

BOOK REVIEW

Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention

By Mary Kaldor

Published by Polity Press, 2007
ISBN: 978-0-7456-4348-9

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As often happen when undertaking the formulation of literatures within the field of security studies, a struggle occurs to achieve a readily noticeable heterogeneity regarding the size, contents, and presentation of a publication's overall contribution(s). Occasionally the struggle assumes a more distinguishable form when the efforts of scholars from various academic fields and practices attempt to assemble an extensive publication that ultimately introduces a cross-section of subjects and interpretations. Mary Kaldor's work entitled *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* is commendable, not least for blending an appreciable breadth of approaches and perspectives in an otherwise ambiguous field of discontinuous change. Kaldor delivers audiences of all fields and levels a combination of history and political analysis with remarkable dynamic and clarity.

Kaldor's point of departure in her study is the assumption that there is a real security gap in the contemporary geo-political world. Millions of people in regions such as the Middle East, East and Central Africa as well as Central Asia, and who live in daily fear of violence provides its narrative framework. Referred to as "new wars" by Kaldor, this concept exists as the core of security studies' increasing need to be understood in terms of its broader but equally significant implications in the modern world. "New wars" and pernicious global challenges centre on various global risks, including the spread of disease, vulnerability to natural disasters, poverty and homelessness, while the current conception

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of security, drawn from the dominant experience of the Second World War, fail in its attempt to reduce these impressions. The crux of Kaldor's work, therefore, may also be seen as a critical hinge, representing a divergence in terms of past and present praxis.

This book is divided into seven chapters dealing with the multifaceted phenomena of new perspectives on arcane preconceptions and debates, particularly in the context of a body of human rights, civil society, the relevance of just war theory in a global era, and the fluid concept of human security. Kaldor establishes a solid basis for analyzing "new wars" in terms of social relations of warfare, and introduces a unique approach to face these types of conflict and their linked challenges. Exemplifying a distinct qualitative and analytical nature, this book addresses: (a) historical perspectives of humanitarian intervention; (b) applications of American militarism and various modes of soft and hard power; (c) nationalism and globalization; (d) international progress of learning through intervention; (e) the concept of global civil society; (f) theoretical conceptions of just war and just peace; (g) human security as a more general discussion and exploration.

Kaldor has arranged the book in an appropriate order as to assist readers' understanding of various levels and aspects of human security from addressing historical changes to its ultimate challenges. One dominant assertion is that "strategy came to be about how force might be used in an imaginary way where everyone knows the rules."² Kaldor analyzes "new wars" in terms of social relations of warfare, which has enabled the conception of a unique approach. Kaldor's methodology overcomes the esoteric nature of old conceptions, especially of new problems in the world today, affirming the need for a "new language."³ Our current use of the "old language" prevents modern states and international actors from finding solutions, according to Kaldor.⁴ Thus, much of this work analyzes different positions and lines of argumentation that are used to legitimize policy. One of the many noteworthy aspects of Kaldor's work is her description of the competing stories of the current period, whereby classic narratives are re-interpreted and applied with great nuance. Accordingly, Kaldor has drawn upon a rich pool of secondary literatures as they pertain to the concepts dealt with in this book.

Chapter one describes the emerging discourse and practice of humanitarianism in the aftermath of the Cold War. The author illustrates that civil society has been instrumental in shaping this discourse, introducing a new dimension into world politics. Kaldor sees the social sciences as a means of "telling stories" in which "some stories can be matched with evidence better than others."⁵ Chapters two and three focus on the challenges of the emerging humanitarian consensus, the former written shortly after the terrorist attacks on the United States homeland in 2001, and the latter written to honour the scholarly inquiry of the field of nationalism. Chapter four runs a thematic thread through the previous three chapters, arguing that the Balkans has been largely demonstrative of a

² Mary Kaldor, *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention*. (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2007), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

unique learning process insomuch as humanitarianism has been applied experimentally. It places the case for a cosmopolitan political disposition soundly in dealing with the rise of a new nationalist movement. The last three chapters address the construction of a new global order in the context of the acute transformations associated with globalization. Of these three, the final chapter in this literary work defines human security as the new security paradigm. It reveals how human security applies to both security and development, while relating the terms and the concept's philosophical underpinnings to human security as a practice.

One of the most intricate problems facing social scientists, including the prominent issues addressed in this book, is the possible sequential orderings among intervention, protection, and preventive action strategy. The complexity is that of establishing a new precedent for instituting modalities that international actors can employ to deal with the challenges that continue to raise pressing, practical and normative questions regarding the issues addressed in this book. One pressing question that is not address by Kaldor is the issue of trend in terms of integrated, multi-dimensional and multi-level attempts to address conflict within communities and to rebuild failed states at the social, practical and normative levels. Kaldor's address of cosmopolitanism, in particular, feels disconnected from the rest of her discussion, and comes across as largely misplaced in her overall work. Given her focus on social justice, it would seem that the issue of cosmopolitanism is deserving of greater attention. In spite of this, however, Kaldor ponders many issues seen as unequivocally paradoxical. Thus, readers are forced to consider aspects typically held as missing in other discussions of this nature. Particularly noteworthy is Kaldor's contention that "cosmopolitans need to have an economic programme, a multilateralist commitment not just to a liberal world economy but also to global social justice."⁶ Notwithstanding Kaldor's attention to global social justice and cosmopolitan principles, her exploration of these issues is too limited to produce an essential impact on the reader, and expanding on this section of her study would have proved beneficial in her overall argument as it ultimately relates to global civil society specifically. However, such discussion in Kaldor's book, while attempting to address theoretical challenges, constitutes the means by which subsequent and larger questions are raised in the readers' mind.

A second set of questions deriving from the pervious issues concerns strategic visions for future approaches to both security and development. Ultimately these two issues are seen as per Kaldor's argumentation, as inextricably bound and imminently challenging scholars and practitioners alike. Nonetheless, Kaldor manages to tie in her concepts cleanly and orderly through her book, with the exceptions of the aforementioned case of cosmopolitanism. Kaldor successfully avoids issues of terminological confusion and lack of conceptual distinctions; the result is a straightforward and readable account of the issues and challenges that we face today.

⁶ Ibid., 98.

A third set of remarks on Kaldor's work concerns the value of comparative studies presented throughout the various chapters. While Kaldor draws upon the most prominent and indeed some very valuable and insightful case studies, supplementation of the qualitative analyses would have benefited from a greater contribution of quantitative analyses. On the other hand, one may equally argue that her focus on qualitative studies has maintained a fresh and comfortable approach to some very complex issues. In this way, Kaldor caters to experts in the fields as well as potential newcomers and novices in the academic field and professional practice.

Despite Kaldor's call for a different approach to security and development studies, her work is undoubtedly a positive promotion of alternative points of view. Kaldor demonstrates the fundamental need for further theoretical refinement and academic gatherings on issues that are affecting our contemporary global village as well as many millions of its inhabitants in ways that unfortunately only a considerable few may currently recognize.

References

Kaldor, Mary. *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 2007.

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