

## CLIMATE CHANGE, FOOD SECURITY, AND HEALTH SECURITY. AN ANALYSIS ON SOME GLOBAL TRENDS AND THREATS

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**Abstract:** *The article focuses on specific concepts which theoretically belong to the new approaches on security, emerging and becoming more and more relevant after the end of the Cold War. The structure of the article includes the description and analysis of the concepts, such as “health security”, “food security”, the trends in the fields of International Relations and Security Studies, as well as changes triggered by the recent global pandemic. The main argument is that health security, food security, and the so-called “pharmaceutical turn” in security policies, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, are no longer “issues” on the soft politics agenda, not merely global threats (that inter-state, traditional approaches cannot solve), but rather major and unavoidable sectors of security.*

**Keywords:** climate change, food security, health security, threats, policy

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## Introduction and theoretical arguments

The article focuses on specific concepts which theoretically belong to the new approaches on security, emerging and becoming ever so relevant after the end of the Cold War. As tackled elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> we aim to show that the 1990's was the decade marked by an increase in intra-state armed conflicts and ethno-political strife, but it also witnessed innovations and development of humanitarian law. Africa represents the illustrative region for the salience of intra-state violence, humanitarian emergencies, proliferation of insurgent armed groups and civilian insecurity, and the United Nations tried to cope with the new challenges in its Security Council Resolutions and its humanitarian interventions. Moreover, the so-called "widening" and "deepening" debate on security was extended so as to challenge/complete the realist account.<sup>2</sup> The Copenhagen School and its leading scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde and Lene Hansen revisited the concept of security by focusing on its widening attributes. According to Emma Rothschild, "the ubiquitous idea, in the new principles of the 1990s, is of security in an 'extended' sense"<sup>3</sup>, and extended security in the 1990's implied several directions, such as upwards, to the global challenges posed by global warming, depletion of the ozone layer, climate change, downwards, from governments to communities, individuals, to human security. Another important theoretical distinction focused on negative security and positive security. According to Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørnv, negative security should be understood in terms of "security *from* (a threat)", while positive security in terms of "security *to*" (in the sense of *enabling*). The author shows that *negative security* is associated with the traditional perceptions of security (*i.e.* realism in IR) and employs "an epistemology of fear", meaning that it focuses on the identification of

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<sup>1</sup> Laura M. Herţa, "Intra-state violence in DR Congo and Human Security – Perspectives from International Relations Theories", *Human Security Perspectives*, Volume 10 (2014), Issue 1, pp. 142-185; Laura M. Herţa, "Jus in Bello and the Solidarist Case for Humanitarian Intervention. From Theory to Practice", *Studia UBB Europaea*, (LVIII), no. 1, March 2013, pp. 5-48.

<sup>2</sup> Barry Buzan; Ole Waever; Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998; Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security* (volume III *Widening Security*), London: Sage Publications, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Emma Rothschild, "What is security?", in Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security* (volume III *Widening Security*), London: Sage Publications, 2007, p. 2.

danger, enemies, threats, and this serves as legitimacy to use force in order to remove the issue of security. Since the monopoly of force is (and should remain) located in the state, negative security is a state-centric concept. On the other hand, *positive security* demands the examination of how security is produced and by whom. Basically, negative security is “security from” (threat) and positive security is “freedom to”<sup>4</sup> (or being enabled to do something).

In this article, we aim to take the discussion further, by focusing on the last decade and by showing why health security, food security, and the so-called “pharmaceutical turn” in security policies, as evidenced by the COVID pandemic, are no longer “issues” on the soft politics agenda, but rather major and unavoidable sectors of security.

### **Climate change as ‘threat multiplier’**

In the study, titled “Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict”, the authors, focusing on the causal linkages among climate change, human security, and violent conflict, explained that “in earth history and human history, a fundamental change has occurred since the Industrial Revolution (1750) and Watt’s invention of the steam engine (1782) from the “Holocene” to the “Anthropocene”. This is due to increasing human interventions, especially the burning of fossil energy that has resulted in an anthropogenic period of climate change. The ‘Anthropocene’ is an informal geological-chronological term that refers to the global impact of human activities on the earth’s ecosystems.”<sup>5</sup> From the perspective of international security, climate change is often viewed as a “threat multiplier.”<sup>6</sup> For example, in the General Assembly of 11 September 2009, many UN member states have recognised the security implications of climate change. Below we

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<sup>4</sup> Gunhild Hoogensen Gjørsv, “Security by any other name: negative security, positive security, and a multi-actor security approach”, *Review of International Studies*, October 2012, Volume 38, Issue 4, pp. 835-839.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Günter Brauch; Jürgen Scheffran, “Introduction”, in Jürgen Scheffran and Michael Brzoska (eds.), *Climate Change, Human Security and Violent Conflict. Challenges for Societal Stability*, Mosbach: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications: Report of the Secretary-General*, Prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 63/281, New York: UN (United Nations), 2009, p. 2, [<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/667264?v=pdf>], last accessed on 31.07.2024.

will list the five channels through which climate change could affect security, according to the Report:

- “(a) Vulnerability: climate change threatens food security and human health, and increases human exposure to extreme events;
- (b) Development: if climate change results in slowing down or reversing the development process, this will exacerbate vulnerability and could undermine the capacity of States to maintain stability;
- (c) Coping and security: migration, competition over natural resources and other coping responses of households and communities faced with climate-related threats could increase the risk of domestic conflict as well as have international repercussions;
- (d) Statelessness: there are implications for rights, security, and sovereignty of the loss of statehood because of the disappearance of territory;
- (e) International conflict: there may be implications for international cooperation from climate change’s impact on shared or undemarcated international resources.”<sup>7</sup>

Analysing the linkages between climate change, human security, and violent conflict in the past decade, the United Nations Developments Program, in its 2022 *Special Report on Human Security* observes that “as military spending has increased, so has the proliferation of arms. [...] Military holdings account for 13 percent of all firearm holdings, and the vast majority of guns are in civilian hands.”<sup>8</sup> Also, the report argues that “armed conflict increases the difficulties in managing and adapting to climate change and may even exacerbate environmental degradation. Conflict weakens government institutions and diverts attention from sustainable development to military concerns. Global military spending is increasing, alongside the military carbon footprint.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *New threats to human security in the Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity*, 2022 Special Report on Human Security, New York: UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), 2022, p. 82, [<https://hdr.undp.org/content/2022-special-report-human-security>], last accessed on 31.07.2024.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 84.

In general, when it comes to respect pertaining to environmental threats to security, the expenditure for protection against a deteriorating environment is lower than the expenditure for defence. For example, the general government expenditure in the European Union on defence amounted to 1.3 % of GDP in 2022<sup>10</sup>, while the general government expenditure on environmental protection amounted to €130 billion (0.8 % of GDP) in 2022.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, many of the human security interpretations of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been integrated in the European Union's EU's foreign and security policy.

The European Security Strategy was adopted in December 2003. In December 2008, Javier Solana, Secretary-General of the Council of the EU / High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, presented an implementation report entitled *Providing Security in a Changing World* in which he stated that "the UN stands at the apex of the international system. Everything the EU has done in the field of security has been linked to UN objectives."<sup>12</sup> Moreover, on the issue of climate change, the report also described it as a "threat multiplier", meaning that: "natural disasters, environmental degradation and competition for resources exacerbate conflict, especially in situations of poverty and population growth, with humanitarian, health, political and security consequences, including greater migration. Climate change can also lead to disputes over trade routes, maritime zones and resources previously inaccessible."<sup>13</sup>

The 2003 strategy was replaced by the 2016 strategy document entitled *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, which reaffirmed the continued incorporation of the human security concept into EU policies, while the third

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<sup>10</sup> *Government expenditure on defence*, 29 February 2024, Statistics Explained, European Commission, Eurostat: [[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government\\_expenditure\\_on\\_defence&oldid=629959](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_defence&oldid=629959)], last accessed on 31.07.2024.

<sup>11</sup> *Government expenditure on environmental protection*, February 2024, Statistics Explained, European Commission, Eurostat: [[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government\\_expenditure\\_on\\_environmental\\_protection](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Government_expenditure_on_environmental_protection)], last accessed on 31.07.2024.

<sup>12</sup> *European Security Strategy. A Secure Europe in a Better World*, Brussels: Council of the European Union, 2009, p. 9, DOI: 10.2860/1402, last accessed on 31.07.2024.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

progress report on the implementation of the European Union Global Strategy, *The European Union's Global Strategy. Three years on, looking forward* of 2019, emphasized EU's status as "a global point of reference"<sup>14</sup> in the pursuit of peace and security, and its new 'Level of Ambition' to act as a global security provider and maintain its position as the leading global norm-setter.

The European Union (EU) promotes a human-centric vision of security and it is determined to shape the global security normative order on human security and towards its own principles, interests and values; in other words, it aims at globalising the European approach on human security through normative power.

Indeed, the post-Cold War unprecedented convergence of liberal power and principles transformed the European Union in the leading norm-setter at a global level, surpassing the United States. Ian Manners explained that "simply by existing as different in a world of states and the relations between them, the European Union changes the normality of 'international relations'. In this respect the EU is a normative power: it changes the norms, standards and prescriptions of world politics away from the bounded expectations of state-centricity."<sup>15</sup> Today, the European Union (EU) faces the great challenge of maintaining its position as the leading global norm-setter and expects the incorporation of its security normativity globally, in the context of the current liberal power dispersion and of the challenges arising from the illiberal world.

## Global Health Security

Global Health is a sub-field within the discipline of International Relations which emerged thirty-five years ago, in 1989, with the seminal work of Caroline Thomas entitled "On the Health of International Relations and the International Relations of Health." Since then, the Global Health sub-discipline of IR is booming, with numerous studies and books published

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<sup>14</sup> *The European Union's Global Strategy. Three years on, looking forward*, Brussels: The European External Action Service (EEAS), 2019, p. 4, [[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu\\_global\\_strategy\\_2019.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_global_strategy_2019.pdf)], last accessed on 31.07.2024.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Manners, "The Normative Ethics of the European Union", *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)*, Vol. 84, No. 1, *Ethical Power Europe?* (Jan., 2008), 2008, p. 45.

every day. In her post-Cold War article, the author noticed that global health was mostly absent in the discussions, debated, arguments pertaining to the field of International Relations. The reason the subject was overlooked was, not surprisingly, “because it did not fit neatly into the dominant state-centric approach of the discipline, and discussion of health might be seen to contravene the aged principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign states.”<sup>16</sup> Thomas pointed out the realities of the time, the fact that “in the global context good health remains the expectations of the few. The structure of the international health regime reflects the structure of international economy, with the result that resources and expertise are concentrated in the developed states.”<sup>17</sup>

At the time Thomas was writing, the international bodies were facing the same challenges in meeting their goals (as they do today for that matter). For example, “the goal of clean water for all people by the year 1990 has been pushed back to the year 2000, which is also the target date for the fulfilment of the ‘Health for All’ strategy promoted by the World Health Organization since 1981.”<sup>18</sup> As is the case today (and as we will show in the following section), the primary barriers to achieving the proposed goals seemed “structural in terms of workings of the world economy”<sup>19</sup> and are caused by “no real sense of community”<sup>20</sup> in the international political system.

The concept *health security* or *global public health security* is defined by the WHO “as the activities required, both proactive and reactive, to minimize the danger and impact of acute public health events that endanger people’s health across geographical regions and international boundaries.”<sup>21</sup> The WTO overview of the concept of *health security* has also included a clear recognition of the threats posed an increasingly globalised world:

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<sup>16</sup> Caroline Thomas, “On the Health of International Relations and the International Relations of Health”, *Review of International Studies*, 1989, p. 273, [<https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/C83C7ADA7AE4404F4861F71C3F56FDFF/S0260210500112884a.pdf/on-the-health-of-international-relations-and-the-international-relations-of-health.pdf>], last accessed on 01.08.2024.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 274.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), “Health security - World Health Organization (WHO)”, [[https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-security/#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-security/#tab=tab_1)], last accessed on 01.08.2024.

“population growth, rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, and the misuse of antimicrobials are disrupting the equilibrium of the microbial world. New diseases, like COVID-19, are emerging at unprecedented rates disrupting people’s health and causing social and economic impacts. Billions of passengers travel on airplanes each year, increasing the opportunities for the rapid international spread of infectious agents and their vectors.”<sup>22</sup> The World Bank, UNICEF and different UN agencies are also contributing to global health, sharing similar definitions of health security.

### **Food Security**

We underline the fact that, from all the threats to life that the concept of human security encompasses, economic insecurity, manifesting in its harshest form as famine, is unquestionably the most acute. Poverty directly results in the deaths of large numbers of people who cannot obtain enough food. Widespread poverty (“about 2.4 billion people now suffer food insecurity”<sup>23</sup>) and increasing inequality are the defining characteristics of today’s global social landscape. The variables related to socioeconomic insecurity primarily capture the challenges to freedom from want. The deprivations, i.e., hunger being one of them. As Caroline Thomas stated in a more recent work, “the pursuit of human security must have at its core the satisfaction of basic material needs of all humankind. At the lowest level, food, shelter, education and health care are essential for the survival of human beings.”<sup>24</sup>

Today, hunger (undernourished people) is on the rise today due to the considerable effect of the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, the growing inequalities related to digital technologies and so on. However, a number of studies begun to highlight also the risk of corporate capture of the space of global governance via *multistakeholderism* and its effects on food security. In 2017, Nora McKeon examined the current state of corporate influence on formal global governance. The author reviewed the multiplication of multistakeholder platforms and partnerships and identified the key

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem, loc.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Caroline Thomas, “Global governance, development and human security: exploring the links”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No 2, 2001, p. 162.



challenges that these developments pose for the legitimacy of governance, the delivery of public goods, and the defence of human rights. Last but not least, she analysed how the concept of multistakeholderism relates to the reformed Committee on World Food Security. The author showed that “the multinational input industry received a boost with the extension of ‘intellectual property’ to cover the products of corporation laboratories. In a short time span, the major private sector seed breeders have operated a massive take-over of the world’s commercial seed supply. Brand-name seeds subject to exclusive monopoly under Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) accounted for 82% of the market worldwide by 2007.”<sup>25</sup> McKeon observes that “the corporate food regime has promised cheap food coordinated by transnational corporate supply chains, legitimized with a food security—productivity—modernization narrative. Today food crises are putting into question its ability to feed the world and its high environmental costs are becoming increasingly evident. The entry of new governmental players—the BRICS—has upset the previous balance, while mobilization by social movements is increasing the pressure for change.”<sup>26</sup> For Nora McKeon the relations between the corporate interests and neo-liberal frameworks that support them are also systemic.

Caroline Thomas also views the neoliberal model which dominated the global development policy agenda during the last decades of the 20th century as causing the deepening of inequalities. According to her, “human security requires different developmental strategies from those currently favoured by global governance institutions, strategies that have redistribution at their core. It also requires a different type of global governance, one that better reflects the concerns of the majority of the world’s states and citizens.”<sup>27</sup>

The perspectives discussed here in relation to the policies for food security seem to indicate the fact that food shortage, famine, people dying of hunger are mostly human caused famine. Recently, the report of the Food

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<sup>25</sup> Nora McKeon, “Are Equity and Sustainability a Likely Outcome When Foxes and Chickens Share the Same Coop? Critiquing the Concept of Multistakeholder Governance of Food Security”, *Globalizations*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 2017, p. 381, [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2017.1286168>], last accessed on 01.08.2024.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 383.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, titled *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024: Special Event on Financing to End Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in All its Forms*, identified “conflict, climate variability and extremes, and economic slowdowns and downturns, combined with the well-established underlying factors that contribute to food insecurity and malnutrition, such as lack of access to and unaffordability of healthy diets, unhealthy food environments, and high and persistent inequality”<sup>28</sup> as the *major drivers* of high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. The countries with the highest levels of food insecurity and which are affected by the major drivers of these problems are the countries with the least access to financing, because agrifood systems in these countries are not resilient to these external forces.<sup>29</sup> Regrettably, the report started on a disappointing note, acknowledging its failure to meet its goals:

“The world is still far off track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, Zero Hunger, with the global prevalence of undernourishment persisting at nearly the same level for three consecutive years after having risen sharply in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. [...] Progress towards the broader goal of ensuring regular access to adequate food for all has also stalled; [...] Focusing on economic access to nutritious foods [...] inequalities are evident, with low-income countries having the largest percentage of the population that is unable to afford a healthy diet (71.5 percent) compared with lower-middle-income countries (52.6 percent), upper-middle-income countries (21.5 percent) and high-income countries (6.3 percent). The lack of improvement in food security and the uneven progress in the economic access to healthy diets cast a shadow over the possibility of achieving Zero Hunger in the world, six years away from the 2030 deadline.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024. Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, 2024, p. xviii, [<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/31af4e18-aaeb-4164-991e-2431fe9d41ca/content>], last accessed on 01.08.2024.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. vii.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, *loc. cit.*

As in the case of the goal of clean water for all people by the year 1990, promoted by the World Health Organization and other international bodies, the *Zero Hunger* in the world is already being pushed six years away from the SDGs' 2030 deadline, while access to clean water continues to be a critical issue in many parts of the world. As the 2024 FAO report concluded, the main obstacle in solving the financing problem is the lack of a "common definition or standard for measuring financing for food security and nutrition."<sup>31</sup>

### **How much Solidarity for Global Health?**

In 2015, when world leaders committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which had the goal to continue the efforts of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to address these challenges more comprehensively, or - in their own terms-, to "free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet"<sup>32</sup>, the heads of state and government and high representatives were supported in achieving their goals by communities such as the Goalkeepers community, founded and led by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Project Everyone, a global collective of collaborative and diverse change makers committed to make these goals a reality, co-founded by Richard Curtis, film director and screenwriter. On June 6-7 at the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs, Bill Gates stated that in order to "accelerate progress and achieve the ambitious targets of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is important that we invest in the bright minds and bold ideas that can deliver the next generation of solutions to people, everywhere. The UN's Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation is an important step in helping us do that in a coordinated and impactful way."<sup>33</sup> The statement also emphasised the

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. xxviii.

<sup>32</sup> *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Preamble*, New York: The United Nations, 2015, [<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

<sup>33</sup> *Statement by Bill Gates at the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs Convened by the President of UN ECOSOC, H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft*, New York: The United Nations HQ, June 6-7, 2016, [<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/statements/21198Bill%20Gates%20statement%20ECOSOC%20Forum%20on%20STI.pdf>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

“critical need for new vaccines and drugs to reduce the burden of infectious diseases.”<sup>34</sup> It was precisely in the context of an infectious disease that it became evident how concentrations of control by both technology providers (in democratic states) or by governments (especially in autocratic states) can disempower or abuse citizens, further eroding the Global North-Global South relationship in the years to come.

Chapter 3 of the 2022 UNDP Special Report entitled *Digital technology's threats to human security* concentrates on the multiple threats from digital technology which have taken new forms in recent years, emphasising the problems arising from the absence of a global regulatory framework and the implications of the uneven access to technological innovations which became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic:

“Vaccine availability is no longer constrained primarily by production bottlenecks. In fact, there is global capacity to produce enough vaccines, but production is hamstrung in part by the intellectual property rights of a few pharmaceutical giants. A global move to suspend intellectual property rights has been called for, not just for vaccines but for a range of treatments, tests and products related to Covid-19. At the World Trade Organization (WTO) attempts by India, South Africa and other developing countries to suspend patents for Covid-19 vaccines and related treatments have been repeatedly blocked. The United States has put its support behind patent waivers, but there is opposition from some pharmaceutical companies. [...] The European Union has made a proposal that builds on using existing WTO provisions. Vaccine equity will not be achieved without increasing the supply and distribution of safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines, especially in low- and middle-income countries. No single vaccine manufacturer can produce enough vaccines to cover the globe, and demand has far outstripped supply, with high-income countries taking the lion’s share of doses. Sharing the know-how behind the vaccines is key to not only scaling up production but also bringing forward the second generation of vaccines to address emerging variants.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74.

As for the background of this situation, on October 2nd 2020, India and South Africa initiated a request “that the Council for TRIPS recommends, as early as possible, to the General Council a waiver from the implementation, application and enforcement of Sections 1, 4, 5, and 7 of Part II of the TRIPS Agreement in relation to prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19.”<sup>36</sup> The document emphasised the “urgent call for global solidarity, and the unhindered global sharing of technology and know-how in order that rapid responses for the handling of COVID-19 can be put in place on a real time basis.”<sup>37</sup> During the European Parliament debate of May 5th 2021, “on ensuring global access to shots, there was a lack of consensus among MEPs on a temporary waiver of patent rights for COVID-19 vaccines. [...] Many MEPs argued a patent waiver is a ‘false good idea’ that would not speed up the provision of vaccines and would harm innovation.”<sup>38</sup> It was only one month later, in June 2021, that the European Parliament called for temporary COVID-19 vaccine patent waiver to lift patent protections on Covid-19 vaccines<sup>39</sup>, thus backing President Joe Biden proposed plan.

According to a study conducted by Rosa Balfour, Lizza Bomassi, Marta Martinelli, from the Carnegie Europe independent centre, the EU was perceived, in this context, as pursuing more selfish strategies, from hoarding COVID-19 vaccinations to opposing vaccine waivers: “while outwardly espousing the benefits of international solidarity, the EU was unable to enact extensive policies to address the structural economic and political imbalances in its relationship with the Global South. This short-sightedness led to several missed opportunities for the EU to play a leading role in

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<sup>36</sup> *Waiver from Certain Provisions of the Trips Agreement for the Prevention, Containment and Treatment of Covid-19. Communication from India and South Africa.* Genève: The World Trade Organization (WTO), 2020, p. 2, [<https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/IP/C/W669.pdf&Open=True>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>38</sup> The European Parliament, “MEPs split over waiver for COVID-19 vaccine patents”, *News European Parliament. Press Releases*, 19-05-2021, [<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210517IPR04116/meps-split-over-waiver-for-covid-19-vaccine-patents>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

<sup>39</sup> The European Parliament, “Parliament calls for temporary COVID-19 vaccine patent waiver”, *News European Parliament. Press Releases*, 10-06-2021, [<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210604IPR05514/parliament-calls-for-temporary-covid-19-vaccine-patent-waiver>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

helping the Global South navigate what will be a long and painful recovery from the pandemic.”<sup>40</sup>

Médecins sans Frontières also called on all governments to support India’s and South Africa’s waiver request,<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch criticised the EU for opposing the TRIPS waiver.<sup>42</sup> Finally, despite opposition from high-profile figures like Bill Gates, United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced on May 5 that the U.S. would support waiving intellectual property rights related to vaccines: “This is a global health crisis, and the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures. The Administration believes strongly in intellectual property protections, but in service of ending this pandemic, supports the waiver of those protections for COVID-19 vaccines.”<sup>43</sup>

### **A Pharmaceutical Turn in Security Policy?**

Kaushik Sunder Rajan describes the emergence of biocapital in the 1990s as “a particular form of capitalism made specific because of emergent technologies and epistemologies of the life sciences”<sup>44</sup>, revealing the character of health–security as a highly capital-intensive activity. The union of biotechnology and market forces, representing what Rajan calls “technoscientific capitalism” also suggests that health issues are predominantly a matter of corporate and commercial interests. In other words, pharmaceutical companies

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<sup>40</sup> Rosa Balfour, Lizza Bomassi and Marta Martinelli, “Coronavirus and the Widening Global North-South Gap”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 2022, p. 2, [[https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Balfour\\_etall\\_Southern\\_Mirror\\_Final.pdf](https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Balfour_etall_Southern_Mirror_Final.pdf)], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

<sup>41</sup> Doctors without Borders / Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), “India and South Africa propose no patents on COVID-19 medicines and tools during pandemic”, 16-10-2020, [<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/india-and-south-africa-propose-no-patents-on-covid-19-medicines-and-tools-during-pandemic/>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

<sup>42</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Seven Reasons the EU is Wrong to Oppose the TRIPS Waiver”, *Human Rights Watch*, 03.06.2021, [<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/03/seven-reasons-eu-wrong-oppose-trips-waiver>], last accesses on 03.08.2024.

<sup>43</sup> United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai, “Statement from Ambassador Katherine Tai on the Covid-19 Trips Waiver”, *Office of the United States Trade Representative. Press Releases*, 05-05-2021, [<https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2021/may/statement-ambassador-katherine-tai-covid-19-trips-waiver>], last accessed on 02.08.2024.

<sup>44</sup> Kaushik Sunder Rajan, *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life*, First Edition, Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006, p. 78.

are working closely with scientists, who are often also connected to the international health organisations. Therefore companies seek to maximise their ROI (returns on investments) by influencing governments and international health organisations to purchase significant quantities of their new products in the name of strengthening health security. In 2014, in his study focusing on the case of Tamiflu, Stefan Elbe, Director at the Centre for Global Health Policy, a research group within the University of Sussex, showed how the molecular vision of life is also inducing an array of new insecurities, arguing that “the conventional disciplinary view of health as a predominantly secondary matter of ‘low’ international politics is incorrect.”<sup>45</sup> According to Elbe, “at the core of this pharmaceutical turn in security policy lies the rise of a molecular vision of life promulgated by the biomedical sciences. Reimagining life as the complex interplay of molecular processes is provoking profound new fears about our collective vulnerability to underlying microbiological processes - be it in the form of pandemics or bioterrorism - that are finding their contemporary political expression in the rise of global health security concerns.”<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the concept of ‘health security’ created international tensions particularly with the states from the Global South fearing that ‘health security’ in reality means securing the West. A solution was offered by Simon Rushton, back in 2011, and it was meant to resolve the tensions around (global) health security system was a more explicit recognition of the primary beneficiaries of the current system, and of who is bearing the costs: “it is the developing world that is being asked to bear many of the costs of global health security. These result both from the requirement that they invest in biosecurity measures in order to meet the core capacity requirements under the IHR (international health regulations) and the expectation that, in the event of emergency, they will undertake economically damaging emergency measures. [...] Many developing states [...] are coming to resent the emphasis being placed on a small number of diseases that worry the West.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Stefan Elbe, “The Pharmaceuticalisation of Security: Molecular biomedicine, antiviral stockpiles, and global health security”, in *Review of International Studies*, Volume 40, No. 5, Special Issue: Global Health in International Relations, December, 2014, p. 936.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> Simon Rushton, “Global Health Security: Security for Whom? Security from What?”, in *Political Studies*, Vol. 59, 2011, pp. 793-794, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2011.00919.x, last accessed on 02.08.2024.

As a consequence, since then, the divide between the Global North and the Global South around health security has become becoming increasingly evident with the Coronavirus pandemic widening the Global North-South Gap.

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