**Forum:** Historical Security Council

**Issue:** Addressing global cooperative efforts in the extermination of the smallpox virus

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Introduction

Smallpox’s orign still remains a mystery till this day, but discoveries and scientific findings have traced its beginnings to around at least 3,000 years ago. However, with the expansion of different civilizations and the start of the Age of Exploration, smallpox had spread across the world. The rapid spread of the highly infectious disease led to the inevitability of deaths, with over hundreds of millions of people falling sick and dying from the illness. Even though there were a handful who survived, they dealt with consequences, such as losing their vision permanently.

Near the end of the 18th century, the first vaccine was developed, using cowpox as a substitute for smallpox, and it was tested and proven to be successful in curing a smallpox patient. The development of the vaccine did not eradicate smallpox, however. Instead, the disease continued to spread globally, causing the death of millions of people for the next few decades.

Since the topic is to be addressed in the Historical Security Council, this report will be set in the 1950s and 60s covering on events and previous solutions occuring before global cooperation was achieved to eradicate smallpox. Delegates should work on finding solutions encouraging global cooperation and increasing access to developed vaccines in order to exterminate the virus. It is also important to note that while there are many solutions, organizations, and programs created in later years and decades, delegates should put focus on writing more unique solutions and perhaps go in a dfferent direction from what history already has laid out.

Definition of Key Terms

Smallpox

An infectious virus with the following symptoms: fever, lesions, rashes, and vomiting. It is a highly deadly disease, with only a handful survivors who suffer from permanent consequences.

**Biological warfare**

The use of diseases or other biological means to cause harm to other humans.

**Variolation**

A kind of practice involving injecting a small amount of a virus into an individual, in hopes of creating immunity from the virus.

**Vaccine**

A treatment, often in the form of injections, given to protect the individual from a sickness, illness, or disease. In some regions, people are required to take certain kinds of vaccines to receive immunity from viruses.

Background

Though the exact number of people who died from the smallpox virus is unknown, an estimated number of hundred of millions have passed because of the deadly disease, as mentioned above. It is also important to note the origins, causes of its rapid spread, and attempts of eradicating the virus.

Smallpox’s origins

Stated earlier in the report, the exact origin of the virus remains unknown to this day. However, there are several scientific findings pointing to its much earlier origin. Many mummies found in Egypt had rashes resembling smallpox (“History of Smallpox”), written reports of smallpox were found in ancient Asian cultures (Riedel), and many even believed that early civilizations like Mesopotamia might have also suffered from the deadly virus though that belief has little scientific proof backing it. Regardless of its origins, the deadly virus spread like a wildfire and killed over 30 percent of those who had it (“smallpox”).

The spread

In the earlier centuries, smallpox was spread through trade, with Japan getting some of its earliest cases from trading with China and Korea. And with civilizations yearning to expand and explore other places in the world, it did not take very long for smallpox to infect every part of the globe. In the 7th century, Arab expansion had infected parts of northern Africa and Europe. And after Portugal expanded into western Africa, that region also became infected. Then, following the severely inhumane African slave trade, smallpox then also spread into the Caribbean and Central and South America. Later, in the 17th century, North America was ridden with smallpox and the Native Americans were largely wiped out. Lastly, in the 18th century, explorers who traveled to Australia also brought smallpox along with them (“History of Smallpox”).

For the next few decades, populations who were newly exposed to the virus often suffered tremendously, with no remedies or any research for cures. And even those civilizations who were exposed to it for years, still struggled to produce a successful cure and suffered from huge losses as well. Indigenous populations were often impacted the most; not only were they exposed to a new disease, but they also suffered from the consequences of colonization. Smallpox quickly became a type of biological warfare, where British forces considered using smallpox to wipe out the indigenous populations that stood up against them in North America (Riedel). However, most of them died from the symptoms of smallpox regardless, changing the landscape and politics of today.

**Earlier types of treatment**

Many countries at that time used a practice known as variolation and inoculation, where individuals who did not have smallpox yet had to inject some of the smallpox material into their body or up their nose. This treatment was used to give the individual a milder version of the virus to ensure they would not be impacted by the deadlier version. Reports of the use of variolation in China was traced back to the 16th century, and there were similar reports of inoculation used in India (“History of the”). There were also other natural remedies that were not as successful, but were still practiced by the small chance that it could get rid of the smallpox in the individual. So when more people came across variolation and inoculation, they spread the practice globally, helping treat people all around the world. The spread of the practice caught the attention of a doctor, Edward Jenner. He noticed that individuals who caught cowpox were immune to smallpox; so using that information, he used variolation and injected the cowpox material into James Phipps, the son of Jenner’s gardener (“History of Smallpox”).

**Creation of a vaccine**

Phipps never caught smallpox so, using that information, Jenner continued to improve and develop a vaccine to eliminate smallpox in the body and to prevent more people from catching the virus. Officially, the vaccie was tested to be successful in 1801. Although there was some doubt about its effectiveness in the beginning, after proven to be effective through testing, people gradually came to accept the vaccine; smallpox becoming the only disease humans have completely gotten rid of (though this success only happens after the period in which this report has been set in).

**Aftermath of the vaccine’s creation**

Despite the creation of the vaccine, only a handful of regions in Europe and North America eradicated smallpox. Other countries around the world still suffered great losses and millions of people died each year. At this point, countries did not collaborate with each other on the global distribution of vaccines yet, nor did they work together to tackle the virus.

Major Parties Involved

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization was the first of many organizations to become involved in tackling and ending smallpox in the entire world. They organized and began their global plan, the Global Smallpox Eradication Program, in 1959 after the World Health Assembly found out that over sixty countries suffered from the drastic consequences of smallpox. However, their plan lacked in many areas: the funds were inefficient, not all countries collaborated, and vaccines were in shortage. Their global program quickly ended, but they continued their efforts to further prevent the virus from spreading in later years (“History of Smallpox”).

Soviet Union

Soviet Union was one of the earliest countries that involved themselves into tackling smallpox. Their deputy minister at the time, Viktor Zhdanov, was the one who helped start the program created by the WHO. While they did involve themselves to reduce the spread of smallpox in their region, their main goal was to prevent the United States from exerting too much power in the state of politics and also place themselves into global affairs (Bristol).

United States

After involving themselves and collaborating with the WHO on different programs to eradicate malaria, the United States was hesitant and dubious at first with USSR’s and WHO’s plan to eradicate smallpox. However, in the 1960s, they started their own program to prevent the spread of smallpox as well, strengthening global efforts and collaboration. They also cooperated with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and distributed many of the vaccines from USSR, eventually leading to the eradication of smallpox in a handful of regions (Bristol).

Timeline of Events

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| Date | Description of event |
| 6th century | Smallpox is brought to Japan after trading with nearby countries |
| 7th century | Northern Africa, Spain, and Portugal are exposed to smallpox |
| 11th century | The spread of smallpox inreases in European regions |
| 15th century | After Portugal expanded into western Africa, that region also became infected |
| 16th century | Following the African slave trade, smallpox spread into the Caribbean and Central and South America |
| 17th century | Spread of smallpox in North America nearly wipes out the Native Americans |
| 18th century | Smallpox is brought to Australia |
| 1801 | The first vaccine for smallpox is considered effective |
| 1959 | WHO begins their Global Smallpox Eradication Program |

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Mentioned above, many countries and organizations have launched their own programs to eradicate smallpox. Many of these countries do this for their own benefit, to gain power in the global stage, but their efforts allow for global cooperation and distribution of vaccines. The United States and Soviet Union, especially, have been extremely involved in the whole process of eradication. They had provided funds, support, and help for decades, in collaboration with other organizations.

However, it is also important to note that while these two countries and one organization have remain involved, the role they play stem from their participation in the Cold War. With the two countries fighting against each other, the United States and USSR, each one hopes to have a more influential role in global politics, and tackling smallpox happened to be one of the major problems at the time.

The WHO, on the other hand, is in charge of ensuring good health globally, giving them the great responsibility of creating programs while working with other countries to meet their goals.

Although these previous attempts have provided a good start to eradicating smallpox, it is worth noting other unique solutions that promote global cooperation and that can be used.

Possible Solutions

* One of the most essential solutions is ensuring the global distribution of vaccines is occuring without any hinderance. It is important to dispatch volunteers to check for donations from different countries and to communicate with organizations such as the WHO in distributing these vaccines equally. Since most European and North American regions are free from smallpox, delegates should encourage these countries to donate any of their remaining vaccines to countries who do not have the same privileges. Delegates should also note the importance of having these vaccines go through extra testing to verify their effectiveness and quality.
* In order to ensure global cooperation, delegates must address transparency, trust, and communciation between countries. The United States and USSR were found to have kept “stocks of variola major” (“smallpox”), which are small amounts of smallpox, and used those as a type of biological warfare. So to ensure global cooperation, delegates should make sure the United States and USSR, and even other countries, report on their uses of the virus and vaccines. If these countries fail to do so or are found to have secretly kept amounts of the virus, they should be receiving consequences decided on by the global community.
* Although a few countries and organizations have already implemented a few global programs to eradicate smallpox, it would not be harmful for other countries to implement and create such programs. Only then will countries all over the globe be ensured access to vaccines and the support they need. However, delegates may consider creating a single joint program instead, to make sure that no nation is dominating global affairs with a larger and more powerful program.
* Furthermore, it could be quite helpful for countries to establish their own partnerships with different organziations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to prevent unnecessary partnerships. Based on previous accounts, not every country was as active nor participated as much as others in these joint programs. So, instead, they might find more benefits for them and for the global community to establish their own partnerships with organizations they want to work with. This also allows for the community to keep them accountable for a project they wanted to work on.
* Lastly, delegates may be considering implementing global caucuses to discuss potential solution. However, insetad, delegates may consider holding more regional caucuses, depending on the geographical landscape. The reason for this is because a global caucus could lead to the potential of larger countries to dominate the conversation, while smaller countries struggle to voice out their opinions. Hopefully, with a smaller panel, representatives would find discussions to flow better and for a consensus to be achieved much easier.

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