

Biosecurity and Human Security in the Post-Pandemic Era: From the Perspective of the Welsh School

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Abstract

The devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have been significantly challenging the international community's efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve a safe, prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable world. Undoubtedly, the spread of COVID-19 underscores the dangers and challenges to biosecurity and human security on a global scale. In this context, one of the mainstays of Critical Security Studies, the Welsh School, with its focus on human security and emancipation, offers such rewarding views for comprehending human well-being in the post-pandemic era. Given current circumstances, this paper intends to introduce the shift in the focus of security studies from traditional to non-traditional security first, starting with the expansion of the security studies' ranges in the post-pandemic era. Besides, concepts related to biosecurity and human security that have attracted much attention in recent years will also be illustrated in the second part. In the following third part, the Welsh School's arguments and concerns, especially those related to human security and emancipation and security community, will be analyzed in detail, and what state actors and non-state actors, especially international organizations, can do for biosecurity governance promotion and human security protection in the post-pandemic era will also be analyzed in the fourth part. Last but not least, the prospects for the Welsh School's contribution to biosecurity and human security will be discussed in the conclusion part.

Keywords: biosecurity, human security, the Welsh School, the post-pandemic era, international organizations

1. Introduction: Why Biosecurity and Human Security Matter in the Post-Pandemic Era

In general, biosecurity means the prevention of the negative impacts of the development and application of modern biotechnology, i.e., the potential risks to biodiversity, the ecological environment, and human health. Based on this common knowledge, biosecurity threats may refer to threats and hazards to national security and its different constituent elements when biosecurity is in an extreme state (LIU Yuejin, 2020).¹ Since the end of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has raged around the world. By 2022, when many states successfully launch effective vaccines, the international community has not yet had time to celebrate this landmark of human well-being breakthrough because the horrible virus variations are constantly causing great biosecurity threats, which leads to millions of people losing their lives and brings disastrous consequences for human society.

The devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have been significantly challenging the biosecurity of the international community's members and undermining their effort to eradicate poverty and achieve a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable world. After helping its members, both the developed and developing ones, address the urgent health crisis posed by COVID-19, the international community is constantly prioritizing a green, resilient, and inclusive recovery. In particular, the international community has witnessed the hygienic situation worsening in some countries, with the number of new confirmed cases and deaths reaching their highest levels since the outbreak began. In the era of global governance, no country can be immune to such a pandemic sweeping the world, and the international community has to work together to combat biosecurity

threats. Just as the United Nations (UN) has pointed out, “We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations — one that is killing people, spreading human suffering, and upending people’s lives. But this is much more than a health crisis. It is a human, economic and social crisis. (UN, n.d.)”² Under such circumstances, biosecurity itself and, more importantly, biosecurity governance, are becoming increasingly worthy of being written into the intergenerational contract, and both state actors and non-state actors, especially international organizations of non-state actors, are expected to make their moves.

Nowadays, as mankind has realized that the fight against COVID-19 will be a long one, human society has gradually switched from a pandemic era to a post-pandemic one. The post-pandemic era does not refer to a time when, under ideal conditions, the virus disappears completely, and human society returns to a state as if the pandemic had never existed. Instead, it refers to a time when the normal functioning of all sectors of society and human life still needs to be maintained while the effects of the pandemic may not completely dissipate, and there might always be a risk of potential small-scale outbreaks. In this sense, the international community is in a typical post-pandemic era. As a result, it is of great practical importance to generate further thoughts to build a better order or mechanism conducive to biosecurity and human security protection.

Given current circumstances, this paper intends to introduce the shift in the focus of security studies from traditional to non-traditional security first, starting with the expansion of the security studies’ ranges in the post-pandemic era. Besides, concepts related to biosecurity and human security that have attracted much attention in recent years will also be illustrated in the second part. In the following third part, the Welsh School’s arguments and concerns, especially those related to human security and emancipation and security community, will be analyzed in detail, and what state actors and non-state actors, especially international organizations, can do for biosecurity governance promotion and human security protection in the post-pandemic era will also be analyzed in the fourth part. Last but not least, the prospects for the Welsh School’s contribution to biosecurity, and human security will be discussed in the conclusion part.

2. Expansion of Security Studies in the Post-Pandemic Era: Biosecurity and Human Security

2.1 Theoretical Evolution: From Traditional Security to Non-traditional Security

War and peace, threat and strategy, as well as population and pandemics, among many other topics, have long dominated the security studies agenda. However, it was not until around the end of WWII that security studies, as it is now widely known, developed into a distinct field of study (Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, 2013),³ with a golden age in the 1950s and 1960s (Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, 2013).⁴ By the beginning of the 1980s, a remarkable transformation of the international environment and world politics prompted many international relations scholars to rethink the traditional concepts of security, dominated by the United States (US) for the past few decades and filled with Realism and State-centrism. Since the end of the Cold War, major changes and reorganization of the balance of power in the international community have further led to the emergence of a consensus in security studies that in the 21st century, realist security theories centered on state-centrism and military power are hardly effective in explaining the new security problems popping up in reality.

Specifically, non-traditional security is concerned with the intensification of influential security issues other than military and political security in the era of global governance, such as economics, energy, environment, food, population, poverty, science and technology, cyber, drugs, biology, health, race and ethnicity, et cetera. In the past few years, when the world-sweeping pandemics such as SARS, Ebola, H1N1, H7N9, and the most recent one, COVID-19, like many pandemics in history, have once again sounded the alarm about non-traditional security, the reflections of biosecurity and human security have contributed to the extension of human well-being, and have been drawing increasing attention from the international community.

2.2 Biosecurity and Human Security: Inseparable Non-traditional Security Concepts

There is a close link between biosecurity and human security, not only in terms of biotechnology development and public health but also in terms of social stability, economic development, and even national defense. In other words, the meaning of biosecurity derives from its uses, not just the way it gets defined (Brian Rappert, 2009).⁵ In general, biosecurity refers to the prevention of the negative impacts of the development and application of modern biotechnology, i.e., the potential risks to biodiversity, the ecological environment, and human health. David P. Fidler and Lawrence O. Gostin regard biosecurity as “society’s collective responsibility to safeguard the population from dangers presented by pathogenic microbes—whether intentionally released or naturally occurring” (David P. Fidler & Lawrence O. Gostin, 2008),⁶ which matches the deep implication of biosecurity fine.

Human beings are the direct bearers of the consequences of biosecurity, and there is thus a close and inseparable connection between human security and biosecurity, while the first attempts to integrate the two have been linked to the efforts of members of the international community, represented by the United Nations (UN), to promote human security. In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) put forward a

comprehensive concept and relevant definitions of human security in its *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*. According to this report, human security consists of economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, political security, and so on (UNDP, 1994).⁷ It argues that the concept of security must “change urgently in two basic ways: from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people’s security and from security through armaments to security through sustainable human development. (UNDP, 1994)”⁸

From a practical perspective, the ultimate goal of biosecurity goes towards the maintenance of human security and human well-being. As can be seen from the preceding, the rise of non-traditional security itself and relevant studies, predominantly ideas of biosecurity and human security, has brought the focus of security concerns back on people and reflected humanism. That is to say, in global governance, especially global biosecurity governance, human security is emerging as a perspective to evaluate threats, foresee crises, analyze the causes of discord and propose solutions entailing a redistribution of responsibilities (Amitav Acharya, Subrat K. Singhdeo, and M. Rajaretnam, 2011),⁹ thus contributing to human well-being. Among the many theoretical schools of thought, the Welsh School’s emphasis on human security and emancipation is of particular interest.

3. Security, Emancipation, and Community: Vital Concerns of the Welsh School

3.1 The Welsh School in Critical Security Studies (CSS)

When the explanatory validity of Realism and State-centrism for non-traditional security issues are declining, Constructivism, Europeanism, Feminism, and various schools of thought have brought up their criticism and comprehension, promoting the development of CSS. Regardless of the differences in their views on specific security issues, the obvious generality lies in the fact that they sharply criticize the state-centered nature of realist security theory and the narrowness of the dominant influence of the military on national security, they focus on structural security and the diversity of security threats. They advocate a break with this realist model of security studies and an expansion of the referent of security studies.

Among many schools within CSS, Europeanism, represented mainly by the Copenhagen School, the Paris School, and the Welsh School, has challenged the state-centered mainstream security studies, and the Welsh School has become one of the mainstays of CSS. Ken Booth first used the term “Critical Security Studies” at an international conference in Toronto in 1994. Later in 2006, 25 European scholars under the pseudonym “C.A.S.E. Collective” published a joint paper entitled *Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto*, leading to more attention being paid to the Europeanism approach.

3.2 Deepening Security, Broadening Security, Extending Security, and Security and Emancipation

The Welsh School believes that the ultimate meaning of security should not be the political claims of political groups but the values of individual humans in social groups; moreover, the ultimate referent of security ought to be individual humans, and emancipation is what security ultimately pursues (Ken Booth, 1991).¹⁰ Correspondingly, it proposes the ideas of deepening security, broadening security, extending security, and, more importantly, security and emancipation (Richard Wyn Jones, 1999).¹¹

First, the idea of deepening security encourages people to go beyond the limits of existing norms and objective factors, emphasizes that security should include more referents, and calls for more care for marginalized groups. Next, the idea of broadening security refers to the security that encompasses most non-traditional security issues in addition to traditional military issues and can be divided into economic security, food security, medical security, environmental security, human security, political security, community security, and others. Besides, the idea of extending security is concerned with the diversification of the referents of security, from individual people to communities, kin groups, and even the whole of humanity. Although the referents can be diverse, the individual human is always the ultimate referent to security.

Apart from the above, the Welsh School is also known for its proposition of human security and emancipation. According to Booth, “‘Security’ means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do.” “Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security (Ken Booth, 1991).”¹² Meanwhile, he argues that between security and emancipation, security is the means, and emancipation is the end; when it comes to the state and the human, the state is the means, and the human is the end (Ken Booth, 1991).¹³

3.3 Security Community: The Welsh School’s Approach to Security

In the theoretical construction of the Welsh School, the security community is the means by which it believes human security and emancipation can be achieved. It assumes that a well-developed value community can benefit the establishment of a larger scale of political and security community and finally lead to the construction of a comprehensive security community. The comprehensive nature of such a security community is reflected in

the fact that security issues and referents are comprehensive, security actors are comprehensive, and security systems are comprehensive (ZHENG Xianwu, 2004).¹⁴ States have a common identity and morality in a comprehensive security community. They can trust each other, and close political, economic, social, and cultural links help maintain their common interests and institutionalized relations of them. In this way, peace and emancipation can be eventually realized to optimize human security.

Some criticize the Welsh School for being too utopian in its claims and call it “Utopian Realism”. Yet, as we delve deeper into its thinking on community, its consideration of reality exists as well. For instance, when Booth clarifies that emancipation should be prioritized over the traditional realist emphasis on power and order, he does not deny the importance of the power and order factor in international politics. In his words, “Emancipation should be given precedence in security thinking over the traditional realist themes of power and order. themes of power and order (Ken Booth, 1991).”¹⁵ Meanwhile, Booth also notes that states’ role, though weakened, will not disappear in a world where emancipation is achieved (Ken Booth, 1991).¹⁶ This reflects the realistic side of the Welsh School.

In the post-pandemic era, the notion of security is undergoing drastic changes. Since state-centered security theories have encountered challenges theoretically and practically, the rise of non-traditional security has expanded the domain and means of national security, and the Welsh School’s focus on human security has emphasized that human beings are the core of security and its ultimate purpose. The Welsh School corrects the tendency to overemphasize the role of states in security, calls for increasing concerns for humans, and refocuses on people-centered principles in security problems. It reminds people that national security is not an end in itself and that the human security of the individuals within it should be given sufficient attention. This, undoubtedly, is a vital dual advancement for the theory and reality of human security and human well-being.

It is generally believed that international relations and world politics are the realistic versions of the “game of thrones”. Nevertheless, Booth has quoted some words from Oscar Wilde that “A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not even worth glancing at”. For those who engage in international politics and security studies, whether they are scholars, politicians, or students of relevant majors, what the Welsh School believes can be, more or less, thought-provoking.

4. Make A Move: Possible Measures for Biosecurity Governance Promotion and Human Security Protection in the Post-Pandemic Era

It is clear from the Welsh School’s theoretical concerns that it advocates the role of non-state actors in achieving human security; meanwhile, the Welsh School does not deny the role of states, even if it considers it to be “weakened”. Hence, what state actors and non-state actors can do for biosecurity governance promotion and human security protection in the post-pandemic era are both worthy of our attention.

Undoubtedly, actors of biosecurity governance include state and non-state actors, and there are many referents of non-state actors, such as international organizations, transnational corporations, individuals, etc. As the Commission on Global Governance explicates, from a global perspective, “governance has been viewed primarily as intergovernmental relationships, but it must now be understood as also involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizens’ movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market (the Commission on Global Governance, 1995).”¹⁷ It is necessary to point out that based on the long-standing practice of the international community, international organizations are by far the most influential of all non-state actors. Accordingly, this paper will focus on international organizations when discussing the possible actions of non-state actors, whether they are intergovernmental or non-governmental, regional or global. Nonetheless, it does not mean that the efforts of other non-state actors are belittled, and this paper intends to select international organizations as typical representatives of non-state actors to focus on.

4.1 Possible Moves of International Organizations in Biosecurity Governance Promotion and Human Security Protection

As mentioned in the previous sections, the Welsh school places great emphasis on non-state actors for the realization of security. In keeping with this, the profoundly influential role and possible moves of international organizations, the significant ones among non-state actors in biosecurity governance promotion will be discussed first.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many international organizations, with the World Health Organization (WHO) as the core, and many regional organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have exerted their influence in combating biosecurity threats. E.g. the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX), co-led by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), WHO, and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), alongside key delivery partner, the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF),¹⁸ has delivered vaccines to more than 100 countries. Another regional instance is that ADB’s investments for Asia Pacific Vaccine Access Facility (APVAX) have helped its members

in Asia and the Pacific acquire and deploy vaccines,¹⁹ showing ADB's determination to procure safe and effective vaccines as a regional non-state actor.

Thus far, international organizations have been entrusted with growing responsibilities for biosecurity governance and human security protection in the forthcoming future, and their roles are turning to be progressively crucial, and the following section will elaborate on this in detail.

a) Exchanges facilitation: A consensus acceptable to all parties is a prerequisite before making moves. In order to reach a consensus, non-state actors have to provide negotiation platforms for countries to take the lead in promoting dialogues on specific issues, including health, education, customs, immigration, civil aviation, and other ones that are closely related to biosecurity governance. In those exchanges, non-state actors will be much appreciated if they actively eliminate divergences with their unrelenting hard work.

b) Institutional construction: Institutional construction is a primary obligation for non-state actors in biosecurity governance. First and foremost, non-state actors ought to establish a mechanism for sharing biosecurity information among countries to enhance necessary information transparency. Besides, non-state actors, especially regional ones, are impressively helpful in consolidating the regional joint prevention and control mechanism, making it possible to control the pandemic dangers when it first emerges.

c) Connection strengthening: Flexibility is an apparent advantage for non-state actors, especially NGOs, as it equips them with great potential to bridge governments and society and stimulate the operation of social capital to play its role. That is to say, non-state actors can promote public-private partnerships (PPP) to advance public health service quality and combine social forces and government forces in a better way. In this process, they can also assist in project management. As they can provide financial and technical support to assist in healthcare infrastructure improvement, if permitted by governments, they might as well send specialists with advanced expertise to guide the project implementation process, helping the countries improve the efficiency of healthcare infrastructure construction and avoid wasting resources.

d) Investment increase: For non-state actors to exert their influence on biosecurity governance, providing financial resources and partnerships is a preferred option. Indeed, regional organizations are possibly to provide more immediate help to countries within the region than large-scale international organizations such as the UN. Taking ADB as an example, ADB is progressively increasing investment in public health, medical research, biotechnology, and so forth. At present, ADB has approved USD 18.9 million in grants to help some developing members in the Pacific roll out vaccines against COVID-19. As of March 2021, ADB has committed more than USD 750 million, including co-financing and technical assistance, and ADB's COVID-19 response for developing Asia surpasses USD 20 billion,²⁰ and ADB will constantly emphasize biosecurity governance in terms of financial and technical assistance in regional countries, according to its *Strategy 2030*. For other regional organizations, ADB's efforts are inspiring and thought-provoking for how they can use their advantages in biosecurity governance.

4.2 Possible Moves of States in Biosecurity Governance Promotion and Human Security Protection

Despite the fact that the Welsh School attaches great significance to non-state actors, states are still the main actors under the current circumstances of international relations. In addition to the above highlight of international organizations, the active participation of states shall not be ignored, and states are, undoubtedly, involved in biosecurity governance promotion and human security protection.

a) Legislation improvement: It is vital for states to improve biosecurity legislation, especially in laws and regulations for the prevention and control of pandemic diseases, if they look forward to achieving a legal basis and guaranteeing the validity of their actions. Meanwhile, on the premise of safeguarding their own national interests, they also need to transform the provisions of relevant international treaties that they have acceded to in strict accordance with the legislative procedures of each country.

b) Talent cultivation: It is generally acknowledged that medical professionals are mainstays in the practice of biosecurity governance, and the tasks of professionals of different levels vary from one to another. In the post-pandemic era, to win the battle against biosecurity threats typified by the COVID-19 pandemic, states have to train a large number of primary-level medical staff to improve the medical plight of the people at the bottom and offer the professional training of primary care providers for the pragmatic-oriented purpose. Meanwhile, states' support should also be given to the advanced training of senior medical researchers to facilitate new medical breakthroughs or medical technology innovations.

c) Public-consciousness raising: Once positive feedback on national initiatives begins to emerge, appropriate public guidance and awareness reinforcement are necessary to better consolidate the achievements, especially in developing countries with low levels of education. Correspondingly, states need to pay extra attention to publicity and education to enhance public consciousness, thus creating sufficient conditions for the operation of public rationality on the prevention of biosecurity threats. To a certain extent, this is also a practical choice to

reduce the heavy burdens of governments on biosecurity problem-solving.

d) Border governance advancement: Integrating border governance with biosecurity governance is essential to effectively combat smuggling and other illegal acts and prevent the rapid fermentation of biosecurity threats, for instance, the pandemic after its emergence at borders, ports, etc., and its spread to multiple countries. For state actors, this self-beneficial and altruistic measure should not only exist as an initiative in the intergenerational contract but also should be seen by states as one of the responsibilities that they ought to take. If each country takes care of its domestic biosecurity and border governance issues, the international community as a whole will face less pressure on biosecurity dilemmas and thus leverage the implementation of the intergenerational contract.

5. Conclusion: One Step Closer to the Realization of Promising Prospects of Biosecurity and Human Security for Future Generations

Several decades ago, Ken Booth from the Welsh School, which is a mainstay of CSS, pointed out that individuals are the ultimate referent of security (Ken Booth, 1991).²¹ Hence, the ultimate purpose of adding biosecurity governance and human security protection to the intergenerational contract is to guarantee human security, to head toward a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable shared future for mankind, and to be one step closer to the realization of promising prospects for the future generations. This is a rather protracted and demanding process, but when the wisdom of state and non-state actors is truly united together, the ambiguous uncertainty will turn out to be an anticipation-worthy certainty.

“International cooperation and the promotion of international organizations and institutions are also to be welcomed. Nonetheless, most of the threats on human security, as encompassed within the wide definition of the concept, can be considered violations of international law, and especially humanitarian, criminal, and human rights law. If the aim is to protect human security in its wider sense, the international community should focus its efforts in the promotion and realization of the totality of human rights and to strengthen the enforcement of international law. A true protection of man’s dignity, life, health, proper environment, etc. will bring about man’s real security - human security (Yaniv Roznai, 2014).”²² In the post-pandemic era, when the international community is striving for rousing results of biosecurity governance, these pungent and illuminating words, which are consistent with the in-depth core of intergenerational contract, shall remain at the forefront of negotiating minds.

Some theorists from the Welsh School have pointed out the gap between theory and reality:

“Doing is not the same as thinking, and doing good is always more difficult than thinking good, in a multi-cultural and inter-state world, characterized as it is by divisions between haves and have-nots, between people of different race, between different genders, and the rest. At whatever level of human society we might want to consider, from the hearth to the grandest stage of all, global politics, Tolstoy was surely not far from the mark when he warned that it was easier to write volumes of philosophy than ‘put a single precept into practice’. Even if we—whoever we are—can agree upon the global good, bringing it about will never be guaranteed (Ken Booth, Tim Dunne and Michael Cox, 2000).”²³

When we put the Welsh School’s arguments in the history and development of biosecurity, human security, and human well-being, the focus on human-centered security signals a new trend. The role of the Welsh School as a theoretical tool in understanding the enduring issues of biosecurity and human security, together with another concern that whether it will provide new ideas or prove to be less applicable to the protection of biosecurity and human security in post-pandemic situations, remains to be examined and verified in the practice of the international community in the approaching future. At least, thus far, mankind seems to seize the hope and get one step closer to the realization of promising prospects of biosecurity and human security for future generations.

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