

Review of: "Examining the Ethical and Geopolitical Context of Global Food Security Policy"

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The article contributes to the ongoing debate on food security, a significant global issue that is relevant to all countries, including the high-income ones. The author offers critical points and comments on 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 of Dublin City University. The author discusses some important political-ethical aspects of food security in the current tense historical context.

In my review of this article, I will point out some issues from the perspective of the right to food and geopolitics.

- It is not quite clear what the author meant by a statement that food security is not only a collective but also a personal problem (p. 2). Does it mean that every individual is responsible to secure enough food for living? If that is the case, this statement is in line with the neoliberal economic logic that has eliminated the concept of the public good and replaced it by the concept of "individual responsibility," and that is responsible for the current state of food insecurity. It is the corporate food regime that causes the majority of people (80%) in extreme poverty to live in rural areas, as well as half of small-scale food producers.^[1] Moreover, neoliberalism has eliminated a social welfare state (under the justification that public funding of education, health care, childcare, social care, etc., is a redundant cost to a state) and has pushed people to find by themselves solutions for their vulnerable position and a lack of social security ("If someone is poor, it is his/her guilt"). This concept is in contrary with ethical principles such as equality, equity, and solidarity with vulnerable groups and those who are in need (persons with disabilities, persons with a health condition, elderly, children, refugees, homeless, etc.). Undoubtably, nowadays hunger and malnutrition have become global and collective problems that need a global and collective response, by shifting the current food regime towards the regime that would be based on principles of human rights, solidarity, equity and equality, economic democracy, and food sovereignty.
- The author points out the controversial interpretation of the relation between the right to food and democracy in the Draft Report but misses to point out the issue of economic democracy and the right of local people to control their own food systems, including markets, production models, and ecological resources (so-called food sovereignty). Is there any democracy if people do not have the right to choose their own political, economic, and social system and to control their own food production and food market?
- The concept of food sovereignty has proved its potential to reduce poverty and enable access to affordable food in Latin America. There are increasing practices of states, particularly in Latin America, in including food sovereignty

in their Constitutions and legislation aiming at protecting the right to adequate food, health, and a healthy environment. The food sovereignty movement has also become more and more present in high-income countries, such as Canada and Switzerland. Thus, the Report's recommendation to states to adopt a food sovereignty lens on international trade, and in particular to privilege domestic and local scale-production (p. 106), is sound and reasonable.

- The article argues on positive correlations between food access and the global market economy. However, the given arguments do not challenge the current concept of food security that is highly neoliberal in its nature and is problematic for both economic and environmental reasons (some of them are outlined in the Report). The article misses to point out several facts: (1) the right to food is inevitably connected with the right to life; (2) contemporary world food (over)production enables sufficient food for everyone on this planet; (3) world hunger and suffering are caused by the concentration of corporate monopoly power that controls national economic and agricultural policies and rules over the entire food production chain, from production to distribution; (4) the right to decide about food production is taken away from those who produce that food; (5) food has become a commodity of trade, instead of a source of nutrition for people (food, particularly healthy food, has become accessible only to those who can pay for it); (6) corporative food production is mainly focused on profit, instead of satisfying the basic needs of the people. The Report highlights some other deficiencies of corporate food production and trade, too. Apparently, there are more negative than positive correlations between food access and the global market economy. There is a broad scope of evidence, research articles, publications, and statistics that prove this fact.^[2]
- The author is also sceptical about the possibility to have an agricultural system that does not take capitalism very seriously, recalling, as a citizen of a Central-European country, the tragic 40-year experience with communist centrally-planned agricultural economy. Undoubtably, that experience was tragic, but it is highly recommended to explore good practices and experiences of other countries, too. For example, as a citizen of the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, I can witness (supporting by facts) that that country had a successful agri-food experience and had in place developed agriculture production based on cooperative farms, social ownership, socially-owned and state-owned companies, the state-driven economy, and the self-management of the working class and people working in agriculture. As a result, citizens of Yugoslavia enjoyed full access to sufficient, affordable, and healthy food. The situation radically changed after transitioning from socialism to capitalism, and food insecurity has become a "normal" issue and is present in all states that arose from the former Yugoslavia.^[3] Now we have a market economy, and now we have many who suffer from hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. The national food system's capacity to ensure sustainable food security in all these countries is seriously threatened by irresponsible 'business-as-usual' activities that jeopardise food safety and the environment. Liberalisation served multinational corporations and foreign food supermarket chains' entry to take a monopolist position, causing bankruptcy of domestic companies and worsening the position of domestic food producers. The positive experience of the former Yugoslavia in enabling food security and economic democracy is encouraging and should be explored to develop a sound basis for a sustainable and efficient food regime (enabling the realisation of the right to food) as an alternative to the current corporate food regime.
- The article, as well as the reviewed Draft Report, has missed to elaborate on the impact of the US and EU's sanctions imposed on Russia on food security in European states.^[4]
- The arguments in the section of the article "Overlooking broader security risks of the Russian aggression against

Ukraine” are one-sided, so it is highly recommended to take into consideration a broad literature on international relations, and geopolitical and historical analysis of the causes of the current war in Ukraine. Examining the geopolitical context of global food security policy should be grounded on findings of a geopolitical analysis including the following research questions (or reviewing the broad literature relevant to this issue):

- What are the geopolitical position and aspirations of: (1) the US, (2) the UK, (3) the EU member states, (4) the Russian Federation? How do the current geopolitical position and aspirations of these states correlate with Mackinder’s theory of Heartland and Rimland, Mahan’s concept of the conflict of thalassocracy and tellurocracy, and Kennan’s US strategy of containment?^[5]
- Why did not NATO dismantle after the end of the Cold War parallel with the Warsaw Pact?^[6] What is the purpose of existence of NATO after the Cold War? Collective defence from who? Fight against terrorism? Improving environmental security? Responding to climate change? Women, peace and security?
- What is the purpose of NATO enlargement since 1989 towards the Russian borders? What is the purpose of the intention to include Ukraine into its membership despite Russia’s clear and loud consideration that that would present a threat to its security?
- What is the relation between the US foreign policy and NATO’s policy?^[7]
- What is the rationale of NATO’s past and present operations and missions since the 1990s? Introducing democracy and human rights to Serbia by bombs? Bringing peace to Bosnia and Herzegovina? Stabilising Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya? Whose political, economic, and military interests have been delivered and protected by NATO? What is the impact of the NATO’s interventions in these countries on the people’s food security?
- Why did not the Ukraine government accept the Minsk Agreement in 2015?
- What is the purpose of the US’ heavy support of Ukraine in various heavy weapon and aircraft equipment?^[8]
- How do dominant geopolitical framings of food security extend and deepen neoliberal models of agro-food provisioning?^[9]
- What is the impact of the war in Ukraine on European and global food security?^[10]
- From the security perspective, the author’s call to *military* support of Ukraine, including NATO, is extremely dangerous and threatens not only the future of food security, but global and regional security. The further fuelling of the war would cause further mass destruction and human casualties. The only reasonable and ethical call in this moment is the call to a peace negotiation and a peace accord, starting from and respecting the interests of both parties directly involved.

^[1] United Nations General Assembly, Human Rights Council. Final study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the advancement of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, of 24 February 2012. A/HRC/19/75, para. 9. See also reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food>.

^[2] See also reports of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food available at

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food>.

[3] See: Dokmanović, Mirjana and Cvetičanin, Neven (2021) The Prospects of Food Sovereignty in the Former Yugoslav Republics. *Teorija in praksa* 58 (4). pp. 1089-1116). ISSN 0040-3598. doi: 10.51936/tip.58.3.1089-1116; Brankov, Tatjana and Ivan Lovre (2017): Food Security in the Former Yugoslav Republics. *Economics and Agriculture* (64) 2: 701–721; Knežević, Irena (2014): Free Markets for All: Transition Economies and the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy. In: Andrée, Peter, Jeffrey Ayres, Michael Bosia, and Marie-Josée Mássicotte (eds.), *Globalization and Food Sovereignty: Global and Local Change in the New Politics of Food*, 228–252. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division; Koczan, Zsoka (2016): *Being Poor, Feeling Poorer: Inequality, Poverty and Poverty Perceptions in the Western Balkans*. IMF Working Paper, IMF; Luketina, Ruzica, Hamid El Bilali, Sinisa Berjan, and Maria Wurzinger (2018): Sustainability Transitions in Bosnian Agro-Food System. *Agriculture and Forestry* 64 (4): 29–38; Marović, Čedomir (2016): Structural Changes in the Agriculture and Rural Sector in Montenegro. *Matica* (65): 51–66; Obradović, Marija (2017): *Chronicles of the Transitional Cemetery: Privatization of Socially-owned Capital in Serbia 1989–2012: Economic-historical Analysis*. Belgrade: Filip Višnjić; Petrović, Saša (2019): *Food Sovereignty in Serbian Context – Food Production System Critical Analysis Framework*. Belgrade: Ama – Centre for the Care of People and Nature; Srećković, Milenko (2013): Land Grabbing and Land Concentration in Europe: The case of Serbia. *Land concentration, land grabbing and people's struggles in Europe*, 194–197. Transnational Institute for European Coordination Via Campesina and Hands off the Land network; Stipetić, Vladimir (2005): Razvitak poljoprivredne proizvodnje u Hrvatskoj: tendencije, stanje i osnovni problemi. [Development of agricultural production in Croatia: Tendencies, present condition and fundamental issues]. *Proceedings of the Rijeka Faculty of Economics*, 23 (1): 25–50.

[4] See, for example: Năsulea, C., Crețu, B. N., & Spînu, D. F. (2015). How sanctions on Russia impact the economy of the European Union. *Studies in Business and Economics*, 10(3), 147-157;

[5] There is a broad recent literature that indicates that the Ukraine crisis is grounded on conflict geopolitical interests of the Atlantic seaborne empire (the Anglo-Saxon countries) to challenge Russia, because it occupies the 'Pivot Area of History'. Many authors consider that Mackinder's Heartland theory is still relevant to the understanding of foreign policies of the US and Russia. See: Dragan Jurošević, Osnovne etape društveno-političkog i institucionalnog razvoja Ukrajine od „Kijevske Rusije“ do građanskog rata 2014. godine (sa fokusom na Ukrajinu kao nezavisnu državu), *Politea*, 10, 2015: 87-111; Moga, Teodor Lucian, and Denis Alexeev. "Post-Soviet States Between Russia and the EU: Reviving Geopolitical Competition? A Dual Perspective." *Connections* 13, no. 1 (2013): 41–52; Ruzhin, Nano. 2022. "The War in Ukraine through the Prism of Classical Geopolitics." *Contemporary Macedonian Defense / Sovremena Makedonska Odbrana* 22 (42): 9–27; Chowdhury, Suban Kumar, and Abdullah Hel Kafi. "The Heartland theory of Sir Halford John Mackinder: justification of foreign policy of the United States and Russia in Central Asia." *J. Liberty & Int'l Aff.* 1 (2015): 58; Rein Müllerson, Ukraine: Victim of Geopolitics, *Chinese Journal of International Law*, Volume 13, Issue 1, March 2014, Pages 133–145, <https://doi.org/10.1093/chinesejil/jmu011>; Elias Götz (2015) It's geopolitics, stupid: explaining Russia's Ukraine policy, *Global Affairs*, 1:1, 3-10, DOI:10.1080/23340460.2015.960184; Elias Götz & Jørgen Staun (2022) Why Russia attacked Ukraine: Strategic culture and radicalized narratives, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43:3, 482-497,

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[6] The publicly available documents of the US National Security Archive prove that the US did not have any intention to disintegrate NATO after the Cold War, but to spread this military alliance by the Russian borders. See: National Security Archive Page, NATO's Original Purpose: Double Containment of the Soviet Union and "Resurgent" Germany, 11 December 2018, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/nuclear-vault/2018-12-11/natos-original-purpose-double-containment-soviet-union-resurgent-germany>; National Security Archive Page, NATO Expansion: What Gorbachev Heard, 12 December 2017, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2017-12-12/nato-expansion-what-gorbachev-heard-western-leaders-early>; National Security Archive Page, Memorandum of conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and James Baker in Moscow, 9 February 1990, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/16116-document-05-memorandum-conversation-between> (accessed 6 June 2023); National Security Archive Page, NATO Expansion – The Budapest Blow Up 1994, 24 November 2021, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/russia-programs/2021-11-24/nato-expansion-budapest-blow-1994>.

[7] Congressional Research Service, Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2023, 7 June 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R4273>

[8] Kiel Institute for the World Economy. Ukraine Support Tracker. Available at: <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>; The White House (2022). Remarks by President Biden on the Security Assistance to Ukraine. May 3. Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/05/03/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-security-assistance-to-ukraine/>; The White House Page. Immediate Release: Fact Sheet on U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine, 20 February 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Feb/20/2003164184/-1/-1/0/UKRAINE-FACT-SHEET-PDA-32.PDF>; Dearnley, F. (2023). Mitt Romney exclusive: Damage caused to Russia makes Ukraine investment worth it. *The Telegraph*, 14 September. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/09/14/mitt-romney-russia-ukraine-aid-reelection-retire-interview/>; Gans, J. (2023). Romney defends US aid to Ukraine: 'We care about human life'. *The Hill*. 1 January. <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/3832959-romney-defends-us-aid-to-ukraine-we-care-about-human-life/>.

[9] For example: Melanie Sommerville, Jamey Essex & Philippe Le Billon (2014) *The 'Global Food Crisis' and the*

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[10] For example: Foued Saâdaoui, Sami Ben Jabeur, John W. Goodell (2022). Causality of geopolitical risk on food prices: Considering the Russo–Ukrainian conflict, *Finance Research Letters*, Volume 49, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.frl.2022.103103>; Kovács, E. K., Bachórz, A., Bunzl, N., Mincyte, D., Parasecoli, F., Piras, S., & Varga, M. (2022). The war in Ukraine and food security in Eastern Europe. *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, 22(3), 1-7; Sohag, K., Islam, M.M., Tomas Žiković, I. and Mansour, H. (2023), "Food inflation and geopolitical risks: analyzing European regions amid the Russia-Ukraine war", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 125 No. 7, pp. 2368-2391. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-09-2022-0793>; Benton, T. G., Froggatt, A., Wellesley, L., Grafham, O., King, R., Morisetti, N., & Schröder, P. (2022). The Ukraine war and threats to food and energy security. *Chatham House—International Affairs Think Tank*, 4; Sun, T.-T. and Su, C.W. (2024), "How is geopolitical risk associated with food prices?", *International Journal of Emerging Markets*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOEM-01-2023-0004>; Glauber, J. W., & Laborde Debucquet, D. (Eds.). (2023). *The Russia-Ukraine conflict and global food security*. International Food Policy Research Institute; Ben Hassen, T., & El Bilali, H. (2022). Impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war on global food security: towards more sustainable and resilient food systems? *Foods*, 11(15), 2301.