
 - 24/02/2021
 - Santiago Dapelo
 - Documenting the government's decision to extend vaccination to teaching staff as one of the first groups, after the scandal of only placing higher authorities as an initial group for vaccination.
 - Positive tone about the reception of Sinopharm vaccines, as it will help that purpose and bring recovery and normality.
 - “El 2020 fue un año excepcional y esta vacuna nos permitirá ir recuperando la normalidad que nos arrebató la pandemia.”
 - There was only one week between the authorization for use and the reception of vaccines.
 - Overall, more attention paid to the scandal of unfair vaccination schemes rather than the actual administration of Sinopharm vaccines.
- **Llegó desde Beijing el vuelo que trajo un millón de dosis de la vacuna Sinopharm**
 - 25/02/2021
 - Fabian Marelli
 - Reports on the actual reception of vaccines in Argentina
 - Purely informative on the journey, no mention of any opinions by the people present nor by the reporter.
 - Neutral tone, no acknowledgement of either the Chinese or Argentinian government's perspective.
- **China: las dudas que despierta el anuncio sobre el fin de la pobreza extrema**
 - 26/02/2021
 - BBC Mundo
 - Informative tone about Xi Jinping declaring that China had eradicated extreme poverty
 - However, article puts into question the credibility of the Chinese regime when it comes to statistics, especially given different metrics.
 - Highlights that China does not follow the metric stipulated by the World Bank
 - Could hint at being critical of China's divergent norms.
 - Also puts into question transparency around certain of the achievements
 - Moreover, puts into question the motive behind China's claims
 - Refers to an expert to explain how this is the easiest of goals Xi could achieve for the sake of image.
 - “erradicar la pobreza no sólo era uno de los grandes objetivos de Xi, sino que es el más fácil de lograr.”
 - Discredits China's narrative of poverty being the product of happenings prior to communism
 - Expert points at the instatement of the market economy as the biggest factor behind the widening gap between rich and poor.
 - Even uses this argument to put into question real development in China.
 - “la aportación de China a la economía mundial pasó del 1,5 % al 15,4% actual.

Lo que cabe preguntarse es quién controla toda esa riqueza generada.”

- **Admiten retrasos y falta de datos en el registro del plan de vacunación**
 - 26/02/2021
 - Jose Maria Costa & Lucila Marin
 - Comments on the issues with reaching vaccination goals in Argentina, pointing at logistics being the primary issue at the domestic level but also because of delays with many vaccine manufacturers.
 - Finishes on a relative positive note in Sinopharm, stating that their arrival might help the situation. But does not appear too optimistic.
 - “Todavía no se llegó al millón de vacunados... el promedio de vacunados por mes está muy lejos del que el Gobierno deseaba.”

Momentous exchange 4

- **Condenan a 18 años de prisión en China a un empresario multimillonario crítico del régimen de Xi**
 - 28/07/2021
 - Noel Celis
 - Reporting on the sentencing of a Chinese magnate, Sun Dauwu, that was critical of Xi’s regime and was accused of several acts against the regime.
 - Overall, neutral in tone and not using inflammatory language to describe the Chinese regime, but still there are implicit criticisms.
 - However, several things highlighted in the article point at stark ideational differences
 - Accuses the Chinese regime of doing these persecutions because of grander political goals for which norms need to be followed to avoid them even though they are impossible.
 - “los esfuerzos más amplios del gobierno... amordazar a los líderes empresariales y dominar al sector privado.”
 - Imposition of: “una serie de normativas empresariales imposibles de cumplir.”
 - Also, proceeds to put the many good acts by Sun Dauwu, after reporting on the situation.
 - This could point at efforts to counter the regime’s claims.
- **¿Se podrá informar libremente durante juegos Beijing 2022?**
 - 02/08/2021
 - Stephen Wade, for AP
 - Questions the Olympic Committee’s claim that the Games can take place without politics coming into play. Presents all the various concerns journalists have about reporting there, including personal safety.
 - Gives various instances in which foreign journalists faced threats
 - Also questions the selection of Beijing as the host city in the midst of accusations over human rights violations
 - Explains the allegations and states the bodies backing them up and China’s negation of them.
 - Overall, points at concerns over freedom of speech and is very negative about the Chinese regime’s tactics to control narratives, both around the games and the situation in Xinjiang.

- **A medida que aumentan los vientos en contra, China evalúa apoyo fiscal para proteger el crecimiento**
 - 03/08/2021
 - Gabriela Donoso
 - Points at China's economy being able to grow despite many factors fostered by the pandemic and natural disasters making it difficult.
 - “La economía china ha recuperado los niveles de crecimiento anteriores a la pandemia, impulsada por la sorprendente fortaleza de las exportaciones.”
 - Overall, points at a positive outlook of China's economy. Once again, pointing at this being a less contentious thing than many other aspects.
- **Desconcertados inversores temen que no haya nada fuera de límites en ofensiva regulatoria china**
 - 03/08/2021
 - Carlos Serrano
 - Reports on the Big Tech Chinese giants fears of more state control over that sector.
 - Potential of increased regulation translated to uncertainty for these companies
 - Critical of the language used by the Chinese state news agency, Xinhua, for its historical insensitivity
 - Hinting at issues with the agency as well as Chinese narratives
- **Sinovac anuncia instalación de planta para vacunas en Chile**
 - 04/08/2021
 - Esteban Felix
 - Reports on the construction of a Sinovac factory for producing vaccines in Chile, for the Latin America region.
 - Notes on the close relationship between China and Chile and how they got closer given arrangements to receive vaccines from China.
 - “Ambos países firmaron en junio de 2020 un contrato que asegura al país sudamericano 20 millones de dosis anuales, por tres años, hasta completar 60 millones de vacunas.”
 - It also puts in contrast Chile's vaccination portfolio, between Chinese-made vaccines and Western ones.
 - It actually highlights the positives that Chile had from administering Chinese vaccines
 - One of the most inoculated countries in the world, sharp decrease in new infections.
 - However, they also note the lower efficacy rates of Sinovac and ends the article on that note
 - Points at this being still a point of contention in Argentina.
 - Overall, informative tone about the situation – but a negative opinion is certainly implied based on the final remarks, even if positives acknowledged prior. No explicit negative opinion put forward though.
- **China reporta cifra más alta de nuevos casos covid desde enero, en medio de avance de delta**
 - 04/08/2021
 - Roxanne Liu & Ryan Woo
 - Critical of the Chinese approach of zero-covid, pointing at it being ineffective and costly

- “el enfoque de tolerancia cero de China al virus se estaba volviendo cada vez más costoso.”
 - Reports on the status of infections in China being on the rise, and notes that the regime has mostly been vocal about imported cases.
 - Overall, puts into question the zero-covid approach – the fact that this was published, points at public sentiments locally being along those lines.
- **Variante delta del coronavirus desafía la estrategia china**
 - 05/08/2021
 - Mark Schiefelbein
 - Reporting on how China will have to change its approach because of the Delta variant
 - Negative about China’s approach, from a primarily economic perspective
 - Too costly, too high an impact – and therefore suggests China needs to learn to deal with it like other countries.
 - “China necesita aprender a controlar el virus sin cerrar repetidamente la economía y la sociedad.”
 - “El mundo necesita aprender a convivir con este virus”
 - “China debe cambiar para crear barreras a la infección dentro de las comunidades aumentando las vacunas y tratando rápidamente a las personas infectadas mientras permite que los negocios y los viajes sigan adelante.”
 - Overall, negative about the approach but not necessarily critical of the Chinese regime ideationally. Advocating for the economy.
- **Xi dice China quiere aportar 2.000 millones dosis de vacuna covid-19 al mundo en 2021**
 - 05/08/2021
 - Janisse Huambachano & Manuel Farias
 - Reports on Xi’s various goals to reach vaccination goals globally: donating more Chinese-made vaccines to more countries, as well as donating money for COVAX funding.
 - Notes that China provided more than 770 million doses to various countries
 - States that Sinovac has made various agreements with a handful of countries to produce more vaccines that can target new variants.
 - Overall, informative, no opinion on Xi’s goal nor the vaccines nor the agreements.

Momentous exchange 5

- **Xi Jinping felicita a Petro una semana después de su victoria y anticipa un "nuevo inicio" con Colombia**
 - 27/06/2022
 - Europa Press
 - Reports on Xi Jinping congratulating Gustavo Petro for winning the presidential elections in Colombia.
 - Notes that in Xi’s congratulatory message, wishes for reinvigorated bilateral relations were expressed
 - The actual report on that is quite short, and the remaining of the piece focuses on the importance China allocates to Colombia in the LAC context.
 - Also notes that this does not necessarily mean reciprocity from Colombia’s part in the long run, given that Petro has responded to

many world leaders and therefore no inferences can be made about allegiances yet.

- However, it is still worth noting the special emphasis that the newspaper placed on this particular communication of Xi Jinping.
 - Overall, informative tone. Implicit evidence of concern over China's reach in budding new governments in LAC and how that could impact regional politics. Choosing to publish this points in that direction at the national Argentinian level.
- **China acusa al G7 de "sembrar la división" tras críticas contra Pekín**
 - 29/06/2022
 - Agence France-Presse
 - Reports on China's response after the G7 leaders criticized China's market practices and announced the need to be less dependent on Beijing.
 - Points that China claimed that these sorts of remarks were creating divisions and confrontation, disregarding sense of responsibility and morality.
 - “deseosos de sembrar división y confrontación, sin ningún sentido de la responsabilidad o la moralidad.”
 - This is voicing the same message China has sought to amplify abroad – building the narrative of morality-based leadership.
 - The same can be said about some other remarks in response to the G7 which highlighted the need for promoting globalization in a critical moment for the international community.
 - “El G7 debería allanar la globalización en lugar de alentar la división "en un momento crítico para la comunidad internacional.”
 - Overall, informative, neutral tone on the incident. However, inferences can be made about Chinese tactics at play. The choice to publish this could be interpreted as a way to prove the growing hostility and hint at China threat rhetoric.
- **Xi viaja a Hong Kong para el 25 aniversario del "retorno" tras dos años sin salir de China continental**
 - 30/06/2022
 - Europa Press
 - Reports on Xi Jinping's first time out of continental China since the pandemic began to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Hong Kong handover.
 - The article is informative about Xi's tour and speeches
 - Proceeds to describe the tensions Hong Kong has with continental China
 - Condemning Xi for expansionism with patriotic tones
 - “la reunificación de la "patria" china y los territorios que considera propios.”
 - Also makes inferences on Taiwan, calling Xi's aims in Taiwan continental aggression (“agresión continental”).
 - Highlights the losses in freedom of speech, civil liberties and the grip of the Hong Kong national security law over the population
 - Overall informative tone, but implicit criticisms based on the tensions as a result of Xi Jinping's goals. The emphasis on freedom of speech points at a trend in Argentinian press.
- **Avances de Rusia y China en África inquietan a la OTAN**

- 30/06/2022
- Agence France-Presse
- Reporting on the various concerns presented at a NATO summit in Madrid about China and Russia's growing presence in Africa
 - “Tanto Moscú como Pekín están utilizando la influencia económica, la coerción y los enfoques híbridos para promover sus intereses en la region.”
- The article focuses mostly on Russia's role in partaking in the instability of certain regions, China is not actually mentioned after the initial concern on rising influence.
- Overall, based on that, publishing this could be seen as an implicit criticism of growing Chinese influence overall, not necessarily just Africa. Especially as it is mentioned in the title and initial remarks but is not the focus.
- **Los servicios y la industria se reactivan en China tras relajar restricciones covid**
 - Agence France-Presse
 - Informative about the situation in the Chinese market as restrictions begin being lifted in Shanghai and Beijing in particular.
 - Mostly statistics without much comment
 - Points at the zero covid strategy still being abided to in China for the foreseeable future, even if it is the only major country still doing so, since it could mean unimaginable consequences.
 - No comment on the impact of this.
 - Overall, informative, neutral tone. Makes no references to effects of this outside of China.

Momentous circumstance 1

- **Los datos de la economía reflejan el precio que pagó China por su estrategia de “Covid Cero”**
 - 18/04/2022
 - Keith Bradsher, translated by Jaime Arrambide
 - Outlines the economic impact of the zero covid strategy for China's economy and what it could mean for its predictions and aims
 - Reports on the decreased production and consumption – no opinion just statistics.
 - States that all of this is bad news for the Chinese government, which had higher goals for economic growth this year
 - Notes the economic standstill all across local economies where the measures are strict
 - It does note how all of this can affect the global economy
 - Heighten the effects of inflation from disruption to supply chains that make production slower and results in less products available at a higher cost, especially due to long transit times from transport disruption.
 - China's economy not growing as much means less imports too, affecting export revenues.
 - It does not just focus on economic repercussions but also human ones for workers, such as all those trapped in different cities because of transit disruptions.

- Points at logistic problems the authorities are facing to actually run the quarantine procedures.
 - Overall, informative piece not critical of the government. However, despite being informative, by highlighting the negatives of the measures, it is possible to discern that there are negative sentiments around them, mostly because of economic repercussions. It is worth noting that while human costs were mentioned, they were not the focus, pointing at the economic side of things still being the most crucial.
- **China reporta las primeras muertes por Covid desde 2020 en la confinada Shanghái**
 - 19/04/2022
 - BBC Mundo
 - Reports on the Chinese government's announcement on the first reported deaths by covid since the start of the Shanghai lockdown
 - Describes the lockdown situation and all the measures in place to curve the spread
 - Notes that there were criticisms and discontent from the population in regards to how the restrictions were making food supplies scarce
 - Comments on how big a challenge the Shanghai lockdown is for China's zero covid strategy and contrasts it to the approach a vast majority of countries has adopted of living with the virus.
 - States that there are considerable doubts about the strategy being sustainable in the long run
 - Uses expert opinion to show how the deaths are something to be expected based on clinical evaluations and knowledge
 - Deaths were from people with underlying health conditions or not vaccinated
 - Puts into question whether this was the reason why the authorities made the deaths public – to motivate vaccination.
 - States that only half of the elderly population over 60 years old is vaccinated t
 - Puts into question the motivations to close the city, since zero covid is based on the virus being devastating for the population – and that if that really is not the case, then why close it?
 - “Porque hasta ahora este era un virus que las autoridades de Shanghái habían advertido que podría devastar a la población -¿por qué si no cerrarían la ciudad?”
 - Overall, points at criticism over the viability of zero covid and is implicitly critical of the Chinese government for not ensuring vaccination in risk populations. Moreover, it puts into question the whole narrative upon which zero covid rests – it being potentially devastating. Thus, it could be said that there is implicit suspicion of the Chinese government's motivations behind the strategy.
- **Lockdown de Shanghái por el Covid-19: personal de Carrefour duerme en el supermercado para mantener el abastecimiento**
 - 20/04/2022

- Hector Retamal
- Reports on that long working hours that Carrefour workers have because of it being one of the few shops open for the sale of goods
 - Details the extent of the work and the staff shortages that have prompted those actually in the store to be overworked.
 - However, article is not necessarily critical of this. It even points at positive opinions from the workers, who see their job as “social responsibility”
 - “a pesar de las largas horas, el personal se mantuvo optimista y vio su trabajo como una responsabilidad social.”
 - It also describes all the incentives and the good treatment Carrefour is offering
- Overall, informative and neutral, pointing at the negative but also the positive opinions. No criticisms expressed by the author of either measures or the government. Gives insight into the sentiments of workers.
- **El puerto de Shanghái sufre un enorme embotellamiento tras la dura cuarentena por Covid**
 - 22/04/2022
 - Cristina Orgaz
 - Reports on the many economic difficulties result of the strict measures in Shanghai and their impact on transport routes, both on land and sea shipments. The latter being the most impactful at a global scale.
 - Emphasizes Shanghai’s economic importance, but also how key its port is for supply chains worldwide
 - Notes on what all the economic consequences will be for Latin America
 - Despite demand for raw materials in China, it will not be possible to ship and meet it.
 - Shipment costs too high, difficulties securing containers, inflation...
 - Finishes on a relatively positive note on the fact the economic repercussions meant that the strict measures lasting long was unlikely.
 - Overall, neutral tone around the Chinese government and the measures themselves. Informative on the situation. However, concerns aplenty expressed about the economic impact of measures, pointing at a negative perspective on them because of their economic toll.
- **Shanghái promete mejorar suministro de alimentos y comercio**
 - 22/04/2022
 - Yu Bing
 - Reports on China’s efforts to loosen restrictions around particular elements in order to diminish negative impacts on supply chains (e.g. less controls for land transport drivers)
 - Also reports on the general state of virus propagation in the city. Neutral. Just statistics. No opinion.
 - Explains many of the economic measures the government is taking to alleviate economic concerns of business owners

- Overall, neutral and informative tone on the state of affairs. No comments nor opinions made on the measures nor the Chinese government.
- **Las dramáticas historias de los habitantes confinados de Shanghái que tratan de conseguir comida**
 - 26/04/2022
 - BBC Mundo
 - Reporting on the various things citizens in Shanghai have to do to be able to secure food and documenting their negative experiences
 - Negative tone used, even if primarily descriptive
 - “deben soportar” – “having to endure”
 - Notes the discontent from citizens, and the fact that messages had to be sent privately to the news outlet for fears of reprisals for criticizing the government
 - However they also note that there were submissions critical of the way Western news outlets were reporting on the situation
 - Reports on the physical barriers put in place to restrict freedom of movement and the buzz it created on Chinese social media
 - Notes that the presence of these to ensure hard lockdown could not be corroborated but proceed to use various personal accounts, highlighting the lack of transparency in the process.
 - Emotional language used because of personal feelings in descriptions of thoughts on the barriers.
 - “No creo que nadie en su sano juicio pueda sellar las casas de la gente” – “I don’t think anyone in their sane judgment could block off people’s homes.”
 - Finishes off on the fact that despite the measures initially keeping infection rates low, consequent closures struggled given that newer variants are more transmissible.
 - Overall, critical towards the Chinese government’s lack of transparency, poor respect for personal freedoms, and logistic failures to ensure food provisions. Emotional tone to emphasise the negatives used. Putting into question the viability and efficacy of the measures, pointing at disagreement on the zero covid strategy on the whole.
- **Nueva ola de Covid en China: la baja mortalidad genera dudas entre los especialistas (y qué podría explicarla)**
 - 26/04/2022
 - AP
 - Points at various expert opinions from different countries that put into question the official numbers reported by China about COVID mortality rate, minimising the situation in Shanghai
 - Draws comparisons to New Zealand, where the number is duplicated.
 - Notes that the indicators used by China are not adequate based on the policy they are following.
 - Cases detected would be more accurate to the zero covid strategy than number of deaths, which is what is being used.
 - Argues that the truer to reality comparisons point at China’s position being similar to that of many other countries, not as low as they claim.

- Overall, critical, negative tone about the Chinese government and raises concerns about transparency aplenty. Implicitly, this is a wider criticism around numbers throughout the whole of the pandemic, not just the Shanghai case, which points at general distrust sentiments.
- **Shanghái hace pruebas, busca erradicar el COVID**
 - 27/04/2022
 - AP
 - The article describes the actions in progress regarding the zero covid strategy in Shanghai, focusing on outlining the districts arrangement.
 - Highlights the lack of food and water in some areas and points at the impacts they are having in some areas already, as well as how they are leading to problems in other areas, such as panic buying.
 - Interestingly, it notes that this had a positive impact for local producers and yet it puts it under a negative light also given the difficulties it creates for the government to regulate supply distribution.
 - Final note is that the strategy worked well at the beginning of the pandemic, but that in the current situation the effectiveness of it is questionable.
 - Overall, it is mostly an informative piece. Even when discussing the negative impacts, it does not offer an opinion on the matter. However, it is worth noting that the negatives where opinions are expressed are actually towards the government and the strategy itself. Therefore, it is mildly negative, even if not overtly critical.
- **China y la tolerancia cero**
 - 27/04/2022
 - El Pais
 - The article starts fully supporting the measures taken back in 2020 in Wuhan that gave positive results at that time, pointing out that they were the only option feasible to flatten the infection curve.
 - However, it then focuses on the various new methods available that make strict lockdowns less necessary, with a special focus on vaccinations as well as the lower mortality rate from Omicron infections.
 - It actually defends vaccination as a strategy moving froward for China, pointing out that from a public health perspective, the zero covid strategy is not effective because of all the negative impacts.
 - It points at mostly health-based negatives, such as the lower availability of hospital resources for non-infectious diseases.
 - It does mention economic repercussions but they are not the focus.
 - And even when it does, it calls for a “self-inflicted recession” that Xi Jinping would be responsible for – it does not put it in global context.
 - “la tolerancia cero puede perjudicar al país hasta el extremo de que bien podría ponerlo al borde de una recesión autoinfligida.”
 - Overall, critical of the zero covid approach as well as Xi Jinping’s role in it. Moreover, it points at concerns resting mostly on the human cost of strict measures and their toll daily life, rather than putting emphasis on its impact on the world economy – economic concerns are treated as an isolated issue for China. This points at a larger ideational difference rather than an economic one.

- **Beijing endurece medidas COVID y ordena cierre de escuelas**
 - 28/04/2022
 - AP
 - It reports on the way the zero covid led to the closure of schools in Shanghai
 - focusing on the role of mass regular testing for all people as key to progress out of the pandemic
 - explains that the actions were taken by the government to reduce the infection curve and avoid saturation of the health system – no comment or opinion on this.
 - It then reports the general state of the lockdown in Shanghai and notes the lack of access to basic food items and water as well as inaccessibility to medical services for non-covid related diseases. It also notes the saturation of testing points.
 - Overall, informative. No comments nor opinions presented. Just descriptions of the general state of affairs.
- **China mantiene las restricciones fronterizas por la pandemia a medida que Pekín aumenta los controles**
 - 28/04/2022
 - Europa Press
 - It reports on the general state of measures and their impact on the population. Description of mass testing, online classes, and general lockdown rules that need to be abided to.
 - Does note that the measures being taken are not popular.
 - Notes that the measures are not just affecting locals but also people from abroad, as the restrictions to enter China got too demanding and as a result there was chaos in terms of flights out.
 - Overall, informative, and neutral article. The only remark that points at criticism is the fact that measures are not popular.

Momentous circumstance 2

- **Pekín, en "carrera contra el tiempo" para contener un feroz brote de covid**
 - 14/06/2022
 - Martin Quin Pollard & Ryan Woo
 - Reports on Beijing deciding to toughen measures shortly after relaxing them because of a spike in cases related to a bar – even if not at their strictest form, with a focus on mass testing.
 - Highlights that this causes concerns internationally because of China only starting to recover from the Shanghai lockdown and the hit that had on global supply chains
 - Reports on the criminal action the state took against the three people believed to have caused the spread by not following the stay at home rule, plus the bar getting its license revoked since it did not abide to all necessary health codes for operation.
 - Overall, informative and neutral tone. Does not express opinions on any of the events, nor criticizes the actions from the government. Economic concerns still pertinent based on this article though.
- **Xi asegura a Putin el apoyo de China en materia de "soberanía"**

- 15/06/2022
- Agence France-Presse
- Reports on Xi Jinping reassuring Vladimir Putin of supporting Russia in matters of sovereignty and security as well as other matters pertaining to fundamental interests and concerns during a phone call.
- Notes that there were no specifics around this claim from China's side, but Russia elaborated more in terms of economic repercussions due to Western sanctions.
 - Additionally, mentions that Moscow claimed that both heads of state discussed development of military relations and the construction of an international system that is truly multipolar and just.
 - “Xi y Putin también enfatizaron su intención de "construir un sistema de relaciones internacionales verdaderamente multipolar y justo”
- Points at this increased engagement being the result of China being the only country Russia could rely on.
 - Proceeds to explain that the previous phone call was just one day after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and notes that China has refused to refer to it as such and also blames the US and NATO for it.
- Argues that Chinese authorities seek to form an alliance to counter the US.
 - “Las autoridades chinas, cercanas al Kremlin con el que quiere formar un frente común contra Estados Unidos.”
 - Mentions that Xi Jinping has called for China and Russia to have closer ties for strategic coordination.
 - “Xi el miércoles... pidió una "coordinación estratégica más estrecha" entre Pekín y Moscú.”
- Finishes with a remark on Xi and Putin's friendship, and how they have met more than 30 times.
- Overall, informative on the topic, and critical of the motivations and actions of both countries, pointing at a negative opinion of both of them. Some mildly inflammatory claims used. Worth noting is the emphasis being placed on the common goals between both countries, and how that aligns with the narrative China has been pushing forward. There is also the mention of “fundamental interests”, which points at an ideational marker being in play. Implicitly, there are hints that there is reluctance to follow the front being fostered by China and Russia, given that their motivations were questioned.
- **Pekín declara victoria inicial ante el covid al aliviarse alza de casos ligada a bar**
 - 16/06/2022
 - Benjamín Mejías y Carlos Serrano
 - Reports on the Chinese authorities' claim of having won its first victory against the bar-related outbreak
 - Describes all the measures in place to deal with the Heaven Supermarket bar outbreak.
 - placing emphasis on the criminal repercussions for those that violated the stay at home order and tested positive afterwards.

- Also notes on the penalties faced by businesses not following proper health measures.
 - States that the lowering of infections is good for residents and the economy
 - “una bendición para los residentes y la economía de Pekín.”
 - Notes that going back to a prevention-focused approach in Beijing is a good sign and settles fears over economic uncertainty, like the Shanghai lockdown caused.
 - Emphasizes global fears of supply chain disruptions because of the measures
 - “han inquietado a los mercados mundiales y han avivado el temor a que se produzcan interrupciones en la cadena de suministro en China.”
 - Finishes noting that the Chinese economy has started to improve in various aspects after the general lockdowns April-June
 - Overall, informative. Not critical of the Chinese government, no negative language used to refer to the restrictions. Points at economic concerns being the primary ones. Positive language used to refer to the ease of restrictions – such as that being a “blessing” for the economy.
- **Conviviendo con la amenaza china en la primera línea de defensa de Taiwán**
 - 17/06/2022
 - Agence France-Presse
 - Describes the daily struggles of the Taiwanese inhabitants of the Penghu Islands – strategic land for defense, in case of aggression from the mainland.
 - Points out the way Mainland China thinks of Taiwan
 - States that aggression is more likely given the growing aggressiveness of China in the international sphere
 - “Su promesa de retomarla algún día, por la fuerza si fuera necesario, parece cada vez menos remota ante la creciente agresividad del gigante asiático en la escena internacional.”
 - However, notes that many locals are optimistic despite the frequent reminders of potential aggression – and in the case of it, they believe there is not much to do but accept it.
 - “Sus barcos rodearán las islas y ya estará. No hay nada que podamos hacer, sino aceptarlo”, dice un amigo de Chen, Wang Hsu-sheng.”
 - Adds expert opinions on the geopolitical importance and struggles of the island historically
 - Interestingly, adds a remark by a local that compares China to Russia – making invasion imminent
 - ““Los chinos son como los rusos. Lo que es tuyo es mío. Lo que es mío, sigue siendo mío”, asegura en referencia a la reciente invasión de Ucrania”.
 - Overall, negative of the Chinese government’s actions. Makes or refers to various inflammatory statements on their behaviour, painting aggression as an imminent truism. Opinion appears to be at wider state behaviour rather than Taiwan as an isolated situation.
- **China se enfrenta a una montaña de desechos médicos y sanitarios**

- 21/06/2022
- Agence France Presse
- Brief note on environmental impact of massive testing in China.
- Uses expert opinion to put massive testing under a negative light
 - “La cantidad de desechos médicos que es generada a diario es de una magnitud casi sin precedentes en la historia de la humanidad.”
- No positives of massive testing mentioned.
- Overall, negative tone around massive testing but not broader measures not the Chinese regime. Implicit criticism of it though, pointing at the testing being not only unnecessary, but very harmful – as no benefits are mentioned. Implicitly pointing at a potential change in opinion from fighting the virus to treating it as endemic and therefore negativizing anything approaches that suggest otherwise. Changing priorities at play.
- **Algunas ciudades chinas relajan mandatos de pruebas del covid**
 - 24/06/2022
 - Marion Giraldo
 - Reports on the changing approach to covid in China, with mass testing being replaced by regular preventative tests.
 - Points out that this is in response to the economic impact of strict measures through March into May
 - Notes the contentiousness of testing though, pointing at the financial burden of regular testing on several local governments – at the national level, higher health authorities have also called for regular testing being unnecessary in areas with no infections.
 - Overall, neutral tone, and informative on the situation. However, it shows the contentiousness of measures in China at various levels around testing, which could point at implicit negative opinions on mass testing, especially given the emphasis on the economic tolls of such extensive testing.
- **Shanghái registra cero contagios por primera vez desde el brote de covid**
 - 25/06/2022
 - Agence France Presse
 - Article on the situation in Shanghai, reporting that for the first time since March, there were no new domestic infections reported in the city and how that resulted in a further relaxation of measures.
 - Emphasis on how all of this plays into a return to normal
 - Using negative language to refer to the role of measures in that process.
 - “el retorno a la normalidad se vio entorpecido por la reinstauración de restricciones en algunos distritos.” – referred to as a “hindrance” or “obstruction” to return to normal.
 - It also gives insight into the situation in Beijing, focusing on the impact on schooling.
 - Overall, no negative opinions on the Chinese government nor their reasoning for the zero covid strategy. However, based on the negative language used around the role of measures, it is possible to conclude that the approach has shifted towards seeing them as a hindrance to going back to normal.
- **La jaula invisible. Cómo China extrema su vigilancia para intentar “predecir” el futuro**
 - 27/06/2022
 - Paul Mozur, Muye Xiao & John Liu

- Critical of all the methods the Chinese government can use for surveillance of its citizens because of technological advances.
 - Points at how this surveillance not only helps in the cause against actual crime, as the regime claims, but also endangers political dissidents, ethnic minorities, and even people with mental illness.
 - Also points at how all of this is a violation of privacy
 - “...sirven para justificar una vigilancia asfixiante y la violación de la privacidad.”
 - Criticizes the role Xi Jinping has played in this, and puts surveillance as a problematic for the case of Xinjiang as well as the lockdowns because of covid.
 - “...aplicando políticas tecno- autoritarias para aplastar la agitación étnica en la región occidental de Xinjiang y encerrar al pueblo chino en una de las cuarentenas más severas del mundo.”
 - Describes in detail the new security technologies being employed and outlines the new surveillance strategy
 - Points at impunity and transparency being a major issue
 - “la policía opera con total opacidad e impunidad.”
 - “La mayoría de las veces la gente no sabe que está siendo observada.”
 - No need for accountability in China, nor are warrants needed for employing personal information for criminal profiling.
 - Criminal profiles being born out of this surveillance are a reality
 - Criticizes how the surveillance software is automating and furthering existing prejudices in Chinese society and result in wrong condemnations that channel those very prejudices.
 - Overall, extremely negative and critical about the Chinese government given concerns over privacy and how the increased surveillance could lead to less civil liberties and less possibility for transparency. Critical of Xi Jinping’s state security goals as they pertain to this mass surveillance.
- **Actividad de las fábricas y los servicios de china en junio se expande por primera vez en cuatro meses**
 - 29/06/2022
 - Javier Leira
 - Reports on the reactivation of factories in China and its positive effects on the economy after the slowdown that lasted three months
 - Notes that despite signs of growth, there are still elements going against China’s recovery, namely the state of the Chinese real estate market, low consumer spending, and fears over what an increase in infections and repeat waves of infections could mean.
 - Also notes that Chinese manufacturers have faced high prices of raw materials, higher market competition abroad with foreign manufactories, and lower demand for Chinese-made goods worldwide because of all related delays.
 - Overall, informative, and neutral tone. No comments nor opinions on the government, the zero covid policy, nor the challenges themselves. However, it shows interest on the state of the Chinese economy. Implicitly, this could

mean that this interest is because of its role in the global economy, not necessarily domestic concerns being seen as too important.

- **"Tranquilizador" o "delirante", las reacciones de los hongkoneses al discurso del líder chino**

- 01/07/2022
- Reports on the reactions to Xi Jinping's visit to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong and his claims that democracy has improved after being under British rule.
 - Points to negative perspectives on this
 - All of the political instability of the past three years, protests against the Hong Kong national security law, dissidents fleeing because of fear of imprisonment.
 - “La insistencia de Xi de que la democracia ha florecido pese a los años de represión política es recibido con desdén por quienes se han visto afectados por el férreo control de Pekín.”
 - “...bajo dominio británico, la ciudad nunca tuvo una democracia completa, pero que ahora "hemos perdido tanto la democracia formal como su sustancia,”
 - But also notes on positive perspectives
 - Mostly from the pro-Beijing government.
 - Claims of supporting the “one country, two systems” arrangement – but questionable
 - Perspectives that there are shared interests between Beijing and Hong Kong
 - “comparte con el presidente chino que Hong Kong "no puede permitirse el lujo caer en el caos””
 - Overall, informative and neutral tone, balanced argument showing both positive and negative perspectives. Based on the article, it is possible to discern that there are implicit concerns over China's claims, especially anti-imperial narratives that compare conditions to colonial times and placing China in a moral higher ground despite this not being the case.

Chile

Momentous exchange 1

- **Fuera de Hubei, epicentro de la epidemia: cae el numero de nuevos contagios por coronavirus en China**

- 10/02/2020
- Janina Marcano
- Informative overall, rather neutral tone on contagion statistics in Hubei, lower numbers. Statistics for other provinces mentioned, no comparison.
- Implied comparison of China with other countries in the success of efforts
 - “se reportaron menos casos nuevos en ese país, un posible indicio de que la expansión del virus podría estar remitiendo mientras varios países redoblaban sus esfuerzos por contenerlo”.
- Acknowledgement of the WHO communicating on China – neutral
- Reporting on China's communications on the believed efficacy of its containment efforts
 - Key words: “surtiendo efecto”, “gestion estricta”

- Mention of expert on the matter that it is too soon to claim a slowdown in the pandemic
 - Countering China’s communication, but done informatively.
- Second opinion of another expert claiming that downward trend could indeed be warranted to China’s efforts, but the trend moving forward was hard to predict.
- Both experts agreeing that proceeding with caution was the way forward. Balanced argument for putting forward both perspectives.
- American expert mentioned to make inferences on what could happen moving forward. Positive outlook but not credited to anything in particular.
- Overall informative and neutral
- **China: Otros frentes del coronavirus**
 - 10/02/2020
 - El Mercurio – Editorial
 - Opinion piece leaning positively towards China for its efforts while shedding light on the political and economic repercussions of the virus.
 - Key argument: “pocos países del mundo están realmente capacitados para gestionar el brote de una enfermedad infecciosa de estas características y a esta escala. Pero China ha demostrado un importante despliegue de recursos humanos y materiales.”
 - Comparison to others. China as better despite the costs of the approach.
 - Key words: “voluntad política”, “capacidad de gestión”, “intelecto”,
 - Key argument: China struggling means Chile struggling.
 - “Y aunque en general se apela al optimismo, aún no hay total certeza sobre las repercusiones que esto tendrá para nuestra economía.”
 - Implied disagreement on the entities that put into question China’s transparency
 - “el gobierno de Xi Jinping ha sido blanco de duras críticas por su manejo de la información y por —supuestamente— haber desestimado las primeras advertencias sobre la aparición del coronavirus.”
 - Key word: “supuestamente”
 - Final argument: Since the effects of the pandemic will affect everyone, it is important to support China
 - “en la medida que la enfermedad se siga extendiendo, también lo harán sus consecuencias. Por eso, es relevante que la comunidad internacional no deje sola a China en medio de esta crisis aún en desarrollo.”
- **Francisco Silva y la CPC: “Si me lo ofrecen, yo estoy dispuesto a considerarlo seriamente”**
 - 11/02/2020
 - Matías Berríos
 - Interview with the president of Grupo Security and the Chile-China Bilateral Business Council around the elections ahead of nominating the new leader of the *Confederación de la Producción y del Comercio*.
 - Informative on the economic toll of the pandemic
 - States that Chilean businesses were running efforts to produce and export masks and antibacterial gel to China in solidarity.

- Implied good relations with the country
- **Exportadores valoran reactivacion en puertos de China, pero autoridades piden cautela**
 - 11/02/2020
 - C. Undurraga, J.P. Silva, T. Vergara, & S. Henriquez
 - Businesspeople from various leading Chilean exporters hopeful for China's efforts to reactivate ports.
 - Positive about China's efforts
 - “creemos que cuando China se recupere sera rapido”
 - Calls for donating to China
 - Good relations stated
 - “siempre hemos tenido una buena relacion”
 - Caution still the priority
 - “cautos”, “aun es pronto para hacer un balance de la situacion”.
- **Restricciones sanitarias aplicadas por China amenazan la temporada de exportacion: 15 mil langostas para el mercado Chino estan retenidas en Juan Fernandez por coronavirus.**
 - 14/02/2020
 - Mauricio Silva
 - Relatively negative tone on the measures, as they are affecting the Chilean exports and therefore the economy
 - “amenaza la temporada”
 - Acknowledges value of China as a partner for communities and that there are not enough alternatives
 - “no hay suficientes mercados alternativos”
 - Urging Chilean authorities to facilitate export
 - “apoyar el proceso exportador de productos con dificultades de acceso a China”
- **Bolsas globales moderaron perdidas por temor a contagio**
 - 14/02/2020
 - Pablo Guarda
 - Discusses the negative impact of the risk of the pandemic spreading on the stock market
 - Neutral, informative.
- **La medicina ancestral china contra el coronavirus**
 - 15/02/2020
 - Sui-Lee Wee
 - Negative perspective on China's efforts to popularize Chinese traditional medicine as an alternative
 - Informative at first about China's plan
 - Then proceeds to question
 - “incertidumbre cientifica”, “no queda claro como funciona la ciencia detras de estas medicinas”,
 - Critical of Chinese traditional medicine's use of wildlife and how it could be more problematic in this context
 - References to the Wuhan wet market
 - Criticizes how it could drive demand for wild meats.
 - Critical of previous failures of Chinese traditional medicine
 - References to Nature journal and the renal failure induced by herbs taken by women to lose weight

- Compares to Hong Kong to mark another negative
 - Implied comparison with the use of “region semiautónoma de China” – implied openness to other ideas
 - “no están convencidos de que las medicinas tradicionales chinas puedan ayudar”.
- **Tension entre China y EE.UU. lleva al gasto militar global a su mayor alza en una década**
 - 15/02/2020
 - Alberto Millán
 - Informative, highlights the China-US tensions and how that has led them to be the top spenders
 - However, most of the threat rhetoric centers around Russia, not China.
 - Describes the situation in LAC but places Chile only in regional context, not global.
- **Secretario de Defensa de EE.UU.: China es una “creciente amenaza” para el orden mundial.**
 - The Associated Press & Europa Press
 - 16/02/2020
 - Informative, highlights the China-US tensions from a relatively neutral standpoint
 - But, places US as the main instigator in tensions by starting the article on the inflammatory remarks made by Mark Esper
 - Then reports on Wang Yi’s response to Esper
 - Decided to highlight his remarks on international cooperation
- **Cancelación de vuelos en China afecta a Chilena**
 - 16/02/2020
 - Cedida
 - Discusses the situation of a Chilean student struggling to secure a way out.
 - Neutral. No mention of either government.
- **China evalúa suspender su principal reunión política del año por coronavirus**
 - 18/02/2020
 - Colomba Sistek
 - Informative, relative victimization of China when describing the importance of the meeting and how it might need to be cancelled
 - “el brote de coronavirus tiene una nueva víctima a la vista: la sesión anual del Congreso del Pueblo.”
- **Gobierno estima menores ingresos y caídas en precios para próximos envíos de fruta desde China**
 - 18/02/2020
 - Carolina Undurraga
 - Mildly positive. Discusses the drop in income but does not see it as a loss.
 - “gusta el término de hablar de menos ingresos, no de pérdida.”
 - Does point at the need to diversify the market, suggesting Southeast Asia as a potential market
 - But this is just a possibility
 - “a lo mejor”
 - Discussed the first technical roundtable of major guilds and government agencies to minimize the impact of the coronavirus on exports to China.

Momentous exchange 2

- **Denuncian desaparicion de criticos de la gestion China de la pandemia**
 - 07/05/2020
 - Lucas de la Cal
 - Detailed account of how many activists and citizens that had brought attention to the reality of poor management in early stages of the pandemic in Wuhan experienced forceful disappearances.
 - Neutral, informative tone – does not put forward an opinion on the matter.
- **China y Estados Unidos se esfuerzan para mejorar su imagen en medio de la pandemia**
 - 09/05/2020
 - Nicolás García de Val
 - Points out that both US and China were criticized for their epidemiological management, hinting at a neutral tone, and both were making efforts to minimize the hit on their reputations.
 - Both under scrutiny equally
 - Makes more inferences on Latin America in relation to China than to the US
 - For US:
 - “Trump Tambien ofrecio apoyo a paises como filipinas, El Salvador, y Honduras.”
 - For LAC:
 - [China] “se esforzo por... enviar ayuda a los paises mas afectados de Europa asi como a varias naciones de America Latina y Africa: la llamada diplomacia de las mascarillas”.
 - “la crisis economica que provocara la pandemia podria ocasionar que Beijing refuerce su influencia en partes de Africa, Europa oriental, America Latina, y el sudeste Asiatico.”
 - Puts forward an argument against China’s mask diplomacy efforts by a renowned China expert, Elizabeth Economy.
 - Only to then put forward a counterargument backed by two organisations that China will reinforce its influence abroad, where countries are less willing to make an enemy out of one of the world’s most powerful economies.
 - Overall, neutral tone and balanced argument. Informative in nature.
- **Naciones Unidas alerta sobre crecientes actos de discriminacion: “xenofovirus”, la ola de racismo que avanza junto a la pandemia**
 - 13/05/2020
 - Jean Palou Egoaguirre
 - Detailed reporting on the struggles of Asian and Asian-descent people in the US and Europe because of racist attacks sparked because of the pandemic
 - Focuses mostly on Trump’s role for enabling it in the US
 - Implied moderate criticism of those places for putting too much emphasis on that and then discussing instances on racism in Latin America but not towards Asian community
 - Stronger implication because of the use of “como el virus, el racismo tambien es altamente contagioso y tiene alcance global”
 - Not much time spent describing the situation in LAC or even Chile
 - “En America Latina... creciente estigmatizacion de los migrantes venezolanos”
 - “en Chile, miembros de la diaspora Haitiana han denunciado discriminacion en los controles sanitarios.”

- It does shed light on the fact that discrimination also arose in China, especially towards black people
 - However there is hesitancy implied by the use of the words “pero ni siquiera China esta al margen de esta pandemia del racismo”
 - Implying it is “al margen” in other aspects.
 - Moreover, even when discussing the racism situation in China, the article refers back to how Trump is still linked to this, using a comment by an American scholar, Gorgon Chang.
 - “Trump ha avivado los prejuicios raciales en EEUU, hacienda que sea acceptable para otros hacer lo mismo”
 - “otros paises se sienten con el derecho de actuar del mismo modo”.
- Overall, more critical of the US than of China in this respect. Even if not positive of China necessarily, it does not tackle the negatives with the same sternness as it does others.
- **“China debe asumir su responsabilidad por el encubrimiento inicial de la informacion”**
 - 14/05/2020
 - Hugo Alconada
 - Interview with dissident Ai Weiwei, originally with Argentinian La Nacion newspaper
 - Interesting given that he is not only critical of China’s response despite having criticized the regime aplenty on other examples of mismanagement. He is only critical of the West because of ongoing lack of transparency as well as own issues that it fails to address.
 - Critical of the health systems of the US and Britain
 - “El Sistema de salud debe ser mejorado en muchos lugares, como Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña”
 - Directly asks opinion on China’s efforts to block information
 - He says that China must assume responsibility for the initial but does not blame China because each country has its own terms for control and management of information.
 - Says the similar struggles are in place in the US and UK
 - Proceeds to outline many examples in which truth was also concealed in the West
 - Finishes off on an overall criticism of systems, not of nations
 - Overall it could be said that the choice of publishing this interview is interesting, as it is critical of both sides, not just China at a time that other news outlets focused on the latter.
- **Trump lanza su mayor amenaza contra China y plantea romper relaciones bilaterales**
 - 15/05/2020
 - Nicolás García de Val
 - In reference to a Trump interview with Fox News
 - Informative about the state of US-China relations, relatively neutral tone
 - Accusations of the US towards China for its poor handling early in the pandemic
 - Soured economic relations
 - However when referencing back to Chile in this context, the Chinese perspective seems to be emphasized more

- Outlines the on-going tensions US-China because of the coronavirus and puts forward other inflammatory actions from US' part
 - Agreement with a Taiwanese tech firm, TSMC, to build a tech supply factory in Arizona, as Chinese firms get pushed out.
- Final message by referring to scholar Jessica Chen that the common good is at stake
 - “todas las acciones que los dos países tomen contra el otro tienen un peso doble por su relevancia mundial a futuro”

Momentous exchange 3

- **Uso de Pfizer solo en la tercera edad pone en riesgo meta de vacunacion y presiona a Sinovac**
 - 22/01/2021
 - Max Chávez & Judith Herrera
 - Documenting on the Ministry of Health's approach to the upcoming mass vaccination campaign
 - Despite Sinovac having been approved for use at all age ranges by the Instituto de Salud Publica, the health ministry would follow the recommendations by experts in the institute that there were not enough grounds for using them with the elderly.
 - This is seen as a negative by the newspaper as it could compromise the goal of mass vaccinating risk populations
 - “podria comprometer la meta de vacunar al 31 de marzo a los cerca de dos millones de adultos mayores que forman parte del Segundo grupo de riesgo prioritizado.”
 - Notes on Pfizer being unable to meet demand in Chile and stalling vaccination efforts
 - However this is not necessarily framed negatively for the Chilean context alone as they outline the situation being problematic, especially in the EU
 - Moreover, they do not pit it against China's efforts in supply.
 - Reports that the situation could change and the ministry might be persuaded to use Sinovac more because of the expected 4 million doses that could arrive to speed up vaccination efforts
 - Reports on ongoing trials to test the vaccine on that group at the most prestigious university in Chile, since the health authority emphasized the need for that
 - “a pedido de la autoridad sanitaria se ha puesto especial énfasis en analizar los efectos de Sinovac en adultos mayores”
- **Envios de cerezas sufren traspie en China traz versiones sobre hallazgos de trazas de covid-19**
 - 24/01/2021
 - Carolina Undurraga
 - Informative on the concern from the Chilean side, no reference to official Chinese sources as unconfirmed
 - But still, very worrisome – which points at market losses being a primary concern for Chile.
- **Exportadores reconocen frenazo ev ventas de cerezas en China y proyectan impacto en empleo del sector**
 - 25/01/2021

- Manuel Herrera
- Informative in Chile's concern about missing out on the best time of the year for cherry sales in China – urging for resolving the matter promptly at the Chile level though.
 - “en medio de semanas clave para la temporada de las cerezas en China, mercado a donde se destina mas del 90% de los envios de la fruta roja”
- **Pandemia, desigualdad, y China, temas clave en inauguracion de Agenda Davos**
 - 26/01/2021
 - El Mercurio – Economía y Negocios
 - Interestingly, starts off the article by referring to China
 - “presidente Chino abogo por multilateralismo y evitar una Guerra Fria”
 - Giving most importance to China and its regime
 - “el protagonista de la jornada, Xi Jinping”
 - Refers back to China's growth in spite of the pandemic
 - Pits it against the US
 - “fracas de la guerra comercial contra Trump”
 - Overall, focusing on China and with no criticisms, therefore positive.
- **Gobierno contacta a autoridades chinas tras drastica caida en ventas de cereza en ese pais**
 - 26/01/2021
 - Rubén García
 - Detailed account of all efforts the Chilean government and private sector entities being affected would partake in to improve the situation in China
 - Inconformity with Chilean government's response from the private sector, but not China's.
- **Merkel pone en “los valores” el limite de la cooperacion con China**
 - 27/01/2021
 - Reuters
 - Referring back to Davos, reporting on Merkel's remarks about relations with China at the economic level being more just, reciprocal and transparent because of the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment
 - News report then points towards another remark that Xi Jinping's definition of multilateralism is different to Merkel's
 - “ambas concepciones chocan en valores fundamentales”
 - Plus, these result on limited cooperation.
 - The emphasis on the remarks would imply that there are fundamental values at stake when engaging in the multilateralism that China sponsors –hinting that Chile's fundamental values could keep cooperation with the EU from intensifying as it could have those clashes.
- **Venta de cerezas en China registra leve mejoría, pero precios siguen bajos**
 - 27/01/2022
 - Carolina Undurraga
 - Reports on the campaign that made this possible and gives credit to China for making it possible in part
 - “producto de las nuevas publicaciones positivas... publicaciones de expertos chinos en seguridad alimentaria... a traves de la Television Oficial de China”
 - Ends on noting positive perspective from the Chilean businesses' side about cooperation with China

- “la industria confía en que el trabajo en conjunto entre los gobiernos de Chile y China nos permitiera recuperar la confianza de los consumidores y distribuidores”.
- Overall, positive attitude towards China’s input.

Momentous exchange 4

- **Los “purgados” del coronavirus en China**
 - 17/06/2021
 - Lucas de la Cal
 - Negative about China’s efforts to curve the virus in Guangzhou
 - “China espera volver a presumir su política de covid zero”
 - “medidas draconianas”
 - “castigos a funcionarios”
 - Referring to the increased supervision and investigation of authorities that failed to perform their duty properly according to higher-level officials as political purges
 - “la purga política tras los brotes es una práctica habitual en China”
 - Proceeds to detail accounts going back to Wuhan and point at the high numbers of officials that were fired, detained, or received political punishments.
 - No opinion on this – but shock value adding to negative.
- **China acelera la carrera al enviar a tres astronautas a su propia estación espacial**
 - 18/06/21
 - Amalia Torres
 - Relative positive tone towards China and relative negative tone towards US
 - Pitting its efforts against the US – space race because of US not allowing Chinese astronauts in the International space station
 - “pone presión a la NASA”
 - Using expert opinions to highlight China’s technological competency
 - “habla de lo avanzados que están los Chinos”
 - “demostrar que [China] es capaz”
 - Finishes off by pitting these novel efforts against the current state of space exploration
 - “La EEI ya tiene dos décadas y ha demostrado desgaste... si se desmantelara, China sería el operador de la única estación espacial activa.”
- **China detiene a cinco directivos de medio prodemocracia en Hong Kong**
 - 18/06/2021
 - Eva Luna Gatica
 - Informative on the raids on Apple Daily following the instatement of Hong Kong national security law
 - Negative tone based on the use of: “la punta de lanza de la represión generalizada contra los críticos de China en Hong Kong.”
- **Brote de covid-19 en puerto chino sube presión a transporte marítimo y retrasaría envíos a Chile**
 - 18/06/2021
 - Marco Gutierrez
 - Informative about the stresses on sea shipments because of the reduced operations in Yantian port

- Minimising potential for negative opinion on China's measures by comparing the situation to Latin America in terms of how many containers can be moved at the ports
 - “su tamaño es relevante si se compara, por ejemplo, con puertos latinoamericanos”
- Offers positive outlook by providing solutions at the regional level
- **China, exitos historicos en el alivio de la pobreza**
 - 19/06/2021
 - Niu Qingbao
 - Opinion piece by Chinese ambassador to Chile, Niu Qingbao
 - Linking China's presence in LAC to reduced poverty, with the BRI at the forefront of initiatives
 - “China seguira fortaleciendo los intercambios y cooperaciones en materia de la reduccion de la pobreza con los paises de America Latina, incluyendo Chile, en el marco de la construccion conjunta de la Franja y la Ruta”
 - Alludes to poverty reduction as a “common goal” – and one that China has been able to make a lot of progress in domestically, pointing at that this success not only being replicable elsewhere, but being a rightful possibility.
 - States 3 strategies that made this possible in China
 - “la valiosa experiencia desarrollada en las practicas de China pertence al mundo”.
 - Notes China's efforts at the international level to reduce poverty – with the BRI being one of the predominant ones
 - In relation to achieving the goal that is the community of shared future for mankind and poverty reduction as a shared goal.
 - “contribuyendo a la construccion de una comunidad con un futuro compartido para la humanidad sin pobreza y desarrollo comun.”
- **Comunismo made in Chile**
 - 20/06/2021
 - Letter to the editor by Carlos Alberto Vivanco
 - Use of positive words when referring to China's system, comparing it to Chile's aspirations
 - “mentalidad y disciplina chinas”
- **Saltan exportaciones de vino a China**
 - 21/06/2021
 - Eduardo Moraga
 - Positive tone about China being behind the sharp increase in wine exports
 - “buenas noticias desde China”
 - “impulso muy atractivo para Chile”
 - “crecimiento tremendamente atractivo”
 - “conyuntura muy propicia para Chile”
 - “China ya es un mercado lider”
- **Investigacion dice que cuentas falsas impulsan narrativa oficial de China en redes sociales**
 - 22/06/2021
 - Javier Middleton Benzanilla
 - Article highlighting Beijing's use of Twitter and Facebook to have echo chambers of what their diplomats post to heighten or defend Beijing's actions.

- Worth noting is the newspaper's approach to discussing Xinjiang in the context of the type of messages being echoed on social media
 - “en referencia a la region China donde, segun algunos paises, habria una violacion a los derechos humanos.”
 - “segun algunos paises” – not making Chile's position clear, plus using allegedly.
- Refers to China's need to “tell the story well” = “contar bien la historia”
 - Gives background on the strategy and how it provided the context for wolf diplomacy to surge
 - Explains the role of the wolf diplomats in systematically ridding off theories that make China responsible for COVID-19 and fight off accusations on Xinjiang
 - “rebatir las acusaciones sobre las supuestas violaciones a los derechos humanos en Xinjiang.”
- Points that China is not the only country that employs these means to shape narratives online, but also Russia and Iran
- Overall tone is informative, not necessarily critical of China, but it is implied to be based on the references to expert opinions on the dangers to democratic states
 - “esto crea desafios para los estados democraticos que valoran un entorno de informacion abierto”
- **Dudas sobre la eficacia de vacunas chinas para evitar contagios obligan a reforzar la prevencion**
 - 24/06/2021
 - Janina Marcano
 - Reaction piece to an article published in the New York Times that questioned the preparedness of various countries where the population had been inoculated with Chinese-made vaccines primarily.
 - It does not approach this as a negative for Chile necessarily but highlights the need to abide to more self-protection methods in conjunction to vaccines, by referring back to expert opinions
 - “esto pone de relieve que las medidas de autocuidado como usar la mascarilla y evitar aglomeraciones deben estar a la par de la vacunacion”
 - “la vacunacion no es la solucion absoluta y debemos seguir protegiendonos con medidas de autocuidado.”
 - They also use expert opinions to question the claims that the pandemic situation in the global north might be better because of the use of other vaccines
 - “posiblemente la baja circulacion del virus se deba a varios factores y no solamente a la vacunacion”
 - “los paises en Europa tienen un bajo porcentaje de la población vacunada... indica que la baja tasa de infeccion no estaria dada unicamente por este factor sino que Tambien por factores climaticos”
 - “estas disparidad Tambien podrian tener que ver con la aparicion de variantes”
 - In the Chilean case they put an expert opinion that the slowdown of vaccination might also be a factor
 - Overall focus is not on the lower effectiveness of Chinese vaccines but other factors.

- “se debe buscar una estrategia para contrarestar la desventaja de la vacuna en su baja efectividad para prevenir contagio”

Momentous exchange 5

- **EE.UU y China chocan en Honduras, con Taiwan como fondo**
 - 27/11/2021
 - Jose Tomas Tenorio
 - Relatively neutral tone to discuss how Honduras could become the new focus on the struggle for influence between China and the US
 - “ambos buscan ejercer su influencia en la nacion centroamericana”
 - However, it refers to those still maintaining relations with Taiwan, and therefore aligning more with the US, as a “club”
 - “un club cada vez mas reducido de naciones en Centroamerica y el Caribe que mantienen relaciones con Taiwan, que es respaldado por EE.UU.”
 - States that the shift towards establishing relations with China became less persistent after a visit to the country by a US political authority
 - To which China responded by accusing US of “arm-twisting” before the election
 - States that there is an on-going competition for influence in Latin America but makes no references to Chile nor builds the argument – maintaining things neutral.
- **China amplia su control a las tecnologicas: pediria a Didi dejar la bolsa de Nueva York**
 - Agencias
 - 27/11/2021
 - Relative negative tone by using “amplia su control” as well as “politica de control”, “organism de control” in reference to the demands being put forward by the Cyberspace Administration of China on Didi to move out of the US and meet requirements as they would in China.
 - Builds on similar issues being faced by other Chinese megatech companies in an informative tone.
- **Tengo plena confianza en las exportaciones de frutas chilenas a China, sobre todo las cerezas**
 - 29/11/2021
 - Patricia Vildosola
 - Communication by Chinese ambassador to Chile, Niu Qingbao to address concerns on potential market changes
 - Positive note in the midst of uncertainty because of fears of economic losses, pointing at China’s core interests that it voices abroad
 - “formar una comunidad de intereses con sus contrapartes... para lograr beneficios mutuos y ganancias compartidas”
 - “fortalecer la comunicacion”
 - “promover la cooperacion”
 - “respeto mutuo, beneficio mutuo, y ganancia compartida”
 - “acelerar el desarrollo de la asociacion estrategica integral”
 - Points at the positive relations China-Chile historically and the need for them to continue being positive and become stronger

- “China y Chile compartimos una Amistad tradicionalmente consolidada... se ha fortalecido con el tiempo”
- “China y Chile pueden fortalecer aun mas los intercambios intergubernamentales”

Momentous circumstance 1

- **Confinamiento en Shanghai alarma a las industrias y al comercio**
 - Efe
 - 30/03/2022
 - Informs on the foreseen phases of the Shanghai lockdown and the government’s goal from the measures
 - Expresses concerns on economic repercussions
 - “El cierre... amenaza la produccion y la economia”
 - “...ha provocado una sensación de inseguridad en los mercados financieros ante una desestabilizacion economica.”
 - “preocupación ante el posible retraso en la producción, preocupando a inversores locales e internacionales”
 - However, refers back to expert opinion to defend measures, given that localized lockdowns are actually the result of wanting to minimize even larger economic repercussions
 - “estos confinamientos sectorizados responden a la voluntad de evitar un gran impacto económico”.
 - Overall, informative tone – implicit support of these measures given the defense towards the end of the article, pointing at a positive opinion on them. However, considerable economic concerns also discernible, suggesting that opinion on measures could change if those concerns grew.
- **Rebote de coronavirus en China endurece las normas en Shanghai**
 - 04/04/2022
 - Informative about the measures residents in Shanghai will have to face given the lockdown
 - There is an economic concern implied based on all the inferences made on Shanghai’s importance in that matter.
 - Referred to as China’s economic capital – “la capital económica de China.”
 - Slight questioning of the measures, given that it puts the number of cases in comparison to other places, and brings up the sustainability of the zero covid approach – even if admitting to its successes.
 - “el número de casos de covid en China sigue siendo bajo en comparación con los estándares internacionales... pero los picos en lugares como Shanghai están poniendo a prueba su enfoque, hasta ahora exitoso.”
 - Refers to measures as aggressive and strict.
- **La odisea de comprar comida en Shanghai, la confinada ciudad más rica de China**
 - 13/04/2022
 - France Presse & The Associated Press
 - Notes on the struggles of Shanghai residents to secure food given the sanitary measures in Shanghai

- It is worth noting that before diving into the details, the article points at the strictness of the measures and emphasizes that most of the new cases are asymptomatic.
 - This could be seen as a criticism towards the extensiveness of the measures, even if not the measures themselves.
- Reports on the impact the strict measures had on the population that they had to put pressure on the government to relax them
 - No opinion about this stated, just describes the situation. No inferences made on the response of the Chinese government other than noting that the public pressure was successful as measures were relaxed.
- Points at the situation being so severe that the US government expressed concerns for its citizens and missions in the city.
 - Once again, could be seen as further criticism of the extensiveness of the measures – implication of pitting it against US domestic response.
- Overall, critical of the extensiveness of the measures and their impact on daily life, but no overt criticism of the Chinese government. It is worth noting that no positives of the measures are highlighted, which points at changing opinions. Moreover, emphasis on Shanghai being the richest city could hint at concerns over how despite economic success, there is still a dark side to living in China, implying a negative view.
- **El gran “pajama party” de oficina en Shanghai debido a la pandemia**
 - 14/04/2022
 - Elaine Yu, Natasha Khan, & Cao Li.
 - Reports on the experiences of many workers that had to move into their offices to be able to continue working given the strict measures in Shanghai
 - There is a mixture of positive and negative experiences, pointing at a balanced argument. None of these are critical of the government, nor the companies they work for, but rather focus on personal discomforts or added value depending on whether the experience was positive or negative.
 - Highlights Shanghai’s economic importance and how the extraordinary measure of having employees live at the office is an effort towards avoiding operational disruptions and be efficient.
 - Economic aspects valued – points at efforts to minimize concerns over the impact of the measures on the economy. No inferences on other aspects.
 - Overall, neutral tone. Emphasis on economics points at that still being the primary focus when analysing the situation in Shanghai. No criticisms of the government points at other factors, such as civil liberties and concerns over freedom not being as relevant in Chile since the newspaper did not publish articles touching on that.
- **Crisis sanitaria en Shanghai**
 - 17/04/2022
 - Sebastian Claro
 - Opinion piece on the concerns over the zero covid policy
 - Critical of the zero covid policy, but mostly because of its economic repercussions
 - Restrictions on freedom of movement not addressed as a threat to freedom but as a hindrance to logistics and supply chains as well as a limitation for production and how that threatens availability of goods.

- “...dañado el funcionamiento de las cadenas logisticas en un centro de altísima relevancia para el comercio internacional... las limitaciones en la producción y los atrasos en las entregas son una amenaza para la disponibilidad de bienes.”
 - Also seen as having too big an impact
 - “severo impacto sobre el consumo, la actividad y el empleo.”
 - Points out that the measures have brought about challenges to Xi Jinping and criticizes their approach for the ways in which it is not viable
 - Pushing for adapting and mingling with the virus.
 - “buscar la adaptación y convivencia con el virus.”
 - Could point at Chile moving in this direction.
 - Questions the efficacy of the zero covid approach
 - Western chaos no longer present, which is showing cracks on China’s approach and putting in doubt their competence.
 - Refers to it as a controlling approach: “esta estrategia controladora ha mostrado grandes fisuras, levantando serias dudas sobre su eficiencia.”
 - Questions Xi Jinping’s motivations and the growing social and economic control
 - But when discussing the “cost” of this, it refers only to the economic ones of restricting freedom of movement.
 - Overall, negative about the approach and points at criticisms over Chinese leadership’s and the motivations behind the zero covid approach. However, this does not necessarily translate to an ideational difference, given that little emphasis is given to the restrictions of freedom of movement when it comes to any other aspect other than the economic. All of this points at Chile’s preference for moving in the more “Western” direction of not fighting the virus but dealing with it as an endemic disease, questioning the narrative China has been pushing for. However, those doubts are not enough to say there is an ideational difference with the Chinese regime, so long as economic tolls are dealt with.
 - **Entre inusuales cacerolazos en Shanghai, el gobierno defiende su politica de zero covid**
 - 30/04/2022
 - France Presse & Reuters
 - Reports on growing social unrest given the measures in Shanghai, outlining the grounds the Chinese government has for maintaining lockdown in the city, and noting the acts of protest that the residents are starting to engage in.
 - Comments on the videos of people banging pots and pans to protest against the poor accessibility to food
 - Highlights censorship and people’s fear of repercussions.
 - Notes that measures are starting to be lifted and control areas are decreasing – but no comment on what this could mean.
 - Overall, neutral tone on the situation as well as no overt criticism of the Chinese authorities. However, given the emphasis on censorship and people’s fear because of it, it can be assumed that concerns over civil liberties were becoming more apparent for the newspaper to decide to publish the piece.

- **Beijing alerta brote “explosivo” de covid-19, en medio de restricciones**
 - 12/06/2022
 - Reuters
 - Informative on the potential tightening of certain restrictions given a spike in cases in Beijing. It grounds this on China’s zero covid policy.
 - Mentions the situation in Shanghai as a contrast and suggests fears of the population of a lockdown of that sort despite the authorities not announcing blanket measures.
 - Overall, informative and neutral tone. No opinion on the viability of zero covid nor the Chinese regime.
- **“Bachelet nunca condenó las gravísimas violaciones a los DD.HH. cometidas en China.”**
 - 19/06/2022
 - Héctor Yáñez
 - Interview with Chilean lawyer, José Miguel Vivanco, ex-director for Human Rights Watch’s Americas division
 - Criticizes ex-Chilean president Michelle Bachelet, who is also the current UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for voicing the same narrative China has been pushing about Xinjiang.
 - Says her approach to her role as High Commissioner is too diplomatic
 - Notes that she has been very clear about HR violations in other instances, such as HR concerns in the US, violations by Russia with the invasion of Ukraine, and has also been critical of the Venezuelan regime.
 - Believes that in the Xinjiang case, she will not be able to do a report, and things will remain inconclusive.
 - “Mi temor es... que esta materia quede inconclusa”
 - Refers to China as a “fundamental concern”
 - Overall, critical and negative of Michelle Bachelet more than the Chinese regime. Negative language used all over in reference to what is happening in Xinjiang. Highlights the importance of addressing HR violations for a healthy democracy. The newspaper’s decision to publish this points at these concerns becoming more amplified at the public opinion level, and increased hesitancy around China in matters of HR.
- **China se enfrenta a una montaña de desechos médicos y sanitarios**
 - 21/06/2022
 - El Mercurio – Vida, Ciencia y Tecnología
 - Brief note on environmental impact of massive testing in China.
 - Uses expert opinion to put massive testing under a negative light
 - “La cantidad de desechos médicos que es generada a diario es de una magnitud casi sin precedentes en la historia de la humanidad.”
 - No positives of massive testing mentioned.
 - Overall, negative tone around massive testing but not broader measures not the Chinese regime. Implicit criticism of it though, pointing at the testing being not only unnecessary, but very harmful – as no benefits are mentioned. Once again, pointing at the potential change in opinion from fighting the virus to treating it as endemic.