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Resources

Review Article

Theorising the shift from security to insecurity—Kaldor, Duffield and Furedi

David Chandler

Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention

Polity, London, 2007, 228 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7456-3854-6

Mary Kaldor

Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples

Polity, London, 2007, 266 pages. ISBN: 978-0-7456-3580-4

Mark Duffield

Invitation to Terror: The Expanding Empire of the Unknown

Continuum, London, 2007, 204 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8264-9957-8

Frank Furedi

Introduction

These three important books focus on the changing nature of the security problematic from security—the inter-state threat of war—to insecurity—the permanent risk of instability. This shift is fundamental to our understanding of new international policy frameworks, particularly within the sphere of conflict, security and development. For Mary Kaldor, globalisation has led to the internationalisation of risks and threats, creating the need for cosmopolitan solutions to the problem of ‘human’ insecurity. For Mark Duffield, the

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permanent war on insecurity is a product of the neoliberal biopolitical division of the world between the insured and the uninsured. For Frank Furedi, the expanding perception of insecurity is driven by the isolation and pessimism of political elites in the West.

Human insecurity

Mary Kaldor has long been a leading advocate of reconceptualising state-based security in terms of human insecurity. Her most recent book, *Human Security* is a collection of essays which brings together much of her analysis on ‘New Wars’, ‘Global Civil Society’ and ‘Cosmopolitanism’ under the broader needs of Human Security.¹ Kaldor notes that there has been a decline in the number of conflicts and the number of people killed in conflict in the first five years of the new century (p. 193). Security is not threatened by international conflict as much as by ‘the underlying conditions that lead to “new wars” and which are the sources of human insecurity’ (p. 195). ‘Moreover “new wars” are increasingly intertwined with other global risks—the spread of disease, vulnerability to natural disasters, poverty and homelessness’ (p. 10).

In these essays, Kaldor sets out her distinct approach to understanding and addressing human insecurity. The displacement of old wars by ‘new wars’ is crucial to this framework. For Kaldor, the political and legal categories of inter-state security frameworks no longer make much sense today, where there has been a ‘blurring of the distinction between war and peace’: “New wars” do not have decisive beginnings or endings. Nor are they clearly delineated in geographical space; they spread through refugees and displaced persons, organised crime, diaspora groups and so on’ (p. 172).

The global security problematic is framed by the need to deal with the threat posed by the fact that: ‘Millions of people in the world still live in situations of intolerable insecurity, especially in zones of conflict—West, Central and the Horn of Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia’ (p. 195). This is not a problem that can be ignored because ‘insecurity can no longer be contained—violence has a tendency to cross borders not in the form of attacks by foreign enemies but through terrorism, organised crime or extreme ideologies’ (p. 196).

A key change for Kaldor is the lack of effectiveness of military force in a globalised world. Liberal internationalist approaches which argue for new rights of military intervention, such as those of Tony Blair and the Bush administration, place too much emphasis on military solutions, geopolitical control over territorial space, and waging war against an

‘enemy’. Kaldor sees Afghanistan and Iraq as demonstrating the limits of military firepower which may be useful for domestic consumption—as ‘spectacle war’, manipulating public opinion to support the moral cause of domestic political elites—but cannot enable the US to impose control over territory or defeat asymmetrical insurgencies (pp. 84–91). The limited usefulness of military force means that ‘compellance no longer works, the only alternative is containment’ (p. 96).

For Kaldor, ‘containment’ involves global cosmopolitan approaches of inclusion, not ‘spectacle war’, which mobilises military force from a distance, but committed global engagement around a programme of global social justice. The solution to global insecurity is human security, defined by Kaldor as ‘about the security of individuals and communities rather than the security of states, and it combines both human rights and human development’ (p. 182). Kaldor argues that the essence of human security is ‘crisis management’ and that the principles of putting individual needs first should guide international intervention to secure the vulnerable whether the emergency is caused by a natural disaster or armed conflict (pp. 183–184).

The human security agenda of ‘global social justice’ involves a broad flexible range of policy interventions from military to administrative. On the military side, the protection of the vulnerable involves ‘robust’ rules of engagement, but the commitment is to civilian protection rather than military victory. Kaldor is keen to distinguish human security interventions from ‘war’ and argues that they should be seen as more akin to domestic law enforcement or policing—preventing crimes against civilians and seeing perpetrators as criminals rather than legitimising them as the ‘enemy’.

Development also has to be seen as key to human security. By development, she is very clear that she means ‘the primacy of human development as opposed to the growth of national economies’ (p. 186). Development is understood as individual security, not in state-based, territorial terms of GDP, economic growth or macro-economic stabilisation but as an approach which emphasises ‘partnership, local ownership, engagement with civil society and gender sensitivity’ (p. 193).

Geopolitical, territorial, state-based approaches are not capable of dealing with the problems of human insecurity. States can no longer secure their own citizens or successfully pursue old-fashioned approaches based on militarism and narrow conceptions of national interests. Globalisation has fundamentally undermined the power and authority of states, reducing the role of state leaders ‘less to rule than to manage complex relationships with international institutions, other states, international

companies and NGOs, as well as domestic interests and the wider public' (p. 166). States are no longer the measure of security or the key mechanism for achieving this. The state's declining importance in terms of traditional economic and military roles, means that 'the notion of a vertically organised, territorially based community congruent to the state is greatly weakened' as citizens increasingly have multiple loyalties (p. 157).

For Kaldor, 'new types of global risk that break down spatial boundaries between peace and war' (p. 148) are seen as a vital spur to new forms of global governance and global cooperation, capable of domesticating the international sphere. Attempts to 'reimpose international relations' and 'recreate state power', such as the Bush administration's 'war on terror' response to the September 11 attacks can only feed global insecurities (pp. 150–153). Globalisation, in weakening territorial state-based approaches to security and creating global forms of insecurity, is seen to be the potential harbinger of progress, but only if the cosmopolitan approaches advocated by global civil society are successful in developing new multi-lateral interventionist frameworks for human security.

Development and insecurity

Mark Duffield has also been a leading theorist of the shift from security to insecurity. His new book *Development, Security and Unending Wars*, pursues and develops the themes of his earlier work, especially that of his 2001 book *Global Governance and the New Wars*, which focused on the shift from inter-state war to the perception of underdevelopment as a source of international insecurity. Here Duffield highlighted the regulatory mechanisms of the global governance of 'liberal peace' through interventionist management of the behaviour of those deemed 'at risk'.²

For Duffield, the discourse of human insecurity is one of permanent emergency and unending war. He argues that human security is a key reflection of the dominance of biopolitical framings of international relations—interconnecting security and development concerns—through having 'life' or the population as a reference point rather than the state (p. 118). Human insecurity discourse seeks to universalise or globalise security problems of instability by positing the responsibilities of the West to intervene and manage insecurity at the same time as seeking to contain the risks of instability through a focus on non-material development, in terms of the technologies of community-based self-reliance.

Duffield argues that the threat of terrorism is not a direct replacement for the threat of communism. The management of Cold War threats of inter-state conflict relegated the

importance of the post-colonial world; where there was intervention this was at arm's length, mediated politically through inter-state relations, where selected states would be supported and provided with aid, often against the will and needs of their populations. Duffield states that, today, the West seeks to intervene biopolitically to reconstruct 'ineffective' or 'failing' states on the basis of satisfying the unmet needs of their populations (p. 129).

For Duffield, there is nothing progressive in the biopolitical framing of security in terms of permanent instability. The human security approach, advocated by Kaldor, is seen to blur the divisions and power relations shaping security discourse at the same time as instituting a racial discourse of biopolitical division between the secure and the insecure—those living under effective and ineffective governance; those developed and those deserving of development. This bifurcation is captured in the descriptive and contingent division between the 'insured'—those living in mass consumer society with social welfare protections—and the 'uninsured'—those living in underdeveloped societies where instability is an ever present threat and where the development solution is self-reliance and containment through the social engineering of community support mechanisms.

Human security, under the aegis of the 'human' offers a divisive vision of the world, where the West has both a security 'interest' and a 'values-based' desire to 'secure', to 'develop', to 'protect' and to 'better' the Other, whose insecurity threatens the security of Western consumer society as the instabilities associated with conflict, poverty and alienation threaten to spill over into and to destabilise the West. The desire to contain instability is understood as the need to address the threatening unmet needs of the unsecured, uninsured and insecure non-Western Other. Since the development solution of self-reliance and sustainable development does not offer to bridge the development gap with the West but instead to contain it, the limitations of self-reliance are continually coming to the fore, promising an unending war where interventionist development techniques are continually being reinvented and perfected.

The biopolitics of human insecurity is fundamentally distinct from the politics of state-based security. Duffield traces a genealogy of the links between security and development through the biopolitical framing of human needs. Interesting insights are provided into the use of development under the native administration strategy of the colonial Dual Mandate, where social engineering attempted to strengthen community self-reliance and legitimise external rule on the basis of the protection of the poor and marginal rural population from the machinations of nationalist urban liberal elites (pp. 170–177). Duffield also traces the development of the 'petty sovereign power' of interventionist

humanitarian and development NGOs during the Cold War and the ‘governmentalisation’ of this power in the interventionist 1990s, where human-centred intervention set itself as above and outside the sphere of politics.

For Duffield, one crucial distinction between biopolitics and traditional inter-state relations is at the level of sovereignty: he highlights how the focus on ‘life’, or the population, makes sovereignty contingent on state ‘effectiveness’. The blurring of the political distinctions between the inside and outside, the sovereign post-colonial state and international institutions and NGOs, are most clear in the case of ‘governance states’, where the donors and international financial institutions operate inside the institutions of the fragile state under the aegis of shared partnership to achieve poverty reduction. Duffield argues that while the state is brought back into interventionist frameworks with the merging of development and security, this is a very different entity from the post-colonial state, which sought to defend its sovereign rights and to lead the development process; for the governance state, ‘while its territorial integrity is respected, sovereignty over life is internationalised, negotiable and contingent’ (p. 169).

As an engaged and empirically-grounded critique of Kaldor’s rosy view of the progressive nature of new forms of global governance, conditional sovereignty, and human development, Duffield’s book is certainly compelling reading. Duffield argues in the Preface that the book’s ‘most important departure ... relates to the application of the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics’ (p. viii). It is the biopolitical angle, which Duffield suggests, distinguishes this book from his earlier work, which equally sought to understand Western interventionist frameworks as techniques of stabilisation, containment and counter-insurgency in the post-colonial world. This is an interesting point, but I do not think it is quite true; his 2001 book, *Global Governance and the New Wars*, stresses the point that:

The ultimate goal of liberal peace is stability. In achieving this aim, liberal peace is different from imperial peace. The latter was based on, or at least aspired to, direct territorial control where populations were ruled through juridical and bureaucratic means of authority.... Liberal peace is different; it is a non-territorial, mutable and networked relation of governance... ideally liberal power is based on the management and regulation of economic, political and social processes.³

Already implicitly, if not explicitly, Duffield is employing a Foucauldian framework distinguishing biopower over processes from disciplinary sovereign power over territory.

In my view, rather than adding anything, Duffield's use of Foucault's concept of biopower has held his work back. Without drawing explicitly on Foucault he was able to highlight the depoliticising effects of the new discourses of development and security, and note how the defeat of the post-colonial project facilitated the problematisation of the non-Western state and the securitisation of underdevelopment.⁴ The weak point in his analysis was theorising the processes of intervention and the blurring of security of development, which he was so insightfully describing.

In focusing on biopower, Duffield is evading the task of explanation and setting up something of a red herring. Foucault himself stated that his analysis of biopower was 'not in any way a general theory of what power is. It is not a part or even the start of such a theory', merely the study of the effects of liberal governance practices, which posit as their goal the interests of society—the population—rather than government.⁵ Biopolitics describes government in the age of liberal modernity, where the state is no longer alien and external to society. The population are no longer an alien mass to be coerced or manipulated, as in the pre-modern time of Machiavelli; instead, the needs of society as a whole 'offer a surface on which [power] can get a hold', or 'secure' itself.⁶

Rather than the disciplinary sovereign power of external rule, the state operates on the basis of 'governmentality' of the liberal freedoms of the political and the economic sphere, where society (capitalist social relations) internally generates the need for regulatory governance.⁷ In fact, Foucault is describing the dynamic of liberal modernity, understood as a society-orientated process, with a social, collective purpose or goal, rather than a process of narrow regulatory governance by the disciplinary techniques of the sovereign. Foucault states: 'I think this marks an important break. Whereas the end of sovereignty is internal to itself and gets its instruments from itself in the form of law, the end of government is internal to the things it directs; it is to be sought in the perfection, maximisation, or intensification of the processes it directs.'⁸

Duffield is grappling with how to explain the apparently 'post-territorial' and 'post-political' dynamics of international regulation and seeks to locate the explanation in the post-colonial world itself and the threat it allegedly poses to the security of the mass consumption societies of the West. He argues that there is a Western projection of the problems of the inequalities and inclusions and exclusions of the world market as a problem of the underdevelopment of weak, fragile and failing states, which are then the subject of new forms of global techniques of intervention and governance. While this appears to be a radical point of critique, there is nothing here which offers a way into

understanding why such a radical shift from the politics of security to the ‘biopolitics’ of insecurity should have taken place.

Ironically, whilst Foucault himself understood his work on biopower as a correction to the reading of his work on disciplinarity, which created the impression of merely asserting ‘the monotonous assertion of power’,⁹ Duffield, in effect, reads biopower ahistorically, as a *fait accompli*, suggesting that the only alternative is to assert that we are all victims of governmentalism: ‘we are all governed and therefore in solidarity’ (p. 232). Apparently, we should focus on what we share with post-colonial societies, not offering the hierarchical ‘solidarity’ of development or political autonomy but instead the solidarity of learning from the poor and being marginalised as equals; once humbled: ‘through a practical politics based on the solidarity of the governed we can aspire to opening ourselves to the spontaneity of unpredictable encounters’ (p. 234). In highlighting the hegemonic frameworks and interests underpinning Kaldor’s idealistic approach to new frameworks of ‘human’ security, Duffield appears to throw the baby of human agency out with the bathwater of development, rejecting modernising aspirations towards democracy and development for recreating oppressive neoliberal biopolitical frameworks of control and regulation.

Despite the differences in their views of whether the shift from state security to human insecurity is to be welcomed or criticised, both Kaldor and Duffield seek to ground their position of critique on the basis of their ‘global solidarity’ with the non-Western poor and marginal. Both Kaldor and Duffield see growing global insecurity as a product of the instrumental pursuit of Western self-interest within a framework of globalisation—for Kaldor, the object of critique is attempts to address the globalised world through state-based security frameworks, for Duffield, it is neoliberal attempts to contain and impose biopolitical order on the post-colonial world.

Terrorism and insecurity

For Furedi, ‘the expanding empire of the unknown’, the permanent war against insecurity, is waged precisely because liberal government can no longer ‘secure itself’ through its immersion and its relationship to its own society. Furedi’s work implicitly suggests that modern governments are in a similar situation to Foucault’s pre-modern Machiavellian Prince, who lacked a sense of a ‘fundamental, essential, natural’ connection with society and therefore, correctly, perceived the relationship as ‘fragile and constantly under threat’.¹⁰ In this respect, Furedi gives greater attention to some of the themes of

government weakness and disconnection from society raised in Kaldor's work. However, where, for Kaldor, the breakdown of state-society coherence and state weakness are consequences of globalisation, for Furedi, it is the attenuated nature of social collective engagement that shapes perceptions of state weakness and the cultural consciousness of globalised threats.

Where Kaldor argues that the war on terror is a conscious strategy of re-establishing domestic elite authority, through public manipulation via the moral crusade of 'spectacle war', and Duffield, that the war on terror has been instrumental in strengthening an institutionalised biopolitical regulation at home and abroad, Furedi argues that it would be a mistake to understand the war on terror in narrowly instrumental terms, reflecting the coherence and control of domestic elites. There is little clarity of the aims of the war or of who it is against. Furedi persuasively argues that the 'problem is not merely one of presentation, but of meaning' (p. xiii). He suggests that 'Western political elites lack a web of meaning through which they can make sense of the threat of terrorism'; the threat of insecurity seems so overwhelming that 'the enemy has acquired an increasingly diffuse and abstract character' (p. xiv).

Rather than the confidence of governing capacity, extending the 'sovereign frontier' of Western domination deeper into the post-colonial world, Furedi focuses on the lack of confidence and apparent defeatism of Western elites. In the past, security threats were minimised by governments, keen to demonstrate their capacity to uphold national security. Today, there is an overwhelming mood of helplessness and fatalism—summed up by the government mantra of 'its not a matter of if but when' and 'its only a matter of time' before the terrorists achieve an attack of widespread devastation of an urban centre—as governments constantly imagine the worst.

Furedi argues that critics of the war on terror tend to miss the demoralisation and even defeatist projection of this conflict as an 'unending war' (p. 10). The official rhetoric of American vulnerability to asymmetric attacks by motivated individuals, inverts the power relations between the West and the post-colonial world, whereby Western technological advances are seen as 'dependency' and 'weakness'—providing targets rather than coping capacity. Rather than taking these statements as good coin, Furedi seeks to investigate why there has been 'a radical reversal of the way that modern, relatively open industrial societies make sense of themselves' (p. 14). Why should Western societies view the world from the perspective of their vulnerabilities rather than their strengths; from the passive perspective of the helpless victim rather than that of a pro-active agent?

His central theme is that the idea of terrorism gives coherence to Western elites' sense of existential threat. The threat is not important in itself; the threat of instability held to stem from diverse causes—such as underdevelopment, state failure, terrorism, global crime or global warming—tends to incapacitate Western policy-making and instrumental strategic planning rather than facilitate it. For Furedi, the Western sense of existential threat is a free floating one, able to attach itself to any cause, which can then be interpreted through the lens of 'worst-case scenarios'. This is because the sense of global insecurity does not stem from what is 'out there' but rather from Western society itself: it 'is the product of society's inability to give meaning to human experience' (p. xvi).

Furedi argues that the sense of insecurity is so strong that our fears are expanding with little relationship to any increase in objectively measurable threats or risks. In fact, what is changing is our understanding of risk itself—from a measurement of the probability of success or failure to a speculative exercise, emphasising the limits of knowledge; a shift from 'probabilistic' to 'possibilistic' thinking (p. 67). Rather than human knowledge and capacity being emphasised, the focus is upon the dangers that we do not know about. The less certain we are about our own judgement and capacity the more insecurity becomes the dominant cultural outlook.

This sense of uncertainty is seen to derive from the breakdown of collective political engagement, which means that societies are less sure of societal goals. Without social goals, communities lack a collective sense of shared meaning and political elites find it difficult to give their policy actions meaning—to generate social consensus around government policies and initiatives. Furedi seeks to draw out the social grounding behind the uncertainty that drives the sense of permanent war and permanent instability and argues that the lack of social and political connection cannot be overcome by re-branding exercises or debates about cohering 'British values'.

In fact, Furedi argues that rather than instrumentally using the war on terror to enforce their authoritarian regulatory rule at home and abroad, political elites are genuinely fearful that their tenuous hold over society could be undermined by a range of extraneous threats. The sense of vulnerability has meant that the war on terror has become an introspective framework through which elite feelings of vulnerability have been extended to a much deeper cultural pessimism, which has had an impact on policies both at home and abroad. This sense of incapacity has exaggerated the impact of the terrorist threat and, through expressing their powerlessness against the military threat and weakness in the 'battle of ideas', they have indirectly weakened their moral authority further.

In locating the shift from inter-state security to global insecurity in the domestic sphere of attenuated social relations, Furedi avoids the problem faced by Duffield in trying to explain the vagaries of Western policy-making in relation to the post-colonial world as part of a clear and coherent agenda of containment. Furedi also implicitly raises critical questions over Kaldor's use of globalisation as a deterministic explanation for political elites' lack of capacity to take on policy leadership and the break down of territorial forms of community consciousness. In focusing on elite insecurity and the policy uncertainties and overreactions that stem from this, a much more socially mediated understanding of Western approaches to security becomes possible.

Conclusion

During the Cold War, conflict was understood as inherently political; inter-state conflict—the subject of security—was understood as *realpolitik*, as politics in the raw, as the promotion of the strategic self-interest of rational state actors. The international sphere was filled with political contestation, providing a context and giving social meaning and collective goals to foreign policy. Today, politics and strategic policy-making appear to have been removed from the international sphere. Kaldor describes this in terms of 'human security'—the concerns are seen to be above political contestation, as the West seeks to govern a globalised world in the interests of an undifferentiated humanity. Duffield argues that underneath the rhetoric of shared threats of insecurity, the West is legitimising a new epoch of civilisational division, where the mass consumption society of the West secures itself against the instabilities of the surplus masses of the post-colonial world, destined to homeostatic regulation and containment under the aegis of sustainable development.

In essence, Kaldor is a leading theorist of the post-liberal framework of insecurity driven by the deterministic process of globalisation, taking the 'values' statements of many Western governments and international institutions as good coin in explaining a new world of post-territorial human security. Duffield, however, is a leading theorist of a post-realist framework of insecurity, explaining the hidden agenda, or 'interests' behind biopolitical regulation in defence of Western consumer capitalism.¹¹ While post-realist approaches are critical of liberal 'values' frameworks, they tend to replace 'values' with 'interests' in an equally unmediated way. For those readers seeking to find a way out of the reworking of liberal and realist frameworks and seeking to ground the

contingency of international relations in the social relations of the present, then Furedi's book provides a wealth of critical insights which could provide the groundwork for a way forward.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, Kaldor, *New and Old Wars; Global Civil Society*.
2. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
3. *Ibid.*, 34.
4. *Ibid.*, 23.
5. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 75
7. *Ibid.*, 91–99.
8. *Ibid.*, 99.
9. *Ibid.*, 56; see also Jean Baudrillard's assertion that for Foucault, power always wins, at issue is merely its modulation, Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, 33.
10. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 91.
11. For more on the constitution of the post-liberal and post-realist divide, see Chandler, 'Hollow Hegemony'.

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