

Book Reviews

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

By Mark Duffield

Reviewed by Squadron Leader Chantal Baker

Introduction

Duffield's analysis of the challenging domain of people centred security provides and insightful perspective on the historical context of development thinking from the post-Colonial era to the present day. He provides an interesting framework for understanding the central themes, but it is not for the uninitiated.

As DCDC and others have clearly presented, the future strategic global trends in demographics, development, personal and energy security have a significant role to play in both current and future security policy thinking and threat analysis. The characterisation of the global environment in the Future Character of Conflict as increasingly congested, cluttered, contested, connected and constrained reinforces the relevance of development themes to the security and defence sphere. Global conflict may well have declined and become less deadly in the post-Cold War era, but the threat posed by fragile, failed and failing states has made understanding the causes of instability an essential part of the security debate. In the multipolar world, instability has become a global danger, without state boundaries, intrinsically linked to poverty and underdevelopment. In our most recent international conflicts it has been well recognised by scholars and military commanders alike that winning the war may be more easily achieved than securing the peace. Therefore, consideration of the causality between security and development has an important role to play in the advancement of military thinking.

In his critique Duffield makes an interesting contribution to the very relevant debate regarding the nexus between security and development. His analysis focuses on humanitarian relief and development, drawing on the theories of biopolitics by Foucault and Agamben. He argues that development is a liberal problematic of security and questions the impact of Western humanitarianism.

His dense analysis draws on the very principle concepts of civilised life through which he seeks to challenge conventional wisdom, and in so doing his work is both complex and thought provoking. Duffield is not providing an introduction to this important and multidimensional subject. Rather, his work anticipates an existing knowledge of the development debate and draws on this to provide a valuable perspective on key trends in development thinking in the post-Cold War era. His critical and historically informed analysis is most valuable when focussed on relevant case studies, including Afghanistan. Duffield's discussion of the changing role of the state is particularly useful, especially regarding the central theme of sovereignty and the impact of the Global War of Terror and the Responsibility to Protect.

Whilst an understanding of the concept and politics of human security is of real relevance to those interested in current and future security challenges, Duffield's contribution is not the most accessible. "Security, Development and Unending War" is a valuable contribution to the rich policy and academic literature addressing this area; however, Duffield's work is best suited as a subsequent text for those who are already familiar with the core themes of the debate, rather than for those seeking an introduction to this essential subject for current military thinkers.

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