

Rescaling Global Health and International Relations: Globalization of Health in a Low Security Environment

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Abstract : In a global environment defined by ever-increasing health issues, in spite of the progress made by modern medicine, this paper seeks to readdress the question of global health in an international relations perspective. The research hypothesis is: the lower the security environment, the higher the spread of communicable diseases. This question will be channeled by re-scaling the connotation of 'global' and 'international' dimension through the theoretical lens of glocalization, a theory by Bauman that starts its analysis from simple systems to get to the most complex ones. Glocalization theory will be operationalized by analyzing health in an armed-conflict context. In this respect, the independent variable 'low security environment' translates into the cases of Syria and Yemen, which provide a clear example of the all-encompassing nature of conflict on national health and the effects on regional development. In fact, Syria and Yemen have been affected by poliomyelitis and cholera outbreaks respectively. The dependent variable will be constructed on said communicable diseases which belong to the families of sanitation-related and vaccine-preventable diseases. The research will be both qualitative and quantitative, based on primary (interviews) and secondary (WHO and other NGO's reports) sources. The methodology is based on the assessment of the vaccine coverage and case-analysis in time and space using epidemiological data. Moreover, local health facilities' functioning and efficiency will be studied. The article posits that the intervention and cooperation of international organizations with the local authorities becomes crucial to provide the local populations with their primary health needs. In Yemen, the majority of fatal cholera cases were in the regions controlled by the Houthi rebels, not officially accredited by the International Community. Similarly, the polio outbreak in Syria primarily affected the areas not controlled by the Syrian Arab Republic forces, recognized as the leading interlocutor by the WHO. The jeopardized possibilities to access these countries have been pivotal to the determining the problem in controlling sanitation-related and vaccine preventable diseases. This represents a potential threat to global health.

Keywords : health in conflict-affected areas, cholera, polio, Yemen, Syria, glocalization

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