



Security and Global Health

Stefan Elbe

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Every era, it is said, has its defining malady. What will be ours? Will it be a new human pandemic caused by an animal-borne infectious disease, such as swine flu? Will it be a lethal microbe like anthrax deliberately released by terrorists bent on causing mass civilian casualties? Or will it be one of our new 'lifestyle' diseases - the epidemics of smoking, obesity and excessive alcohol consumption that threaten to engulf modern societies? Perhaps our era will even be remembered for its tragic neglect of certain health issues - endemic diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS that continue to ravage millions in developing countries.

In this book Stefan Elbe shows that in the new millennium international politics is no longer characterized by its preoccupation with a single disease, but precisely by its need to urgently confront what is now an epidemic of epidemics. Over the past decade a whole host of diverse global health issues have raised the highest levels of political concern, provoking governments and international institutions to tackle such health threats through the prism of security - be it national security, biosecurity, or human security. This convergence between health issues and security concerns has also produced the new notion of health security, which has already begun to shape the way international health policy is formulated.

The intersection of the worlds of health and security is beginning to change our very ideas of what security means and how it is achieved. At the outset of the twenty-first century, practising security increasingly demands that citizens become patients, that states resemble huge hospitals, and that security itself becomes a technology of medical control. It is this transformation of security, Elbe argues in an innovative and engaging re-conceptualization of the health-security nexus, that marks nothing short of the medicalization of security.

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