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China's Role in Pre- and Post-COVID Dynamic

要旨：

This paper explores the intricate relationship between conspiracy theories, public discontent, and the political context within Central Asia. It delves into how conspiracy theories, often rooted in grievances, have the capacity to mobilize and channel societal frustrations, even in environments where traditional avenues for dissent are constrained. The prevalence of Sinophobic sentiments in the region serves as a compelling case study, demonstrating how these narratives can be strategically employed to articulate dissatisfaction with both external actors and domestic governance.

Through a multidisciplinary analysis, this paper sheds light on the dynamic interplay between conspiracy theories, protests, and the evolving political landscape in Central Asia, offering insights into broader issues of governance, identity, and social mobilization in the 21st century. The link between conspiratorial narratives and mass protests presents an intriguing angle for this paper from two key perspectives. Firstly, conspiracy theories are not necessarily concerned with the binary concepts of truth and falsehood, but rather their efficacy or inefficacy. Secondly, conspiracy theories can be interpreted as mirrors reflecting the political, social, and economic environments from which they originate.

The paper is based on a case study that delves into the events that transpired in the Naryn region of Kyrgyzstan between 2019 and 2020. Our research team conducted comprehensive fieldwork, visiting 15 localities affected by mining activities in the Ala-Buka, Chatkal, and Naryn areas of Kyrgyzstan. During these visits, we conducted interviews with a total of 262 individuals, including local residents, civil society leaders, government officials, and representatives from Chinese mining companies. Additionally, in February 2024, we revisited some of those locations to ascertain whether dynamics had changed and to evaluate how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the livelihoods of people.