

China's Response to Health Risk: Insights from the English School

This paper explores domestic-foreign policy interactions in China's response to health risk caused by epidemics and scandals in the pharmaceutical industry. Drawing on Barry Buzan's work on world society, the paper examines the role of domestic, international, and global society in shaping China's approach to addressing health risk. Theorists of risk argue that state policies that cause risk will lead to a response from within domestic society to address the consequences of risk. Because the literature on risk is largely drawn from case studies of European democracies, applying this approach to the Chinese case is problematic. Unlike European democracies, Chinese society is largely state-led, though globalization and changing information technologies have contributed to the expansion of societal action and facilitated links between domestic and foreign NGOs. At the same time, the Chinese government has been seeking to become a "stakeholder" in international society, for example through its efforts to develop cooperation with regional and global health organizations. Some scholars have concluded that this is an indication of Chinese acceptance of the liberal norms of international society. It will be argued here that Chinese responses to health risk are predicated on a form of governmentality with Chinese characteristics, seeking to participate in international society, while shaping it to better accommodate its interests.

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