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Matthew S. Weinert on A Decade of Human Security: Global Governance and New Multilateralism by Sandra MacLean, David Black, and Timothy Shaw. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006. 264 pp.

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Abstract

A review of:

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Keywords

International relations, Human rights, Human security, United Nations Development Programme

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A Decade of Human Security: Global Governance and New Multilateralism by Sandra MacLean, David Black, and Timothy Shaw. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006. 264 pp.

Neologisms have a way of appearing and disappearing in International Relations (IR) with such alacrity that one must question not simply their utility, but our very tendency as scholars to construct new bottles for old wine in the first place. Every so often, though, vocabulary like complex interdependence, globalization, sustainable development, or human security find residence within the lexicon of both the practice and discipline of international relations in ways that renovate policy and theoretical analyses.

Human security (HS), a term introduced in the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 *Human Development Report*, has had mixed reception. In the policy world, HS resonates, perhaps in part because of its remarkable acceptance and successes in its early years, which include the creation of human security-based foreign policy platforms by states and regional organizations; the Ottawa Convention banning landmines; the Kimberley Process combating the sale of conflict diamonds; and the International Criminal Court, among others. In the academic world, a cottage industry of literature has emerged in IR, mostly supportive of HS, though detractors are now making a concerted effort to castigate HS for its welfare orientation, its implausibility predicated on its breadth, and its liberal interventionist proclivities. Even human security's academic proponents are beginning to step back and re-examine the promises and perils of human security.

A Decade of Human Security stemmed from a February 2005 workshop that addressed such concerns, held at Simon Fraser University. Part I of the volume focuses on theoretical questions and implementation problems related to and associated with HS. While the authors find considerable promise in the concept of human security, they attribute its problems to a disconnect between perceptions and realities of insecurities. Further, they underscore a general Western unwillingness to appreciate the extent to which the problems of inequity and inequality, or human security's "freedom from want" dimension, contribute to violence and conflict, or human security's "freedom from fear" dimension. Part II examines the ascendance and decline of human security in the Canadian context. Canada was one of human security's most ardent supporters, but since the 2000 departure of Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy and the change in government in 2003, HS has been eclipsed by more traditional security concerns. Importantly, though, the authors in this section maintain HS is and remains related to Canada's national interest, as it has evolved from Canada's historical interests in peace, order, and good governance.

Parts III and IV shift gears and examine HS's implementation in both its "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" dimensions. Chapters focus on corporate responsibility with respect to Sudan; Uganda's bifurcation—war in the north versus development in the south—and its implications for HS; UN missions in Haiti; and HIV/AIDS in Africa. Part V constructively addresses possibilities for research on security issues given North-South collaboration. Authors note successes, but highlight very real problems that human security-based policies and programs continue to face. Donors fail to address root causes of conflict by ignoring interlinkages between security and development (precisely what human security aims to reveal and address); scholars often neglect the policy relevance of their work; and, owing to resource

scarcity, researchers and program officials carefully protect their perceived territories, which leads to duplication of effort and the wasting of valuable resources.

If ever there was an opportunity for significant and, importantly, fruitful, academic –policy world collaboration, now is the time. And *A Decade of Human Security* amply demonstrates this necessity. Not only do the authors debunk (consciously or unconsciously) many of the criticisms levied against HS, but they also soberly amplify HS’s successes and its promises. For both the policy and academic worlds, the volume serves up recipes for constructive engagement owing to “new multilateralisms,” or coalitions of states, IOs, NGOs, and other civil society groups. In this regard, the book will be of considerable value for scholars at all levels and practitioners in various sectors. Further, it is rich in insights regarding the utility of these new multilateralisms vis-à-vis good governance and the furthering of global governance. While HS continues to animate discussion and inform policies and programs, especially within UN circles, its future relevance is ultimately contingent on constructive engagement between, and involvement of, actors on all levels (local, national, international) regarding HS programs and the identification of insecurities pertinent to particular communities; recognition of the connections between freedom from want and freedom from fear; and more sustained, open dialogue between the developed North and the underdeveloped South.

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