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## Commentary

# Examining the Ethical and Geopolitical Context of Global Food Security Policy

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The aim of this review (written in the summer of 2023) is to stimulate the critical reflection of policy experts, academics, and civic activists in the field of food security and to focus our attention on broader ethical and geopolitical aspects of the food security debate. The critical comments in the review particularly refer to the final version of the report *Collective Action for Ending a Collective Problem: A Multi-stakeholder Project on Global Food Security*, published on 23rd July 2023 by the team at Dublin City University led by Prof Phillip McDonagh. <https://www.dcu.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Report%20-%20final%20%283%29.pdf>

One of the reasons for publishing this review on Qeios is that it was taken out of team discussion by the editors of the Report during its final stage, which seriously reduced the critical debate about its content and about some political-ethical aspects of food security in the current tense historical context, especially with regard to the open wounds caused by the disastrously inhumane Putin's war against Ukraine. The author of this review welcomes any feedback from both members of the Report team and the general public, policy experts, academics, or anybody involved in the area of food security theory and practice.

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## Critical Comments and Discussion Points on the Draft Report: Collective Action for Ending a Collective Problem, Rome, July 4–8th, 2023

Dear colleagues,

I appreciate the opportunity to meet all members of the Dublin Centre research group and learn from their extensive expertise and practical project experience in the field of food security, which has not yet been at the centre of my research interest. I would also like to express my respect to the editor/editors of the draft report for integrating an extraordinarily diverse spectrum of aspects related to such a complex topic.

In response to this challenge, I would now like to offer a few comments and critical points which, as I genuinely hope, can contribute to our conscientious reconsideration of the core ethical-political message of the Draft Report and

some of its individual topics. My presentation of these points will respect a certain order of priorities. It will especially highlight the topics concerning *the general mission/framework* of the report and pay special attention to the *complexity* of the *ethical and political context* in which food security can be addressed in the current historical situation of the world.

Let me now turn to individual points of the Draft Report.

## 1. The Report title

Does the title ‘Collective Action for Ending a Collective Problem’ imply that the problem of food security can only be solved by our collective bodies and institutions, especially the economic and political ones, or only that it is a problem affecting all people, including those who do not want to admit it? In other words, is food security only a ‘collective’ or rather a *universal* problem? Food security solutions definitely demand many forms of human cooperation, but we should not forget that the real impact of this policy on the ground always depends on the willingness of its actors to *take concrete personal responsibility* for these solutions and, as a result, to face risks, hardships, and many unexpected complications. Thus, food security is always *both a personal and collective problem*, a multi-layered challenge to human *subsidiarity*.

## 2. ‘Ending’ the food security problem?

Due to many historical failures of ‘grand human plans,’ including the current state of the global food crisis or some humanitarian interventions in developing countries (see, for example, the latest aid results in Tigray, Ethiopia)<sup>1</sup>, we should be much more modest in our claim (made in the second part of the Draft Report title) that we are able ‘*to end the problem*’. Setting targets might be necessary, but we should always check first if our aid serves the right purposes and if it can really reach those who are to be helped. Small, slow, but tangible changes are usually much better than permanently disappointing utopias. Institutional standards, such as Sustainable Development Goals, can serve, at best, as ‘*a horizon*’ or even ‘*a vanishing point*’ of our honest and necessarily diverse efforts to reduce world hunger and suffering.

## 3. Multi-stakeholder approach

As for the concept of a multi-stakeholder approach, the Draft Report mainly refers to the joint document of UNEP, FAO, and UNDP of 2023: ‘Rethinking our food systems/A guide for multistakeholder cooperation’ (see esp. footnote 32, p. 13). The Draft Report also indicates it shares this concept partly for a strategic reason because the upcoming meeting of the Committee on World Food Security of FAO in September 23 – 27, 2023, will consider the same concept and document (See the Draft Report, p. 47).

However, the ways this document and the Draft Report use the term ‘multi-stakeholder’ are *not fully consistent*. While the UNEP/FAO/UNDP document always prefers the collocations multi-stakeholder *cooperation* or *participation*, implying a *free/voluntary engagement* of participants, the Draft Report has quite a strong (although maybe not fully conscious) temptation to replace the term cooperation with a *much more paternalistic term coordination* (see p. 4 and p. 49), assuming some sort of external or superior power, or with a bit more ambiguous term *inclusion* (see p. 13, 47, 53, and 63). With both coordination and inclusion, the *free consent* of the stakeholders remains open and *not absolutely necessary*.

Moreover, the stakeholder in the UNEP/FAO/UNDP document is not only 'a collective actor' but 'any person or group who is affected by or can affect the situation or issue at stake, as well as the achievement of an organization's objectives.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, the 'stakeholder approach' to food security is definitely *not an exclusive task* of a political, economic, or academic *elite* enforcing its plans from above, but it allows a wide *plurality of free initiatives and forms of human responsibility* harmonised (at most) *from the bottom up*, and *seeking* an adequate response to a concrete problem in a concrete historical time.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, once again, this approach calls for complex human *subsidiarity*.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4. Involvement of churches and faith communities in multi-stakeholder food policy negotiations**

In view of their long and profound tradition of sacred, symbolic, and practical understanding of food, the draft report rightly demands that churches and faith communities are much more involved in the 'multi-stakeholder processes' (see, esp., p. 13 and p. 46 of the Draft Report). In practice, this probably means their deep involvement in *international policy* and *international diplomacy* (especially within the UN food policy institutions). It is, however, also perfectly legitimate to ask about concrete acceptable *forms* of this cooperation and of its legal and ethical *limits*. If, on the one hand, international institutions and diplomacy cannot fairly claim they are the only and the highest ethical value by themselves and that they rather share universal values of humanity, typically human dignity and *the whole portfolio of human rights*, they must also *protect the debate* on food security *in the public square* from religious and non-religious fundamentalism, cultural intolerance, nationalist chauvinism, hatred, violence, racism, discrimination, etc. Members of religious groups should join the multi-stakeholder debate on food security *only* if they practically *respect these universal values* (expressed, e.g., by official UN documents or the Helsinki Final Act). Islamic state leaders/Islamic militias, violent sects, 'pro-life' activists blowing up abortion clinics, or orthodox clergy denying the right of Ukraine for independent existence are *not ideal partners* in a dialogue about food security and security in general.<sup>5</sup>

#### **5. Missing connection between the food right and civic and political liberties. Food right as an immediate unlimited demand or an adequate demand in progressive realization?**

In contrast to the Helsinki Final Act and many other international documents, the Draft Report *lacks clear awareness of the fundamental connection between the food right and civic and political liberties*. If the editor(s) of the report do not want to accept the cynical mantra of vulgar Marxist materialism 'Grub first, then ethics', they will have to admit some *tension between material welfare and human dignity* and, more importantly, that civic and political freedom is *a necessary condition* for the just distribution of social and economic goods. All dictatorships, sooner or later, lead to hunger and material injustice, and they often use the uneven distribution of material goods as a form of 'blackmail' of those who do not want to accept their persecution.<sup>6</sup> From this point of view, food is *not always*

*an automatic public good, but it can sometimes also become a risk for our personal and civic moral integrity.*

The crucial passages of the Draft Report on pp. 16-20 focusing on the right to food *do not mention this connection*, or, at most, just tacitly assume it. At the centre of the Draft Report, there are the values related to *the preservation of life rather than human dignity in its integral form*.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, the statement in the Draft Report that ‘the right to food promotes the transformation of social benefits ... into legal *entitlements* (p. 17)’ makes the impression that this right has to be realized *immediately and to the maximum degree*, while, for example, article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) establishes the so-called ‘*principle of progressive realisation*’ defined as the duty of all parties ‘to take steps ... to the maximum of its *available resources*’.<sup>8</sup>

## **6. Mutual, not a one-sided relation between the food right and democracy**

Quite controversial is also the interpretation of the relation between the right to food and democracy. The key passage of the Draft Report on pp. 30-31 seems to reflect only ‘*a one-way*’ relation between these two aspects of modern civic life. Democracy as a political system definitely has to serve our security and economic well-being, but, to the same if not a larger degree, economic well-being helps to maintain political rights and civic freedom.<sup>9</sup>

Both political experts and politically engaged citizens would definitely appreciate a more balanced analysis of *mutual relations* between fair food distribution and ‘good governance’, agricultural policy and the rule of law (e.g., food oligopolies and constitutional limitation of power), soil protection and ecological policy under liberal democratic and (for example, some African or Asian) authoritarian regimes, etc. Democracy definitely is ‘an ever-evolving process’, as the Draft Report claims on p. 31, but the reason why it can develop *positively* and continuously is that its proven system of rights and freedoms, constitutional division and limitation of power, and the corresponding *real institutions* are also *stabilized and systematically protected*.

Following traditions of humanist politics, we should also admit some form of international cooperation with political regimes that are not strictly ‘liberal-democratic’ but are able to meet certain universal standards of justice and ‘decent government’.<sup>10</sup>

## **7. Positive correlations between food access and global market economy**

Another problematic aspect of the Draft Report is *an exclusively negative evaluation of market economy* in the field of agriculture. On the one hand, the Draft Report is rightly critical of *some* current tendencies of market economy further intensified by its ‘globalization’, such as oligopolization, inequality of access to food, health and ecological risks of ‘intensive’ industrialized agriculture, crises caused by financial, energy, or fertilizer speculations, negative effects of outsourcing and offshoring, intensive political lobbying by multinational corporations, etc. (see, esp., the Draft Report, p. 8-9). What is missing, however, is *a positive appreciation of market economy as the only real*

*economic system capable of ensuring continuous efficiency* of agricultural production on a global scale, although not without some negative or ambiguous side effects (externalities).

It is one thing to criticize (more or less legitimately) the market system in the field of agriculture; it is another thing to create the impression that this system can be not only reformed but *completely replaced* by another one. If it were so, it would be fair to describe the working of the alternative system openly and in detail, and prove it with concrete long-term results based on practical experience. However, the author of this text is very skeptical about this possibility, and even the Draft Report itself admits that the problem of market economy is not in its productivity but rather in structural injustices.<sup>11</sup> For a citizen of a Central-European country with a tragic 40-year experience with a communist centrally-planned agricultural economy, especially the so-called 'unified cooperative farms', it is very hard not to be particularly sensitive to any *utopian economic experiments* based only (mainly) on state bureaucratic management and not taking capitalism (i.e., free human creativity, *entrepreneurship*) very seriously.<sup>12</sup>

We definitely do not have to be uncritical followers of unregulated capitalism to reflect that the ethical problem of food security lies not only in the field of food distribution but also in *food production*, whose *effectiveness* is as important as its justice. We should also ask in a very careful and balanced way if the food insecurity of the developing countries is caused only by its 'dependancy' on the developed countries (controversial claims of the left-wing 'dependancy theories' were critically discussed almost 50 years ago!) but also by *their insufficient access to global markets* (which is definitely not an argument against market economy as such). After all, the relatively positive results of global market economy in agriculture can be proved by the Draft Report itself when it says: 'It seems unlikely that the rising rates of food insecurity are primarily a reflection of absolute (i.e., global) availability of food: between 2000 and 2019, the global population increased by approximately 26 per cent. In the same period, the FAO reports that global production of primary crops increased by 53 per cent, production of vegetable oils increased by 118 per cent, and meat production increased by 44 per cent' (see the Draft Report, p. 6).<sup>13</sup>

## 8. Disarmament without legitimate defense?

No matter how experimental and dialogically open our model of international food policy may be, it can never avoid the question of its *real feasibility* and *legal enforceability* under current human historical conditions and already existing political institutions. In ordinary conditions of this sinful world, any kind of structural policy can usually be enforced by the *sovereign political power of the nation-states* (especially the superpowers) *strongly limited by the constitutional system of checks and balances* and *relatively weakly cultivated by rules and values of international law*.<sup>14</sup> With regard to this fact, the ethically and politically most controversial passage of the Draft Report is the section about *disarmament*.

On the level of principles, we can hardly meet the ethical criteria of humanity if we ask only about the costs of wars but not about *material and non-material costs of peace and disarmament*. If we reduce our ethical reflections only to the question of peace and ignore the question of *justified*, albeit strictly ethically and legally *conditioned*, *defense* of freedom and national independence, we risk that the only possible peace to be established will be *false and unjust peace imposed by*

*the will of the more powerful ones.* When the weaker or more vulnerable states are asked to disarm at the moment of their stronger enemies' aggression, and the international community has neither the will nor the real power to enforce also the disarmament of the aggressor, it basically means to *surrender the weaker to the stronger*. Furthermore, *arms supplies* can often be used only as a *deterrent* to an unscrupulous enemy who would otherwise immediately attack us or continue his invasion on a much larger scale. Therefore, it is perfectly legitimate to ask about *ethical limits of both our armament and disarmament*.

## 9. Dangerous world security architecture?

In contrast to this prudent realist approach, the Draft Report dreams about a *complete redesign of the world security architecture* based on a certain vision of multilateralist 'dialogue' and some, although rather *one-sided*, interpretation of the UN Charter (1945), the Helsinki Final Act (1975), and 'the OSCE comprehensive model of security'.<sup>15</sup> At the centre of this vision, there are the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015), which, together with disarmament and 'the renewal of global financial architecture', are to make 'an embryo vision of the global citizenship of nation states and a common medium-term plan for humanity'.<sup>16</sup>

As for the allegedly 'unfulfilled promises' of the Helsinki Final Act, it has to be reminded that the core of its 'first basket' (Declaration of Principles) is *civil and political freedoms*, including, for example, the respect for a state's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and self-determination. Although the document was aimed at lessening tensions between the East and West, its official text never legitimised Communist dictatorship and especially not the Soviet (or now better to say Russian) domination over Central and Eastern European countries.<sup>17</sup> The Helsinki Final Act was rather effectively *used by dissidents* from CEE initiatives, such as Charter 77 or the Moscow Helsinki Group, as a *tool* for defending civil, political, but also socio-economic rights *against their totalitarian governments*.<sup>18</sup>

The obvious oversight of *the key defensive democratic organization of NATO* indicates that the Draft Report wants to achieve a significant reduction of its international authority, including the elimination of the NATO enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe (?). The alleged 'benefit' of such an extremely dangerous 'return' not only to (still highly respectable) Helsinki values but also to the Helsinki *political situation (security division of Europe between the two 'imperialist spheres of interest')* is to be some cooperation with Russian and Chinese dictatorships. However, what may appear as a chance for 'peaceful cooperation' from the alibistic comfort of a Western democratic citizen is, in fact, a *lethal threat* to the freedom and security of Central and Eastern Europe and, in the longer term, for European democracies in general.<sup>19</sup>

Multilateral security dialogue *demands*, at least, essentially *predictable partners* respecting basic values of reasonable humane coexistence and not actors driven predominantly by irrational imperialist resentment, hatred, and desire to dominate or destroy others. Highly cautious negotiations, even with neoimperialist dictatorships, are not completely excluded, but the declared dialogical openness of 'talks about talks' (see the Draft Report, p. 49) must be supported by *real security guarantees* for democratic Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>20</sup> Ironically, the Draft Report's proposal to 'rebuild European security architecture' through rather '*toothless*' *reinterpretation of the*

*Helsinki Final Act* and the OSCE is almost identical with the current official position of Russia, which daily threatens the West with attacks of nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup>

## 10. Overlooking broader security risks of the Russian aggression against Ukraine

The one-and-a-half-year-long Russian *aggression* against Ukraine is a very serious, but perhaps not the most important, part of the present-day food security crisis. Nevertheless, it is definitely not a reason to *confuse causes and results* of the war, to overlook its broader risks for the people of Ukraine and the whole of Europe, and to *reduce its food policy effects* only to a few factors fitting some previously held political ideology. When, for example, the destruction of arable land, cutting commodity supplies, and price spikes are seen as *the only negative impact* of Russian aggression on Ukrainian (food) security, it is a hardly acceptable denial of many other (and perhaps more serious) Russian crimes against humanity, such as blocking Ukrainian ports for grain export to developing countries, massive theft of Ukrainian grain from the occupied territories and its resale to third parties, daily shelling of civilian homes, land, and infrastructure, child abductions, destruction of Ukrainian non-military ships, pushing Ukraine from global agricultural markets, blowing up the Nová Kakhovka Reservoir, etc.<sup>22</sup>

It is also very hard to accept when undeniably serious effects of the war on the food security of developing (especially African) countries are *used only as a pretext for reducing military and humanitarian support to Ukraine*, which is still facing a full-scale Russian invasion and a daily threat to its national existence, freedom, and basic life needs.<sup>23</sup> Although the Draft Report, in principle, admits some kind of political and/or economic *sanctions* against ‘failed countries’ combined with stronger diplomatic engagement, all concrete arguments and examples basically *deny their legitimacy*. The Draft Report is, for example, highly critical of the sanctions against Russian oil and gas, asset freezes, and, for some reason, it needs to point out specifically that some EU sanctions on Russian fertilizers were partly lifted.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, it highly appreciates the Black Sea Initiative between Russia and Ukraine, which it considers a ‘model of constructive relationships’ in international policy ‘recognized by all sides’, even though its implementation from the Russian side is a continuous series of injustices, backstabbing, and promise-breaking. According to available reports, no Ukrainian grain ship has sailed to the Black Sea since June 2023 despite repeated requests, and the Black Sea Initiative itself, which is set to expire on July 17, 2023, will probably not be extended.<sup>25</sup>

In all these cases, Russian aggression is not a result, or a marginal aspect, of global food insecurity, but one of its serious *causes*. In this extremely difficult stage of the conflict, the only ways to restore peace are either that Russia will return to the norms of international law and withdraw its troops from the illegally occupied Ukrainian territories, or that its dictatorial regime will fall or internally implode, or, third, that its military power will be so weakened and depleted by the Ukrainian army and the international community that it will not be able to continue with this criminal adventure.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up, peace and *gradual general disarmament* must be our *medium-term goal*. However, the *political, military, and economic* support of Ukraine and the moral cohesion of the democratic community, including NATO, are its *necessary*, albeit extremely demanding, *intermediate step*.

## Conclusion

The aim of my reflection is to stimulate a common, honest, and focused discussion about the values and proposals of the Draft Report, including its overall reworking and significant improvement. I have to admit that I would not be able to sign and support it in this form. However, my questions and points are definitely not the only ones that can be asked, and I will be very grateful for critical responses from any other participant, both to my comments and to the Draft Report. I truly believe that such honest common deliberation about our Rome conference will bring good results.

## Statements and Declarations

### Author Contributions

VM conceived the idea, conducted the analysis, and wrote the manuscript.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/jun/29/ethiopia-hunger-food-aid-suspended-usaid-wfp>. Many other examples of corruption and ineffective waste of international development aid can be found in the book by William Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*. London: The Penguin Press, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> 'Rethinking our food systems/A guide for multistakeholder cooperation.' UNEP/FAO/UNDP, 2023, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Free participation and 'community-based' initiatives are mentioned briefly on p. 33 of the draft report but only in the narrow context of 'social polarization'. Social plurality, a necessary part and gift of liberal democratic societies, is rather considered as a risk for social consensus and cohesion under the title of 'otherness' (see the Draft Report, p. 34–35). See also the Draft Report's call for 'creating the consensus, the constituency, and the civilization' (Draft Report, p. 50).

<sup>4</sup> 'Some consider that the term stakeholder hides the immense differences in rights, roles, responsibilities, interests, motivations, power, and legitimacy among the partners. [...] Not every stakeholder has an equal stake, and each category of stakeholders faces distinct challenges.' (Rethinking our food systems/A guide for multistakeholder cooperation.' UNEP/FAO/UNDP, 2023, p. 35). The same passage describes a multi-stakeholder approach as 'any collaborative arrangement among stakeholders from two or more different spheres of society (public sector, private sector, and/or civil society)... *sharing risks and responsibilities*' to produce the common outcome of public interest. Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> We can definitely appreciate a small mention of 'the convergence between a sense of the sacred and human rights' in the Draft Report section resulting from the debate of the subgroup Food and the Sacred (See the Draft Report, p. 11). Unfortunately, it is too brief and not conceptually elaborated.

<sup>6</sup> These ethically unacceptable activities are usually called 'the weaponization of food'.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., the reference of the document to the ethical concept of 'permaculture' associated with the statement: 'earth care – people care – fair shares.' The Draft



Report, p. 53. [11-07-2023]. <https://permacultureprinciples.com>.

<sup>8</sup> ICESCR, Article 2.1. ‘States are under a legal obligation: the right to food promotes the transformation of social benefits that individuals or households receive under government food security programmes into legal entitlements.’ The Draft Report, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> The same ‘one-sided’ approach is repeated in point IV of the Conclusion) summing up the Draft Report’s ‘high-level /i.e. fundamental/ values’ (p. 53).

<sup>10</sup> An American philosopher, John Rawls, calls these regimes ‘*decent hierarchical peoples*’ and contrasts them with ‘burdened societies’, ‘outlaw states’, and ‘benevolent absolutisms.’ Rawls also sets 8 *ethical criteria for discerning* such regimes, including: 1. freedom and independence, 2. equality and ‘being parties to their own agreements’, 3. the right of self-defense but no right to war, 4. a duty of non-intervention, 5. observing treaties and undertakings, 6. specified restrictions on the conduct of war, 7. honoring human rights, and 8. ‘duty to assist other peoples living under unfavourable conditions that prevent their having a just or decent political and social régime.’ For a detailed analysis of these criteria, see, especially, John Rawls. *The Law of Peoples*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> On p. 6 of the Draft Report, we read: ‘A society driven too much by commerce may fail to account for such critical externalities as an unliveable climate and the loss of social trust. Fundamental to our project is an understanding that [...] food insecurity results not from a lack of available resources but from injustice and structural inequalities.’

<sup>12</sup> According to an American Catholic ethicist of Slovak origin, Michael Novak, the term capitalism comes from the Latin word *caput*, ‘head’, and to follow your own self-interests does not always mean ‘to selfishly destroy others’ but also *take the burden of risk and responsibility for others*. Unfortunately, the Draft Report does not tell us a lot about this *power of human creativity* in the field of food production and farming. For example, about the model of *microfinance* in developing countries.

<sup>13</sup> Some reference to the ‘left-wing’ ‘dependency theories’ of the 1970s might be indicated by the following statement of the Draft Report on p. 6: ‘It seems clear that rising rates of food insecurity and malnutrition are primarily related to structural forms of inequality—between and within states— as well as to organizational issues involving the forms of *dependency* that we discuss below’.

<sup>14</sup> At present, we definitely do not have anything like ‘a global political authority’ able to enforce matters of human rights and universal values on a global scale. In particular, the UN Security Council is still occupied by ‘the victors of past wars’, specifically the Second World War, although at least two of its members commit long-term and systematic crimes against humanity fully comparable to those who caused this war. Russia and China routinely violate almost any valid norms of international law, civil rights, and principles of judicial and media independence and use massive terror both against neighboring countries and their own citizens. It is fair to admit that also the United States, under George Bush Jr., had serious limits in some of these fields; however, at least under the present government, the US mainly follows international standards.

<sup>15</sup> See the Draft Report, pp. 48–49.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Such expectations came exclusively from the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, but they were explicitly refused by the US President Gerald Ford and other Western leaders already during the Conference. Nevertheless, the Soviet government still misused the results of the Helsinki Accords as a definitive legal justification of 'the satellite status' of Central and Eastern European countries, particularly the *annexation of the Baltic States*. See, e.g., John Lewis Gaddis. *The Cold War*. London: Penguin, 2005, p. 190. For the position of the American President, see: Gerald R. Ford (1977). *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, 1975*, p. 1030-1031.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon H. Skilling. *Charter 77 and human rights in Czechoslovakia*. London-Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1981.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., the recent statement of Dmitry Medvedev that Ukraine is just 'a rotten piece of lard' which 'has to be annihilated' if Western democracies do not want to face nuclear apocalypse. See: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12258103/The-West-stop-opposing-Russia-face-World-War-warns-Putin-ally-latest-rant.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Some attempts to conduct such negotiations included the *Partnership for Peace* in 1994, the *NATO-Russia Council* in 2002, and a few other forms of non-military cooperation, but all these initiatives were stopped after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. See the summary <https://web.archive.org/web/20090815145836/http://www.nato-russia-council.info/HTM/EN/Copy%20of%20news%2041.shtml>. See also: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26838894>.

<sup>21</sup> See, especially, this: <http://opiniojuris.org/2022/04/22/options-for-a-peace-settlement-for-ukraine-option-paper-ii-new-european-security-order/>. The 'neoimperialist' undertone of this proposal can be seen at least in the Draft Report's utopic expectation that if the present NATO defense system is dissolved and replaced *only* by peaceful

<sup>22</sup> This criticism mainly points at the following passage: 'It is estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the arable land in Ukraine has been rendered unusable as a result of mining and other direct impacts of the Russian invasion, which has also impacted fuel supplies and supplies of other agricultural raw materials' (The Draft Report, p. 7).

<sup>23</sup> 'Over the past year, the Russian invasion of Ukraine *has served* to further highlight the vulnerability of our food systems. Energy- and fertilizer-price increases have had a major impact on global food production in 2022 and 2023 and contributed to the rise in the number of hungry people in the world, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.' (The Draft Report, p. 4). See 'Africa bears the heaviest burden of malnutrition and is currently not on track to meet its goal of ending hunger by 2025.' (Ibid.). Yes, it does, but *it should definitely not divert our attention and financial resources from the critical risk of Russia's war against Ukraine, which is not just a local civil war but a civilization war against humanity affecting also fundamental material needs of everyone*.

<sup>24</sup> See especially the Draft Report, p. 27-28, 37, and 56.

<sup>25</sup> The latest development in this field is presented in the following article: <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/07/17/russia-says-it-will-not-extend-the-landmark-ukraine-grain-deal.html>.

<sup>26</sup> According to the British admiral Sir Tony Radakin, Russia has already lost almost half of its combat military power in Ukraine. <https://www.ft.com/content/8cd1c388-6fb9-497b-a8a9-14b6ea21ede2>.

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