

Hakan Seckinelgin. *International Security, Conflict and Gender: 'HIV/AIDS is another war'*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2012. ISBN 978-0-415-61570-9

The tendency over the last fifteen years to frame HIV/AIDS as a threat to international security has generated some unease among health practitioners, researchers and people living with HIV. Discussions on the nature and source of the threat, the reference object, and international proclamations such as that of the UN Security Council identifying HIV/AIDS as a threat to international security has often been at awkward odds with the experiences of people living with or affected by the disease. Seckinelgin's book is a very welcome intersection into this debate that not only reflects on some of the difficulties and problems of such a security frame but forces us to pause and reflect on the experiences of people affected by both HIV/AIDS and conflict as told by them. This book fills a void in the literature that has overlooked a critical engagement with the experiences of people affected by HIV/AIDS and conflict. It does so through an exploration of the gendered dimensions of knowledge and understanding of the disease and conflict in the case study of Burundi. The book highlights the central role gender has within this void as a means of understanding post-conflict relations, how people understand their everyday experiences, and the gendered nature of the causes and reactions to HIV/AIDS.

The book effectively addresses the methodological problems of reflecting experiences and not falling into the trap of ascribing experience and value to other people's lives that the book critiques. Reflections on responses to narratives associated with gender, conflict and HIV/AIDS such as sexual violence and family isolation present difficult reading that is perhaps a hidden commonality of conducting this kind of research. Such methodological reflection and a writing style that presents the stories and experiences of people in their own words is unique to literature in the global politics of health and is all the more revealing and insightful for it. This intended style provides insights into the gendered dimensions of understanding the disease for both men and women and the agency of people, particularly women living with HIV/AIDS or affected by the conflict. Seckinelgin's treatment of agency builds on his earlier work on the local dimensions or silences in international AIDS policy formation, in developing a different way of understanding people's self-reflection and knowledge of their own experiences and how this pertains to the international. After reading the book one gets a sense of the different sights of agency, resistance, and resilience of the people included and how this challenges some of the assertions or received wisdom of international policy makers.

The received wisdom of international policy-makers and the assumptions of what constitutes evidence is a central theme of the second half of the book. Seckinelgin effectively deconstructs one example of how evidence-based arguments rest on a specific form of evidence that neglects a range of other sites of experience and evidence. However the links he makes between one body of work and global policy-making is quite a leap and partly lacking in evidence. The assertion here is that international policy is often generic and rests on evidence that when evaluated can be found wanting. I agree with this argument; however Seckinelgin's leap of assertion to argument here also seems to be lacking in evidence, generalised from one article and slightly rushed (this is also evident in a number of typographical errors such as naming Justin Parkhurst, Justine Parkhurst). Not all policy sees people living with HIV as victims, but often positions them as advocates and the source of effective governance; there is also a broad range of policy pilots that have attempted to target the nitty gritty of behaviour such as conditional cash transfers, however

problematic they may be. Greater elaboration on what the book means by 'gender governance' may have also helped tease out some of the implications of the book's findings for gender and gender blindness in international policy-making, and though it is used in the first section of the book falls by the wayside slightly in the second half. The book is at risk of becoming two different parts, however the overarching narrative and argument is succinctly addressed in conclusion. At the outset of the book Seckinelgin highlights how he has previously avoided the security-AIDS debate: I am pleased that he changed his mind, this is one of the most revealing and refreshing books I have read on security and AIDS.

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