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Foreward

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Foreword

by Yanzhong Huang

Throughout recorded history, disease has consistently accounted for the greatest proportion of human morbidity and mortality, far surpassing war as a threat to human life. In the post-Cold War era, the threats to the health of populations from infectious diseases have actually increased, as diseases do not respect territorial borders and the burgeoning global activities make national borders increasingly porous. The anthrax attacks of 2001 and the recent SARS epidemic only highlight the importance of health as a national security or foreign policy issue.

As threats to the health of populations gain prominence on the public policy agenda, decision makers face a host of thorny questions. Should a comprehensive strategy for biological security emphasize improvement in international public health? What is the best approach to engage the public sector and the pharmaceutical industry in building our biodefense? What roles should be played by the international organizations such as the World Health Organization to ensure maximum protection from infectious diseases with minimal disruption? To effectively address these concerns, policy makers and scholars alike must transcend traditional models of inter-state conflict and develop new tools of analysis in assessing the nature of global health threats and fashioning out effective responses to them.

Against this background, the Whitehead School of Diplomacy launches its Center for Global Health Studies, which will examine global health issues from a foreign policy and national security perspective. Among its functions, the Center will develop coursework, curricula and symposia to train leaders, practitioners, and policy makers. Bringing together public, private and academic partners, the Center will serve as a think tank and resource center on issues relating to health policy, development, and international security. The perspectives and insights presented in this special issue reflect our efforts to draw on the expertise and experience of leaders, policy makers, and analysts to examine global health challenges, as well as policy options aimed at their resolution. We are grateful to the editors and the contributing authors for their cooperation and hard work in assembling this volume.

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