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Book Review

Duffield, Mark. 2007. *Development, Security and Unending War. Governing the World of Peoples*. Cambridge: Polity Press. xii + 266 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7456-3579-8 (hb), 978-0-7456-3580-4 (pb). Price: £55.00 (hb), £18.99 (pb).

by Bjørn Møller (4 April 2008)

This new book by Mark Duffield belongs to the school that might be called critical development studies. The school is characterized by its questioning of the hidden assumptions of the development policies of the main donor countries and unveils the underlying and often selfish interests motivating them. Not least among these is the donors' concern for their own security, now most blatantly obvious in the context of the global so-called war on terror.

In Duffield's view, development is about governance, which Duffield sees as part and parcel of the imperial ambitions implicit in the "liberal project." These have become more pronounced after the Cold War as respect for the sovereignty of other states has declined steeply and concepts such as "trusteeship" have again become fashionable. Even the otherwise quite meaningful concept of human security may be abused to by a dominant West to claim that Third World states unable or unwilling to provide human security for their citizens thereby forfeit their sovereignty, justifying forceful interventions by the West, followed by a stage of foreign administration leading up to, at best, a reestablishment of statehood, but now in the form of a merely contingent form of sovereignty in a "governance state." In implementing such "imperialist" programs, the states of the West make extensive use of NGOs (both their own and such as may exist in the governed territories).

The theoretical basis for this analysis is primarily Michel Foucault with his theory of biopolitics and Giorgio Agamben's writings about the so-called *homo sacer* and the states of emergency. In Duffield's analysis, the Third World is thus viewed by the developed countries as representing "surplus life" (or even "waste-life" in the terminology of Zygmund Bauman) which is, moreover, uninsured or "bare life" as opposed to the insured and secure life in the donor countries. Even humanitarian NGOs are now tasked to exercise "petty sovereignty over international surplus life" (p. 54) when they are used by the states of the West and by international organizations to implement relief programs in complex emergencies.

The author also makes use of the social constructivist theory on "securitization" developed by Ole Wæver. By discursively constructing Third World problems such as armed conflict, migration, state fragility and failure, and even poverty as security threats to the West, scope is created for "extraordinary measures," i.e., for an almost Agambenian state of emergency which, in turn, allows for blatant violations of international law as have been committed by the West, for example in the form of military interventions. Duffield thus warns against "the dangers of a too ready willingness by the state and professional groups to invoke the exceptionalism of security in relation to a widening range of life and society processes" (p. 4).

Besides the theoretical chapters, the book also contains a couple of case studies, one about the donors' views and treatment of Mozambique after the civil war, the other about Afghanistan

between the Soviet withdrawal and the rise of the Taliban. Most of the policies and conceptualizations which are critically analyzed are those of the United Kingdom, but the critique seems directly applicable to the donor policies of most other OECD countries.

Even though the author is a renowned expert in development aid, this book does not elaborate alternatives to such aid — which is acceptable from the vantage point of critical theory. The recommendations are thus formulated very abstractly, as in the concluding words of the book which deserve quoting: “If development encloses an emancipatory urge, it does not lie in the formulation of endless ‘new and improved’ technologies of betterment nor the search for more authentic forms of community — it is found in the solidarity of the governed made possible by a radically interconnected world and the insatiable will to life that flows and circulates through it” (p. 234).

It is a very thought-provoking and insightful work which is warmly recommended to everybody with an engagement or interest in development policies.

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