

Diagnosing Security or the Medicalization of Knowledge, Authority, and Resistance in IR

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Long before the COVID-19 pandemic have critical security scholars pointed to the increasing securitization of public health. The COVID-19 crisis has further amplified the importance of such calls, sparking a variety of important investigations. What has received little attention so far, however, is the global trend towards the medicalization of society and by extension the disciplinary realm of International Relations. This roundtable draws attention to this trend by investigating multiple sites where medicalization of/in Global Politics is enacted. Four thematic questions anchor the discussion. First, what types of knowledge does medicalization privilege or marginalize, specifically focussing on how medical frameworks obscure or silence alternative viewpoints. Second, how does medicalized security influence political legitimacy? As scientific authority rises, medical classifications and “objective” terminologies lend a veneer of neutrality that masks cultural biases and shapes perceptions of political authority. Third, what subjectivities emerge from practices of medicalization? For example, how do diagnostic frameworks influence and shape identities in ways that may reinforce societal inequalities and exclusions. Finally, we consider possibilities for resistance, investigating how activism and scholarship might challenge the disguised biases of medicalized security practices..

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