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Human Security, Development and Biopolitics

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LIANA SMALL, DEC 3 2011

In the post-Cold War era new forms of insecurity were introduced as there was a departure from conflicts between states and a move towards more inner-state and ethnic disputes (De Larrinaga and Doucet 2008). This move drastically changed the idea of security and traditional security studies, whereas at first it was at the borders of states where security was breached, but as this changed, it forced us to look at security in a different light. From this came a move towards critical security studies, and further, a more human-centric approach to security (Mutimer 2007). This moved away from brute, military protection and force and started to encompass other aspects of society and progress within nations. Many of these aspects, however, were found to be threatened by the underdevelopment of states and it ultimately was determined that many risks to human security were caused by this declared underdevelopment. This lack of developed institutions directly impacted the areas of human security. Therefore, through the inextricable link between insecurity and underdevelopment, plans of development were put in order to maintain national securities. However, through the acts of development to ensure security, further insecurity and exclusion amongst individuals was created. In this paper I will introduce this concept of security of the individual and how these new views of security support further a link between security and development. I then will highlight the patterns of inclusion and exclusion involved in processes of security and development and will explain their biopolitical tendencies.

Human Security: restructuring the modern view of security

In 1994, a new approach to security studies emerged from a Toronto conference giving birth to the concept of *Critical Security Studies* and drastically changing the way in which security was viewed (Mutimer 2007). This transformation of studies spurred from the questioning of what was exactly the referent object of security—or “who or what is to be secured” (Mutimer 2007, p. 88). The traditional answer was of course the state: “security refers to protecting the state from external threats, and the people living within the territory of the state are considered secure to the degree that the state is secure” (Ibid.). As Maria Stern and Joakim Öjendal assert in their observation of security practices, they state that “in modern political imagination, ‘security’ has traditionally revolved around the principle of modern state sovereignty. If the state is not ‘secure’, then political order unravels and ultimately citizens, and all other possible ‘referents of security’, are imperiled” (Stern and Öjendal 2010, p. 14).

This border-limited way of thinking, however, impels an abundance of questions as to if this view can be sufficient enough when discussing the overall state of being ‘secure.’ Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams point out that, in the modern world, security “may be threatened by dynamics far beyond these parameters” (Mutimer 2007, p. 88). Ways in which states can pose threats to their citizens can be found and it is imperative to note how human beings are “both secured and rendered insecure in ways other than by states and military force” (Ibid: 89). As Stern and Öjendal continue, “the nation-state system lacks the tools with which to contend with today’s threats – which include terrorist networks, gender-based violence, violent ‘ethnic’ discrimination, global pandemics and climate change” (Stern and Öjendal 2010, p. 15).

This shift from traditional, state-centric security studies to the titled *Critical Security Studies* gave a platform for redefining security away from the state and coincided with the conceptualization of a more human-centric focus which “places people and the individual at its epicenter” (Kerr 2007, p. 122). Security, therefore, has become much more than protecting borders and exerting violence against state enemies. It focuses more on “prioritizing the

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security of people rather than states” (Duffield 2007, p. 3) and becomes a primary reason for and means of improving the human condition. This form of “human security” focuses on the “particular vulnerabilities of peoples who suffer violence from representatives of the state, as well as other forms of violence and injustices” (Stern and Öjendal 2010, p. 15) and broadens security to embrace society reforms (Duffield 2007). This shift brings in the element of development, labeling many risks to human security as “largely associated with underdevelopment” and moves to include in security “the protection and betterment of the world’s poor and marginalized peoples” (Ibid.). This shift is where Duffield states there begins a “complementarity” with development and security (Ibid.) which subsequently couples “security with the concerns of international humanitarianism and human development” (De Larrinaga and Doucet 2008, p. 518).

Security—Development nexus: development as a security measure

Undoubtedly the practice of security and the acts of development are entwined and “indeed, in current policy, the ‘inextricable links’ between security and development are repeated like a mantra” (Hettne 2010, p. 34). It is understood that “economic inequality, underdevelopment and poor governance [are] at the root of armed conflict and crime” (Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007, p. 9) and “while it is accepted that poverty does not cause terrorism, it is argued that it fosters exclusion and alienation, which terrorist organizations can exploit to garner support, if not recruits” (Duffield 2007, p. 2). Security then becomes trying to develop a desired “safe” form of life—or “securing the Western way of life” (Ibid.)—one that both supports stability within a country and abroad. The transnational qualities of modern security threats are illustrated through the phenomena of globalization and global terrorism and a driving force of development in weak states stems from the correlation between underdevelopment in these feeble states and overall security in ‘rich’ (Western) states. This introduces a concept of ‘in order to ensure security up here, we must be concerned with development down there.’ Quoting former Prime Minister Tony Blair, Duffield highlights this way of thinking in relation to the United Kingdom’s interest in development in Africa. Blair is quoted stating that “famines and instability ‘thousands of miles away lead to conflict, despair, mass migration and fanaticism that can affect us all. So for reasons of self-interest as well as morality, we can no longer turn our back on Africa’ (Blair 2005)” and “because development reduces poverty and hence the risk of future instability, it also improves our own security” (Duffield 2007, p. 2).

This undeniable link between security and development undoubtedly calls for further attention and “it should thus be an obvious task for theory to clarify more deeply in what ways development and security can be (causally) related and how the two may influence each other” (Hettne 2010, p. 34). Further, attention should be drawn to these efforts of development for guaranteeing security as they can tend to be writ with elements of exclusion and can subsequently cause a loss of security and freedom to various individuals involved.

Power plays of security: development as biopolitics

Development as a technique for security highlights the discussed power structure of biopower (Duffield 2007). Further, securitization of development reflects models of biopolitics and tendencies towards inclusion and exclusion that can in turn render development as insecure. Biopower, a political power explained by philosopher Michel Foucault, “deals with the population as a political problem” and strives to control, manage and regularize society (Foucault 2003, p. 245). Through the act of regulation, biopower seeks to produce a certain safe and developed citizen—one that will maintain the ‘equilibrium’ of society and uphold a stable way of life.

This act of regularization is common in actions of development as well. In their analysis of the security-development nexus, Buur, Jensen and Stepputat draw attention to this development and “modern production of citizens” which they say “works through the exclusion of people who are considered improper, out of place and dangerous” (Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007, p. 16). Securitization of development in turn becomes a divide between good or safe individuals and states and bad or dangerous others. When speaking in relation to Africa, the creation of these dichotomies can in fact foster fear and unease and “divide the continent from the rest of the world” (Duffield 2007, p. 4). To exemplify this pattern of division further, Buur, Jensen and Stepputat illustrate post-apartheid South Africa explaining that while there was unification within the state, there was alternatively a creation of divide outside. So to maintain a desired, peaceful way of life within South Africa, there has been an exclusion of “dangerous” people on

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the outside which “has recast the external borders as the threshold of national belonging, with dire consequences from members of the Southern African region” (Buur, Jensen and Stepputat 2007, p. 17).

Duffield further recognizes development’s negative biopolitical tendencies stating that it can be seen as unbalanced techniques exercised by developed states working to secure their own interests. He says that “the benevolence with which development cloaks itself—its constant invocation of rights, freedom and the people—conceals a stubborn will to manage and contain disorder rather than resolve it” (Duffield 2007, preface i). He explains that:

“rather than development being concerned with reducing the economic gap between rich and poor countries...it functions to contain and manage underdevelopment’s destabilizing effects, especially its circulatory epiphenomena such as undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, transborder shadow economies or criminal networks” (Duffield 2007, preface ix).

This development as biopolitics observation showcases the lack of attention to individual security apparent in biopower. As Foucault asserts, biopower is not interested in individual human security as there is “absolutely no question relating to an individual body” (Foucault 2003, p. 246). It is, as he says:

“not a matter of taking the individual at the level of individuality but...of using overall mechanisms and acting in such a way as to achieve overall states of equilibrium or regularity...taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized” (Ibid.).

This brings about the claim of biopolitics as treating life as “bare life” and entailing “a disregard for aspects of personhood” and instead involving “protocols of communication and administration that treat people as objects” (Edkins 2008, p. 212). These correlations between development and biopolitics bring about questions as to where the presence of human security is and begs deeper observation and study for the connections between security and development and their effects on the individual.

Conclusion

The realm of security and security studies has seen drastic changes in its practice since the end of the Cold War. A heightened focus on the individual has brought about the concept of human security and caused a shift from state-centric to human-centric security approaches. In an effort to maintain complete security of human life correlations between security and development are stressed. However, certain exclusionary and regulatory characteristics, similar to those of the power structure of biopolitics, are evident in developmental efforts and tend to focus on maintenance of Western life stability and security as opposed to universal security of individuals in both rich and weak nations alike. These observations support the call for further study of the security—development nexus and pose the question of if it is possible to ever fully attain security, freedom and equality for all.

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