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# Virus Alert: Security, Governmentality, and the AIDS Pandemic

By Stefan Elbe



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**Virus Alert: Security, Governmentality, and the AIDS Pandemic** By Stefan Elbe

Bound up with the human cost of HIV/AIDS is the critical issue of its impact on national and international security, yet attempts to assess the pandemic's complex risk fail to recognize the political dangers of construing the disease as a security threat. The securitization of HIV/AIDS not only affects the discussion of the disease in international policy debates, but also transforms the very nature and function of security within global politics.

In his analysis of the security implications of HIV/AIDS, Stefan Elbe addresses three concerns: the empirical evidence that justifies framing HIV/AIDS as a security issue, the meaning of the term "security" when used in relation to the disease, and the political consequences of responding to the AIDS pandemic in the language of security. His book exposes the dangers that accompany efforts to manage the global spread of HIV/AIDS through the policy frameworks of national security, human security, and risk management. Beyond developing strategies for mitigating these dangers, Elbe's research reveals that, in construing the AIDS pandemic as a threat, policymakers and international institutions also implicitly seek to integrate current security practices within a particular rationalization of political rule. Elbe identifies this transformation as the "governmentalization" of security and, by drawing on the recently translated work of Michel Foucault, develops a framework for analyzing its key elements and consequences.



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*By Stefan Elbe*

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## **Editorial Review**

Review

an important case study.

*(Survival)*

*Virus Alert* offers a fine security analysis of the implications of HIV and AIDS.

*(The Midwest Book Review)*

A provocative and controversial book on the subject of HIV/AIDS and national security... Highly Recommended.

*(Choice)*

An elegant, intellectually stimulating contribution that provides a timely, empirically grounded, and indeed most welcome critical analysis of recent associations of HIV with security.

*(Jonas Hagmann Millennium)*

Review

Theoretically sophisticated, cogent, and teeming with profound insight, *Virus Alert* is an outstanding contribution to the field of security and HIV/AIDS studies.

*(Alex de Waal, fellow, Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University)*

Stefan Elbe has written a careful and measured study of the relationship between security, governance, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It will be an important text for students of the epidemic and, more broadly, for those interested in theoretical developments in international relations and global governance.

*(Dennis Altman, professor of politics and director, Institute for Human Security, La Trobe University)*

In *Virus Alert*, Stefan Elbe sheds brilliant light on the complex government of biopolitical life in the twenty-first century through the securitization of disease and the regulation of bodies. His case study of governmentality and HIV/AIDS is sure to become a canonical volume for students and scholars, not only of Michel Foucault and discourse theory but also of international relations and world politics.

*(Ronnie D. Lipschutz, professor of politics, University of California, Santa Cruz)*

Stefan Elbe's dissection of how the HIV/AIDS pandemic has become a security issue is a compelling demonstration of the political force of theoretical critique informed by empirical rigor. Showing how securitization itself can be dangerous, Elbe has given us a book that will profoundly disturb established ways of engaging public health, international relations, and global security.

(David Campbell, professor of cultural and political geography, Durham University)

#### About the Author

Stefan Elbe is reader (associate professor) in the Department of International Relations at the University of Sussex, where he teaches security studies. Previously, he held positions at the London School of Economics, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the University of Essex, and the University of Warwick.

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#### Hattie Jasso:

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**Orville Hightower:**

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