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STARVATION POLITICS: COLONIALISM'S CREATION OF ARTIFICIAL FAMINES, AND THE PURSUIT OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the impact of colonial policies on the creation of artificial famines globally. A focus on historical famines is utilized as a lens for understanding contemporary food sovereignty challenges. Employing a qualitative approach, the research analyzes case studies from the famines in Ukraine, Ireland, China, Ethiopia and Bengal to understand how preexisting food sovereignty and transboundary food governance systems were deliberately undermined for external economic and political gain and how their lasting impact has affected local communities. Findings reveal that systemic exploitation and political manipulation have perpetuated cycles of famine and dependency. Further exploration shows that global institutions such as the WTO, often pressure less economically powerful states to open their economies to international competition, which leaves local farmers struggling to compete and increases state reliance on imported food. This process undermines self sufficiency and continues to fuel poverty and hunger, ultimately reinforcing a system that benefits Western and Global North nations at the expense of others.The paper concludes that empowering communities through support of decentralized, communal food systems separate from state control is essential for achieving food sovereignty. This research contributes to ongoing discussions about food justice and underscores the need for policies that prioritize local autonomy over external control. Future research should focus more deeply on the role of indigenous practices in fostering resilient food systems and mitigating the effects of historical injustices.

Keywords: food sovereignty, decentralized, transboundary, colonial, famine

Author's Note

Food, water, and shelter are the three most fundamental needs for survival.

I have not known what it is like to not be sheltered, and I have not known what it is like to not have clean water, but I have known hunger. I have also known community and friendship through food. I can think of a million times when the people I love would offer me food. Sharing fresh bread, slathered in sweet lavender honey or tart raspberry preserves. Offering me a cup of warm and earthy tea. Splitting bowls of spicy malatang with far too many ingredients for our budgets. Or asking, "do you want a piece of this?" and ignoring my polite decline to wordlessly slide a portion of what they have over to me. I have been fortunate to have been able to share meals with good company, nearly all my life. Even when times were financially hard, I still had the means to get food, albeit maybe not my fill, but definitely enough. But not everyone has that option.

Many people, especially in historically colonized and marginalized regions, suffer from hunger, and starvation. A cruel and unnecessary burden in a world where food waste and surplus are so common. As I've traveled around the world, I have seen hunger everywhere I've gone. Why? Growing up with the last name O'Connor leaves you a lot of time to think about famine and to question why it happened, and why it keeps happening today. But it turns out just thinking about those questions doesn't get you very far, which is what led me to this thesis. I wanted to investigate the ways in which famines, the most extreme form of hunger, are created artificially both historically and contemporarily and for what cause. It's not just a simple answer of poverty as even in wealthy nations like my home country of the United States, I still see widespread hunger and food insecurity.

After much research, I have reached an answer to these questions, which I look forward to sharing. But before I can do so, I would like to thank the people who kept me fed and sane enough to reach this point. I would like to thank my Dad for all the egg-in-a-nests he made me before school growing up to fuel me to learn enough to get to this point and for encouraging me to be curious about the world and my place in it. I would like to thank Marie

for the bubble tea excursions and all the: 'babe you've got this!' that powered me through my doubts. I would like to thank Amanda for the Alaskan salmon and for graciously responding to my hundreds of hours of snapchat videos about my research. I am also very grateful for Vincent who with dedication, zest and humor found creative ways to get me to drink copious amounts of water every day and who generously provided nothing but love and support during the entire writing process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Conceptual Framework

1.1 Introduction

Throughout history, famine has been more than just a consequence of natural disasters or crop failures; it has been a strategic instrument of control and coercion. Colonial powers often exploited or deliberately created famines to consolidate their authority over occupied territories, manipulating food supplies to subjugate indigenous populations. By controlling food production, distribution, and trade, colonial rulers wielded immense power, ensuring compliance through the threat of starvation. This historical pattern of exploitation laid the groundwork for enduring inequalities and dependencies that persist in the 21st century.

In the contemporary landscape, the echoes of colonial-era tactics resonate in the form of modern-day colonialism, albeit under different guises. Economic hegemony, political manipulation, and neocolonial structures continue to exert control over the food systems of vulnerable states, perpetuating conditions ripe for famine. The monopolization of agricultural resources and the imposition of unequal trade agreements strip nations of their autonomy, leaving them vulnerable to food insecurity and perpetuating cycles of poverty and deprivation.

To envision a world free from famine requires confronting the root causes. Empowering nations with autonomy over their food systems emerges as a pivotal step towards eradicating famine and fostering global equity. By dismantling structures of exploitation, communities can reclaim control over their agricultural resources, ensuring food sovereignty for their populations.

In this exploration, we investigate the connections between historical legacies, contemporary power dynamics, and the persistent threat of famine in the 21st century. By understanding the complexities of modern-day colonialism and envisioning pathways towards autonomy

and equity, we work towards a future where famine is no longer a grim reality, but a distant memory of a bygone era.

This thesis will investigate the following sections in depth:

Definition of Artificial Famine

An artificial famine is defined as severe food shortages and starvation intentionally caused or exacerbated by human actions, rather than natural factors. Historical examples include the Irish Potato Famine, Ukraine under Stalin, China's Great Leap Forward, Ethiopia under the Derg regime, and the Great Bengal Famine, where political and economic policies deliberately worsened food crises. This section will emphasize that modern neo-colonial tactics continue to use famine as a tool for political control, maintaining dependency and exploiting vulnerable states through mechanisms like debt, unfair trade agreements, and restricted aid.

What is Food Sovereignty?

Food sovereignty is defined as the right of communities to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods, and the authority to define their own food systems. Distinct from food security, it focuses on local control and autonomy over food production, resisting state and corporate dominance. This section highlights examples from indigenous communities to illustrate how localized, cooperative management of resources can enhance resilience and sustainability.

Theoretical Expansion of Food Sovereignty

Chapter two expands the concept of food sovereignty beyond national borders, advocating for cooperative management of shared natural resources like rivers and mountain ranges. It critiques state-centric approaches and highlights the need for international collaboration to ensure equitable food distribution and environmental stewardship. Real-world examples, such as the EU's Common Agricultural Policy and indigenous movements like La Via Campesina, demonstrate both the potential and challenges of transboundary food

sovereignty. The chapter argues for international legal frameworks and governance structures that prioritize community autonomy and sustainable practices over state and corporate interests.

Current Gaps in Literature

The literature on food sovereignty is critiqued for its state-centered focus, which overlooks the global interconnectedness of modern food systems influenced by international trade, climate change, and corporate interests. Existing research emphasizes local autonomy and resistance to neoliberal policies but fails to address how global forces shape local food security. The section highlights the dominance of Western perspectives and capitalist driven research agendas that prioritize profit over community needs. It calls for a transnational approach to food sovereignty that integrates global governance and cooperation to empower local communities and address structural inequalities in the food system.

Rethinking "Ownership" and Understanding Entitlements

This section delves into the contrasting understandings of "ownership" between Western and Indigenous perspectives, highlighting how the Western capitalist framework views land as a commodity, while indigenous groups, like the Kashinawá in Brazil, treat land as a communal, fluid resource. It explores how colonial practices, such as those rooted in British land laws, imposed rigid systems of private property, thereby marginalizing indigenous systems of land stewardship. Citing Patrick Wolfe's analysis of settler colonialism, the section demonstrates how indigenous lands were converted into parcels for private ownership under the false belief that colonial powers could "better" use the land. This process of dispossession, facilitated by economic and legal mechanisms, served not only economic ends but also reinforced racial hierarchies.

The imposition of Western legal frameworks on indigenous communities is examined through historical examples like Niger, where the introduction of Western property laws undermined traditional social structures. The communal responsibilities tied to land use were eroded in favor of formal ownership documents, effectively marginalizing cultural ties and

obligations. This shift reflects broader neo-colonial practices, in which indigenous land management practices are subverted, leading to dispossession and conflict.

Indigenous land practices, based on collective stewardship, stand in stark contrast to Western notions of land as an asset. These non-private property systems focus on sustainability and communal well-being, challenging the Western model of land as a resource for individual profit. The section argues that embracing communal land use can also address issues like artificial famines, where colonial powers have historically controlled land to undermine local autonomy and food production. By empowering communities to control their own food systems, they can resist external manipulation and achieve food sovereignty.

The section then critiques Amartya Sen's entitlement theory, which posits that famines result from individuals' inability to command resources through entitlements. While Sen emphasizes the role of state interventions in preventing famines, the section argues that relying on the state for such entitlements is problematic. States often prioritize capitalist interests over the welfare of their citizens and may deny access to resources based on exclusionary policies. Rather than focusing on state-led solutions, the section advocates for empowering local communities to achieve food sovereignty, removing food production from state control to prevent exploitation and ensure equitable resource distribution.

The critique of Sen's argument continues with the assertion that the state's involvement in food production could lead to further entrenchment of state power and neglect of the poor in favor of capitalist priorities. It calls for a shift toward community led food systems that operate independently of state interests, allowing communities to secure their own entitlements without being subject to the state's priorities, such as military spending or profit-making. This approach, the section argues, would foster self sufficient communities capable of ensuring their own food security

Food Sovereignty vs. Food Security

The concept of "food sovereignty" was introduced by La Via Campesina in 1996 as a challenge to the corporate dominated global food system. It emphasizes the right of

communities to control their own food production, focusing on sustainability, equity, and social justice. Food sovereignty promotes local, ecologically sound farming practices and resists the power dynamics of global markets.

In contrast, "food security," as defined by the United Nations, focuses on ensuring access to sufficient food without addressing who controls the food systems. It often overlooks power imbalances, can promote industrial agriculture, and perpetuates dependency on volatile global markets. Food security aims to provide food, while food sovereignty seeks to give communities control over how food is produced and distributed.

Advocates for food sovereignty, such as Vandana Shiva and Elizabeth Hoover, argue that prioritizing food security undermines small farmers and indigenous practices. By supporting local food systems, food sovereignty not only promotes environmental sustainability but also addresses social inequalities. The focus on food sovereignty is especially important in countering the negative impacts of globalization, industrial agriculture, and colonialism.

On these grounds we can understand that implementing food sovereignty can also combat issues like poor nutrition in both developed and developing regions. Studies from regions like Bolivia show that prioritizing local, nutritious food over imports can help address malnutrition and improve health outcomes, emphasizing the need for government policies that support local farmers and food systems.

Transboundary Food Governance

Transboundary food governance emphasizes the importance of managing food systems that extend beyond state borders, recognizing that many communities, especially indigenous peoples, engage in practices that naturally cross political boundaries. This approach supports sustainable food systems by prioritizing local knowledge and shared stewardship. A notable example is the Mekong River Commission (MRC), which facilitates cooperation among Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam to manage the Mekong River's resources. The MRC exemplifies transboundary governance by promoting equitable participation, sustainability,

and conflict resolution among its member countries, highlighting the potential for regional collaboration in food governance.

Contextual Factors

Chapter three discusses how artificial famines arise from various contextual factors rooted in power imbalances, particularly between colonial or occupying powers and the communities they control. These famines often involve the deliberate exclusion of aid, where surplus food is withheld to coerce neighboring states into submission. Additionally, powerful entities may monopolize food exports, prioritizing international markets over local needs and leaving local populations to starve. The imposition of forced grain collections to support occupying armies further exacerbates hunger, as these actions deprive local communities of essential food supplies. Moreover, the promotion of monoculture farming practices diminishes ecological diversity, undermining the resilience of local food systems. Ultimately, artificial famines illustrate how powerful states manipulate food access, making it a tool for political and economic domination and stripping affected communities of their food sovereignty.

Why These Case Studies?

This thesis examines case studies of artificial famines in Ukraine, Ireland, China, Ethiopia, and Bengal, illustrating how colonial or occupying powers used famine as a tool of control and economic gain. Each case exemplifies the manipulation of food access to dominate local populations, emphasizing the importance of decentralizing food systems and fostering community driven food sovereignty. In Ukraine, the Holodomor resulted from Soviet grain requisitioning and the destruction of local agricultural control. Ireland's Great Famine was exacerbated by British policies prioritizing exports over local needs. In China, Japanese occupation diverted food from local communities for military purposes. Ethiopia's famine in the 1980s was intensified by the government's political maneuvering and Cold War politics, and in Bengal, British policies during World War II prioritized starving enemy forces over local populations. These examples underscore the need for an active food sovereignty framework and new regulatory bodies to prevent artificial famines and highlight the dangers

of centralized control over food resources. Understanding food sovereignty as a global issue can empower local populations and resist state oppression.

Case Studies

Chapter four provides an in-depth historical analysis of the previously mentioned case studies and examines the way each state previously exhibited food sovereignty before the arrival of colonial powers and the ways in which these foreign entities deliberately undermined their ability to maintain control over their food systems. The case studies also show how the "entitlement theory" is flawed in that occupying states are able to create policies that legally result in citizens being deprived of their entitlement to food from the state. The consequences of these actions, both on the occupied and occupying states are investigated and show how artificial famines and suppression of food sovereignty ultimately benefit no one and result in generations of harm and suffering.

Food Regimes

Chapter five explains that in 1987, Harriet Friedmann and Phil McMichael introduced the term "food regime" to describe the complex relationships between class, power, and food systems during periods of capital accumulation. Understanding food regimes is crucial for comprehending food sovereignty, as they highlight how dominant agricultural practices and policies often serve the interests of powerful states and corporations at the expense of local communities. Food regimes reveal systemic barriers, such as land dispossession and corporate monopolies, that hinder food sovereignty movements. The historical context of food regimes underscores the importance of prioritizing local autonomy and sustainable practices, which can empower communities to reclaim control over their food systems.

Agrarian Citizenship

The emergence of rural social movements has led to the concept of agrarian citizenship, which explores the evolving relationships between land, power, and citizenship in rural areas. Agrarian citizenship emphasizes grassroots participation and recognizes the rights of small-

scale farmers and indigenous communities to control their food systems. This concept links the struggles for political and ecological rights, addressing challenges like land dispossession and resource access, especially in regions vulnerable to artificial famines. Although global agricultural land has increased, small scale farmers face significant barriers due to land concentration and environmental degradation. Addressing these challenges is essential for advancing food sovereignty, which advocates for local communities to manage their agricultural practices sustainably and equitably, transcending state boundaries and fostering resilience in food production.

Brazilian Activists MST

The Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil advocates for land reform as a means to achieve social justice and food sovereignty. Despite significant resistance and violence, the MST succeeded in influencing the implementation of the Programa Nacional de Reforma Agrária under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. However, MST activists continue to face repression, with many killed without justice due to the influence of large landowners on the judiciary. The struggles of the MST illustrate the vital role of activist groups in pushing for land reforms and highlight the challenges these movements face from powerful interests and systemic injustices. Their persistence keeps the issue of land reform on the national agenda, emphasizing the need for comprehensive policies that promote equitable land distribution and support sustainable agricultural practices, while also protecting activists from violence and intimidation.

How Gender Affects Survival Rate in Famines

This section discusses the dual impact of gender on survival during famines. Women generally have biological advantages, such as higher body fat and reduced fertility during food crises, which can enhance their resilience. However, they often face greater social vulnerabilities due to cultural norms favoring men in food and healthcare access. Qualitative data indicates women struggle more than men to obtain food, highlighting the intersection of famine, gender, and patriarchy. Various conflict zones illustrate how women

disproportionately suffer from food scarcity and gender-based violence. Implementing food sovereignty could improve women's survival by fostering equitable resource allocation and reducing their social vulnerabilities.

Further Discussion on Modern Relevance: Famine as a Tool of Occupation in Palestine

This section explores how Israel's policies contribute to artificial famine in Palestine, validating the relevance of food sovereignty concepts. The blockade restricts essential food supplies, leading to a humanitarian crisis characterized by starvation and ecological destruction. This situation underscores the need for food sovereignty independent of state control and the role of neocolonialism in creating present day artificial famines. The intentional deprivation of food serves as collective punishment, limiting Palestinian autonomy and reinforcing dependency on external aid. International responses often prioritize political interests over humanitarian needs, emphasizing the need for frameworks supporting community based food sovereignty rights.

The Potential of Food Sovereignty Policies

Food sovereignty policies are proposed as a solution to prevent artificial famines, like the one currently imposed in Palestine. By ensuring communities control their food supply independently of state mechanisms, especially occupying state mechanisms, such policies can enhance resilience and reduce a need for dependency on unreliable aid. The relevance of food sovereignty is highlighted as a means to empower communities and challenge the neoliberal commodification of food, with the Palestinian situation serving as a contemporary example of these dynamics.

Conclusions

The conclusion emphasizes the necessity of redefining food sovereignty beyond state centric frameworks. In a globalized world, food sovereignty must reflect interconnectedness and critique the political economy influencing state sovereignty. This approach advocates for

collaborative efforts to achieve genuine food sovereignty, recognizing the limitations of individual state governance in addressing food security challenges.

1.2 Conceptual Tools of Analysis

As part of my empirical analysis, I am introducing a new concept of **food sovereignty** that is separate from the state and instead rooted in local communities. I am drawing from **ecological indigenous knowledge** and **environmental justice** to emphasize the importance of communities having control over their own food systems. By focusing on their unique relationships with the environment, I argue that food sovereignty must center on sustainability, self-sufficiency, and the preservation of ecological practices that respect local ecosystems. This redefinition pushes back against the market centric, state controlled models that currently dominate the food economy.

I am using **historical analysis** to understand the political economy of food and the **coloniality of power**, which reveal patterns of artificial famines orchestrated by colonial, neocolonial and occupying powers. These famines were not accidental but deliberate strategies that served larger political and economic objectives. By investigating these patterns, I am uncovering how food was weaponized to create dependency, effectively undermining local food sovereignty. This historical lens helps me trace how control over food systems has been used as a tool of domination and exploitation.

In addition, I am **critiquing global capitalism** by examining how contemporary capitalist structures perpetuate these colonial era patterns. The current global food economy, dominated by multinational corporations and state interests, continues to marginalize local food systems. By maintaining these power structures, global capitalism reinforces the dependency that was created during colonial times. My critique highlights how profit driven motives overshadow local autonomy, prioritizing market interests over community needs and sustainable practices.

Lastly, I am using **food sovereignty** (as I'm redefining it) to critique the role of the state in perpetuating dependency within food systems. State led models often co-opt food production, aligning it with national or corporate interests rather than community needs. By examining **state dependence vs. community autonomy**, I show that centralized control of food systems fosters reliance on external forces, whereas community-led approaches can restore true autonomy and resilience.

1.3 Definition of artificial famine

Famine as a political weapon has been used throughout history by state actors to control populations, suppress dissent, and achieve strategic goals. Rather than being a mere consequence of natural disasters or crop failure, famine can be deliberately exacerbated or left unchecked for political purposes. An artificial or man-made famine refers specifically to a severe shortage of food and widespread starvation that is intentionally caused or worsened by human actions. This term is used to describe situations where famines result from deliberate policies, actions, or neglect by governing authorities or other powerful actors, rather than from natural factors such as adverse weather conditions or crop failure.

One commonly misunderstood example of an artificial famine is the Irish Potato Famine, also known as the Great Famine, which occurred in Ireland between 1845 and 1852. While it is often portrayed as a natural disaster resulting from the potato blight that devastated the potato crop, closer examination reveals a more nuanced and politically charged reality. The Irish Potato Famine was not solely caused by the failure of the potato crop; it was exacerbated by British colonial policies and economic exploitation.

During the Great Famine, Ireland was under British rule, and the British government's laissez-faire economic policies exacerbated the crisis. British landlords continued to export grain and livestock from Ireland for profit, even as millions of Irish peasants starved. Additionally, British authorities implemented ineffective relief measures and failed to adequately respond to the escalating humanitarian crisis. The combination of crop failure,

land tenure issues, discriminatory policies, and governmental inaction resulted in widespread suffering and death.

Similarly, artificial famines in other parts of the world, such as Ukraine under Stalin's rule, China during Mao Zedong's Great Leap Forward, Ethiopia under the Derg regime, and Bengal under British control were deliberately caused or encouraged by colonial powers for economic and political gain. In these cases, famine was used as a tool of coercion, control, and exploitation, with dire consequences for the affected populations.

Furthermore, these famines are not issues of a long gone era, but have present day relevance. As the power and wealth gap between states grows, it becomes easier and easier to institute neocolonial tactics on vulnerable states, as these states are forced to comply with a Western/Global North frameworks that deliberately act to keep them in a weaker state. In our capitalistic world, dominant powers use debt dependency, unfair trade agreements, and control over international institutions to impose policies that strip vulnerable nations of their economic and political autonomy. These tactics prioritize the interests of multinational corporations and Western economies, often forcing vulnerable states to adopt agricultural and economic practices that undermine local food sovereignty, exacerbate inequality, and leave these nations dependent on imported goods, loans, and foreign aid. This perpetuates a cycle of exploitation and poverty, mirroring the colonial systems of the past, where control over resources and labor is maintained by external powers at the expense of local populations. As discussed in the book *Accounting for Hunger*, "...the expansion of volumes of traded goods is not an answer to hunger if it leads, not to poverty reduction and decreasing inequalities, but to the further marginalisation of those who are not benefiting from trade and may instead be made more vulnerable by trade liberalisation (De Schutter and Cordes, 2011, 24), which argues that simply increasing the amount of goods traded globally does not solve the problem of hunger if the benefits of trade are not distributed fairly. If trade expansion does not reduce poverty or inequality, it can actually harm people who are already marginalized. These groups, who may not see the advantages of trade, could become even more vulnerable as a result of global trade liberalization, which often prioritizes economic growth over social protections for the poor and disadvantaged. There is a disproportionate

benefit from these systems, leaving vulnerable states weakened and dependent on external forces which can lead to famine.

Understanding artificial famines as deliberate acts of policy or neglect challenges the prevailing narrative that famine is usually a result of natural factors. By recognizing the political and economic dimensions of famine, we can confront the systemic injustices and power imbalances that perpetuate hunger and food insecurity, and work towards preventing future humanitarian crises.

1.4 What is Food Sovereignty?

Food sovereignty is a broad term that has been highly debated on what exactly it should encompass, but for the purposes of this paper we will begin by using the definition as described at the the 2007 Forum of Food Sovereignty by Mali Selingue, "Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and the right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007). Food sovereignty is closely related yet distinct from food security, it refers to the rights of specific communities to be in control of their own food systems. This paper argues that these rights should not be subject to governmental control or external market pressures. A specific community could refer to an ethnic group, a tribe, or a localized group of people sharing cultural, linguistic, or historical ties within the larger national framework. These communities often have distinct identities, traditions, and ways of life that are deeply intertwined with their local environment, including access to natural resources such as water, land, and forests.

When discussing food sovereignty within such communities, it's essential to acknowledge the complex interplay between local ecosystems, socio-economic dynamics, and political structures. In many cases, the livelihoods of these communities are directly dependent on the land they inhabit and the resources it provides, making issues of food security and environmental sustainability inherently linked to their existence. According to food sovereignty advocate and scholar, Vandana Shiva, "We cannot allow a law manipulated by

global food giants, promoted by power-hungry bureaucrats to take away our food freedom and food sovereignty." (Shiva, 2005, 13). Shiva's point is crucial to understanding that food sovereignty must be separated from capitalist interests and instead focused on the wellness and survival of people, rather than profit.

Take, for instance, the scenario of a river that traverses multiple states or regions within Ethiopia. This river could serve as a lifeline for various communities along its banks, providing water for irrigation, fishing, transportation, and other essential activities. However, the actions of upstream states, such as industrial pollution or excessive water extraction, can have negative impacts downstream, affecting water quality, ecosystem health, and the livelihoods of communities reliant on the river. In this interconnected landscape, traditional notions of sovereignty based solely on state boundaries become insufficient. Capitalistic interests are inherently individualistic, meaning that states prioritize generating profit for themselves above all else. When it comes to protecting shared spaces, this focus often results in a disregard for others who also depend on the land. By reframing our priorities, we can shift the focus from monetary gain to systems that prioritize environmental health and community wellbeing, ensuring a more equitable and sustainable approach to land use and resource management. The concept of food sovereignty extends beyond political borders, recognizing the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and the equitable distribution of food.

At the heart of this discussion lies the need for a new political concept, one that transcends traditional notions of sovereignty and emphasizes cooperation, mutual respect, and collective action. This concept could be termed "transboundary food governance." Transboundary food governance emphasizes the need for collaborative decision making, separate from the state and rooted in the relation of communities to their environment as well as the shared space we occupy when we rely on natural resources. It also relates to resource management across political boundaries, recognizing the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the shared interests of communities reliant on common resources. It calls for the establishment of mechanisms for dialogue, negotiation, and joint planning to address issues such as water pollution, land degradation, and climate change resilience. In an era where the concept of

sovereignty is expanding beyond traditional state boundaries, it is necessary to revisit how we think about food sovereignty.

Traditionally, food sovereignty has been conceptualized within the limits of state control, with each nation governing the production, distribution, and regulation of food within its territorial boundaries. However, as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, this framework proves inadequate. Inspired by the idea of digital sovereignty, which transcends national borders and connects communities in ways that defy traditional geographical limitations, a new theoretical framework for food sovereignty is needed, one that emphasizes the connection to land and resources rather than the arbitrary lines drawn on maps. We can pull useful insights from Renata Avila Pinto's work on *Digital Sovereignty or Digital Colonialism* that can be applied to this theoretical framework of food sovereignty and rethinking the ways in which modern famines are caused by colonization and oppression. One of the key concepts in Pinto's discussion of digital sovereignty is the erosion of state sovereignty by global corporations and the power imbalances between the Global North and South. She argues that we are witnessing a new form of digital colonialism as a small number of powerful actors, mainly based in a few wealthy nations, dominate the world's digital infrastructure and data collection, leaving developing nations vulnerable to exploitation (Pinto, 2018).

This notion of digital colonialism can be paralleled with food sovereignty, where corporate control over global food supply chains limits the autonomy of local communities to control their own food production and resources. Like digital sovereignty, food sovereignty is undermined by the concentration of power in the hands of multinational corporations and powerful states that manipulate agricultural systems for profit, leaving marginalized communities dependent on external food sources. Pinto's critique that "entire nations and their industries are fully dependent on critical infrastructure provided by a handful of companies" (Pinto, 2018, 19) can be applied to how nations suffering from famine are often dependent on external food aid and imports controlled by the Global North, reinforcing power imbalances.

In both cases, sovereignty, whether digital or food, requires rethinking global governance and control structures to empower local communities. Just as Pinto calls for "regional, national, and community solutions to restore control and ownership" over digital infrastructures (Pinto, 2018, 15), the food sovereignty movement advocates for local control over food production, resisting global systems that perpetuate inequality and dependence. The centralized power dynamics that dominate both spheres have created systems where wealthier nations or corporations dictate the terms of access, distribution, and ownership. These top-down structures perpetuate inequality, marginalizing smaller communities that are left dependent on external entities for resources critical to their survival. To achieve true sovereignty, whether in the digital realm or the agricultural sector, there must be a shift towards localized governance that prioritizes the needs, rights, and autonomy of communities over the interests of global actors.

Transboundary food sovereignty could realistically function as a cooperative system where states, regional organizations, and local communities share responsibility for ensuring equitable food access. Drawing parallels to digital sovereignty, where no single state holds absolute control over global digital infrastructure, food sovereignty could operate through international cooperation that transcends borders, prioritizing the rights of communities to access and control their own food systems without state or corporate monopolization. One of the key challenges to national food sovereignty is the globalization of trade and agriculture, which often subjects local food systems to the whims of international markets. Much like the global digital landscape, which necessitates international agreements and regulations, food sovereignty would require cooperative frameworks to ensure that no country or corporation can dominate access to food resources.

Food sovereignty, as an entity separate from the state, can be seen as a form of resistance to both global capital and state control. The state, especially in centralized or authoritarian regimes, controls food production and distribution, using it as a means to exert control over the populace. However, food sovereignty movements argue that communities themselves should manage their food systems, as centralized control leads to inefficiencies and vulnerabilities, especially when the state prioritizes its political or economic interests over

the well-being of its citizens. In a sense, food sovereignty is also a challenge to the conventional nation-state system. It rejects the idea that the state should have sole authority over resources and advocates for decentralized, community based governance structures. This decentralization aligns with the broader resistance to neoliberalism and globalized capitalism, offering a more just and equitable approach to food security.The tension between global capital, the state, and local communities highlights the importance of framing food sovereignty not only as an economic or agricultural issue but as a political one. Famine, in this context, is both a symptom and a tool of these larger power dynamics.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Expansion of Food Sovereignty

2.1 Food Sovereignty Beyond Borders

In this new framework, food sovereignty should be understood as a right that transcends state boundaries, focusing instead on the land, water, and natural resources that sustain communities. Just as digital sovereignty allows for the governance of data and technology to extend beyond a single nation's control, this reconceptualized food sovereignty would prioritize the shared use and management of resources across borders. For example, when multiple states share a mountain range, a river, or a fertile plain, the sovereignty over the food produced in these areas should not be confined to the citizens of one particular state. Instead, the framework would encourage cooperative management of these resources, ensuring that all communities dependent on them can access and benefit from the food they produce.

The implications of this rethinking are vast. First, it challenges the current state-centric approach to food sovereignty, calling for international cooperation and the dismantling of rigid nationalistic policies that limit access to food based on political boundaries. This could lead to more equitable food distribution, especially in regions where borders divide

historically shared lands. Moreover, by emphasizing the connection to land and natural resources, this framework promotes environmental stewardship. Communities would be more likely to engage in sustainable practices if they collectively manage the resources that transcend national boundaries, as their survival would directly depend on the health of these ecosystems. This approach mirrors indigenous practices, which are often deeply rooted in understanding of and respect for local environments. By valuing and integrating these practices, communities can achieve greater harmony with their surroundings, leading to improved ecological outcomes and enhanced resilience, ultimately benefiting both the environment and the well-being of the community.

Applying this framework in reality would require significant political and social shifts. Regional agreements and transnational policies would need to be developed to manage shared resources collaboratively. An example that illustrates this possibility is the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which promotes cross-border cooperation among member states. CAP works to support sustainable agriculture, ensure a stable food supply, and protect rural economies, all while adhering to international trade agreements. While imperfect and subject to criticism for its environmental impacts, CAP shows how food systems can be managed collectively across borders (European Commission, 1). In the case of the EU, member states have ceded some level of sovereignty over their agricultural policies to a supranational entity, in order to receive funding and support.

However, while CAP shows the potential for transboundary cooperation, it is still heavily reliant on state-controlled mechanisms. The policy is largely dictated by the interests of individual governments and the EU as a political entity, which often leads to decisions that prioritize economic or geopolitical objectives over the specific needs and sovereignty of local communities. CAP has also been criticized for its environmental impact, corporate favoritism, and the unequal distribution of subsidies that disproportionately benefit larger agricultural producers over small-scale farmers (Gebrekidan et. al, 2019, 1). In this way, CAP's current model reinforces some of the same power dynamics that food sovereignty aims to dismantle, with the state maintaining control over food production and distribution rather than empowering communities. Additionally, oversupply caused by CAP leads to

surplus goods being sold to developing nations at lower prices, undermining local farmers' livelihoods.

Implementing cooperative efforts such as CAP, but with less centralized state control over food production, could help alleviate food crises, especially in regions where food is used as a political weapon, such as in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Here, the deliberate restriction of food supplies to Palestinian territories by the Israeli state serves as a form of control and punishment, exacerbating food insecurity (Gordon and Haddad, 2024, 3). A transboundary food sovereignty framework could prevent such scenarios by ensuring that no single state has unilateral control over food resources in an occupied or contested region.

Another real world example supporting this framework is the global effort to combat hunger in the 2011 famine in Somalia. International organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and various NGOs worked across national borders to deliver aid, but the state's control over food distribution and access still played a major role in exacerbating the crisis. U.S. food aid was restricted due to political concerns regarding al-Shabaab, a militant group in the region, illustrating how national security concerns often trump humanitarian needs in food distribution efforts (Maxwell and Fitzpatrick, 2012, 5). In a transboundary food sovereignty model, food production and distribution would not be restricted by state boundaries, which could prevent the politically motivated blocking of aid to vulnerable populations. Governance structures could operate similarly to how digital spaces exist beyond state bounds and are shared communally, in terms of food sovereignty, with an added focus on ensuring that food production and distribution extends beyond state borders and includes the input of local communities, regional organizations, and international bodies.

Moreover, La Via Campesina's global peasant movement advocates for food sovereignty as a transnational issue, emphasizing that the struggle for food sovereignty cannot be confined within national borders. La Via Campesina argues that the international corporate control of agriculture, primarily through trade agreements and global supply chains, has undermined the ability of local communities to grow and access their own food (Desmarais, 2007, 36). This echoes how digital sovereignty is constantly negotiated in the face of multinational tech

corporations that operate beyond state control, showing that collective governance could empower communities globally.

The idea of a transboundary food sovereignty system would be underpinned by international legal frameworks that prioritize the right to food as a fundamental human right. Much like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the digital sphere, such legal frameworks could ensure that no state or corporation has the authority to exploit food systems for political or economic gain. Global governance structures such as the United Nations Committee on World Food Security could play a role by moving beyond their current focus on food security to embrace a food sovereignty approach that empowers local communities and prioritizes ethical standards over profit-driven motives.

Adopting this perspective of food sovereignty would have far-reaching effects on global food security and sustainability. It would encourage nations to think beyond their borders and recognize the interconnectedness of communities that share natural resources. This shift could lead to more resilient food systems, as communities would collaborate to protect and enhance the resources they rely on. The Quechua people of the Andes provide an excellent example of how transboundary food sovereignty can lead to a more resilient food system. Spanning across national borders in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, the Quechua have maintained traditional agricultural practices, particularly in the cultivation of potato varieties, which has contributed to both biodiversity conservation and climate resilience. As Altieri and Toledo note, "The fact that many peasants commonly manage polycultures and/or agroforestry systems points at the need to re-evaluate indigenous technology as a key source of information on adaptive capacity centered on the selective, experimental and resilient capabilities of farmers in dealing with climatic change" (Altieri and Toledo, 2011, 597). The Quechua people's seed-sharing practices and communal agricultural networks have enabled them to sustain food production even in the face of challenges like soil erosion and climate change. This traditional knowledge is not confined to state boundaries but shared across regions, such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. This strengthens their food system. In line with food sovereignty principles, the Quechua communities illustrate how locally controlled food systems can resist external pressures. As La Via Campesina

emphasizes, "food sovereignty promotes local food systems managed by communities rather than by market forces or external agencies" (La Via Campesina, 2014). The Quechua people's success in sustaining their crop diversity and productivity despite environmental challenges exemplifies the empowerment food sovereignty brings, offering a model for other regions facing similar issues.

A similar case can be found in North America, where the Anishinaabe communities in Canada and the U.S. have cooperated to protect wild rice (manoomin) habitats in the Great Lakes region. This collaboration has helped them resist industrial encroachments and maintain ecological balance. The relationship between the Anishinaabe people and manoomin is not just one of harvest and consumption but of stewardship and reciprocity. As Indigenousscholar Jana-Rae Yerxa explains,

> "The more I thought about us gathering at Neyaashing to roast manoomin it became clear that this would be a meaningful act of resurgence for Anishinaabeg. We would assert Anishinaabeg nationhood by re-prescencing ourselves on our traditional lands, lands that we have been displaced from; we wouldengage in land-based practices that have always sustained our people. By roasting manoomin at Neyaashing,we were reclaiming the space for Anishinaabeg. One hundred Anishinaabeg from the communities of Couchiching, Naicatchewenin, Mitaanjigaming and Nigigoonsiminikaaning came together as our ancestors always had. We honoured and renewed our treaty with manoomin,as well as our relationships with Neyaashing and one another. This is the essence of Anishinaabeg governance" (Yerxa, 2014, 160).

By managing this resource collectively across borders, the Anishinaabe have preserved both their cultural heritage and their food sovereignty, showcasing how Indigenous-led transboundary governance can protect ecosystems and ensure food resilience.

Both the Quechua and Anishinaabe communities demonstrate how transboundary food sovereignty can promote more resilient and sustainable food systems. These cases show the potential of Indigenous knowledge and cooperation across borders to secure food systems in the face of environmental and industrial pressures, reinforcing the need for global recognition

of these approaches. This framework could work on a larger scale and serve more communities globally, it could serve as a model for other forms of sovereignty, highlighting the need for global cooperation in the face of shared challenges, such as climate change and resource depletion.

2.2 Current Gaps in Literature

While food sovereignty has traditionally been treated as a state-centered framework, focusing on the autonomy of local or national food systems, this perspective does not fully account for the global interconnectedness of modern food systems. The idea of food sovereignty, as often framed in the literature, revolves around a nation's control over its agricultural resources, food production, and distribution. However, this narrow perspective can obscure the extent to which international policies and corporate interests influence and shape local food security. For example, trade agreements, international food aid, and environmental changes often transcend national boundaries, impacting local communities in ways that cannot be addressed solely through a national or state-centric approach.

The existing literature has largely concentrated on resisting neoliberal policies and advocating for local autonomy. Movements like La Via Campesina highlight the fight for control over land, seeds, and agriculture in opposition to large multinational corporations that dominate the food industry. Scholars like Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael discuss how food sovereignty often becomes a tool for local communities to resist globalization and reclaim autonomy over their food systems. However, this local focus often misses how interconnected the modern food system truly is, with decisions made in global centers of power, through international trade agreements, environmental policies, and multinational corporate interests, profoundly affecting local food systems (McMichael, 2009) (Friedmann, 1993).

Moreover, much of the literature and policy discourse tends to emphasize food security over food sovereignty. Food security is primarily concerned with ensuring access to sufficient food to meet the dietary needs of a population, regardless of where that food originates. This

is often achieved through globalized supply chains, food imports, and international aid programs. I argue that this focus on food security undermines local food sovereignty because it encourages dependence on external sources of food and prioritizes quantity over the rights and autonomy of communities to determine their own food systems. Food security frameworks often work within the structures of global capitalism, further entrenching inequalities and overlooking the importance of local control and environmental sustainability.

This gap is where my thesis will intervene. Just as digital sovereignty involves transnational cooperation and governance to address the challenges posed by the borderless nature of digital technologies, food sovereignty similarly requires global cooperation and governance. There is a need for an approach that recognizes the capitalistic global forces shaping local food systems. My thesis will explore how global governance, interaction, and cooperation are essential to empowering communities and regions to regain control over their food systems in an interconnected world.

Furthermore, it is essential to move beyond the binary framework of food sovereignty versus food security. While ensuring food access is crucial, food sovereignty calls for a deeper understanding of how the global economy and international politics affect local food systems. Addressing these global dimensions and recognizing the need for international collaboration will help to reshape the debate, emphasizing a model of food sovereignty that incorporates, rather than resists, global interconnectedness.

It must also be taken into account how much of the existing research comes from a western and global north perspective. The main critique of the capitalist system of food research lies in how it privileges profit-driven motives over the actual needs of communities, particularly those in the Global South. This system centralizes control over food knowledge in the hands of corporations, financial institutions, and governments, effectively marginalizing local and indigenous forms of agriculture. Research priorities under capitalism are dictated not by sustainability or food security but by the potential for generating profits, leading to a system that undermines food sovereignty and fosters state dependence. Food research under

capitalism is heavily influenced by the interests of multinational agribusiness corporations, which fund and direct much of the research agenda. This is particularly evident in the focus on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), chemical fertilizers, and pesticides, innovations that are designed to maximize yields and increase corporate profits rather than promote sustainability or address the root causes of hunger. The privatization of knowledge and technology is another major issue. Intellectual property laws, especially those related to patents on seeds and agricultural technologies, place control of critical resources in the hands of a few corporations. Small-scale farmers are often forced to buy patented seeds and inputs from these corporations, locking them into a cycle of dependency on external, profit-driven sources. This model disregards the traditional knowledge systems that have sustained communities for generations, and it undermines local capacity to innovate or adapt to changing conditions.

Research priorities in this system also tend to focus on increasing productivity through technological fixes rather than addressing deeper structural problems in food distribution and access. High-tech solutions, such as precision agriculture and biotechnology, are often touted as the future of food security, but these "solutions" cater to large-scale industrial agriculture. They frequently ignore the ecological and social costs, including the displacement of small farmers, environmental degradation, and the erosion of biodiversity.

2.3 Rethinking "Ownership" and Understanding Entitlements

In Western and Global North states, ownership of land, resources, and food is typically defined in legal and economic terms. These societies often view land through a grid system, where each parcel is clearly demarcated, and individual ownership is established through legal titles. This system, rooted in British colonial practices, sees land as a commodity to be bought, sold, and owned perpetually by individuals or entities. In this sense ownership implies exclusive rights to use, manage, and dispose of the land, which is central to the capitalist framework of property and wealth accumulation.

In stark contrast, many indigenous groups, such as the Kashinawá in Brazil, understand land not as a series of individually owned plots but as a shared space where the community lives and thrives together. For the Kashinawá, the concept of ownership is fluid and communal. A person might fish at a particular spot in a river during a season, but this does not translate into permanent ownership of that spot. Instead, it reflects a temporary use of the land, where rights are shared and negotiated within the community based on need and tradition rather than fixed, individual entitlement. From Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native in the Journal of Genocide Research, "Tribal land was tribally owned—tribes and private property did not mix," (Wolfe, 2006, 397) but later through American policies, "the magic of private property ownership would propel Indians from the collective inertia of tribal membership into the progressive individualism of the American dream" (Wolfe, 2006, 400). This difference in understanding land has placed indigenous groups in a precarious position. To protect their territories from being seized by colonial and state forces, many indigenous communities have had to adopt the language and concepts of ownership. They are forced to claim "ownership" in a Western sense to legally defend their lands, despite fundamentally viewing land as communal. This forced adoption of ownership language is a survival strategy against a backdrop of colonialism that views land as something to be possessed and controlled.

Dispossession, driven by the imposition of private property systems, has been a global process by which vast areas of the earth were transformed into parcels of private property. This process was not solely controlled by any particular group but was the result of converging state and market forces. Beyond the economic benefits there was, "the ideological justification for the dispossession of Aborigines was that "we" could use the land better than they could" (Wolfe, 2006, 389). In this false belief of racial superiority, colonial elites, governments, and corporations developed legal, political, and economic tools to facilitate and benefit from the dispossession of indigenous peoples.

On that note, these forces of dispossession often operate beyond the complete control of any single entity, reflecting a complex interplay of interests and powers. Historically, the expansion and diversification of property have created an immense and often unmanageable

system with unforeseen negative consequences. From the paper *Unintended Consequences of Legal Westernization in Niger,*

> "Before the institution of Western law, a person's access to land depended on a complex web of social relations. So long as he fulfilled his obligations to his lineage and his community, he could expect reasonably secure and durable access to land. Under the new land tenure rules, the person's obligations to the social group fade in importance as his access to land comes to depend solely on obtaining a piece of paper designating his ownership. Once he has this paper, he can, if he wishes, ignore his cultural obligations to his community (Kelley, 2008, 1022).

Here we can see that the imposition of Western land ownership laws forces individuals to comply with unfamiliar legal requirements or risk losing their land rights, a clear neocolonial practice. This system effectively marginalizes indigenous land management practices and results in dispossession, as individuals are denied access to land that, culturally and historically, would have been rightfully theirs under traditional systems. With the introduction of Western land tenure rules, which emphasized formal ownership through legal documentation, the traditional social obligations became secondary. Access to land became dependent solely on obtaining a piece of paper, rather than maintaining ties and responsibilities to the community. This shift undermined the communal and relational nature of land management, leading to a breakdown in traditional land management practices.

A non-private property system, as envisioned by many indigenous groups, operates on principles of shared use and communal stewardship. Land is viewed as a collective resource to be managed sustainably for the benefit of all community members, rather than an asset for individual exploitation and profit. This system emphasizes reciprocal relationships with the environment and recognizes the interconnectedness of all life forms. It challenges the Western notion of ownership by advocating for a model where land and resources are cared for collectively, ensuring long-term sustainability and equity.

Reimagining our perception of ownership also applies in preventing artificial famines and enhancing food sovereignty. Colonial and occupying states have historically used control

over land to separate communities from their means of producing food, thus undermining their autonomy and making them dependent on external sources for food imports and exports. By embracing a communal and sustainable approach to land use, communities can retain control over their food production systems, reducing vulnerability to external manipulation and ensuring food security. This shift can empower communities to resist oppressive structures, maintain their traditional practices, and uphold their right to self-determination and food sovereignty.

From an interview with Clayton Brascoupe, an Indigenous American of the Mohawk nation,

> "We refer to these [seeds] as our living relatives. So, we have to have control and the ability to protect our living relatives. That's what seed sovereignty means to me. So that they can't be molested, contaminated, or imprisoned. When I say imprisoned, I mean perhaps someone will say "this is some interesting stuff," and they grow it up for a few years and all of the sudden they say they own it. If we can't protect of our living relative, then somebody else may say they own it. They're imprisoned and you can't go visit and plant your relative. Also, if you have the ability to interact with your relatives through these seeds, you also have the ability to feed yourself well" (Brascoupe qtd by Hoover, 2021, 1).

This quote highlights a fundamental difference between indigenous and Western perspectives on sovereignty and land use. In Western contexts, sovereignty often implies dominion and control over territory and resources, reflecting a hierarchical and ownership-based approach. This view sees land, water, and wildlife as commodities to be managed, exploited, and regulated for human benefit, often leading to environmental degradation and social inequalities. In contrast, the indigenous perspective, as articulated in the quote, frames sovereignty as a relationship based on reciprocity and mutual benefit. This approach emphasizes a balanced and respectful interaction with the natural world. It recognizes that human well-being is deeply interconnected with the health of the environment, and thus, the use of land, water, and wildlife should ensure the sustainability and flourishing of all involved.

One historical example of the imposition of the western ownership framework is the British occupation of India. India did not have a system of land ownership prior to the British, but "once India's land was usurped, the collection of public revenue became a prime concern of the colonizing powers. Someone needed to be taxed…To collect the tax, the British needed proprietors of land who would collect rents from the cultivators and pass it on to them. How could this be done? The answer was extremely simple—create landlords" (Shiva, 2005, 29-30). This shows the destruction of established, culturally important systems by disrupting traditional practices and governance structures. In the case of British-occupied India, the introduction of a land ownership system was driven by the need to extract revenue rather than by the needs or structures of the local population. The British created a system of landlords to facilitate tax collection, which undermined the existing community-based practices and replaced them with a framework that prioritized revenue generation over cultural or social cohesion. This imposition disrupted traditional agricultural and social systems, imposing foreign structures that did not align with local practices and values, ultimately leading to economic and social strains.

To envision a way in which collective ownership can exist in a world dominated by western ideals, we can turn to a real world example of communal land use in the Global North and West, which are community gardens. These gardens operate as shared spaces where individuals collectively grow food and can take what they need for free. Community gardens foster a sense of communal ownership and stewardship, allowing people to reconnect with the land and with each other. However, they often face challenges from the state, such as bureaucratic hurdles, zoning laws, and the threat of land being repurposed for commercial development. If implemented on a grand scale, such communal agricultural practices could transform urban and suburban landscapes, providing significant environmental benefits by promoting biodiversity, reducing urban heat islands, and decreasing the carbon footprint associated with food transportation. Additionally, these gardens can enhance community engagement, fostering social cohesion and providing educational opportunities about sustainable practices. Researchers of urban community gardens state, "These conceptual, political, evaluative, and liberatory agendas matter in geographical research because they

illuminate the transformative potential of urban community gardens as sites of quiet activism, challenging dominant food paradigms and fostering community resilience against the commodification of food" (Tevera and Kanosvamhira, 2024, 3). These researchers argue that urban community gardens are not just about gardening; they represent sites of activism that challenge systemic issues in food production and distribution while fostering community resilience and empowerment. By scaling up this model, societies could move towards a more equitable and resilient food system, ensuring greater food sovereignty and security for all community members.

In terms of entitlement, nobel prize recipient and Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen describes how, "Ownership relations are one kind of entitlement relations…An entitlement relation applied to ownership connects one set of ownerships to another through certain rules of legitimacy. It is a recursive relation and the process of connecting can be repeated" (Sen, 1981, 1). In this way we can understand how ownership relations define who has control over resources like land, food, or money, while entitlement relations explain how these resources are distributed within society. When an entitlement relation is applied to ownership, it connects different sets of ownerships through specific rules that determine legitimacy, meaning that one person's right to food, for example, depends on the established rules governing how resources are transferred or accessed. This process is recursive, as it can be repeated through various channels of ownership, such as land ownership leading to food production, or wages leading to purchasing power. The importance of this concept in understanding famines lies in the way these entitlement relations can either provide or restrict access to resources during times of crisis. Famines often arise not from an absolute shortage of food but from a breakdown in the entitlement system, where vulnerable populations lose their legitimate claims to resources necessary for survival. By analyzing entitlement relations, we can better understand how institutional structures and ownership rules impact the ability of people to secure food in times of scarcity, and how disruptions to these systems contribute to famine.

Sen also states that:

> "The exchange entitlements depend not merely on market exchanges but also on those exchanges, if any, that the state provides as a part of its social security programme. Given a social security system, an unemployed person may get 'relief', an old person a pension, and the poor some specified 'benefits'. These affect the commodity bundles over which a person can have command. They are parts of a person's exchange entitlements, and are conditional on the absence of other exchanges that a person might undertake…The social security arrangements are particularly important in the context of starvation. The reason why there are no famines in the rich developed countries is not because people are generally rich on the average…What prevents that is not the high average income or wealth of the British or the general opulence of the Americans, but the guaranteed minimum values of exchange entitlements owing to the social security system" (Sen, 1981, 6).

Amartya Sen's argument emphasizes that famines are not merely the result of food shortages but are deeply connected to a person's ability to command resources through their entitlements. In societies with strong social security programs, individuals who are otherwise unable to participate in market exchanges due to unemployment, poverty, or old age still have access to essential resources, such as food, through state-provided benefits. This guaranteed minimum entitlement prevents starvation, even when individuals are not economically self-sufficient. Sen's insight explains why famines do not occur in wealthy nations, not because of their overall wealth, but because of their structured safety nets that ensure no one falls below a critical threshold of access to resources. This understanding shifts the focus from food availability to the mechanisms through which people can secure food, reinforcing the importance of state intervention in mitigating the risk of famine.

I, however, would argue against Sen's logic in this case. His theory places the state at the center of entitlements, assuming that the state is a necessary facilitator of resources like food, shelter, and medicine. However, there are many instances where the state may deny individuals access to basic needs, deeming them unworthy due to arbitrary or exclusionary requirements. Furthermore, his suggestion that a robust social security system is essential to prevent famine is unrealistic for many weaker or less developed states that lack the capacity to build and sustain such systems. Expecting these states to develop a robust social safety net may not be feasible due to systemic challenges and also risks further entrenching state power,

which often prioritizes the economy over the well being of its citizens. Instead of focusing on state led solutions, I would advocate for a shift toward empowering small, localized communities to achieve food sovereignty. These communities should have control over their own food production and resources, allowing them to develop sustainable relationships with their environments.

Additionally, Sen also notes, "if one person in eight starves regularly in the world, this is seen as the result of his inability to establish entitlement to enough food" (Sen, 1981, 7). And herein lies the fundamental issue at the core of starvation and famine. One should not have to work to secure their entitlement to the state. His argument postulates that the individual needs to prove they are entitled to food and entitled to not starve to death in the eyes of the state, but I would argue that it shouldn't be up to the state because the state will never go out of its way to provide resources. It will always prioritize capitalist interests over the well being and survival of the poor. If food production remains in the hands of the state, it could be subjected to the state's other priorities, such as military spending or profit-making, potentially leading to decisions that sacrifice the lives of the poor. Removing food production from the control of the state would be a step toward creating more autonomous and self sufficient communities that can prioritize their own needs over the interests of the state and secure their own entitlement.

2.4 Food Sovereignty vs Food Security

As we know, the term "food sovereignty" originated from La Via Campesina, which is a global coalition of peasant, farmer, rural women's, and indigenous people's movements. It was first introduced during a meeting held in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in 1996, where members of La Via Campesina proposed it as a concept and framework to challenge the prevailing agri-food system and offer alternative solutions for both theoretical and practical application (Wittman, 2011, 87). Since the Tlaxcala conference, the idea of "food sovereignty" has spread globally, notably the 2002 World Food Summit and counter-summit, the NGO/CSO Forum on Food Sovereignty, in Rome. In 2007, an international forum on food sovereignty held in Nyéléni, Mali defined food sovereignty as:

> "The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations…It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations" (Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty 2007).

This in depth definition of food sovereignty is particularly important because it goes beyond earlier definitions by centering not just food production but also the social and political dimensions of food systems. Unlike previous definitions that focused mainly on food security, this definition emphasizes the right of communities to define and control their own food and agricultural systems. It explicitly challenges corporate dominated global trade regimes, moreover, this definition introduces a strong emphasis on social justice, aiming to dismantle systems of oppression. By promoting "new social relations free of oppression," it moves beyond traditional food security frameworks, which often overlook the structural inequalities in food systems. This broader, holistic approach integrates sustainability, self-determination, and equity, setting it apart from earlier concepts focused solely on meeting food needs without addressing who controls the food system and how it functions.

It is important to note the clear differences between "food sovereignty" and "food security." Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO),

ensures that "all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2006, 1). This definition focuses on the availability and accessibility of food but does not necessarily consider the sources or methods of food production.

The differences between the two concepts are significant. Food security concentrates on the availability and accessibility of food, ensuring that people do not go hungry, whereas food sovereignty emphasizes who produces the food, how it is produced, and who controls the food systems. Food security does not address the power dynamics or control over food production and distribution, while food sovereignty advocates for the rights of local farmers, indigenous peoples, and communities to control their food systems and policies. Additionally, food security can be achieved through various means, including industrial agriculture, and foreign aid, which may not be sustainable. In contrast, food sovereignty promotes sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural practices. Food security also promotes dependency on global food markets, which can be volatile and exploitative, rather than fostering self-sufficiency and resilience at the local level.

Those excluded or not protected by the current food security definition include small scale farmers who lack the resources and power to compete with large agribusinesses in the global market, and indigenous peoples whose traditional food systems and rights to land and resources may not be recognized or protected under food security policies focused on global market solutions. Local communities that rely on local food systems can be marginalized if food security strategies prioritize large-scale production and global trade over local food sovereignty and sustainability.

The United Nations has often highlighted the importance of "food security" in its global initiatives. While ensuring that all people have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is undoubtedly crucial, the emphasis on food security often overlooks the deeper, more sustainable concept of "food sovereignty." This distinction is significant because the focus on food security can inadvertently prioritize Western ideals over indigenous values and practices, causing harm to local communities. To put it plainly, food security means

prioritizing that communities have enough calories to survive, and it doesn't matter where that food comes from or the quality. Food sovereignty means prioritizing that communities have the autonomy to control their own food production without outside interference or control.

By prioritizing food security over food sovereignty, the UN's policies can lead to the marginalization of small scale farmers and indigenous communities. Indigenous scholar Elizabeth Hoover argues that,

> "To neglect the source of food promotes the dumping of agricultural commodities below market prices and the use of genetically modified seeds and other expensive agricultural inputs. This has devastated domestic agricultural systems—undermining the economic position of small farmers and reinforcing power differentials by promoting multinational corporations, rather than putting resources back into the hands of those who would produce food for themselves" (Hoover, 2017, 33).

Instead, it reinforces dependence on international markets and corporations, which frequently impose Western agricultural practices and technologies that may not be suitable for local conditions. This imposition can erode traditional farming methods that have been sustainably managed by indigenous peoples for generations. This quote also illustrates the destructive impact of global capitalism on small scale and indigenous food producers. It highlights how colonial and neoliberal policies concentrate power in the hands of multinational corporations, undermining food sovereignty by removing local control over food systems. This reinforces economic inequalities and makes communities dependent on external, often exploitative, entities for their food supply.

Moreover, focusing on food security, without considering sovereignty, can lead to monoculture farming and the loss of biodiversity. Altieri has argued that agroecological practices intrinsic to food sovereignty promote biodiversity and resilience (Altieri, 2011, 587). This differs from industrial agriculture, which is often supported by food security initiatives and can result in reduced diversity. This reduction in biodiversity can have long-

term negative impacts on food systems, making them less adaptable to climate change and other environmental challenges, both of which are prime conditions for future famine.

The emphasis on food security can also perpetuate social inequalities. For instance, development programs aimed at enhancing food security often prioritize efficiency and yield, which can marginalize the voices and needs of women, smallholders, and indigenous peoples. Food sovereignty scholar Lucy Jarosz notes the importance to, "address hunger and poverty with justice and equity" (Jarosz, 2014, 179). By neglecting these aspects of justice, food security initiatives can fail to address the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, which are often tied to social and economic inequities. So while the UN's focus on food security addresses immediate concerns about hunger and malnutrition, it falls short of promoting long term, sustainable solutions that empower local communities. Food sovereignty, with its emphasis on local control, cultural appropriateness, and ecological sustainability, offers a more holistic approach to addressing food related issues. As such, it is crucial for global policies to shift towards supporting food sovereignty to ensure that the rights and needs of indigenous and local communities are respected and upheld.

It is also important to note that this issue does not only affect impoverished communities. It is easy to see the issue of food and think that it is some far away issue for select groups and nations who are less wealthy. However, the United States does not face widespread food insecurity in the sense of widespread hunger, but there is a significant issue with the quality of food available to economically disadvantaged communities. Many low income individuals have access only to processed, high calorie, and low nutrient foods, contributing to the country's obesity crisis. As noted by the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), "food insecurity and obesity can co-exist" due to the affordability and availability of calorie dense, low nutrition foods in poorer neighborhoods (FRAC, 2015, 1). The reliance on cheap, unhealthy food has had a detrimental impact on the health of these populations, leading to higher rates of diabetes, heart disease, and other obesity related illnesses. Many people in the United States have access to foods, but the emphasis on food security over food sovereignty results in those foods being unhealthy.

Implementing policies that prioritize transboundary food sovereignty and local food production would help address these health disparities. By supporting local farmers and community-based food systems, communities could gain access to more nutritious, locally grown produce. Research shows that local food systems often result in fresher, more nutrient-rich products that improve public health. Additionally, these policies would reduce the environmental costs associated with long-distance food transportation, including emissions from trucks and planes. Michael Pollan, an author known for investigating the socio-cultural impacts of food, argues that the food that's healthiest for us and for the environment is that which is grown closest to us. He states that, "...we should simply avoid any food that has been processed to such an extent that it is more the product of industry than of nature" (Pollan, 2008, 143). By heeding this advice and supporting local food production, we reduce reliance on global supply chains. The result of such action could create more resilient food systems, both for individuals' health and for ecological sustainability. By focusing on food sovereignty, the U.S. could shift towards food systems that not only meet basic food security needs but also provide healthier, more sustainable options, ultimately benefiting both people and the planet.

Furthermore, Moncayo's 2009 study also highlights the importance of prioritizing food sovereignty over food security on a small scale in schools in urban El Alto, Bolivia. The issue the study focuses on is the problem that in El Alto there are very high rates of malnutrition that exist at the same time as high rates of obesity. This is caused by "nutrition transition" which is described as, "consumers are departing from their traditional diets increasingly eating energy dense foods, with low nutritional value" (Moncayo, 2009, 68). The cause of this problem can be explained by the fact that in El Alto there has been a rapid increase in food imports in the past 100 years as well as "recent decades of trade liberalization" (Moncayo, 2009, 68). There is more than enough food in El Alto, however the food is not nutritious so while they have 'food security,' they do not have 'food sovereignty.'

Government initiatives, such as the New Constitution and the National Development Plan, aim to dismantle neoliberal policies and support food sovereignty by backing local farmers and regulating food sales in schools, ensuring access to nutritious, native foods at affordable

prices (Moncayo, 2009, 68). Educational programs, including the school breakfast program and proposed lunch programs, alongside awareness campaigns, can significantly increase the consumption of healthy, native foods. The study states that "a food sovereignty approach has the potential to be a more appropriate strategy" than merely providing nutritional supplements, as it targets structural problems related to rural development and urban market deficiencies (Moncayo, 2009, 69). The study found that combining market-based solutions with government support can make native foods more accessible and affordable, thus reducing the prevalence of 'junk' food in schools. However, the study also emphasizes the need to overcome structural challenges, such as, "need[ing] policies and institutional mechanisms that can control contraband in food, support small scale producers and farmers with subsidies and credit, and create of mixed market and non market-based initiatives that introduce competitive native food products" (Moncayo, 2009, 70).

The feasibility of implementing food sovereignty in regions affected by artificial famines or vulnerable to food insecurity can be inferred from these findings. Strengthening local food systems through government support and educational initiatives can enhance food security and sovereignty, providing income opportunities for farmers and reducing dependence on imports. The study concludes that "revitalizing the consumption of native and nutritious food" requires addressing both local and structural factors and empowering educational communities in policy proposals (Moncayo, 2009, 70). Overall, Moncayo's research suggests that strategic policies and community engagement can make food sovereignty a viable solution to counteract the impacts of the nutrition transition. Incorporating indigenous food practices into schools can also aid in investing in local farmers and foods which is another key step in preventing the creation of artificial famines by colonial or occupying powers who may seek to exploit communities facing food insecurity for political and economic gain.

2.5 Needed qualifiers for an Artificial Famine

To classify a famine as artificial, several qualifiers are necessary to distinguish it from natural disasters or other forms of food scarcity. Firstly, deliberate human actions or policies must play a significant role in causing or exacerbating the famine. This may include actions such

as forced population displacement, confiscation of food supplies, or obstruction of humanitarian aid. Secondly, there is often evidence of political manipulation or exploitation of food resources for economic or military gain. This can involve the intentional diversion of food supplies to privileged groups or the use of food as a weapon of war or political control. Additionally, artificial famines are typically characterized by a lack of adequate government response or intervention to address food shortages and mitigate the impact on vulnerable populations. This may include failure to provide relief assistance, obstruction of humanitarian efforts, or deliberate neglect of affected regions.

2.6 Transboundary Food Governance in Action

Food sovereignty should not be confined to the state because food systems and the communities that manage them often transcend political borders. Many indigenous peoples have long histories of land stewardship and food production that are not limited by modern state boundaries. Their practices are deeply rooted in the ecosystems they inhabit, and these connections to land, culture, and food extend beyond artificial borders imposed by states. By recognizing food sovereignty as something that exists beyond the boundaries of individual nations, we can better support sustainable food systems that respect these traditional ways of life.

A relevant example is the Sami people, whose territory spans across northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and parts of Russia. The Sami have practiced reindeer herding for centuries, which is essential to their culture, diet, and livelihoods. Their traditional land management practices involve moving reindeer herds across large areas to access seasonal pastures, an activity that naturally crosses modern political borders. The Sami approach to land and food is based on shared stewardship of the land, which does not align with state imposed restrictions or private property laws (Peters, 2020, 58). Their transboundary approach demonstrates how food sovereignty should be seen as independent of state control.

The Sami people's ability to continue their cultural practices of land stewardship and food sovereignty beyond state borders highlights the importance of recognizing food sovereignty

as something that can and should be practiced across regions that share ecological, cultural, and historical ties. Because this is possible for the Sami people, and other communities as will be discussed in Chapter 5, we can infer that this model can be replicated on a grander scale. This can be accomplished by creating mechanisms for transboundary food governance that are rooted in communities sharing ecological, agricultural, and cultural values by prioritizing local knowledge, shared stewardship, and cross-border collaboration. This approach not only preserves traditional practices but also strengthens the resilience and autonomy of food systems in a globalized world.

Establishing clear legal and institutional frameworks formalizes transboundary governance mechanisms and supports enforcement. Capacity building and empowerment initiatives strengthen the ability of stakeholders to engage effectively in governance processes. Cross-sectoral collaboration encourages coordination among relevant sectors and actors to enhance governance efforts. Respect for indigenous rights and knowledge safeguards cultural heritage and integrates traditional ecological knowledge into decision making. By embracing these qualifiers, policymakers and stakeholders can foster resilient, sustainable, and inclusive transboundary food governance systems that promote the well being of both people and the planet.

There are several examples of transboundary governance mechanisms and initiatives that provide valuable guidelines for implementing successful approaches. One notable example is the Mekong River Commission (MRC), established in 1995 by Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam to manage and coordinate development activities in the Mekong River Basin (Jacobs, 2002, 354).

2.6 Map of MRC (Jacobs, 2002, 355).

From the map, we can see the Mekong River flows through many states, the MRC specifically is an intergovernmental collaboration between Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. The MRC exemplifies many of the qualifiers outlined for transboundary food governance. It facilitates equitable participation by engaging riparian countries, stakeholders, and local communities in decision making processes through mechanisms such as basin-wide consultations, stakeholder forums, and public consultations on major development projects. In 2002, approximately 73 million people lived along the river, and it was estimated that by 2025 it will be 120 million people (Jacobs, 2002, 356), this shows how large an operation

this commission is and how many stakeholders, and local communities are impacted in decision making processes related to transboundary governance. Additionally, "The Mekong Committee was created as part of the United Nations' Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East and represented the UN's first direct involvement in international river basin planning" (Jacobs, 2002, 356). Noting the role of international organizations, in this case the UN, in the MRC's establishment shows how organizations can act in similar roles as a platform for coordinating transboundary governance and promoting regional cooperation

Sustainability is a core principle of the MRC, as evidenced by its emphasis on integrated water resource management to balance competing demands for water, energy, and food while safeguarding the basin's ecological integrity. The commission promotes adaptive governance through its basin wide approach, which allows for the continuous monitoring of water quality, hydrological patterns, and ecosystem health to inform decision making and management strategies (Gupta, 2005, 221).

The MRC also provides mechanisms for conflict resolution through its procedures for addressing disputes and conflicts that may arise between member countries over water resource management issues (Offerdal, 2019, 66). Transparency and information sharing are facilitated through the commission's data and information sharing platforms, which is in the spirit of transboundary food sovereignty. Legally, the MRC operates under the 1995 Mekong Agreement, which provides a framework for cooperation and joint management of the river basin. The agreement establishes the MRC's institutional structure, roles, and responsibilities, and outlines principles for equitable and sustainable water use among member countries. Capacity building and empowerment are central to the MRC's mandate, with the commission supporting member countries in strengthening their technical expertise, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement processes. Cross-sectoral collaboration is facilitated through the MRC's engagement with various sectors, including water resources, agriculture, energy, environment, and socio-economic development (Mekong River Commission, 1995).

While the MRC may not directly focus on food sovereignty, its approach to transboundary water governance offers valuable insights and lessons that can inform the development of

similar initiatives aimed at addressing broader interregional cooperation and environmental sustainability challenges across political boundaries.

2.7 Needed Qualifiers for Food Sovereignty

As we know now, food sovereignty goes beyond mere food security by emphasizing the right of people to define their own food systems. For a community to achieve food sovereignty, several critical qualifiers must be met, which include local control over resources, sustainable agricultural practices, equitable access to land, and active participation in food policy decisions.

One essential qualifier for food sovereignty is local control over agricultural resources. This includes land, water, seeds, and biodiversity. Communities must have secure land tenure and access to natural resources to produce food sustainably and independently. Shiva argues that the focus must be on, "reclaiming the commons, not their enclosure; on freely sharing the earth's resources, not monopolizing and privatizing them" (Shiva, 2005, 10). Without this local control, communities remain vulnerable to external pressures and dependencies.

Sustainable agricultural practices are another critical component. Food sovereignty emphasizes agroecological methods that maintain and enhance soil fertility, biodiversity, and ecological balance. According to Altieri (1995), sustainable agriculture typically involves farming practices designed to achieve long term, stable yields by using environmentally responsible management techniques. This approach treats agriculture as an ecosystem (often called an agroecosystem), focusing not just on maximizing the production of a single crop but on optimizing the entire system. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of ecological balance and sustainability, moving beyond just the economic aspects of production. These practices help ensure long term food production capacity and environmental health, which are vital for food sovereignty.

Equitable access to land is also crucial. Land reforms that redistribute land to small scale farmers and marginalized communities can help achieve food sovereignty. The Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that in order to "address the root causes of food insecurity: promoting not only productivity growth, but also resource access, land tenure, returns to labour and education" (FAO, 2006, 4). The emphasis on land tenure security is essential for achieving food sovereignty, as it ensures that farmers can invest in and sustainably manage their land without fear of displacement. Without equitable land access, food sovereignty cannot be realized, as land concentration in the hands of a few undermines local food systems.

Active participation in food policy decisions by local communities is another key qualifier. Policies must be shaped by those who are directly affected by them, ensuring that local needs and knowledge are prioritized. Food sovereignty expert Michel Pimbert states, "Food sovereignty implies greater citizen participation in the governance of food systems. It assumes that every citizen is competent and reasonable enough to participate in democratic politics" (Pimbert, 2006, xii). This democratic participation helps align food policies with the real needs of communities rather than external economic interests. This also presents a powerful shift in perspective, by advocating for greater citizen participation in the governance of food systems, we reframe the idea of who should be in control of food production. Traditionally, those in power, whether governments or corporations, are seen as having the expertise and authority to manage food systems. However, this perspective often overlooks the fact that these decision-makers are frequently disconnected from the realities on the ground, driven by capitalistic and political motivations rather than the needs of the people. So, rather than viewing it as a domain reserved for distant, often detached authorities, we emphasize the role of active participation and community led decision making. By doing so, it empowers individuals and communities to reclaim control over their food systems, challenging the idea that governance should be left to those who may not have the best interests of the people at heart.

In contrast, food security often focuses on the availability of food without addressing these deeper systemic issues that cause hunger. Benjamin Shepard argues that hunger is unjustifiably excluded from the most popular definition of food security, which is defined by the FAO. Unlike threats like "communists" or "terrorists," hunger doesn't fit the typical

portrayal of security risks favored by elites. The exclusion is especially problematic because state security is supposed to protect citizens from physical harm, particularly existential threats. Hunger, while a significant form of harm, affects those on the margins of society, not those at the center, making its exclusion even more troubling (Shepard, 2012, 201). This difference underscores why food sovereignty is a more robust and transformative framework because it addresses not just the availability of food but also the political, social, and economic structures that create and perpetuate hunger.. By focusing on local control, equitable distribution, and the right of people to determine their food systems, food sovereignty moves beyond the narrow focus of food security, which emphasizes supply over justice. This framework is more inclusive and systemic, addressing hunger not as a peripheral issue, but as a core threat to human security that requires structural change.

Chapter 3: Historical and Contextual Factors of Famines

3.1 Contextual Factors

Artificial famines emerge from a range of contextual factors rooted in power imbalances, particularly between colonial or occupying powers and the communities they control. One significant factor is the deliberate exclusion of aid. In situations where a nation possesses surplus food, colonial powers may refuse to share resources with neighboring states, coercing them into submission by withholding food until they agree to unfavorable terms. This tactic weaponizes starvation, using it as leverage to enforce compliance with colonial demands.

Control over food exports is another critical mechanism. When a colonial entity monopolizes the exportation of agricultural products, it prioritizes international markets over local needs. This results in surplus food being shipped abroad while local populations are left to starve. Such actions strip affected communities of their food sovereignty, creating reliance on external markets for sustenance, which can be both exploitative and destabilizing.

Forced grain collections are also employed to sustain occupying armies. These requisitions deprive local populations of essential food supplies, leading to widespread hunger. Farmers may be forced to divert their crops to meet military demands, disrupting local agriculture and diminishing food availability for civilians.

Furthermore, the promotion of monoculture farming practices under colonial rule can degrade ecological diversity, which undermines the resilience of local food systems. By enforcing a focus on a single cash crop, colonial powers compromise the ability of local populations to produce diverse and nutritious food. This shift not only increases vulnerability to market fluctuations and crop failures but also erodes the cultural and environmental foundations of local agricultural practices.

Ultimately, artificial famines highlight how powerful states exert control over weaker ones, manipulating food access to achieve their own political or economic objectives. Even in the presence of natural factors that might contribute to food shortages, the actions of colonial or occupying entities exacerbate these conditions, making food sovereignty unattainable and using famine as a calculated instrument of power and domination.

3.2 Why These Case Studies?

This thesis will explore case studies of artificial famines in Ukraine, Ireland, China, Ethiopia, and India. They are crucial for understanding the proposed theoretical framework of food sovereignty, particularly the necessity of transboundary food sovereignty to combat the recurrence of state-induced famines. Each of these cases exemplifies how colonial or occupying powers used famine as a tool of control and subjugation for economic and political gain. These artificial famines were not simply the result of natural disasters or poor agricultural conditions; they were engineered by states seeking to dominate occupied populations by manipulating food access and distribution. By examining these specific examples, the importance of decentralizing control over food systems and fostering community-driven food sovereignty becomes evident, reinforcing the dangers of leaving such power in the hands of states or external forces.

In Ukraine, the Holodomor famine of 1932-1933, orchestrated by the Soviet Union under Stalin, is a poignant example of how state control over food systems can result in catastrophe. Soviet policies of grain requisitioning and exportation led to mass starvation, particularly among Ukrainian peasants, who had previously enjoyed a system of local control over food production. By imposing state authority over agricultural outputs and intentionally restricting food supplies, Stalin effectively starved millions in order to quell Ukrainian resistance to Soviet rule. Prior to this intervention, Ukraine's agrarian communities had a form of transboundary food sovereignty based on their regional agricultural practices and collective management of resources. This case highlights how the imposition of state control dismantled these systems, paving the way for artificial famine.

Similarly, in Ireland, the Great Famine of 1845-1852 was exacerbated by British colonial policies that prioritized economic gain over the welfare of the Irish population. The British government allowed the exportation of food from Ireland during the famine, depriving the local population of resources they had produced. Before British control, Ireland's local food systems were based on community managed agriculture, where smallholders played a significant role in local food production. British colonialism not only disrupted these systems but also centralized control of food exports and imports, demonstrating how the loss of local sovereignty over food can lead to long lasting consequences when controlled by external powers.

China's experience with famine during the Japanese occupation in the 1930s and 1940s further reinforces this argument. The Japanese deliberately exploited Chinese agricultural resources for their war effort, diverting food from local populations to support their military campaigns. Prior to this occupation, China's vast agrarian landscape allowed for a system of food sovereignty in which regional communities managed their food production based on local ecological and geographical conditions. The Japanese occupation disrupted these systems, prioritizing the empire's needs over the survival of the local population. The resulting famine was a direct consequence of the occupation's extraction of resources and disregard for the well being of the people living in these territories which created conditions that led to Mao's Great Famine.

In Ethiopia, during the 1980s, famine was both a natural and a politically induced disaster. The Ethiopian government, embroiled in civil war and struggling with Cold War geopolitics, deliberately withheld food aid and resources from rebel controlled regions, exacerbating the famine's death toll. Although the U.S. and other Western countries had the means to provide food aid, political agendas, particularly the Reagan administration's desire to weaken Ethiopia's Marxist government, led to the manipulation of food aid for political purposes. Prior to this conflict, Ethiopia's indigenous communities had managed food production through systems that were regionally adapted to the country's diverse climates. The state's centralization of food production and distribution eroded these systems, again demonstrating how artificial famines can be engineered when local control over food is lost to political powers.

Finally, Bengal, under British colonial rule in 1943, faced a devastating famine as British authorities diverted food supplies to support their war efforts during World War II. The famine, was largely the result of British colonial policies that prioritized keeping food out of Japanese reach over the local population. Bengal's agrarian communities had historically enjoyed a system of local food sovereignty, where food production and distribution were managed by regional leaders in alignment with seasonal agricultural patterns. British colonial rule dismantled these systems by centralizing agricultural control under the colonial administration, turning food into a commodity to be exploited for imperial interests.

These case studies underscore the essential role of transboundary food sovereignty in preventing the creation of artificial famines. In each instance, local populations had systems in place that were closely linked to their geographical and ecological conditions, allowing for more sustainable and equitable management of food resources. However, the intervention of colonial or occupying powers stripped these populations of control over their food systems, turning food into a weapon of political and economic domination. By highlighting these historical examples, it becomes clear that the centralization of food control under the state or external powers increases the likelihood of artificial famines. A transboundary food sovereignty framework, in which local communities retain control over food production,

distribution, and access across regional and national borders, would offer a more resilient and just system, capable of resisting the political manipulation of food.

This theoretical framework is particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where food systems are increasingly interconnected. The case studies of Ukraine, Ireland, China, Ethiopia, and Bengal reveal that food sovereignty must be understood not only as a matter of local or national concern but as a global issue that requires cross border cooperation and a rejection of state centric control. By studying these historical examples, we can better understand the necessity of rethinking food sovereignty as a transboundary issue, one that empowers local populations while preventing states and occupying powers from using food as a tool of oppression.

Chapter 4: Case Studies of Artificial Famines

4.1 Case Study 1 – Ukrainian Famine

4.1.1 Before and After Soviet policies of collectivization and grain requisitioning

The famous Greek historian Herodotus once commented on the amazing fertility of Ukraine's 'black earth' and wrote, "No better crops grow anywhere than along its banks, and where grain is not sown, the grass is the most luxuriant in the world" (Herodotus qtd. in Plokhy, 2015, 9). Reading Herodotus's praise of Ukraine's fertile black earth makes it strikingly ironic that the region faced severe famine. Known for its abundant and productive land, one would expect such fertility to naturally support a stable food supply. However, the impact of colonialism reveals a grim reality: even the most fertile lands can be rendered ineffective by deliberate policies of starvation and exploitation. Colonial powers have historically manipulated and undermined local food systems, turning bountiful regions into sites of scarcity and suffering through systematic control and mismanagement. This underscores the

harsh truth that the presence of fertile land alone is not enough to ensure food security when external forces impose strategies that prioritize their own interests over the well-being of local populations.

Historian Robert Conquest, in his seminal work *The Harvest of Sorrow*, notes that the famine was not merely a result of natural conditions but was exacerbated and, to a large extent, caused by the Soviet policies of collectivization and grain requisitioning (Conquest, 1986, 344). The collectivization policy forced individual farmers to surrender their land and join collective farms, disrupting traditional farming methods and local food sovereignty. This led to a significant decline in agricultural productivity and food availability. Moreover, the Soviet regime imposed severe grain requisition quotas that stripped Ukrainian peasants of their harvests, leaving them with insufficient food to sustain themselves. These policies were enforced with brutal efficiency, and any resistance was met with harsh punishment, further exacerbating the famine.

Before the Holodomor, Ukrainians exhibited several signs of food sovereignty, characterized by their distinct agricultural practices and community-based food systems. Ukraine earned its nickname as the "breadbasket of Europe" long before Soviet occupation due to its fertile soil and robust agricultural output. The rural population largely practiced traditional farming methods, which were deeply rooted in local customs and community cooperation. From a study by The European Journal of Development Research, "Collective rules (cropping patterns, rotation, and common grazing on lands) applied only to open fields outside the village, within the framework of the *mir*, not to household plots. Notably, these external fields that were collectivised in 1929–1930 were later massively consolidated within the framework of collective farming, especially to facilitate its subsequent moto-mechanisation" (Cochet et al., 2021, 1541). This system enabled communities to produce and distribute food locally, ensuring that the needs of the community were met.

However, it should also be noted that the mir system was controversial, on one hand it fostered a sense of communal responsibility and cooperation, as villages managed land collectively and made decisions about land use, tax payments, and resource distribution as a

group. It also allowed for the periodic redistribution of land among peasants which was aimed to prevent the entrenchment of wealth and maintain a degree of equality within the community. However, the system also had drawbacks. It led to reduced individual incentives for productivity and innovation due to the collective decision-making process, resulting in inefficiencies and lower agricultural output. As described by author A. M. Anfimov (originally in Russian and translated), eventually a push towards the *khutor,* a private farming system, would be set in motion by Russian leadership. The khutor system was part of broader reforms initiated by the Russian Empire under Tsar Nicholas II, notably influenced by the Stolypin land reforms of 1905-1915. These reforms aimed to modernize agriculture, improve productivity, and stabilize rural society by breaking up the traditional commune system (mir) and promoting private land ownership. The Russian government hoped that individual land ownership would lead to more efficient farming practices and increased agricultural output, which were seen as essential for the empire's economic and political stability (Anfimov, 1992).

While Ukrainians were affected by these reforms, the drive towards the khutor system was not primarily motivated by Ukrainian interests. Many Ukrainian peasants, especially in rural areas, preferred the communal practices of the mir system, which they were familiar with and which suited their traditional way of life. The introduction of the khutor system often met with resistance from local communities who valued the communal land management and collective decision making processes. In terms of the outcome of these reforms, "soon more than half of the communal land passed into the private ownership of more than an two-and-a-half million families, and by the beginning of the world war, Russia was the second largest exporter of grain" (D. Zhukov qtd in Anfimov, 1992, 3). And so we can understand that the shift from communal farming to private farming was largely motivated not for the general well being of the peasants, but for economic gain for the Russian empire.

On another note, the Dnieper and Dniester Rivers, central to Ukraine's agricultural and trade systems, played a significant role in transcending state boundaries, and facilitating regional cooperation. Historically, these rivers provided crucial irrigation and transport routes, enabling the movement of goods and agricultural products across different regions. The

shared use of these waterways not only allowed for the efficient distribution of crops but also promoted collaborative agricultural practices among communities along the riverbanks. For example, farmers from different areas could coordinate irrigation strategies and share knowledge on crop cultivation, which enhanced overall productivity and resilience against environmental challenges. As described by this primary source:

> "Nikolai Gogol, a Ukrainian who wrote in Russian, once observed that the Dnieper River flows through the centre of Ukraine and forms a basin. From there 'the rivers all branch out from the centre; not a single one of them flows along the border or serves as a natural border with neighbouring nations.' This fact had political consequences: 'Had there been a natural border of mountains or sea on one side, the people who settled here would have carried on their political way of life and would have formed a separate nation'" (Gogol qtd. in Applebaum, 2017,16).

Nikolai Gogol's critique of the Dnieper River, viewing its lack of a defining border as a negative aspect, reflects his specific perspective of the river's role in shaping political and cultural identities. However, this very characteristic also had a positive impact on transboundary food governance. Unlike rivers that serve as natural borders, the Dnieper's flow through multiple states facilitated cooperation rather than isolation. This interconnectedness allowed for the sharing of agricultural practices and resources across different regions. By not serving as a boundary, the river enabled diverse communities to collaborate on irrigation strategies and food production, thus promoting regional cooperation. This cooperation was crucial for maintaining food sovereignty, as it allowed communities to adapt their farming practices to the river's environment and work together to manage their resources effectively

Similarly, the Carpathian mountains, extending across several countries including Ukraine, Poland, and Romania, influenced agricultural practices by integrating diverse local methods adapted to the shared mountain environment. As described in Fontana et al. (2022), the rugged terrain and varying climatic conditions of the Carpathians necessitated innovative agricultural techniques such as terracing and seasonal grazing, which were developed and refined through cross-border collaboration among the mountain communities (Fontana et al.,

2022, 1). These practices included rotating livestock and crops based on altitude and seasonal changes, which optimized land use and productivity. As outlined by Mattalia et al. (2020), the shared environmental challenges and resources encouraged a collective approach to agriculture, where neighboring communities, such as indigenous peoples in Ukraine and Romania, could exchange techniques and support each other, leading to more sustainable and effective food production. This regional cooperation not only improved agricultural output but also reinforced social and economic ties among the communities living within and around these transboundary natural features.

Furthermore, for hundreds of years, the indigenous Hutsul people, who live in the Carpathian mountains, have continuously cultivated and harvested local species. In doing so they have been able to create and maintain a productive system of producing food for their community outside of state aid which has created an economic safety net to protect themselves in times of scarcity and insecurity (Fontana et al., 2022, 5). The significance of this lies in the fact that the Hutsul people do not need to rely on the state to prove their entitlement to food, nor are they dependent on state aid to manage their food systems. This autonomy allows them to be less likely to fall victim to famine and starvation that can arise when state run food systems fail. Their self sufficient practices give them resilience in the face of external challenges.

However, the imposition of Soviet policies under Stalin, such as forced collectivization, dismantled these traditional systems. The Soviet regime's emphasis on centralized control and monoculture production for export severely disrupted local food sovereignty. Soviet scholar, Sheila Fitzpatrick explains,

> "There was little support for this [collectivization] in the village (do peasants ever actively support programs of radical change advocated by the state?), but in any case the regime did not seem overly concerned about securing peasant support. The drive to collectivize came not from within the village, but from without. The state was the initiator of the collectivization drive, and the new collective farms were organized at village level by outsiders—Soviet rural officials, supplemented by tens of thousands of urban Communists, workers, and students whom the regime sent out into the countryside for the purpose" (Fitzpatrick, 1994, 3).

The forced collectivization policies not only stripped communities of their control over food production but also led to the confiscation of grain and other foodstuffs, exacerbating conditions for famine.

The occupation and subsequent policies of the Soviet Union were the primary causes of the Holodomor, not natural causes. The intentional actions taken by the Soviet government to requisition grain and collectivize agriculture, combined with the suppression of Ukrainian resistance, created conditions that led to widespread starvation and suffering.

4.1.2 Effects of Famine on Ukraine

The Holodomor had significant and enduring effects on the Ukrainian population, extending far beyond the immediate period of food scarcity. Socioeconomically, the famine resulted in widespread impoverishment and destabilization of rural communities, as agricultural productivity plummeted and traditional livelihoods were disrupted. Families were torn apart, with many losing multiple members to starvation or related illnesses, leading to a breakdown of social networks and support structures. The loss of breadwinners and productive laborers further exacerbated economic hardship, perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependence on external aid (Bezo and Maggi, 2015, 87).

The Dnieper and Dniester Rivers, which had historically supported regional agricultural networks and trade, were subjected to Soviet control, which centralized and standardized agricultural practices. Soviet policies aimed to integrate agriculture into a national framework, reducing local autonomy and disrupting traditional practices of irrigation and crop rotation that had been adapted to the rivers' shared environmental conditions. As illustrated in *Taming the Dnipro Rapids: Nature, National Geography, and Hydro-Engineering in Soviet Ukraine, 1946-1968,* the Soviets began transforming the Dnieper River's use in Ukraine in the 1920s and 1930s, with a significant event occurring in 1932 when construction began on the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station (Dnieprostroi Dam) near Zaporizhzhia. This was a major part of the Soviet industrialization and modernization plans, as they sought to harness the river for hydroelectric power to fuel heavy industry. The dam,

completed in 1932, was one of the largest in the world at the time. It dramatically altered the river's flow, created reservoirs, and had lasting impacts on the surrounding agricultural and ecological systems. This transformation was part of broader efforts by the Soviet government to exert control over natural resources for economic development (Duncan Smith, 2019, 4). This process dismantled local farming methods and replaced them with state run collective farms, diminishing the role of regional cooperation and shared resource management that had previously characterized the use of these rivers.

Similarly, in the Carpathian Mountains, Soviet policies imposed uniform agricultural practices that disregarded local adaptations to the mountainous environment. Traditional agro-pastoral practices, which had been developed collaboratively across the borders of Ukraine, Poland, and Romania, were replaced with state driven methods that often ignored the ecological variations within the mountain range (Gutman and Radeloff, 1991, 76). The Soviet regime's focus on maximizing production for state needs led to environmental degradation and a loss of traditional knowledge that had facilitated effective and sustainable food production. The Soviet interference thus disrupted the transboundary food sovereignty that had previously existed, undermining regional agricultural systems and cooperative practices. The shift from localized and collaborative approaches to state-controlled methods had profound effects on food production and regional cooperation.

Furthermore, the Soviet state effectively stopped peasants from fleeing famine by reintroducing internal passports and denying them to rural populations. In Ukraine and elsewhere, harsh measures were implemented to block starving peasants from purchasing train tickets or entering cities. Instead, they were forcibly returned to their villages, where many faced certain death from starvation (Graziosi, 2017, 63). The Soviet state's imposition of internal borders, denying peasants the freedom to leave famine-stricken areas, is a colonial tactic that suppresses transboundary food governance and stifles food sovereignty. Before Soviet control, Ukrainians had the freedom to move across borders to access resources. By restricting movement, the Soviets enforced boundaries that trapped people in famine-stricken areas, using hunger as a means of control. This policy stifled local self sufficiency and

reinforced state dominance, sacrificing lives to maintain power and prevent access to external food sources.

As outlined by journalist and historian Anne Applebaum in her novel *Red Famine*, in March and April, the famine wreaked havoc across every village, leaving tens of thousands of people emaciated, swollen, and dying. The crisis saw a surge in orphaned children and families torn apart. While local and regional governments attempted to provide food from their reserves, the escalating sense of hopelessness led to a continuous stream of pleas for further assistance. The conclusion was inevitable: the existing grain procurement policies, deemed unrealistic, needed to be abandoned. Even collective farms that had met their quotas were being pressured to deliver additional supplies multiple times. Kaganovich, a close ally of Stalin, forwarded correspondence from Chubar and Petrovskyi to Stalin, who both stated that it was crucial to start providing aid to Ukraine. Molotov, another ally of Stalin, also recommended that Soviet grain exports be temporarily reduced to allow for some relief to Ukraine (Applebaum, 2017, 126).

Stalin, however, responded with skepticism, revealing his unwillingness or inability to accept that there might be a genuine shortage of grain in Ukraine:

> I did not like the letters from Chubar and Petrovskyi. The former spouts 'self-criticism' in order to secure a million more poods of bread from Moscow, the latter is feigning sainthood, claiming victimization from the [Central Committee] in order to reduce grain procurement levels. Neither one nor the other is acceptable. Chubar is mistaken if he thinks that self-criticism is required for securing outside 'help' and not for mobilizing the forces and resources within Ukraine. In my opinion, Ukraine has been given more than enough … (Stalin qtd. in Applebaum, 26).

This quote from Stalin reveals a critical disconnect between colonial or centralized powers and the realities of the territories they dominate. Stalin's dismissal of the requests from Chubar and Petrovskyi, his own allies that were struggling to secure additional food resources from Moscow, illustrates how leaders removed from local conditions often impose policies that prioritize their own political objectives over the well being of the people. By rejecting

their appeals and criticizing their pleas for aid, Stalin demonstrates a refusal to acknowledge the acute food crisis in Ukraine and instead frames the problem as one of internal mobilization. His focus on the supposed availability of sufficient resources and the need for "self criticism" reflects a broader colonial mindset, where the central authority assumes it understands the needs of the territory better than local leaders.

This detachment from on the ground realities is characteristic of colonial powers, which often implement top-down policies that disregard local conditions and needs. Stalin's response shows that his priorities were not centered on alleviating the suffering of the Ukrainian people but on maintaining control and reinforcing ideological discipline. This mirrors the behavior of other colonial rulers, who impose their own economic and political strategies, often exacerbating crises like famines, rather than addressing the root causes of suffering. By framing the famine as a failure of internal Ukrainian efforts rather than a systemic issue exacerbated by grain requisition policies, Stalin prioritized the Soviet state's demands over the survival of its people, reflecting a pattern of exploitation common to colonial regimes.

Psychologically, the trauma inflicted by the famine left deep scars on the Ukrainian psyche, shaping individual and collective memory for generations to come. Survivors of the famine experienced profound psychological trauma, manifesting in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety. Applebaum also describes how the famine's effects extended to the customs surrounding death. Traditional Ukrainian funerals, which once blended church and folk traditions and involved choirs, meals, psalm singing, Bible readings, and sometimes professional mourners, were abruptly halted. The overwhelming devastation left people too weak to manage burial rites or perform ceremonies, leading to the disappearance of religious practices and the loss of cultural rituals. This absence of proper farewells became an additional source of trauma for a culture that deeply valued its rituals (Applebaum, 2017, 175).

A first hand account from a young man describes only one of millions of stories:

> "Mother had gone away, I was sleeping atop of our stove, and woke before sunrise. 'Dad, I want to eat, Dad!' The house was cold. Dad was not answering. I started to shout. Dawn

> broke; my father had some foam under his nose. I touched his head – cold. Then a cart arrived, there were corpses in it, lying like sheaves. Two men entered the house, put father on a burlap sack, threw his body on a cart with a swing … After that I could not sleep in the house, I slept in stables and haystacks, I was swollen and ragged" (Testimony of Vasyl' Iosypovych Huzenko, n.d., 54-55).

The famine's legacy of suffering and loss permeated Ukrainian society, influencing cultural attitudes, values, and perceptions of authority. Trust in government institutions eroded as survivors grappled with feelings of betrayal and abandonment by the Soviet regime, exacerbating existing tensions between the Ukrainian populace and central authorities.

The state's prioritization of production quotas and national objectives over regional food security demonstrates how entitlement to food was withheld, causing millions to starve despite the potential for food to be redistributed. The Soviet policies disrupted the existing transboundary food sovereignty that had been shared across regions, and by imposing uniform agricultural practices that ignored local ecological conditions, the Soviet regime further undermined regional food systems. The collapse of local farming networks and traditional knowledge exacerbated the famine's impact, stripping individuals of their ability to claim food through familiar and effective means and thus resulting in mass starvation.

4.1.3 Effects of Famine on Russia

While Russia did not experience the same level of famine-related devastation as Ukraine, the famine had significant ripple effects throughout the broader Soviet Union. Socially, the famine contributed to heightened tensions and unrest among the Soviet population, as rumors and reports of widespread starvation circulated, fueling discontent and disillusionment with the Soviet regime. Historian Robert Conquest notes that "reports of the famine were hard to suppress entirely. The next line of defence is two-fold: that there was indeed malnutrition, and even an increase in the death rate, and that the responsibility for this was the recalcitrance of the peasants who had refused to sow or reap properly" (Conquest, 1986, 323). This tactic attempted to shift the narrative, by blaming the peasants, the Soviet leadership sought to avoid accountability for its own disastrous policies. This resulted in political dissent as

citizens questioned the government's handling of the crisis and its broader policies of collectivization and central planning. Ukrainian leaders, who initially supported Soviet policies in 1929 with the hope of benefiting from rapid urbanization, became disillusioned. They had believed these policies would help them gain influence over their Russian-speaking cities by mobilizing Ukrainian peasants. However, as the policies led to mass suffering, starvation, and repression, they began to feel anger and discontent toward the Soviet Union. The reality of famine and the suppression of local autonomy made it clear that the regime prioritized control over Ukrainian well-being. (Graziosi, 2017, 52). The loss of support among Ukrainian leaders and the growing discontent toward Soviet policies significantly weakened the regime's authority in Ukraine. As trust eroded, it became increasingly difficult for the Soviet Union to maintain control over the region. This discontent not only fueled resistance and criticism but also highlighted the regime's failure to meet the needs of the Ukrainian people. Ultimately, the shift in attitude contributed to a broader sense of unrest, undermining the Soviet Union's efforts to enforce its policies and suppress local autonomy. This is important to note, as the perception of artificial famines is often a win-lose understanding. However, more often it is that both the occupied state as well as the perpetrating state suffer.

Politically, Stalin and the Soviet leadership capitalized on the famine as a means of consolidating power and suppressing dissent. Control over Ukraine, as the breadbasket of the Soviet Union, held immense strategic and political significance for Stalin's regime. By controlling agricultural production and distribution in Ukraine, Stalin wielded considerable leverage over the rest of the Soviet Union, using food as a tool of coercion and control. The famine served as a stark reminder of the consequences of disobedience and resistance, instilling fear and compliance among both the Ukrainian populace and Soviet citizens more broadly. As Anne Applebaum states, "The famine was used by Stalin as a political weapon, reinforcing his authority and demonstrating the deadly consequences of opposition" (Applebaum, 2017, 213). Additionally, the famine provided justification for further centralization of power and crackdowns on perceived enemies of the state, as Stalin sought to eliminate dissent and solidify his authoritarian rule (Fitzpatrick, 1994, 104). This empire

of fear yielded instability that would ultimately contribute to its downfall. In the end it was in its disinterest to impose the conditions for an artificial famine.

4.1.4 Conclusion and Aftermath

The Ukrainian Famine represents a dark chapter in Ukrainian and Soviet history, characterized by state sponsored violence, repression, and mass starvation. Its legacy continues to shape Ukrainian identity and relations with Russia, fueling debates over historical memory, national sovereignty, and the enduring impact of Soviet rule. The aftermath of the famine underscores the importance of establishing, maintaining and protecting communities rights to food sovereignty as a means of combating artificial famines.

Furthermore, the eventual division of Hutsulshchyna, a section of the Carpathian mountains, between Ukraine (under Soviet rule) and Romania in 1940, along with the distinct policies enforced on either side, disrupted the traditional flow of knowledge and practices. This state imposed border not only created differences in how species were used and distributed but also significantly hindered the transmission of ethnobotanical knowledge between communities connected by a shared environment. This separation undermined the Hutsuls' food sovereignty, forcing them to rely more on state systems that prioritized standardization. By restricting their ability to share and preserve knowledge about the land, these borders increased their vulnerability and created a dependence on the state, which prioritizes external interests over local needs (Fontana et al., 2022, 6).

For the Hutsuls who have remained in Ukraine, now separated by a border from other Hutsuls, the fallback foods that were once vital for survival have remained culturally significant in their daily lives. The species classified as 'fallback foods' serve multiple purposes and continue to provide nutrient-rich sustenance during times of scarcity, uncertainty, and regional disruption, as is the case with Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. This adaptive response to crises, shaped by a history of world wars, food shortages, shifting borders, and colonialism, reflects the community's resilience. A resilience-based approach involves not only addressing disturbances but also enhancing the natural capacity of

ecosystems to heal themselves. Resilience, in this context, embraces change, crisis, and uncertainty as inherent parts of life (Fontana et al., 2022, 15).

This established form of food sovereignty allows communities, such as the Hutsul to avoid famine by maintaining control over their own food production systems, independent of the state. This stands in stark contrast to entitlement theory, which positions the state as the ultimate authority over food distribution and requires citizens to prove their right to food. In this framework, people are made vulnerable to the state's failures or decisions, especially in times of conflict or instability. The resilience of the Hutsul people, who have successfully preserved their own food systems for generations, shows that such dependence on the state is not only unnecessary but potentially harmful. By maintaining food sovereignty, they have safeguarded themselves from the risks of famine, demonstrating that local control over food production is a more reliable and empowering solution. Their self-sufficiency ensures that, unlike communities beholden to state systems, they are less exposed to food shortages and political instability, proving that food sovereignty is a more resilient and sustainable approach.

Similarly, as the whole of Ukraine continues to presently grapple with a neocolonial war with Russia, resulting in widespread food scarcity and insecurity, the need for a robust system separate from the state becomes increasingly evident. Such a system would empower local communities to have control over their own food systems, making them less vulnerable to the administrative failures of the state, especially in times of conflict. When the state is unable to provide for its citizens due to war or other crises, food sovereignty offers a pathway to stability, ensuring that communities can sustain themselves by relying on their own resources and local knowledge, rather than being dependent on a centralized authority that may falter.

4.2. Case Study 2 – Irish Potato Famine

4.2.1 Ireland Before and After British Occupation

> "There can never be peace in Ireland until the foreign oppressive British presence is removed, leaving all the Irish people as a unit to control their own affairs and determine their own destinies as a sovereign people, free in mind and body, separate and distinct physically, culturally and economically" (Sands, 1981, 1).

This quote is from Irishman Bobby Sands on March 1, 1981, who died on March 5 from starvation during a hunger strike in protest of British colonization while he was imprisoned.

Before British occupation, Ireland exhibited signs of a food sovereignty system through its unique approach to land ownership, food production, and distribution, which contrasted sharply with the practices enforced by British control. Traditional Irish society was largely agrarian, the land was owned individually within families, but often managed communally. The system of land tenure was based on clan ownership, where land was held collectively by kinship groups, known as clans or septs. This communal approach allowed for a more equitable distribution of resources and ensured that food production was tailored to the needs of the local community.

This system provided a degree of food sovereignty and sustainability, as decisions regarding land use were made with the welfare of the community who shared the land, rather than the profit motives of individual landowners. The Irish cultivated a variety of crops and raised livestock, ensuring a balanced diet and consequently reducing the risk of famine (McCormick, 2011, 125). This self sufficiency was supported by the practice of "rundale," a communal farming system where families worked together on scattered plots of land, sharing both the labor and the produce. This method fostered a sense of mutual responsibility and cooperation among community members (Flaherty, 2015, 3).

Prior to British interference, Ireland also exhibited elements of transboundary food sovereignty through its communal land use practices under the Brehon Laws and its localized, sustainable agriculture. These practices helped avoid famine by maintaining a decentralized and flexible food production system that adapted to varying regional needs and resources. As described in Molloy (2009), under the Brehon Laws, land was not privately owned but held in common by extended family groups known as clanna (clans). The Brehon laws in Ireland allowed land to be owned by Irish families, governed by elected chieftains. When the Normans invaded under King Henry II, they fought these chieftains for control of the land. Although the Normans initially built castles to dominate these territories, over time, they began to adopt Irish customs, speak the Irish language, and form alliances through marriage with the Gaelic chieftains, who continued to rule under the Brehon laws. In relation to food sovereignty, the Brehon laws supported local control over land and resources, aligning with principles of communities managing their own food systems without external interference. The elected chieftains had authority over land, which allowed families to maintain a degree of autonomy over agricultural production and food sources (Molloy, 2009, 121).

Furthermore, the rundale system of communal farming provided shared access to vital resources like pastures and rivers. This arrangement ensured that all community members had fair access to essential resources, contributing to a reliable food supply for everyone involved. (McCormack, 1992, 112). In this way land ownership was rotational; plots could be reallocated based on family size and agricultural needs, allowing flexibility in response to environmental and social changes. This is very different from the British standard of understanding property which is usually understood using a grid system of a portion of land. A landowner's authority over their property may be influenced by specific rights held by neighboring individuals. For instance, if there is no alternative access, a neighbor might possess a right of way across the landowner's property (Kelly, 2000, 400). Furthermore, as explained by William Tighe in 1802,

> "...with regard to the procedures of landholding under the rundale communal conditions, the amount of arable land held by an individual member was never quantified by a determinate

> or definitive measurement system, such as acres, furlongs, roods etc, but was determined by the potential ecological output (or value) of the land area and the sharing out of its ecological output equally among the communal members" (Tighe 1802 qtd in Kelly, 2000).

This focus on dividing land based on ecological output puts more value on the land's productivity rather than its physical size. This posits ownership as a tool for the collective benefit of the community, which was prioritized over strict ownership or measurement by land area. This collective landholding and usage system inherently fostered food sovereignty by granting local communities control over their food production, reducing dependence on external markets for sustenance.

The clans also functioned across territorial boundaries within Ireland. A tribe is comprised of many clans and there were boundaries between tribes. However, those boundaries primarily served as a space for assemblies, "these involved in effect the fusing together of separate peoples, even if only for purposes of religion or trade initially, and should be taken as an illustration of the idea that boundary lines in Celtic society forged rather than severed links" (Riain, 1972, 26). In regions where multiple clans shared access to rivers like the Shannon, they coordinated fishing and water use, ensuring that the river's resources were distributed equitably, thus maintaining the community's food supply even in lean times (Riain, 1972, 26). The shared management of land and natural resources across territories established a form of transboundary food sovereignty within Ireland itself, where the cooperation between regions supported sustainable food production.

A key feature of Irish Agriculture prior to British colonization was its diversification. Irish farmers typically grew a variety of crops, including oats, barley, and wheat, alongside tending cattle, sheep, and pigs (McCormick, 2013, P4). Livestock, particularly cattle, were central not only as a source of meat and milk but also as a form of wealth and social capital (McCormick, 2011, 122). This reliance on mixed farming practices contributed to food security, as it allowed communities to withstand crop failures by relying on other sources of food and income. The sustainability of this system was further enhanced by pastoralism which is the movement of livestock between summer and winter pastures. This practice

required coordination and mutual agreements between different clans that shared access to these lands. By ensuring that grazing land was used optimally and preventing overuse, these transboundary arrangements supported the long-term productivity of the land and the stability of food systems.

Moreover, the diversity of crops and livestock provided a safety net. Since communities did not rely on a single crop, such as the potato, which became the norm under British agricultural policies, they were less vulnerable to the kind of monoculture failures that would later devastate Ireland during the Great Famine.

The arrival of British imperial control marked a significant shift in land ownership and food production. The English implemented a system of private land ownership, which concentrated land in the hands of a few wealthy landlords, often absentee English landowners. This led to the displacement of many Irish farmers, who were reduced to the status of tenants on their ancestral lands. The transformation of Irish land tenure under English rule created a landlord-tenant relationship that was exploitative and often led to insecurity of tenure and eviction (Walsh and O'Mahony, 2018, 13). The British colonial system undermined all practices of Irish food sovereignty by imposing a new system of private ownership. While the Irish did have private ownership it differed from the British system. British landlords held absolute control over their land, often without regard to traditional family or community connections, leading to a more hierarchical system where landowners had much more power over tenants (Donnelly, 2001,186). The British model also focused on ownership as a commodity, often resulting in the displacement of Irish tenants and families. The communal practices that had sustained Irish food sovereignty were replaced by tenant farming, where farmers had little control over the crops they grew, and were heavily reliant on a single, vulnerable food source. This shift away from transboundary, community managed food systems toward a centralized and profit driven model ultimately made Ireland more vulnerable to famine.

The imposition of monoculture, particularly the cultivation of cash crops like wheat for export, further undermined Ireland's food sovereignty (Turner, 2002, 9). The British

emphasis on exporting agricultural produce to England reduced the availability of diverse foodstuffs for local consumption. This shift was disastrous during periods of poor harvest, as the reliance on a single crop made the population vulnerable to famine. The Great Famine of the 1840s is a stark example of the consequences of this imposed agricultural system, where the failure of the potato crop, combined with the continued export of other foodstuffs, led to mass starvation.

4.2.2 Famine Background

> "...during all the famine years Ireland was actually producing sufficient food, wool and flax, to feed and clothe not nine but eighteen millions of people'. Thus the Famine was an artificial event, caused not by a shortage of food, but by the failure on the part of the British government to close the ports and by the need to export food to pay rents to profligate, absentee landlords. This viewpoint, which was common during the Famine years, dominates the first scholarly history written by Canon John O'Rourke, which was first published in 1874" (Daly,1996, 72).

Here we can see that even in 1874, only twenty years after the end of the famine, it was clear that the primary cause was not a shortage of food within Ireland, but rather a combination of political, economic, and social factors exacerbated by British governance.

The Irish Potato Famine was triggered by the failure of the potato crop, which was a staple food for the majority of the Irish population. The blight, caused by the fungal pathogen Phytophthora infestans, devastated potato crops across Ireland, leading to widespread hunger, malnutrition, and disease as all other foods were exported out. In 1845 the amount of food exported from Ireland could have fed 2 million people, but instead was shipped out for economic gain (Turner, 2002, 2). Approximately one million people died in the potato famine, and had the British not had control over Ireland's food distribution systems, no one would've needed to suffer famine or starve.

The famine forced millions more to emigrate, primarily to the United States and Canada (Mulrooney, 2003, 6). This pattern of displacement during famines has been repeated throughout history. Colonial powers often exploit vulnerable populations by controlling their access to land and food, forcing them into desperate situations where they are compelled to leave their homes. Such forced migrations destabilize communities, disrupt cultural ties to the land, and weaken local autonomy, making these populations dependent on external forces.

The landlord system imposed by the British in Ireland during this time also contributed significantly to the devastating impact of the Great Famine. Under this system, British or Anglo-Irish landlords owned much of the land, while Irish tenant farmers worked it, often under harsh conditions. Landlords focused on profits, frequently evicting tenants who couldn't pay rent, even during times of famine (Coogan, 2013, 216). This system left Irish tenants with little control over the land they worked, and their reliance on the potato crop, combined with the lack of alternatives during the potato blight, led to mass starvation and displacement.

Additionally, religious tensions between the predominantly poor Irish Catholics and the British Protestant landlords exacerbated these conditions. A historical account describes how:

> "Mrs. Thompson's husband [a landlord] had a reputation for trying to get rid of Catholic tenants on the Ventry estate by charging them higher rents than Protestants. However, he was said to have lowered the Catholics' rent to Protestant levels if they changed their religion. Hundreds of Catholics are said to have been evicted because they did not 'turn'" (Coogan, 2013, 152).

The discrimination against Catholics not only intensified their oppression but also restricted their access to land and resources, further marginalizing them within the social and economic

hierarchy. This systemic exclusion perpetuated a cycle of poverty and dependence, making the impact of the famine even more devastating for the Irish Catholic population.

This emphasizes how crucial it is to develop systems that protect a community's food sovereignty. Food sovereignty ensures that local communities have control over their own food systems, including the ability to export or not export and do not face discrimination or exclusion on the basis of differing cultural values. Without this, external powers, like colonial forces, can control land and resources, leading to exploitation and displacement, as seen in Ireland. Protecting food sovereignty empowers communities, prevents forced migrations, and safeguards their right to sustainably manage their lands and resources in the face of crises.

4.2.3 Effects of Famine on Ireland

. From George Bernard Shaw's 1903 "Man and Superman" play:

> "Malone . .. Me father died of starvation in Ireland in the black' 47.
> Maybe yourself heard of it?
> Violet The Famine!
> Malone (with smouldering passion) No, the Starvation. When a country
> is full of food, and exporting it, there can be no famine. Me father
> was starved dead; and I was starved out to America in me mother's
> arms. English rule drove me and mine out of Ireland" (Shaw, ACT IV).

This excerpt from George Bernard Shaw's "Man and Superman" offers a poignant reflection on the political and economic factors in exacerbating the suffering of the Irish people during this period. The speaker, Malone, vehemently rejects the term "famine" and instead insists on calling it "starvation." This choice of words is significant because it challenges the narrative that the famine was solely a result of natural factors, such as crop failure due to potato blight. By emphasizing "starvation," Malone asserts that the root cause of the crisis was not a lack of food in Ireland, but rather the unjust distribution and exportation of food resources under English rule.

Furthermore, Malone's assertion that "When a country is full of food, and exporting it, there can be no famine" encapsulates a powerful critique of British colonial policies. It highlights the paradoxical situation where Ireland, despite being abundant in food resources, experienced widespread hunger and death due to the prioritization of profit and the interests of absentee landlords over the welfare of the Irish population.The personal narrative shared by Malone is one similar to millions of other Irish at the time. His statement that his father died of starvation in Ireland and that he was forced to emigrate to America due to English rule underscores the devastating impact of the famine on individual lives and families. It also speaks to the lasting trauma and displacement experienced by many Irish people during and after the famine years. In analyzing this poem, it is essential to recognize its importance as a piece of historical testimony that challenges conventional narratives of the Irish Potato Famine. Through Malone's words, Shaw confronts the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, highlighting the systemic injustices that perpetuated suffering and displacement in Ireland. Moreover, the poem serves as a call to remember and honor the voices of those who endured and resisted during this dark chapter in Irish history.

Another primary source comes from O'Rourke, in a chapter entitled 'Irish ranks split':

> "Thus at a most critical moment, standing between two years of fearful, withering famine, did the leaders of the Irish people by their miserable dissensions, lay that people in hopeless prostration at the mercy of the British Cabinet, from which, had they remained united, they might have obtained means of saving the lives of thousands of their countrymen" (O'Rourke qtd in Daly, 1996, 73).

This primary source, written by O'Rourke and cited in Daly's work, provides a critical perspective on the impact of internal divisions within the Irish leadership during the time of the famine. O'Rourke argues that these internal conflicts among Irish leaders led to a missed opportunity to effectively advocate for aid and relief from the British government, which could have potentially saved thousands of lives during the famine. Furthermore, the passage challenges simplistic narratives that portray the famine solely as a result of natural disasters or British indifference. Instead, it underscores the role of internal divisions and political maneuvering within Irish society in shaping the course of events during this period.

Entitlement theory is highly relevant in this context because it illustrates how access to food is not merely about its availability, but about the ability of individuals to claim and obtain it. Malone's assertion that "When a country is full of food, and exporting it, there can be no famine" critiques British colonial policies, highlighting how food was being exported for profit rather than being distributed to the starving Irish population. Despite Ireland having abundant food resources, the Irish people were denied entitlement to that food due to the economic priorities of absentee landlords and the colonial government. This reflects a key aspect of entitlement theory: famines occur not because food is unavailable, but because people are unable to access it.

O'Rourke's account further supports this by showing how internal divisions within Irish leadership weakened the ability to effectively advocate for aid from the British government, exacerbating the famine. Had Irish leaders remained united, they might have secured greater entitlement to food and relief for the people, preventing thousands of deaths. The theory here underscores how entitlement is shaped not just by food supply, but by the political and social systems in place, and in this case, the failure of both the colonial rulers and internal leadership to secure that entitlement for the Irish population led to widespread suffering and death.

4.2.4 Effects of Famine on England

The Irish Potato Famine had many effects on England, both direct and indirect. One significant impact was economic, as the collapse of the potato crop in Ireland led to a decline

in agricultural exports from Ireland to England, disrupting trade between the two countries (Read, 2022, 280) Additionally, the influx of Irish immigrants into England seeking relief and employment strained local resources and contributed to social tensions (Lees, 1979, 18).

The famine also had social and political consequences, heightening unrest and agitation in Ireland against British rule, which necessitated military and administrative intervention to maintain order. This intensified anti-British sentiment and spurred nationalist movements (Donnelly, 2001, 128). Despite these negative effects, there were perceived benefits for England. The famine created economic opportunities for English landlords and investors to acquire land and assets in Ireland at reduced prices, further consolidating English control over Irish land and resources. Moreover, the influx of Irish immigrants into England provided a cheap labor supply for industries such as construction, manufacturing, and domestic service, contributing to England's industrial development.

The English government's reluctance to provide adequate aid or stop exporting food to Ireland during the famine can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the prevailing economic ideology of laissez-faire capitalism influenced policymakers' reluctance to intervene, as minimal government intervention in economic affairs was emphasized. The doctrine of laissez-faire, dominant at the time, shaped the British government's response to the famine, leading to a hands-off approach. Additionally, some policymakers viewed the famine through a lens of political expediency, seeing it as an opportunity to weaken Irish resistance and reinforce British control over Ireland (Read, 2016, 411). Economic interests also played a role, as the government prioritized the interests of landowners and merchants who profited from the exportation of food from Ireland to England, as well as maintaining stability in the broader British economy.

However, the economic impact of the famine on Ireland affected Britain's economy. The collapse of the Irish agricultural sector and the mass emigration of Irish people led to a reduction in the consumer base for British goods and services. Ireland had been an important market for British products, and its economic decline meant a loss in trade revenue. The famine also had implications for Britain's colonial policies and strategies. The humanitarian

crisis in Ireland, coupled with increasing demands for political reform and relief, shifted focus away from Britain's imperial ambitions and exacerbated internal tension.

4.2.5 Conclusion and Aftermath

While the famine itself officially ended in 1852, its consequences continued to shape Ireland for decades to come. The famine resulted in a significant loss, of both those who died from famine related causes as well as those who had to flee Ireland. This mass exodus led to a substantial decline in Ireland's population, which had long lasting effects on the country's demographics.

After the Great Famine, Ireland struggled to regain its food sovereignty and the communal, transboundary farming roots it once relied upon. British colonial policies had deeply transformed the Irish agricultural system, prioritizing export-oriented monoculture and private land ownership, which fundamentally altered the socio-economic structure of Irish farming. Although there were attempts to restore some aspects of food sovereignty, the British-imposed system of land tenure and farming largely persisted, limiting Ireland's ability to return to its pre-colonial agricultural practices.

The British government's land policies, including the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849, enabled the sale of indebted Irish estates to wealthier British investors. This entrenched the model of large scale farming aimed at exporting goods, rather than sustaining local communities (Dooley, 4). This shift fundamentally undermined Ireland's pre-famine focus on subsistence farming and food sovereignty, instead forcing farmers to align their production with the needs of the British market.

Furthermore, as described by Walsh and O'Mahony (2018), the Landlord and Tenant Law Act of 1860, also commonly known as Deasy's Act, was created by the British and aimed to formalize the landlord-tenant relationship under a capitalist framework. The Act reflects the principles of laissez-faire capitalism, which advocates minimal government intervention in the economy. By promoting this economic model, the Act sought to create a market oriented

system for land transactions and relationships. It explicitly rejected traditional Irish practices concerning land tenure, which often involved communal or customary arrangements. Instead, it favored a legal framework that aligned with capitalist ideals, prioritizing formal contracts over local customs (Walsh and O'Mahony, 2018, 11). By declaring that the relationship between landlords and tenants was based on contract rather than property, the Act emphasized individual agreements and legal rights over historical or customary claims to land. This shift meant that the terms of tenancy were dictated by formal agreements rather than the cultural practices that had previously governed land use in Ireland. Deasy's Act reinforced capitalist principles and diminishing the influence of traditional practices. This shift often disadvantaged tenants, as it favored landlords in negotiations and reduced tenants' security and rights.

The Land Wars of the late 19th century and subsequent reforms like the Irish Land Acts sought to redistribute land to Irish tenant farmers. However, even these reforms did not fully restore the traditional, communal land management system that had existed under the Brehon Laws (Guinnane, 1997, 24). The shift from collective to private ownership, a key feature of British colonial rule, meant that Ireland's pre-colonial, transboundary farming practices were largely lost.

Even after Ireland gained independence in 1922, the country's agricultural system remained focused on exports, particularly to Britain. This was partly due to trade agreements like the Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement of 1938, which bound Irish farmers to supply agricultural products to the British market (Bromage, 1938, 516). And so we see that the legacy of British influence on Irish agriculture endured long after independence, with much of the country's farming forced to be geared towards meeting the demands of the British market, rather than achieving self-sufficiency. Thus, Ireland's food sovereignty was not fully restored, as the economic pressures of the post-famine period and ongoing British economic influence continued to shape Irish farming.

While some small farmers maintained local and sustainable practices, they were overshadowed by larger scale, commercial agriculture. The tradition of transboundary

farming, where communities shared resources across regions, did not return to its pre-famine prominence. The forced adoption of British land use patterns, which prioritized individual land ownership and commercial farming, hindered the possibility of reviving Ireland's former communal, transboundary farming practices.

So while there were attempts to reform land ownership and agricultural practices in Ireland after the Great Famine, British interference had a lasting impact on the country's food sovereignty. The shift to a British-style system of private land ownership and commercial farming for export greatly inhibited Ireland's ability to return to its pre-famine roots of communal land management and transboundary farming. The Irish agricultural system continued to serve British interests well into the 21st century, preventing the restoration of true food sovereignty in Ireland.

4.3 Case Study 3 – Chinese Famine

4.3.1 Before Japanese Occupation

Before the Chinese Famine of 1943, which was significantly exacerbated by the Japanese occupation during World War II, there were notable signs of food sovereignty in various regions of China. Historically, Chinese agricultural practices were deeply rooted in local traditions and community-based systems (Brook, 2018, 51). Philosopher Engels described this system as "the original communism" (Engels, 1884, 422). These systems were characterized by a high degree of local autonomy in food production and distribution, with villages often organizing collective efforts for planting, harvesting, and storing crops.

The diversity of China's agricultural landscape led to the development of region specific farming techniques, which were well-adapted to local conditions and ensured a stable food supply (Chinese Dynastic Society, 2024, 1). For example, the rice paddies of the south, the wheat fields of the north, and the mixed farming systems of central China each represented distinct agricultural ecosystems, managed by local communities with a deep understanding of their specific needs and capabilities. This is important to note as individual communities,

based on their specific relation to the land, developed independent strategies and as such worked collaboratively with other regions in order to acquire what was needed.

Moreover, Chinese rural society often relied on intricate systems of mutual aid and cooperative labor. Historian Yong Xu explains, "...without mutual aid and cooperation, a single peasant household would have had a hard time surviving. It was just that in China, such cooperation and mutual assistance occurred mainly at the family or clan level with the household as a unit." (Xu, 2014, 131). These practices underscored a form of food sovereignty where local communities maintained significant control over their agricultural resources and resilience strategies.

Furthermore, China's engagement in the Silk Road trade also indicates a form of transboundary food sovereignty. While the Silk Road is often remembered for the exchange of luxury goods, it was also a vital trade route for food products and agricultural knowledge, extending China's food systems into Central Asia and beyond (Spengler, 2019, 56). This extended across borders and involved relationships with other states in managing shared resources, such as mountain ranges like the Himalayas, which impacted agricultural practices.

As a colonial power, Japan deliberately interfered and undermined China's food sovereignty by exploiting their resources, disrupting trade and resource management and destroying irrigation systems. As described by historian David M. Gordon, when Japan occupied parts of China during World War II, it severely disrupted China's food sovereignty by redirecting agricultural resources and labor to support Japan's war efforts. Japanese forces took control of fertile regions such as the Yangtze River Valley, where much of China's grain was produced and underwent efforts to block the flow of rice throughout China (Gordon, 2006, 157).

Japan also interfered with China's transboundary trade routes, particularly the movement of food products and agricultural goods across China's borders into neighboring regions. The Japanese blockade of coastal regions and the occupation of key trade hubs disrupted China's

ability to engage in food trade with Central Asia and other parts of the world. This diminished China's capacity to utilize its cross-regional food sovereignty and resilience systems. Historian Diana Lary further describes how ports were blockaded, causing a sharp decline in trade across regions, severely negatively impacting the economy. Key exports like tea, sugar, and fruit, which had previously flowed through many ports, ceased, isolating cities from other regions. By 1938, the transport and financial industries reliant on migrant trade began to collapse, and by 1941, they had completely failed. Even sectors of the economy not tied to trade suffered. The fishing industry was devastated as boats were prohibited from going to sea. Additionally, land was taken over, and crops were confiscated by the Japanese military (Lary, 2010, 132).

The occupation forces requisitioned large quantities of food for their troops, leading to widespread shortages and famine in occupied territories. The traditional systems of local food sovereignty were undermined by the external pressures and exploitative policies imposed by the occupiers.

4.3.2 Famine

> "Rice shortages during the Japanese occupation were caused by a combination of declines in production and the lack of a smooth flow of rice. Production decreased in most occupied areas despite enthusiastic campaigns to promote food cultivation. On this topic…the following factors as reasons for the decline: (a) the loss of any incentive to grow surplus rice arising from Japanese requisitioning of paddy; (b) shortages of labour and draught animals; (c) inadequate maintenance of irrigation systems; (d) use of land for other urgently needed crops, such as cotton and castor oil plants; and (e) unsuccessful trials of new varieties of seeds. These points apply to many parts of Japanese-occupied South-East Asia" (Kurasawa, 1998, 32-33).

This quote illustrates how foreign occupying powers, in this case Japan, can severely disrupt a state's autonomy and food sovereignty, even with the intention of maintaining food production. During the Japanese occupation, rice shortages were not merely due to a decline in production but were exacerbated by the occupying forces' fundamental misunderstanding

of local food production systems and a misutilization of resources. Despite campaigns to promote food cultivation, the occupiers' requisitioning of paddy removed incentives for local farmers to grow surplus rice, leading to a significant decline in production. Additionally, the occupation led to shortages of labor and draught animals, inadequate maintenance of irrigation systems, and the diversion of land to grow other crops needed for military or economic purposes. These disruptions were compounded by failed trials of new seed varieties, further undermining local food production. The occupying forces' prioritization of their own military and capitalistic interests over the needs of the local population resulted in a misalignment with local agricultural practices and resource allocation. This fundamental misunderstanding and mismanagement of resources not only failed to support local food production but actively hindered it due to a lack of understanding of the culture of the occupied peoples.

The quote also illustrates how vulnerable centralized food production systems are to disruption by foreign powers. When food production is tied directly to the state, as seen during the Japanese occupation, it becomes easier for occupying forces to interfere and exert control. The Japanese occupiers were able to impact local food production significantly by requisitioning paddy, redirecting resources, and implementing policies that did not align with local agricultural needs. This centralization allowed them to disrupt a system that was already dependent on state control and intervention.

However, if farmers had worked within smaller, community based systems that were closely attuned to the land they inhabited, it would have been more challenging for the Japanese to exert such extensive control. Community based agriculture, rooted in local knowledge and practices, would have been more resilient to external disruptions. Farmers in such a system would have had greater autonomy and the flexibility to adapt to changes and resist interference. This decentralized approach would have made it harder for foreign powers to disrupt food production, as they would have faced numerous, localized, and more complex systems of resistance. The quote underscores the vulnerability of centralized food systems to

foreign manipulation and highlights the potential strength and resilience of localized, community driven agricultural practices.

The Japanese invasion brought unprecedented devastation to China, as millions of civilians were subjected to brutal atrocities, mass killings, and widespread displacement. The occupation further exacerbated China's already precarious food security situation, as agricultural production was disrupted, and vital resources were diverted to support the Japanese war effort. As the conflict intensified, the Japanese military implemented a policy of scorched-earth tactics, deliberately destroying crops, confiscating food supplies, and imposing harsh penalties on Chinese civilians suspected of supporting resistance efforts. This policy was called "the 3 all's policy." The three "alls" being kill all, burn all, loot all (Fairbank, 2006, 320). These punitive measures not only undermined agricultural productivity but also contributed to widespread famine and starvation among the Chinese population.

Simultaneously, internal factors exacerbated the crisis. Chinese troops, facing dire shortages, seized grain to sustain the army and fund the war effort. This combination of Japanese aggression and domestic requisitioning led to acute food shortages and soaring prices, precipitating the famine of 1943. One tactic was, "the Japanese introduced a system of 'forced delivery' under which peasants were required to sell to the government a certain percentage of their production at a very low official price. This arrangement created tremendous strains in rural society, especially where rice-surpluses were small and production mostly for personal consumption" (Kurasawa, 1998, 33). The significance of this situation lies in how both external aggression and internal policies can drastically undermine food sovereignty and contribute to mass famine. The Japanese occupation and their aggressive strategies, combined with internal requisitioning by Chinese troops, created a dire scenario where food was diverted from civilian needs to sustain military efforts. This dual pressure led to severe food shortages and inflated prices, culminating in the famine of 1943.

Furthermore, the introduction of the forced rice sale system by the Japanese, required peasants to sell a significant portion of their rice production at artificially low prices, which

exacerbated the crisis. This system strained rural society, especially in areas where rice surpluses were minimal and most production was for personal consumption. Many peasants were paid in IOUs which left them unable to cover their needs. This went on for some time until, "After April 1940, there was an almost complete cessation of shipments to Shanghai... as everywhere in the Yangzi valley the Japanese seized all foodstuff surpluses for exportation to Japan" (Henriot, 2000, 44). The forced sales further undermined the peasants' ability to retain sufficient food for themselves and their communities.

The Chinese farming system before Japanese occupation was distinct from the Japanese system, largely due to its large regional diversity and decentralized nature. According to political economist and Chinese Historian Dwight H. Perkins, "Most of the time even government officials did not intrude into the life of the rural village except to collect taxes or to settle disputes and breaches of public order on the rare occasions when these could not be handled by the village's own elders" (Perkins, 2013, 111). This decentralized system previously allowed for a stable food supply, where local communities controlled and managed their agricultural output in accordance with regional needs.

In contrast, Japan's agricultural system was more centralized and focused heavily on rice production to support a dense population. Japanese farming practices were characterized by intense land use and government intervention, this was more easily achieved due to the smaller size of their island. As noted by Peter Duus, Japanese agricultural policy emphasized productivity through land consolidation and standardization of farming techniques, especially in rice cultivation, to meet the growing demands of its urban centers and military (Duus et al., 1996, 377). This centralization created a distinct difference from China's locally driven, diversified farming practices. An attempt to implement what worked well in Japan, in China, proved disastrous because the conditions which allowed for such consolidation and standardization were simply not replicable on such a large scale.

Despite these challenges, the occupation was still driven by Japan's imperial ambitions to exploit China's resources, including agricultural output. During this period, Japanese forces imposed centralized control over Chinese farmlands, forcing local farmers to produce crops

that would benefit Japan's war effort. According to historian and political scientist Rana Mitter, the Japanese occupation led to the requisition of large quantities of food and resources, contributing to widespread famine and hardship in occupied regions (Mitter, 2013, 267). This requisitioning stripped Chinese farmers of their ability to control what they produced. The farmers were forced to shift from their diverse crop production to a monoculture system, focusing on a few key crops that could be exported to Japan. By prioritizing Japan's needs, the occupation destroyed local food sovereignty and eroded the traditional agricultural knowledge that had sustained China for centuries.

Additionally, Japanese agricultural policies during the occupation displaced many Chinese farmers from their land, either through forced labor programs or military campaigns. This further weakened the local farming systems, as farmers lost the ability to maintain their land and agricultural practices. As Louise Young writes in *Japan's Total Empire*, Japan's imperial policies during the war were negatively received by occupied states, "Chinese and Koreans protested vigorously against their treatment at the hands of Japanese settlers, and these protests were often met with more violence. The friction surrounding these issues grew to such proportions that the colonial police authorities drew up a report in 1941 documenting a long list of illegal land acquisitions and incidents of forced labor as well as violent assaults on persons and property by Youth Brigade boys" (Young, 1998, 405). These policies and social attitudes contributed to the build up to famine in China. The forced displacement of Chinese farmers, coupled with violent land seizures and the breakdown of local agricultural systems, directly undermined the country's ability to produce food and maintain self-sufficiency.

4.3.3 Effects of Famine on China

The famine in China in 1943, exacerbated by the Japanese occupation, resulted in an overwhelming loss of life, with millions succumbing to starvation or malnutrition. Precise figures are challenging to ascertain due to the chaotic circumstances of the time and limited documentation, there are a very wide range of estimates. Based on readings from numerous studies, I would modestly estimate a death toll numbering from 16-46 million. The

widespread suffering and deprivation experienced by individuals and families during this period left a lasting mark on the collective memory of the Chinese people.

The psychological impact of the famine was profound, with survivors grappling with trauma and grief long after the crisis subsided. Many individuals endured the anguish of watching loved ones perish due to hunger or disease, while others faced the constant fear of starvation and uncertainty about the future. Chinese scholar Yang Jisheng details the desperate measures many were forced to take, "People were driven mad by hunger. They'd go out with a basket, and if they saw a corpse along the side of the road, they'd cut off any edible flesh to cook at home" (Yang, 2012, n.p. section 15). This trauma left deep psychological scars, influencing how future generations perceived and responded to issues of food security and governance.

Economically, the famine had devastating effects on China's agricultural sector and overall economic stability. The disruption of food production and distribution networks, coupled with the diversion of resources to support the war effort, exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and deepened the country's dependence on foreign aid and relief efforts. This set back China's agricultural productivity and broader economic stability for years to come.

Furthermore, politically, the famine exposed the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Chinese government's response to the crisis, highlighting issues of governance, accountability, and social inequality. The failure to adequately address food shortages and provide relief to affected populations eroded public trust in the government and fueled discontent among the populace. A 2015 study on *The Institutional Causes of China's Great Famin*e asserts, "...the fall in output was also partly due to bad government policies such as the diversion of resources away from agriculture to industrialization, as well as weakened worker incentives" (Meng, Qian, and Yared ,2015, 1573). Furthermore, many deaths can also be attributed to the states delayed response in handling the famine where, "the Chinese government did not begin to systematically respond to the famine until the summer of 1960, after a large proportion of famine mortality had already taken place" (Meng, Qian, and Yared, 2015, 1574). This highlights the challenges of centralized state control over food production,

distribution, and governance, especially during a crisis like famine. It illustrates the risk of inefficiency and delayed responses when a single entity, in this case, the state, has exclusive control over critical resources and decision-making processes. The delay in systematic response indicates a lack of prompt and effective action to address the immediate needs of the population. In centralized systems, such delays can be exacerbated by bureaucratic inertia, limited local knowledge, and slow decision-making processes, which can significantly worsen the impact of a famine. As seen in this instance, the state's failure to act promptly and effectively contributed to the scale of the famine, highlighting how centralized control can sometimes lead to a disconnect between the needs of the population and the actions of those in power.

Lastly, in regards to the entitlement theory we know that access to food is shaped by the social and economic structures in place, and in this case, the Chinese people were denied that access due to government failures and external pressures. This inability to secure food for survival illustrates once again how the famine was not only the result of environmental factors or war but also of a breakdown in the mechanisms that should have ensured people's entitlement to food. Entitlement is a two-way street: while all human beings are inherently entitled to food, if that entitlement is not recognized or supported by the state, people will starve. This is why it is crucial to divest control of food from centralized authorities and place it in the hands of local communities, where the direct relationship between people and their food systems can be better maintained and protected.

4.3.4 Effects of Famine on Japan

As with all artificial famines caused by occupying or colonial powers, the occupying state also suffers. During the conflict, the Japanese army employed a strategy of depriving Chinese civilians of food as a means of gaining the upper hand in the war. This tactic, known as "scorched earth," involved the deliberate destruction of crops, seizure of food supplies, and imposition of harsh penalties on civilians suspected of supporting resistance efforts. The Japanese military sought to starve China into submission by targeting its food sources and

livelihoods. This strategy aimed to weaken Chinese morale, disrupt their ability to support resistance movements, and undermine their capacity to sustain themselves during the war.

While the tactic of food deprivation had short-term tactical advantages for the Japanese army, its effectiveness in achieving strategic objectives was mixed. On one hand, depriving Chinese civilians of food contributed to widespread suffering, starvation, and displacement, exerting pressure on resistance movements and weakening civilian support for anti-Japanese activities. By creating conditions of desperation and despair, the Japanese military hoped to quash dissent and resistance among the Chinese population.

However, on the other hand, the strategy also had unintended consequences and long-term repercussions for Japan. The brutal tactics employed by the Japanese army, including mass killings, forced labor, and attacks against civilians, provoked international condemnation and tarnished Japan's reputation on the world stage. According to Diana Lary, "the conviction that China was being humiliated by Japan and was suffering 'national shame (guochi)' was widespread" (Lary, 2010, 16), this was felt not only in China but globally. Moreover, the devastation wrought by the war and the accompanying famine inflicted significant economic costs on Japan, draining resources and undermining its long-term prospects for economic growth and development. The destruction of agricultural infrastructure and the displacement of labor further exacerbated Japan's post-war economic challenges.

Politically, Japan's aggressive expansionism and wartime policies of aggression and exploitation fueled tensions with other world powers and contributed to its eventual defeat in World War II. The famine effects on Japan underscored the human cost of militarism and imperialism, highlighting the moral and ethical dimensions of warfare and the imperative of upholding humanitarian principles in times of conflict.

4.3.5 Conclusion and Aftermath

After the famine of 1943, exacerbated by the Japanese occupation, China slowly began to regain some degree of food sovereignty, but it was not a simple return to its pre-war agricultural roots. The Japanese occupation had severely disrupted traditional agricultural

systems, trade networks, and infrastructure. However, these disruptions also laid the groundwork for later developments, particularly the policies that would emerge under Communist rule. As discussed in *Power Over Property: The Political Economy of Communist Land Reform in China (2020)*, when the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in 1949, the new Communist leadership introduced sweeping land reforms that redistributed land from landlords to peasants, dismantling centuries-old landholding systems.

The Japanese occupation not only damaged infrastructure but also paved the way for the radical policy changes that culminated in the Great Leap Forward. Japan's scorched-earth tactics and destruction of farmlands caused China to move away from traditional, localized farming and toward a more centralized model. This shift was fully realized when, in the 1950s, the PRC pushed for collectivized farming to increase food production and achieve self-sufficiency. However, this new system, combined with the political zeal of the Great Leap Forward, led to catastrophic results. Mismanagement, and unrealistic production targets, which were influenced in part by the urgency to recover from the agricultural devastation of the occupation, ultimately contributed to the massive famine of 1958-1962 (Noellert, 2020, 94).

While China regained control over its food production, the methods of farming and agricultural organization had fundamentally changed, in part due to the disruptions caused by the Japanese occupation. The legacy of these events, combined with the Communist revolution, ensured that post-war food sovereignty was characterized by state control, shifting away from the more diverse and communal agricultural practices that had once defined China's food systems.

4.4 Case Study 4 – Ethiopia

> "This famine has been long in the making, and was predicted well in advance. And not because the amounts of food needed are too immense. There are food surpluses in North America, and funds enough in Soviet bloc countries to finance a larger relief effort. No,

> people are starving in Ethiopia primarily because of international politics, bad local policies and governmental mismanagement on a large scale" (Shepard, 1984, 1).

4.4.1 Before and After Emperor Selassie and the Derg Regime

Historically, Ethiopia has exhibited some elements of food sovereignty, particularly within its diverse and decentralized agrarian communities. Ethiopia's traditional agricultural systems were primarily based on smallholder farming, with families and local communities practicing subsistence agriculture to meet their food needs. Ethiopian agriculture can be categorized in five distinct zones:

> "a. the highland cereal zone,
> b. the highland ensete 3 —root crop zone,
> c. western, moist, lowland zone,
> d. eastern, moist, lowland zone, and
> e. the dry lowland zone" (Waterbury, 2002, 96).

Traditionally, Ethiopia's decentralized agricultural system allowed for diverse communities to maintain food sovereignty, with each region adapting its agricultural practices to the unique conditions of its environment. In the highland cereal zone, communities relied on cultivating staple grains like teff, wheat, and barley, which were well-suited to the cooler temperatures and more fertile soils. The highland ensete, root crop zone, in contrast, was based on the cultivation of ensete (false banana), which provided a reliable source of food in higher altitude areas where cereals were less viable. In the western moist lowland zone, the richer soils and ample rainfall supported mixed farming systems, including the production of maize, sorghum, and cash crops such as coffee. The eastern moist lowland zone adapted to semi-arid conditions by focusing on drought-tolerant crops like sorghum and millet, supplemented by pastoralism. Meanwhile, the dry lowland zone was characterized by extensive pastoralism, where communities relied on livestock herding to sustain themselves in the harsh, arid environment (Kloos and Zein, 2019, 111). These decentralized agricultural systems allowed local communities to exercise a degree of autonomy over their food

production, developing farming techniques that were tuned to the environmental conditions of their respective zones.

Under Emperor Haile Selassie, while there was a centralized authority with the emperor and nobility holding significant power over land and resources, the administration of local agricultural practices and land management was often more decentralized, relying on local landlords and traditional systems. However, as noted by historian Dagm Alemayehu Tegegn, "The land tenure system that prevailed under the feudal government in the twentieth century contributed to the persistence of famine... peasants were never able to accumulate capital or invest in improved technology... Consequently, tenants and peasants were always restless and unhappy" (Tegegn, 2023, 4). And so, even with less centralized control, the single state power still resulted in poor food management.

However, with the rise of the Derg regime in the 1970s, there was a significant shift towards a more strict centralized control. This regime suppressed dissent, stifled political opposition, and implemented misguided socialist policies that severely undermined agricultural productivity and food security (Tareke, 2009, 226).The Derg's centralized policies, such as forced resettlement and villagization, undermined local communities' autonomy and their ability to manage food production according to their specific environmental conditions (Waterbury, 2002, 43). Berhanu (2012) noted that,

> "Immediately upon seizing power, the [Derg] military regime (1975-1991) embarked on the socialist path of development... the military regime is famed for introducing radical agrarian changes signified by the Land Reform Act, which was expressed in nationalization and equitable distribution of land... Despite the intensification of collectivization and cooperativization... production declined during most of the years of military rule" (Berhanu, 2012, 6).

The significance of this in relation to food sovereignty lies in the fact that the Derg regime's socialist policies centralized control over agricultural production, reducing the autonomy of local farmers. The state-controlled land through collectivization, state farms, and peasant associations limited farmers' freedom to make independent decisions about production,

distribution, and resource use. This top-down control undermined food sovereignty because it placed the state as the primary decision-maker over agricultural outputs, rather than empowering local farmers to manage their own food systems. The focus on collective and state farms, at the expense of smallholder farming, led to reduced agricultural productivity. This inefficiency contributed to food shortages and weakened local food systems, which made the country even more vulnerable to famines, like the one in 1983-1985. By prioritizing state control over agricultural production and marginalizing small-scale farmers, the Derg regime inadvertently exacerbated food insecurity and was a major factor in the famine that occurred during this period.

4.4.2 Cold War Geopolitics and Its Influence

It must be noted that the United States played a significant role in exacerbating the famine in Ethiopia. The United States, motivated by Cold War geopolitics and anti-communist sentiments, provided military and financial support to the Ethiopian government. They also provided food aid, however, "In March, 1984, two US aid officials announced that donated food was being sold in Ethiopia to pay for Soviet arms for the civil war in the northern provinces. For this reason, the officials said, the Reagan Administration would resist Congressional efforts to increase food aid to Ethiopia" (Shepard, 1985, 5). This report was very hotly debated, as it was well known the Raegan administration was reluctant to provide aid to Ethiopia for political reasons. It should be noted that many believe that states such as the U.S. who have such an abundance of wealth and resources have an obligation to provide aid to other states when needed. However, the report was refuted by the European Economic Community who stated that "no conclusive evidence has been produced to show that food aid has been systematically diverted to the armed forces" (NYT, 1984). This is the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the means in which the United States tried to manipulate the narrative and politics of Ethiopia.

The U.S. government's policy of supporting the Mengistu regime, coupled with restrictions on humanitarian aid and the prioritization of military assistance, hindered international relief efforts and exacerbated the suffering of the Ethiopian people. By propping up a repressive

regime and prioritizing Soviet suppression interests over humanitarian concerns, the United States contributed to the prolongation and intensification of the famine in Ethiopia. According to sociologist John Skrentny, "The United States and the Soviet Union were becoming established as rivals and competitors for 'zones of influence' in Europe and also in the developing world. It was not the first time that world powers feared a nation's apparent expansionist tendencies, and feared the loss of access to the neutral world's resources and markets" (Skrenty, 1998, 245). Both the Soviet Union and the United States, with their immense power, wealth, and resources, leveraged Ethiopia as a pawn in their Cold War rivalry, acting in a neocolonial capacity by using the country's political instability to further their own agendas of dominance, all while disregarding the devastating impact on the Ethiopian people.

Before the Ethiopian famine in the 1980s, there is evidence that Ethiopia had a degree of food sovereignty that transcended its borders, particularly through shared natural resources like rivers and ecosystems. Ethiopia's location as the source of the Blue Nile gave it a pivotal role in the agricultural systems of downstream countries like Sudan and Egypt, contributing to a form of transboundary food governance. Historian John Waterbury notes, "Ten juridically sovereign nations share the Nile basin and by virtue of that fact can lay claim to some share of its waters. Why they would do so and how they would go about it are questions shaped by relative power among the states, access to patrons external to the basin, and access to alternative sources of water." (Waterbury, 2002, 56). Ethiopia's claim to part of this shared and vital water resource allowed communities to maintain a certain level of sovereignty and engage collaborative efforts regarding food production that extended beyond its borders.

However, Ethiopia's capacity for food sovereignty has faced many external hardships, particularly in the mid-20th century as foreign forces, including U.S. intervention during the Cold War, started to influence its agricultural policies. During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie and later the Derg regime, U.S. aid was largely militarily and politically motivated, often tied to policies that resulted in destabilized local agricultural practices. The topic of the consequences of foreign aid in Africa is discussed in depth in Dambisa Moyo's novel *Dead Aid.* As a global macroeconomist, she notes:

> "Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and up until the 1990s, the Cold War had provided richer countries with the political imperative to give aid monies even to the most corrupt and venal despots in Africa. One of the features of the Cold War was the West's ability and eagerness to support, bankroll and prop up a swathe of pathological and downright dangerous dictators. From Idi Amin in the east, to Mobutu Sese Seko in the west, from Ethiopia's Mengistu to Liberia's Samuel Doe, the competition among these leaders to be more brutal to their people, more spendthrift, more indifferent to their country's needs than their neighbours were, was matched only by the willingness of international donors to give them the money to realize their dreams" (Moyo, 2010, 39).

As outlined by Moyo, aid to African nations governed by corrupt leaders often reinforces cycles of poverty and dependence, functioning as a form of neocolonialism. This assistance supports regimes that mismanage resources, undermining local economies and agricultural systems. As a result, citizens are forced to become reliant on external aid, leading to a situation where, without such assistance, they face starvation. This dynamic perpetuates vulnerability and instability, mirroring the same historical exploitation by colonial powers we have witnessed time and time again. This particular external interference by the U.S. and Soviet Union weakened Ethiopia's traditional agricultural base, and forced them to be increasingly reliant on food imports and foreign aid.

4.4.3 Effects of Famine on Ethiopia

The famine that struck Ethiopia in the 1980s had catastrophic effects, with an estimated three million people having faced a shortage of food or have starved (Tegegn, 2023, 7). This tragic loss of life tore families apart, decimated communities, and deeply frayed the fabric of Ethiopian society.

The psychological impact was profound, leaving survivors to grapple with trauma, grief, and despair long after the crisis subsided. The famine also exposed the failures of the government's policies and the inadequacies of the international response, which fueled discontent and exacerbated political instability in the country. As Tareke notes,

> "The longer the civil wars, the greater the need for arms... Also deepening was the strategic dependence on foreign sources...The economic and social costs were high and the political consequences severe because the military expenditures took away funds from much-needed programs for improving the living conditions of the population" (Tareke, 2009, 133).

This quote illustrates how U.S. and other foreign powers played a critical role in perpetuating Ethiopia's military spending, diverting resources from the country's agricultural sector and essential social programs. As the civil wars dragged on, Ethiopia's strategic dependence on foreign arms suppliers deepened. This dependence forced the Ethiopian government to prioritize military expenditures to sustain its war efforts, rather than investing in improving the living conditions of its people. The high economic and social costs of these wars were exacerbated by the continuous inflow of arms from foreign sources, which incentivized the government to focus on military strength rather than addressing underlying issues like agricultural productivity, food security, and rural development. As a result, funds that could have been directed toward alleviating poverty, modernizing farming practices, and improving food security were instead funneled into an escalating arms race. The political consequences were also severe, as this militarization not only prolonged internal conflicts but also undermined the government's ability to address the basic needs of its citizens, contributing to social unrest and economic stagnation.

Furthermore, the U.S. and Soviet Union were not the only foreign powers to take advantage of the vulnerabilities in Ethiopia for their own gain, ″The Israelis were the first to develop a counterinsurgency plan for the Ethiopian government″ (Tareke, 2009, 368), the importance of this quote lies in its demonstration of the multitude of Global North foreign powers' involvement in shaping Ethiopia's military priorities rather than addressing humanitarian needs or agricultural development. Israel's early involvement in providing counterinsurgency support reflects how international actors prioritized military solutions to Ethiopia's internal conflicts over addressing root causes of instability, such as food insecurity, poverty, and land disputes. Instead of assisting with development programs that could have helped Ethiopia modernize its agricultural sector or improve infrastructure, Israel, and later other foreign powers, focused on bolstering Ethiopia's military capacity to suppress insurgencies.

This focus on military strategy illustrates a broader trend of foreign powers engaging with Ethiopia through a security lens, emphasizing stability through force rather than sustainable development. By shaping Ethiopia's military responses, foreign involvement perpetuated the government's prioritization of military spending over social welfare programs. As a result, resources were directed toward fighting insurgents rather than resolving the social, political, and economic conditions that fueled unrest.

Furthermore, the lack of attention to humanitarian aid and development programs only deepened Ethiopia's dependence on foreign military support, while the underlying issues, such as famine, poverty, and the unequal land tenure system, were left unaddressed. This ultimately exacerbated Ethiopia's vulnerabilities, contributing to long-term instability. If strong food sovereignty systems had been in place in Ethiopia, foreign manipulation by powers like the United States, the Soviet Union, Israel and others could have been significantly circumvented. Communities would have had control over their own food production and distribution, independent of the state's political conflicts.

Food sovereignty emphasizes local governance, where communities manage land and resources according to their specific needs and ecological conditions. In Ethiopia, this would have empowered rural populations to sustain their agricultural systems. With localized food systems, the Ethiopian government would have faced less pressure to rely on foreign military aid, as empowered communities could mitigate famine and food insecurity through diversified farming practices and sustainable resource management. These autonomous food systems would have safeguarded against the devastating effects of drought and war, allowing agricultural resilience to thrive even amidst political instability. This separation of food governance from the state's militarized priorities could have lessened Ethiopia's strategic reliance on foreign powers, shifting the focus from arms to sustainable development, and allowing local economies to flourish independently from external political manipulations.

For those who didn't die of starvation, many were forced to leave their homes, as described in this 2023 study, "The outbreak of persistent famine had short-term and long-term consequences on the social, economic, political, and psychological aspects of society...

About a hundred-thousand peasants from Tigray and Wollo only annually migrated to work on plantations" (Tegegn, 2023, 7). Being forced to migrate yearly for survival creates cycles of dependency, hopelessness, and insecurity, further undermining local economies and their ability to recover. This is a similar consequence to the famine in Ireland which resulted in 'The Great Migration' where millions of Irish had to leave their ancestral homeland and travel elsewhere in hopes of a better life. This systemic displacement fosters resentment towards the state and colonial powers, as people realize their vulnerability to policies and external forces that prioritize exports over their well being.

Politically, the displacement of so many people underscores the failure of the government to provide for its citizens. It reveals how state controlled food systems can be manipulated by external powers or internal elites, prioritizing profit or geopolitics over human needs. The peasants from Tigray and Wollo likely felt powerless as they were subjected to a system that denied them access to their own land's produce. This can fuel resistance movements, as was seen in Ethiopia during and after the Derg regime.

In this case, the famine was exacerbated not by a complete lack of food, but by the failure of the Ethiopian government, heavily influenced by foreign powers, to prioritize its citizens' entitlement to food over military and geopolitical concerns. Entitlement theory explains how the state's failure to recognize its citizens' right to food led to mass starvation, displacement, and prolonged suffering. If Ethiopia had developed strong food sovereignty systems, empowering local communities to control their own food production and distribution, foreign interference and the state's militarization of resources could have been mitigated. This would have allowed rural populations to sustain themselves even during political crises, reducing dependency on the state and foreign powers for survival.

4.4.4 Effects of Famine on US

The artificial famine in Ethiopia during the 1980s had significant implications for the United States, both politically and economically. Although the famine was also caused by internal factors such as government mismanagement and natural disasters, the U.S. government's

policies and actions exacerbated the crisis and influenced its outcome. Geopolitically, Ethiopia was embroiled in a Cold War-era conflict with neighboring Somalia, which was receiving support from the Soviet Union. The United States provided military and financial aid to the Ethiopian government, aiming to bolster its ally in the region and counter Soviet influence. In this context, the famine served as a pretext for increased U.S. involvement in Ethiopia, allowing the United States to strengthen its strategic position in the Horn of Africa and advance its broader geopolitical objectives. As Gebru Tareke explains, Ethiopia was "the recipient of the largest amount of United States economic and military aid in sub-Saharan Africa" (Tarek, 2009, 357), the importance of this lies in its demonstration of how wealthy foreign powers, particularly the U.S., can effectively treat other nations like modern colonies through economic dependency and strategic manipulation. Aid gave the United States considerable influence over the country's policies and priorities. This type of dependency allows foreign powers to dictate terms that are aligned with their own strategic interests, such as maintaining Ethiopia as a Cold War ally, while disregarding the long-term development and food security needs of the Ethiopian people.

Economically, the Ethiopian famine presented opportunities for the United States to expand its influence and access new markets. However, that opportunity was seized with little regard or preparation for the wellbeing of the people of Ethiopia, "The humanitarian intervention in Somalia in the early 1990s was undertaken by the George H. W. Bush administration in ignorance of the historical and regional context" (Tareke, 2009, 11). The provision of humanitarian aid and development assistance allowed U.S. companies and non-governmental organizations to establish a presence in Ethiopia and promote American interests in the region. American interests over all, including Ethiopian. Additionally, the famine drew attention to the plight of developing countries and underscored the importance of international cooperation and assistance, ironically creating opportunities for the United States to showcase its leadership and humanitarian values on the global stage.

Furthermore, "There is strong evidence that the Reagan administration's deliberately delayed response to the Ethiopian famine of 1984 was prompted by the knowledge that famine had toppled Emperor Haile Selassie ten years earlier, so that withholding food aid

might similarly undermine the Marxist Dergue regime" (Devereux, 2000, 22). Ethiopian people starved and the American government had the capacity to provide relief, but instead withheld food aid for the sake of larger political maneuvers. This highlights how American politics and ideological opposition to Marxist regimes influenced the decision making process regarding the Ethiopian famine of 1984. The Reagan administration's deliberate delay in responding to the crisis was driven by concerns that providing aid could inadvertently support the Marxist Dergue regime in Ethiopia. This reluctance to intervene promptly was rooted in the broader geopolitical context of the Cold War, where the United States viewed Marxist governments as ideological adversaries and sought to contain their influence. By withholding food aid, the Reagan administration aimed to undermine the legitimacy of the Ethiopian government and advance its anti-communist agenda, even at the expense of human lives. The quote underscores the tragic consequences of politicizing humanitarian assistance, as people suffered and died while American policymakers prioritized geopolitical considerations over humanitarian imperatives. This illustrates how ideological biases and geopolitical interests can shape humanitarian interventions and exacerbate the impact of crises on vulnerable populations.

The U.S. response to the Ethiopian famine also had drawbacks and negative consequences for them. Critics argued that U.S. aid policies were motivated more by strategic interests than genuine humanitarian concerns, leading to the prioritization of military assistance over food aid and development assistance. In response to destruction of U.S. military property and a failure to come to an agreement for compensation, it is reported that, "Congress has also directed the Administration to vote against Ethiopian applications for loans from the World Bank and the African Development Bank" (Gencheng, 1984, 55). This directive undermined Ethiopia's ability to secure crucial international funding, exacerbating the country's struggle to address its food insecurity and manage the famine's devastating effects. This was of course criticized globally as the U.S. used it's considerable power to oppress a vulnerable state.

Moreover, the United States faced international criticism and condemnation for its support of the Ethiopian government, which was widely accused of human rights abuses and authoritarian rule. According to sociologist Skrentny, America's actions were globally

perceived as, "embarrassing, but only because the world expected human rights to be respected, not repressed, because
world opinion matted" (Skrentny, 263). And so the perception of U.S. complicity in the Ethiopian regime's repressive policies brought negative attention to America's reputation and raised questions about its commitment to democracy and human rights

4.4.5 Conclusion and Aftermath

Even after the famine had passed, the U.S. intervention and subsequent policies affected Ethiopia's ability to achieve food sovereignty. The dependency on international aid undermined the pre existing Ethiopian systems. According to Tareke "Since locally extracted revenues were insufficient to cover expenditures, the state relied heavily on foreign loans and aid, drawing 24 percent of its total revenues from them in 1962. That as much as 64 percent of that came from the United States meant that the United States had a dominant influence in the affairs of the Ethiopian client state" (Tareke, 2009, 357). This dynamic is neocolonialism, as foreign powers, particularly wealthy nations, were able to maintain control over Ethiopia by creating economic dependencies rather than through direct occupation. In the case of Ethiopia, the U.S. did not directly extract resources in the traditional colonial sense, but it shaped Ethiopia's policies and priorities to serve its own geopolitical interests. By ensuring Ethiopia remained strategically aligned with the West, the U.S. effectively gained influence over Ethiopia's domestic affairs.The consequence of budgets being spent on military caused a shift away from traditional farming practices to systems that favored international interests which created vulnerabilities in Ethiopia's food production.

As a result of these changes, Ethiopia has experienced increased instability and a greater susceptibility to famines in the years following the famine making it more dependent on foreign aid. According to USAID today, "Ethiopia's reliance on foreign aid is substantial, with a significant portion of its external revenue coming from the United States. In fact, agriculture is a critical sector of the Ethiopian economy, accounting for around 40% of GDP, 80% of exports, and employing about 75% of the workforce" (USAID). This is the result of deliberate efforts to undermine local sovereignty and the ramifications from actions in the

1980s are still felt today.By controlling the flow of aid and influencing policy, nations like the United States can perpetuate the economic and political subjugation of vulnerable states, making them modern day colonies in all but name.

As noted by Tareke, "...famine was the worst in a century...result of misguided agrarian economic policies, war, and drought...Drought may be beyond human control, but surely the social conditions of famine could and should have been long eliminated" (Tareke, 2009, 20). This quote highlights a critical reality: while the famine was exacerbated by drought, which may be a natural, uncontrollable event, the social conditions that turn it into famine, such as agrarian economic policies, war, and state mismanagement, are entirely preventable. When a state exercises sole control over food production, distribution, and management, as was the case in Ethiopia, it centralizes decision-making and often disregards local knowledge and the specific needs of the diverse communities. This top-down approach frequently leads to catastrophic outcomes, especially during times of environmental stress, as the state is disconnected from the immediate realities of the land and its people. A new understanding of food sovereignty, where power is devolved to local communities, is crucial for preventing such outcomes. By putting food management in the hands of the people directly affected, tailored approaches that account for the specific challenges and needs of the land can be developed, ensuring that food security is maintained even in times of environmental stress. This is the shift in governance that can turn natural disasters from inevitable tragedies into manageable challenges.

The narrative surrounding global food shortages often perpetuates the myth that there isn't enough food to go around, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. In many industrialized nations, particularly in the Global North, vast surpluses of food are generated annually, leading to millions of tons being wasted. This stark contrast becomes particularly evident when examining countries like Ethiopia, where famine is not merely a statistic but a devastating reality for millions. The disparity raises critical questions about the role of food aid, international relations, and the responsibilities of governments.

In a world where food waste is rampant, the moral imperative to provide assistance to nations facing hunger becomes even more pressing. The idea that food aid should come without strings attached is vital; it highlights the need for compassion over political maneuvering. However, historical evidence shows that the U.S. and other powerful nations have often tied humanitarian aid to political conditions, using hunger as leverage to gain influence over governments. This tactic not only weaponizes food insecurity but undermines the dignity and autonomy of nations struggling to survive. The hunger experienced by Ethiopians is, in many respects, easily solvable, especially when viewed through the lens of global food production and distribution.

Centralized control of food aid through government systems exacerbates existing inequalities and prevents effective assistance from reaching those in need. In an interconnected world, community-based solutions could facilitate the distribution of resources, bypassing the bureaucratic red tape often associated with government intervention. By allowing local communities to manage food aid, we can promote self-sufficiency and ensure that assistance is tailored to the specific needs of those affected.

Moreover, the geopolitical landscape often sees powerful nations acting to suppress alternative ideologies, such as socialism, in regions like Africa. This can result in further entrenching the conditions that lead to famine. Rather than relying on state actors who may prioritize their own political agendas, food sovereignty should be placed in the hands of communities. These local entities understand their circumstances and can forge connections that transcend borders, fostering resilience and sustainability.

In conclusion, addressing global hunger requires a fundamental shift away from government-centric approaches towards community-led initiatives. By acknowledging the surplus of food in the Global North and the systemic issues that contribute to hunger in nations like Ethiopia, we can work towards a more equitable and compassionate global food system. Ultimately, food should be viewed as a right rather than a privilege, and its distribution should not be dictated by political interests or power dynamics.

4.5 Case Study 5 – Bengal Famine India 1943

4.5.1 Prior to Famine

As described by Paul R. Greenough, a historian specializing in Indian history, in Bengali culture wealth and beauty are deeply intertwined. Laksmi, the goddess of wealth, is also known as Sri, the goddess of beauty. The terms for beauty and wealth, sri and lakshmi, are often used interchangeably with prosperity. As a result, key forms of wealth like gold, gems, and paddy are considered naturally beautiful. Gold, in particular, symbolizes both great value and aesthetic appeal, placing Bengalis on a "gold standard" of beauty. For instance, paddy is often described as "golden" (sonar), and the phrase "golden Bengal" reflects the cultural reality of vast fields turning golden when the paddy crops ripen three times a year. This transformation is seen as a sign of Laksmi's presence, with the ripened crops symbolizing her blessing (Greenough, 1982, 32).

The connection between wealth, beauty, and the land in Bengali culture explains the care with which Bengalis traditionally tended to the land. The beauty of the fields was both a religious and cultural marker, motivating people to maintain the land's richness and strive for the perfect color of the paddy. Before British colonization, this spiritual and aesthetic relationship with the land was central to agricultural practices. However, the British, lacking this religious and cultural context, approached the land with a more capitalistic mindset. Rather than focusing on the spiritual and visual harmony of the crops, they prioritized the profit to be gained, shifting the focus away from nurturing the land's beauty toward economic exploitation.

Before the Bengal Famine of 1943, there were demonstrated signs of food sovereignty through diverse and localized food systems across its regions. According to Shiva, Bengal historically maintained decentralized agricultural practices and food systems that varied significantly from region to region, reflecting local ecological conditions, cultural traditions, and community preferences (Shiva, 2016, 23). These decentralized systems included

traditional farming methods, diverse crop varieties, and local irrigation practices tailored to specific geographic and climatic conditions. This diversity not only ensured food security but also supported cultural and ecological sustainability across different parts of the country.

Moreover, Bengal's communities had distinct approaches to growing and distributing food based on their local needs and resources. Vandana Shiva, an authority on the subject, emphasizes that traditional Indian agriculture encompassed a range of practices that were adapted to local environments and societal needs, promoting both food security and resilience. They also had a non-western understanding of ownership, Shiva states, "A shared resource can be managed communally through the implicit acceptance on the part of all the members of the community of a commonly shared norm." (Shiva, 2005, 57). These community-centric practices involved cooperative efforts in seed conservation, water management, and collective decision-making in agricultural practice.

The shift away from traditional food sovereignty strategies in Bengal can be attributed to several interrelated factors that emerged over time. One significant factor was the impact of colonialism and subsequent modernization efforts. Colonial policies, particularly under British rule, imposed centralized agricultural practices and commercial crop production that undermined traditional diversified farming systems. Shiva mentions one example of how, "Colonialism had dispossessed peasants throughout the Third World of their entitlements to land and to a full participation in agricultural production. In India, the British introduced the system of 'Zamindari' or landlordship, to help divert land from growing food to growing opium and indigo, as well as to extract revenue from the cultivators" (Shiva, 2016, 45). This shift prioritized export-oriented crops over food crops, leading to a reduction in local food diversity and self-sufficiency.

Shiva notes, "traditional farming systems are based on mixed and rotational cropping systems, of cereals, pulses, oilseeds with diverse varieties of each crop, while the Green Revolution package is based on genetically uniform monocultures" (Shiva, 2016, 65). While

diversity of crops isn't as profitable as focusing on cash crops, it is key in preventing famine and was a key strategy in Bengali farming.

Globalization and economic liberalization in the 20th century accelerated the decline of traditional food sovereignty strategies in India. Market oriented reforms encouraged cash crop cultivation for export markets and introduced agribusiness models that prioritized profit over local food needs and ecological sustainability. Shiva points out, "Globalization destroys jobs and livelihoods but creates consumerism" (Shiva, 2005, 130). This brings us to the broader consequences of these reforms, they not only erode traditional livelihoods and food sovereignty but also foster a consumer culture that benefits multinational corporations at the expense of local communities. This underscores the conflict between global economic policies and local, culturally embedded practices of food sovereignty, revealing how economic liberalization can disrupt sustainable and equitable food systems.

4.5.2 Causes of the Bengal Famine

The famine in question in which this thesis seeks to investigate, was sadly not the first to affect the Bengal region due to British colonization, in fact, "The British colonial Bengal suffered countless famine among which the first worst hit in 1770 and the last in 1943" (Islam, 2023, 28). This series of famines was caused by colonialism and a disruption of preexisting food sovereignty. But for the purpose of this thesis, we will only be focusing on the Bengal Famine of 1943 which was the result of colonial exploitation, wartime occupation, natural disasters and administrative failures.

The British colonial rule had already laid the groundwork for vulnerability in the region through exploitative economic policies and the prioritization of resource extraction over local needs. The World War II wartime context further exacerbated the situation, with Japanese occupation in neighboring areas contributing to supply disruptions. During this period, "the British government extensively implemented scorched-earth policies in Bengal like denial of rice and boats. The British government had inadequate defense equipment to resist Japanese attack in Bengal" (Islam, 2023, 27). This policy, aimed at depriving World War II Japanese

forces of resources by commandeering rice stocks, had disastrous consequences for the local population.

The Japanese occupation of Burma in 1942 had severed a critical supply of rice imports to Bengal, drastically reducing the availability of food. Alongside the other Japanese war tactics regarding food was, "their policy for controlling rice marketing, the Japanese instituted 'regional autarchy', a catastrophic policy which prescribed self-sufficiency for each area, and prohibited the movement of commodities not only across national borders but also beyond province and regency boundaries" (Kurasawa, 1998, 33). This strategy was designed to fragment local food systems and reduce reliance on external sources, making it easier for the occupying forces to control and exploit resources. This demonstrates the critical importance of transboundary food sovereignty and how occupying powers can disrupt it to assert control over a state.

This policy had dire consequences. By restricting the movement of food, it undermined the interconnectedness of regional food systems that is essential for maintaining overall food security. The inability to transfer surplus food from one region to another, where it might be needed, led to localized shortages and exacerbated the food crisis. This disruption of food sovereignty resulted in inadequate food supplies in areas that could not produce enough on their own, leading to widespread famine and starvation.

These external pressures were compounded by severe mismanagement and administrative failures. The colonial government in Bengal, led by the British, failed to act decisively to mitigate the crisis. One way in which they sought to provide aid was in that the British, "brought in a large amount of wheat. Now, the people of Bengal are traditionally rice eaters and they would not change their eating habits; they literally starved to death in front of shops and mobile units where wheat was available" (Sen, 1981, 164). This highlights how colonial powers often have a fundamental misunderstanding of the states they seek to subjugate, which can exacerbate crises they contribute to. Their attempt to address the crisis by introducing large quantities of wheat, despite the fact that Bengal's population traditionally consumed rice, illustrates their lack of sensitivity to local dietary practices and needs. The

Bengali citizens' refusal to eat the wheat reflects not just cultural preferences but also practical concerns; unfamiliar foods can cause gastrointestinal issues, such as diarrhea, which is a major cause of death during famines. This demonstrates how the British failed to provide effective aid and address the famine appropriately, as they did not understand or respect the local context, ultimately leading to more suffering and death among the population.

Furthermore, it also shows how the Bengali people were denied entitlement to food because the colonial administration failed to recognize or respect their needs and did not empower them with the means to access food during the crisis. It was well known that Bengalis eat rice and not wheat, but rather than supplying rice (which was very feasible), the British chose not to in order to not further risk losing their territory to the Japanese. This reinforces how the entitlement to food is not just about the physical availability of food but also the social and political structures that govern its distribution.

Effective food governance would involve granting local farmers the sovereignty to manage their own food production and allowing them to continue farming in ways that are adapted to their specific environmental and cultural contexts. By supporting farmers with the necessary tools and resources to address the challenges they face, such as improving irrigation, providing access to quality seeds, and enhancing agricultural techniques, food governance can empower communities to maintain and strengthen their own food systems. Rather than imposing external ideas and foods from different cultural backgrounds, which can disrupt local practices and fail to meet the needs of the population, effective governance respects and integrates local knowledge and preferences. This approach not only supports sustainable food production but also ensures that food systems remain resilient and responsive to the actual needs and conditions of the community.

Furthermore, "The British government lacked adequate defense equipment to withstand a Japanese attack. Moreover, many Bengalis, including Sushil Dhara of Medinipur, were elated by the success of the Japanese. The military department was afraid that the people of Bengal might welcome the Japanese. For this reason, Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 14 November 1941 insisted on the 'Scorched Earth Policy' (Islam, 2023, 31). This illustrates

the extent to which colonial powers, like the British in this context, prioritize their own strategic and political objectives over the well-being of the populations they govern. As described by Islam (2023), the 'scorched earth policy,' was implemented on two fronts: boat boat denial and rice denial policies. The boat denial policy severely impacted the livelihoods of fishermen in Faridpur. The rice denial policy led to violent incidents in Faridpur as authorities tried to control rice prices despite a shortage of rice production. Government agents bought up available rice and impeded its free movement, disrupting the rice market system and causing prices to soar, which significantly contributed to the famine and widespread suffering. (Islam, 2023, 33). The British government's decision to implement this policyin response to the perceived threat of a Japanese invasion reveals a disregard for the lives of the Bengali people. The fear that Bengalis might support the Japanese led to drastic measures that sacrificed local food supplies and resources, directly contributing to widespread suffering and starvation. By prioritizing military and strategic concerns over the basic needs and safety of the local population, the colonial authorities demonstrated a willingness to inflict harm and neglect their duty of care. The policy aimed at denying resources to the Japanese forces, but it also ensured that these resources could not be used to sustain the local population, who were left to suffer the consequences.

4.5.3 Impact of the Famine

> "There were corpses on the road. A girl no more than seventeen, slim and pretty, lay on the damp earth, her lips blue with death: her eyes were open, and the rain fell on them. People chipped at bark, pounded it by the roadside for food; vendors sold leaves at a dollar a bundle. A dog digging at a mound was exposing a human body. Ghostlike men were skimming the stagnant pools to eat the green slime of the waters" (White, and Jacoby, 1946, 165).

This description is one of thousands of horrific scenes the Bengali people had to see daily. The reference to vendors selling leaves at exorbitant prices and people consuming green slime from stagnant pools further underscores the breakdown of normal societal structures and the extreme measures people were forced to take to survive.

The human toll of the Bengal Famine was staggering. It is estimated that between two and three million people perished due to starvation and related diseases. As with all famines, families were torn apart, and the social fabric of Bengal was deeply frayed. The psychological impact was long lasting, with survivors grappling with trauma, grief, and despair long after the crisis subsided (Greenough, 1984, 115).

Economically, the famine had dire consequences. The loss of lives and productive capacity undermined Bengal's long term development prospects. The agricultural sector was particularly hard hit, with widespread loss of livestock and deterioration of farmlands.For the Bengali people, this knowledge that their suffering was a result of deliberate actions rather than a natural disaster adds a layer of trauma and betrayal. It was,"not unknown to the British government that the inhabitants of Faridpur or the people of Bengal would starve to death if the riverine Bengal's lifeline boats were stopped and rice was removed from the coastal area, especially the rice deficit district of Faridpur. So it can be said that the Bengal famine of 1943 is not a natural disaster. It is a man-made disaster" (Islam, 2023, 37). This trauma and suffering endured during the famine contributed to widespread distrust and disillusionment with colonial authorities, fueling political unrest and anticolonial sentiment. This famine, like so many others, thus stands as a stark example of how colonial policies and administrative failures can have devastating and enduring consequences on the lives and societies of occupied regions.

4.5.4 Government Response and Reforms

In the aftermath of the famine, there were significant introspection and reforms. The famine exposed the failures of the colonial administration and highlighted the need for a robust and responsive governance structure to address food security. Post-independence, India implemented several policies aimed at preventing such a catastrophe from occurring again.

One of the key reforms was the establishment of the Public Distribution System (PDS), which aimed to provide subsidized food grains to the poor. This system was designed to ensure that

vulnerable populations had access to essential food supplies, regardless of market fluctuations (George and McKay, 2019, 1).

Additionally, India focused on improving agricultural productivity through the Green Revolution. This initiative involved the adoption of high-yield crop varieties, expansion of irrigation infrastructure, and the use of modern agricultural techniques. These measures significantly boosted food production and reduced the country's dependence on food imports (Yadav and Anand, 2019, 321).

The implementation of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Green Revolution significantly enhances food security and reduces vulnerability to famine. By ensuring that essential food supplies are accessible to the poorest populations, the PDS stabilizes food availability and prices, enabling communities to withstand market fluctuations without relying on external aid. Simultaneously, the Green Revolution promotes agricultural self-sufficiency by increasing productivity through modern farming techniques and high-yield crop varieties. This dual approach not only empowers the nation to take control of their food systems but also fosters resilience against food crises, ultimately supporting long term stability and reducing the need for dependence on foreign assistance.

4.5.5 Conclusion and Aftermath

The Bengal Famine serves as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of administrative failures and the importance of proactive governance in ensuring food security. It underscores the need for timely and coordinated responses to crises and highlights the vital role of government accountability and transparency. The reforms implemented in the wake of the famine, particularly the PDS and the Green Revolution, demonstrate the potential for policy interventions to safeguard against future famines.

Moreover, the Bengal Famine illustrates the broader principle that food security is not merely a matter of food availability but also of access and distribution. Sen's entitlement theory, which emerged from his study of the Bengal Famine, emphasizes that famines can occur even when food is available if people lack the means to access it. This insight has profound

implications for contemporary food security policies, suggesting that addressing poverty and inequality is as crucial as ensuring sufficient food production.

Chapter 5: Global Food Governance and Power Dynamics

5.1 Food Regimes

In 1987 Harriet Friedmann and Phil McMichael coined the term "food regime" to describe, "a constellation or cluster of class and interstate power relations, norms, and institutional rules, and socioecological/geographical specializations that link the global relations of food production and consumption to periods of capital accumulation" (Wittman, 2011, 89). Understanding food regimes is essential for grasping the dynamics of food sovereignty, as they reveal the intricate relationships between local food systems, global market forces, and political power structures. Food regimes illustrate how dominant agricultural practices and policies are often shaped by the interests of powerful states and corporations, which can marginalize local communities and undermine their autonomy over food production. Understanding food regimes can inform practical strategies for activism by guiding the development of policies that prioritize local autonomy, ensuring that communities have the necessary resources and support to reclaim control over their food systems and challenge the dominance of corporate interests.

The concept of food sovereignty challenges these power dynamics by advocating for the rights of communities to control their own food systems, emphasizing local knowledge, sustainable practices, and equitable distribution of resources. For instance, during the era of the first food regime, characterized by colonial expansion and the establishment of global trade networks, many local agricultural practices were displaced, leading to food insecurity and dependency on imported goods (Rioux, 2017, 2). This historical context underscores the

importance of recognizing how global food regimes have often prioritized capital accumulation over community well-being, resulting in social and economic inequalities.

By examining the connections between food regimes and food sovereignty, we can better understand how agricultural policies and practices impact local communities and their ability to exercise control over their food systems. The framework of food regimes provides insights into the challenges faced by movements advocating for food sovereignty, as these movements often arise in direct response to the adverse effects of global agricultural policies that favor large agribusinesses. Understanding these regimes helps identify the systemic barriers that impede food sovereignty, such as land dispossession, corporate monopolies, and unfavorable trade agreements.

Furthermore, analyzing food regimes allows us to recognize the historical and geopolitical contexts that shape contemporary food systems. For example, the transition from the post-World War II food regime to the current neoliberal regime has seen a shift toward industrial agriculture, where corporate interests dominate food production and distribution (Bonanno and Wolf, 2014, 1-3). This shift has not only exacerbated environmental degradation but has also marginalized small-scale farmers and indigenous communities, further complicating the pursuit of food sovereignty.

Ultimately, the study of food regimes is crucial for advocating for food sovereignty, as it highlights the need for structural changes within food systems. By understanding the interplay of power, capital, and ecological considerations within food regimes, activists and policymakers can better strategize for a more just and sustainable food system, one that prioritizes the needs and rights of communities over the interests of powerful entities. Emphasizing food sovereignty through this lens allows for a more holistic approach to addressing the challenges posed by global food systems, fostering resilience and sustainability in local food production.

5.2 Agrarian Citizenship

The revival of rural social movements has opened up new avenues for studying the relationship between land, power, and citizenship in rural areas, particularly in light of ongoing social and economic changes. In the UK, Parker (2006) explored how regulations shape "countryside" citizenship, where governance controls how rural areas are used and managed. Similarly, Woods (2006, 2008) highlighted the need for more research into how rural citizenship and power structures are transformed by what he calls a "critical politics of citizenship." This has led to the idea of agrarian citizenship, which focuses not just on rural geography, but on how political action and production practices are evolving.

Agrarian citizenship examines how rural populations, contrary to expectations of their decline, are mobilizing to redefine citizenship. This concept emphasizes grassroots participation and alternative approaches to production and governance (Wittman, 2009, 121). It encompasses not only the legal and political rights related to land ownership and agricultural production but also broader social, cultural, and environmental dimensions tied to rural livelihoods and identities.

In the context of food sovereignty, agrarian citizenship plays a crucial role. Food sovereignty advocates for the rights of small-scale farmers, indigenous communities, and rural populations to control their own food systems, including production, distribution, and consumption decisions. Agrarian citizenship aligns with these principles by emphasizing the empowerment of local farmers and communities to manage their agricultural practices sustainably, preserve traditional knowledge and seeds, and ensure equitable access to land and resources. For instance, "agrarian citizenship acknowledges the diverse voices of human actors within the food system, but also considers how these voices and practices interact with nature's voice (such as changing weather patterns as a result of climate change), as a "lively" actor that shapes and constrains human activity" (Wittman, 2009, 93). The two ideas are closely linked because agrarian citizenship provides the framework for local farmers to exercise the control that food sovereignty advocates. In other words, food sovereignty is the goal of giving local communities power over their food systems, and agrarian citizenship is

the mechanism through which these communities participate actively, sustainably, and equitably in agriculture.

States vulnerable to artificial famines or those historically victimized by colonial powers often face challenges related to agrarian citizenship. These challenges include land dispossession, lack of access to resources such as seeds and water, and policies that prioritize export-oriented cash crops over local food production. In response to this challenge, "The concept of agrarian citizenship creates explicit links between struggles for political and ecological rights and practices, bringing the rights of nature into the food sovereignty equation" (Wittman, 2009, 93). It serves as a counterbalance to historical and contemporary inequalities in global food systems, particularly in regions vulnerable to food shortages and artificial famines.

It is important to note the issues regarding agrarian citizenship when analyzing how the agriculture industry has changed over the decades. "Since the 1960s, the global agricultural area has increased by about eleven percent, but land access for small-scale farmers in developing countries has decreased due to land concentration, urbanization, and environmental degradation" (Wittman, 2009, 94). Despite a global increase in agricultural land area since the 1960s, small-scale farmers in developing countries have encountered significant obstacles such as land concentration, urbanization, and environmental degradation. This trend highlights a substantial shift in agricultural dynamics where larger farms or corporate entities increasingly dominate land ownership and agricultural production.

The implications of these challenges are profound for food sovereignty and rural livelihoods. Land concentration limits the access of small-scale farmers to productive land, which is essential for their economic stability and food security. Urbanization further reduces available agricultural land as cities expand, leading to the conversion of farmland for urban development. Concurrently, environmental degradation, including soil erosion and depletion of water resources, exacerbates these challenges and undermines the long-term sustainability of agricultural systems. Addressing these issues requires policy interventions that support equitable land distribution, protect the rights of small-scale farmers, promote sustainable

agricultural practices, and ensure resilient food systems amidst global agricultural transformations and environmental pressures. Understanding and addressing agrarian citizenship issues are crucial for advancing food sovereignty principles that empower local communities to control their food production and secure their livelihoods sustainably. By connecting agrarian citizenship to food sovereignty, we strengthen the argument that the ability to manage food production should rest with local communities, not states.

In relation to concepts like transboundary food governance, and food regimes, the concept of agrarian citizenship is interconnected because of the implicit understanding of how local communities are more capable of addressing their own food security and sustainability needs when they have control over their land and resources. It shows that sovereignty over food does not need to be confined to state borders but can operate on a community level, crossing traditional state boundaries. This resonates with the argument that artificial famines are often a product of state-controlled food systems, as seen in the thesis' case studies (Ukraine, Ireland, China, Ethiopia, and India). In each of these cases, local agrarian communities had been functioning with systems of food sovereignty, only to have these systems disrupted by colonial or occupying powers that sought to control food as a means of political and economic dominance.

Agrarian citizenship also helps to demonstrate that food sovereignty is not just about the production of food but also about the broader rights and identities of rural populations, which are frequently marginalized under state-controlled or globalized food systems. As Wittman argues, agrarian citizenship "creates explicit links between struggles for political and ecological rights and practices" (Wittman, 2009, 93), emphasizing that food sovereignty must involve the participation of communities in shaping agricultural policies that are socially and environmentally just.

5.3 Critique of the WTO and the Political Economy of Food

As is abundantly clear by this point, food sovereignty is fundamentally about reclaiming power over food from the hands of market-driven forces and state-centric policies, thus

placing the wellbeing of communities at the center of food systems. This struggle is in direct opposition to the logic of global capitalism, where food is treated as a commodity to be bought, sold, and traded. Global institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) often impose policies on developing states that force them to liberalize their economies, opening up local food markets to international competition. This undermines local farmers, increases dependency on imported food, and erodes the capacity for self-sufficiency, all of which perpetuate cycles of poverty and hunger.

The political economy of food is shaped by global markets, trade policies, and the concentration of power in multinational corporations and states. The global food system is characterized by the dominance of a few powerful players who control the production, distribution, and sale of food. This concentration of power leads to a system where food is treated primarily as a commodity rather than a basic human right, deepening inequalities between wealthy nations and poor countries or regions.

Central to the critique of food sovereignty are the roles of major international financial institutions, such as the WTO, IMF, and World Bank, which often impose policies that prioritize free market ideologies at the expense of local agricultural systems. Developing countries are often pressured to liberalize their economies, eliminate subsidies for local farmers, and open their markets to foreign agribusinesses. This undermines local food systems and makes countries dependent on imported food, which is often produced more cheaply due to economies of scale in the Global North. As a result, small-scale farmers in developing countries are pushed out of the market, leading to the loss of livelihoods and the collapse of local food systems. Instead of producing food for local consumption, many developing countries are incentivized to grow cash crops for export, further deepening their reliance on the global market. This dependency on global capital and state structures leads to a vicious cycle: as local food systems are eroded, countries become more reliant on external inputs, technologies, and imported food. This, in turn, reduces their ability to build resilient food systems that prioritize the needs of local communities. In this way, the political economy of food creates a system of state dependence, where both governments and citizens

are beholden to the interests of multinational corporations and international financial institutions.

In 1995 when national governments joined the WTO, "they relinquished their powers to unilaterally set their own food and agricultural policies" (Wittman, 2011, 90). The WTO's conditions completely overhauled food security programs in impoverished countries. However, there was a disparity in how different countries received the program, "the main effect of bringing agriculture into the WTO was not to reform global agriculture in line with market rationalities, but to aggravate already-existing uneven opportunities in the world food system" (Pritchard, 2009 in Wittman, 2011, 97). The WTO's actions in this context reflect its role as a forum where international trade rules are negotiated, which inherently involves balancing the interests of different member states. However, critics argue that the WTO's agricultural policies have often favored powerful agricultural lobbies and industrialized nations, perpetuating uneven opportunities and exacerbating challenges for developing countries striving to achieve food security and sustainable agricultural development. The statement by Pritchard suggests that rather than leveling the playing field or promoting fair competition, the WTO's integration of agriculture into its framework has tended to reinforce and amplify existing inequalities within the global food system.

Furthermore, "following the establishment of the WTO, over 30 million peasants lost land access, highlighting a trend of depeasantization. Today, almost half of the world's population resides in rural areas, but in industrialized countries, agricultural producers make up less than 5% of the population. Advocates for food sovereignty argue that improving land access for diverse farmers is crucial for challenging corporate land consolidation" (Wittman, 2011, 94-95). This process involves the displacement and marginalization of small scale farmers, which can lead to increased rural poverty, migration to urban areas, and loss of traditional agricultural knowledge and practices. The displacement of peasants disrupts local food systems, affecting food security and sovereignty at the grassroots level. The consolidation of agricultural land by large corporations poses a threat to everyone. Corporate consolidation often leads to monoculture farming, increased use of agrochemicals, and prioritization of

export-oriented crops over local food needs. This trend undermines biodiversity, environmental sustainability, and the economic viability of smallholder farming.

A possible counterargument is that liberalized trade can improve food security by creating market efficiencies. Proponents argue that by opening up markets, countries can specialize in what they produce most efficiently and trade for goods they cannot produce as effectively. This theoretically lowers prices, increases the availability of food, and enhances access for consumers. In this view, the free flow of goods across borders is essential to ensuring that food surpluses in one region can offset shortages in another, creating a more stable global food supply.

However, this perspective overlooks the unequal power dynamics in global trade systems, where wealthier countries with advanced agricultural technologies dominate markets, often dumping cheap, subsidized food in developing nations. This harms local farmers who cannot compete, leading to the erosion of local food systems and creating long-term dependencies on imports. Additionally, the focus on market efficiency fails to account for the social, cultural, and ecological impacts of dismantling traditional agricultural practices.

The trends of depeasantization and corporate consolidation call for policy interventions that prioritize land reform and support for small-scale farmers. Policies that promote equitable land distribution, protect farmers' rights, and foster sustainable agricultural practices are crucial for advancing food sovereignty. These policies can help mitigate the adverse effects of globalization and trade liberalization on rural communities.

As discussed in *The WTO, Agribusiness, and The Third Food Regime (2011),* one significant issue arises from the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), which has been criticized for favoring large-scale agribusiness over small-scale farmers and local food systems. The AoA's provisions have pressured developing countries to open their agricultural markets to international competition, reduce tariffs on imported food products, and adopt industrial farming practices that prioritize export-oriented cash crops over food crops for domestic consumption (Wilhelm-Ross, 2011, 30). As a result, many communities have seen their

traditional farming practices and local food sovereignty undermined by the influx of cheap imports and the displacement of small farmers who struggle to compete in global markets.

For example in India the external market tried to influence rural farming systems by importing foreign seeds but,

> "The fact that in spite of miracle seeds, farmers in large parts of India prefer to retain and exchange seeds among themselves, outside the market framework, is not taken as an indicator of better viability of their own production and exchange network. It is instead viewed as reason for a bigger push for commercialisation, with bigger loans and better incentives to corporate producers and suppliers. The existence of the indigenous seed industry as a decentralised community based activity is totally eclipsed in the World Bank perspective according to which, 'before the 1960s, the seed industry was little developed" (Shiva, 62).

The significance of this lies in the critique of the World Bank's dismissal of traditional seed practices in favor of commercialization. By overlooking the effectiveness of community-based seed exchanges, which function outside the commercial market, the World Bank's perspective implies a disregard for the resilience and value of these indigenous systems. This approach reflects a broader trend of prioritizing corporate interests and market-driven solutions over locally managed, decentralized agricultural practices, highlighting the tension between global financial institutions' policies and effective, culturally embedded practices in agriculture.

Another illustrative example of the WTO's impact on food sovereignty can be seen in the case of Mexican tortillas. As described in *The Politics of Food: The Global Conflict between Food Security and Food Sovereignty*, Mexico's implementation of NAFTA, which includes WTO principles, led to a surge in cheap corn imports from the United States. This influx undermined Mexico's centuries-old system of maize farming, pushing many rural farmers into poverty and contributing to food insecurity (Schanbacher, 2010, 42). By promoting trade agreements like NAFTA, which aligned with WTO principles, the U.S. facilitated the influx of subsidized American corn into Mexico. This undercut local maize prices, making it nearly impossible for small farmers to compete.

The U.S. was empowered to flood the Mexican market with cheap maize through its system of agricultural subsidies, which allowed American farmers to produce corn at artificially low prices. These subsidies gave U.S. agribusinesses a competitive advantage in international markets, enabling them to sell maize below the cost of production, a practice known as "dumping" (Schnabacher, 2010, 43). NAFTA and the WTO reinforced this by promoting free trade policies that prioritized market liberalization over local protections.

Furthermore, Schnabacher also describes that under NAFTA, Mexico was required to reduce tariffs on U.S. corn imports, while the WTO's rules discouraged Mexico from implementing protective measures like subsidies or tariffs that could safeguard its farmers. As a result, heavily subsidized U.S. corn flooded into Mexico, making it impossible for small scale Mexican farmers, who lacked similar government support, to compete. This led to the collapse of Mexico's traditional maize farming industry and eroded local food sovereignty as the country became increasingly dependent on imported U.S. corn, rather than its own agricultural production. The pressure also led to declining traditional farming practices and increased rural poverty, consolidating corporate control and dismantling local food sovereignty (Schnabacher, 2010, 43)

This systemic exploitation exemplified the broader patterns of neocolonialism, where external powers exert control over local economies for their benefit. The U.S. actions mirror classic colonial practices, where foreign powers exploit local resources and labor for their own benefit, but in this case, the dominance was achieved through economic and policy levers rather than direct political control. By undermining local food systems and consolidating corporate power over agriculture, the U.S. effectively maintained a neocolonial grip on Mexico's agricultural economy.

Moreover, the WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) has been used to challenge and overturn domestic policies aimed at protecting food sovereignty. For instance, India's efforts to subsidize its agricultural sector and support small farmers have faced challenges at the WTO, where they have been deemed in violation of international trade rules (Mishra, 2024, 1). This has limited India's policy space to implement measures that prioritize food security

and local agricultural development over trade liberalization goals. On one hand, India asserts that its subsidies are crucial for ensuring food security and supporting vulnerable farming communities, especially in a country where agriculture is a primary livelihood for millions. By prioritizing local agricultural development, India seeks to protect its farmers from global market fluctuations and ensure sustainable food production.

On the other hand, the WTO's stance emphasizes the need for compliance with international trade agreements to maintain a level playing field among member nations. From this perspective, India's policies could be seen as undermining trade liberalization efforts and creating unfair advantages in the global market.

However, the WTO's strict adherence to international trade agreements overlooks the unique economic and social contexts of individual countries, particularly developing nations like India. These nations face significant challenges, such as poverty, food insecurity, and reliance on smallholder farmers, which necessitate targeted support through subsidies. Rather than undermining trade liberalization, India's policies aim to create a more equitable environment where local farmers can compete and thrive. Additionally, prioritizing food sovereignty and local agricultural development can contribute to global stability and sustainable development, ultimately benefiting the international community by ensuring that all nations can produce sufficient food for their populations. Ignoring these priorities in favor of rigid compliance with trade rules may exacerbate inequalities and undermine the long-term sustainability of global food systems.

The WTO's policies and agreements have posed significant challenges to food sovereignty globally, often exacerbating inequalities and undermining local food systems in favor of globalized markets and corporate interests. The examples of Mexico and India illustrate how WTO rules can contribute to the erosion of community-based agriculture and exacerbate vulnerabilities to food crises, highlighting the need for policies that prioritize food sovereignty and local autonomy in agriculture.

To strengthen food sovereignty and counter the adverse effects of Global North economic policies, reforming the current framework of organizations, such as the WTO, would be

necessary. By revisiting the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and creating space for transboundary food sovereignty, a more equitable system can be fostered. Instead of prioritizing large-scale agribusiness and free-market competition, the WTO could emphasize policies that support small scale farmers and rural communities, allowing them to maintain control over their local food systems. This would enable states like India, which have faced legal challenges at the WTO for supporting domestic farmers, to pursue policies that prioritize food sovereignty over trade liberalization. Moreover, creating mechanisms within the WTO to support agroecological practices and traditional farming methods could help counter the current trend of corporate land consolidation and environmental degradation. Allowing for these reforms would acknowledge the necessity of food sovereignty and provide a more balanced approach to global trade, empowering communities to regain control over their food systems and reduce dependence on external markets.

In the capitalist system, food security is framed as an issue of production, how to increase food output to feed a growing population. But this approach ignores the more fundamental issue of access and distribution, which are often governed by political and economic factors rather than by the availability of food. As global food systems become more centralized, food sovereignty movements find it increasingly difficult to advocate for local control and self sufficiency. One of the most insidious consequences of the capitalist food system is its creation of state dependency. In many cases, national governments are unable or unwilling to challenge the power of multinational corporations and international financial institutions. They become complicit in promoting policies that benefit corporate interests at the expense of their own populations. This dependency is reinforced by international aid systems, which often provide temporary relief without addressing the structural causes of food insecurity, further entrenching the capitalist model of food production.

5.4 Brazilian Activists MST

There are policies which already exist at promoting equitable land distribution and fostering food sovereignty. By supporting these policies and advocating for their development, they may be adopted by other communities who have been affected by the WTO in terms of

agricultural rights. Moyo and Yeros (2005) details how in Brazil, the social movement 'Landless Workers' Movement' aka MST, advocated for land reform as a means of achieving social justice and food sovereignty. Despite facing significant resistance and violence, the MST ultimately succeeded in advocating for land reform. Under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's administration, the Programa Nacional de Reforma Agrária was implemented. However, even after the implementation the MST continued to face repression, and activists were killed with impunity. Additionally, the government deployed military police to intimidate the MST leadership, indicating that the relationship between the MST and the state was contentious rather than wholly successful (Moyo and Yeros, 2005)

The influence of large landowners over the judiciary in Brazil is evident from the data: between 1985 and 1999, over a thousand rural activists were murdered in land disputes, but only ten out of fifty six gunmen were prosecuted (Moyo and Yeros, 2005, 296). This statistic reveals the impunity with which violence against rural workers occurs and underscores the power that large landowners wield within the legal system. Such control allows them to evade justice, maintain dominance over land, and suppress movements for land reform and workers' rights. This imbalance perpetuates cycles of violence and inequality in Brazil's rural areas.

Since President F.H. Cardoso assumed office in 1995, nearly two hundred MST activists were killed without any convictions of the perpetrators.This trend continued under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, with the government deploying military police to intimidate MST leadership. State-led land reforms, especially in the 20th century, have often been influenced by the propertied class, leading to prolonged struggles for implementation and consolidation (Moyo and Yeros, 2005, 296). There are many lessons to learn from the struggle of the land activists in Brazil. One is the role and importance of activist groups. Groups like the MST are crucial in pushing for land reforms. They highlight the issues faced by marginalized communities and advocate for policies that promote social justice and food sovereignty. Despite facing significant resistance and violence, the MST's persistent efforts kept the issue of land reform on the national agenda.

State-led land reforms often face significant challenges, including resistance from powerful landowning classes and systemic issues within the judiciary and law enforcement. The example of the MST shows that even when governments implement land reform programs, such as the Programa Nacional de Reforma Agrária under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, these programs can be undermined by violence, intimidation, and lack of enforcement. Furthermore, this is a prime example of the violence and impunity members of the community and activists face when seeking justice or reform. The high level of violence against MST activists, coupled with the low rate of prosecution and conviction of perpetrators, underscores the dangers faced by those advocating for land reform. This highlights the broader issues of inequality and injustice in the agricultural sector.

Despite these challenges, the MST's persistence demonstrates the resilience of grassroots movements. Their continuous advocacy and mobilization efforts, even in the face of repression, are vital for keeping the pressure on governments to address land inequality and promote food sovereignty. This example also shows how the relationship between activist groups and the state can be complex and often contentious. While the state has the power to implement reforms, the influence of powerful interests can hinder genuine progress. And lastly, we can see the importance of creating comprehensive policies for long lasting, holistic change that benefits communities over corporations. The MST example indicates that piecemeal or poorly enforced reforms can lead to ongoing struggles and setbacks. Effective land reform should include not only land redistribution but also support for sustainable agricultural practices, access to resources, and protection of activists.

Chapter 6: Cross-Cutting Issues and Modern Relevance

6.1 How Gender Affects Survival Rate in Famines

This section is to briefly discuss how gender plays a role in surviving famines. During famines, "In general, women are more resilient than men because females store more body fat than males, and a statistical effect also favours female survival because famines are associated with fertility declines, so maternal mortality rates fall for the duration of the food crisis. On the other hand, women often face higher 'social vulnerability' than men, in cultural contexts where intrahousehold allocation rules for food, health care and other basic needs favour males over females" (Devereux, 2000, 12). Here we can see the critical implications for understanding how famines, especially artificial ones orchestrated by colonial powers, disproportionately affect women. While women possess biological advantages such as higher body fat percentages and reduced fertility during famines, these benefits are often overshadowed by social vulnerabilities.

Qualitative data from the FOA shows that women are more likely to struggle to access food, "even when they have the same income and education levels and live in similar areas as men" (FAO et al., 2020, 24), and so we can understand that artificial famines relate not only to the political struggles of land stewardship and food access, but also are a feminist issue in the ways in which women are disproportionately affected due to patriarchal mechanisms.

Cultural norms frequently prioritize men over women in the allocation of food and healthcare within households. During famines, these biases intensify, leading to greater suffering for women who may receive less food and inadequate medical attention. When colonial powers weaponize food and hunger, they engage in gender-based violence that exacerbates these disparities, intentionally or unintentionally harming women more severely. This dynamic illustrates how, in times of hunger, social customs can outweigh biological advantages,

resulting in women suffering disproportionately. A comparable situation can be seen in conflict zones, where access to resources is similarly weaponized, and women often bear the brunt of deprivation and violence. Conflicts often result in, "food wars', not only because hunger is used as a weapon but also because food insecurity is both an effect and cause of conflict" (Messer and Cohen, 2004, 1).

Some examples being, the Yemen Civil War: where women and children were particularly affected, facing heightened risks of malnutrition and lack of access to healthcare (Rohwerder, 2017, 2). The Syrian Civil War: where women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the loss of healthcare services and the scarcity of food and water. Additionally, sexual violence being used as a weapon of war, further contributing to the suffering of women in the conflict (Shafi, 2019, 21) The South Sudan Conflict: Where many women are responsible for procuring food for their families, and in times of conflict, they are forced to take greater risks to find food and water. Furthermore, there have been numerous reports of gender-based violence, including rape and abduction, exacerbating the hardships faced by women (Ellsberg, 2020, 3). And The Rohingya crisis in Myanmar: which resulted in mass displacement and severe deprivation for the Rohingya people. Women and girls in refugee camps faced significant challenges, including limited access to food, clean water, and healthcare. They were also at higher risk of sexual and gender-based violence, which is prevalent in the overcrowded and under-resourced camps (Priddy et al. 2022). Journalist Fiona MacGregor has also reported that girls "are being forced to marry…simply to secure more food for themselves and their families. With UN World Food Programme rations allocated by household, families are marrying off girls as young as 12 to reduce the number of mouths to feed and create new households with food quotas of their own" (MacGregor, 2017, 1). This situation unfortunately isn't unique to Myanmar, and while these international organizations aim to help, they can unintentionally contribute to this objectification by incentivizing families to use girls as bargaining chips for survival. This form of gendered violence is rooted in Myanmar's disrupted food sovereignty, a consequence of British colonial rule. Without this historical disruption, Myanmar might not need to rely on international aid, and these girls would not face such exploitation to access basic food.

Such contexts underscore the intersection of gender, power, and survival, revealing the need for policies and interventions that address both the immediate and structural factors contributing to women's heightened vulnerability during crises. They also emphasize the intersection of conflict, resource scarcity, and gender-based violence, demonstrating how women often bear the brunt of deprivation and violence in these situations. The weaponization of food and healthcare not only perpetuates physical deprivation but also inflicts psychological and social harm, contributing to long-term destabilization and gender-based violence.

Implementing food sovereignty systems could greatly improve women's survival rates during famines and crises by reducing their social vulnerability. As has been discussed at length in this paper: food sovereignty empowers communities to take collective control over their food production, reducing reliance on external sources and fostering shared responsibility. When communities are not made to rely on external food sources and are responsible collectively for food, there is more shared responsibility which leads to shared respect and value. By enabling women, as well as men, in communities to have a direct role in their food systems management, food sovereignty can mitigate the social vulnerabilities women face, such as biased food distribution. With stronger community-based food systems, local women's participation can lead to more equitable resource allocation and improved nutrition, reducing gender disparities and enhancing resilience. Ultimately, food sovereignty not only addresses immediate food needs but also strengthens social structures, reducing vulnerability and increasing survival rates for women and marginalized groups during crises.

6.2 Further Discussion on Modern Relevance: Famine as a Tool of Occupation in Palestine

The situation of Israel creating an artificial famine in Palestine presents a compelling case for testing and refining the conceptual tools I have presented and used to understand food sovereignty and artificial famines by occupying or colonial powers. This scenario not only validates the relevance of these tools but also empowers them by demonstrating their

applicability in contemporary contexts. Food sovereignty, defined as the right of communities to control their own food systems, can be re-examined through the lens of Israeli policies in Gaza. The blockade and deliberate restrictions on food supplies highlight how external political agendas can undermine local food autonomy. As noted by scholars, the use of food as a weapon of control by occupying powers echoes historical instances of artificial famines, thus redefining and expanding the scope of these concepts to include modern geopolitical strategies (Pappé, 2014, 112). This case underscores the necessity of robust frameworks that address the complexities of power dynamics and the strategic manipulation of food resources, ultimately enriching the discourse on food sovereignty and artificial famines in the context of occupation.

The creation of famines by colonial or occupying powers is not a relic of the past but a pressing contemporary issue, notably exemplified by the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. This section examines how Israel's policies and actions have contributed to food insecurity in Palestine, serving as a form of collective punishment and control, and explores the international community's response, or lack thereof.

The blockade imposed by Israel on Gaza has severely restricted the flow of goods, including essential food supplies. Reports indicate that there are substantial amounts of aid, including food, that remain undelivered, rotting in trucks at border points because Israel does not permit their entry into Gaza. This blockade, justified by Israel on security grounds, has been criticized for causing a humanitarian crisis, with dire implications for the civilian population.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR),

> "It is unprecedented to make an entire civilian population go hungry this completely and quickly. Israel is destroying Gaza's food system and using food as a weapon against the Palestinian people. Israel is destroying and blocking access to farmland and the sea. Recent reports allege that since Israeli military's ground offensive started on 27 October, approximately 22% of agricultural land, including orchards, greenhouses, and farmland in northern Gaza, has been razed by Israeli forces. Israel has reportedly destroyed approximately

> 70% of Gaza's fishing fleet. Even with little humanitarian aid that has been allowed to enter, people still lack food and fuel to cook" (UN OCHA, 2024, 1).

And here we can see that the famine is artificial, in this circumstance there are people starving to death when just outside the borders there is more than enough food to provide ample relief, but it is being blocked due to political conflict. Furthermore, beyond the issue of aid, natural resources are being specifically targeted to intentionally block Palestinians from having any access to food. Political conflict should not be able to block people from receiving food. Every single human is entitled to food and should not have to rely on their government to prove to external occupying powers that they are entitled to it. This is why food sovereignty separate from a state centric framework is so vital.

The intentional restriction of food supplies to Palestinians can be seen as a form of collective punishment which is common with occupying and colonial powers. By denying food and essential supplies, Israel exerts control over the Palestinian population, affecting their health and well-being. This practice is reminiscent of historical uses of famine as a tool of subjugation and control by colonial powers. Scholar Sara Roy argues, "Israeli policy in the Gaza Strip and West Bank has been and continues to be defined by what it does not allow rather than by what it does. What it does not allow is real indigenous control over key economic resources needed for the establishment of an independent Palestinian economy" (Roy, 2007, 122). The ability for another state to have such absolute control over another undermines the principles of food sovereignty. And in this way we can understand how interconnected the causes of famine are with the deprivation of the ability of citizens to exercise food sovereignty by colonial and occupying states.

The United States, a key ally of Israel, has supported some measures ostensibly aimed at providing aid, such as the proposal to build an "Aid pier." However, this initiative has been criticized for being ineffective and for serving as a cover for military operations. It is merely another means to support the colonizing power of Israel and not a means of promoting food security as they state. Military operatives having been disguised as aid workers used the structure to infiltrate the area, further undermining trust in such initiatives. Moreover, air

drops of aid by the US have often been poorly executed, with significant portions of the aid landing in the sea or causing harm to civilians upon landing. Analyst Rashid Khalidi states, "U.S. policies have frequently undermined genuine humanitarian efforts in Gaza, often prioritizing strategic and political interests over humanitarian needs" (Khalidi, 2010, 78). The goal with all of these measures is not to empower Palestinians with food sovereignty so they may have control and security over their food production, but to support Israel in keeping the Palestinian people in a position of dependency and insecurity.

Another key feature of colonial powers creating artificial famines is through ecocide and the destruction of agriculture, as seen with the previous case studies. Israel is also guilty of ecocide through the destruction of Palestinian agricultural lands and olive trees. This tactic not only undermines the local economy but also forces Palestinians into dependency on external aid, which Israel controls. This destruction of farmland is a deliberate strategy to erode food sovereignty, a critical aspect of Palestinian autonomy. According to environmental scholar D.A Aber, "As a settler colonial ideology, Zionism seeks to erase all traces of Palestinian indigenous life from Palestine…This erasure produces inevitable ecological destruction. As such, it is fundamental to rewrite the formulation of settler 'space' as inherently ecocidal, as it implicates not only the indigenous population but also the local and regional ecologies" (Jaber, 2018, 6). This perspective is valuable as it allows for a more holistic understanding of settler colonialism as a tool for both the displacement of people, but also as a means of degrading of the environment, which affects both local and regional ecologies.This reinforces the idea that the struggle for indigenous rights is intertwined with environmental justice.

The international community face challenges in addressing this issue. Political complexities, including strong alliances and geopolitical interests, often hinder decisive action. Additionally, there is a lack of enforceable international policies that ensure the right to food sovereignty for occupied populations. This is why the need to build international frameworks that support decentralized, community based authority for food sovereignty rights is so vital.

6.3 The Potential of Food Sovereignty Policies

The potential of food sovereignty politics could be a key change in influencing global policy to mitigate artificial famines and support local populations in regards to control over their food systems. Implementing food sovereignty policies could provide a pathway to preventing crises such as Israel's imposition of famine on Palestine.

Ensuring communities have the right and capacity to grow and regulate their own food supply, independent of state control, could also prevent the manipulation of food as a weapon. Such policies would empower local populations, enhance their resilience, and reduce reliance on potentially unreliable external aid. Food sovereignty advocate La Via Campesina states, "Food Sovereignty offers itself as a process of building social movements and empowering peoples to organise their societies in ways that transcend the neoliberal vision of a world of commodities, markets and selfish economic actors" (La Via Campesina, 2013, 1). The situation in Palestine highlights the modern relevance of artificial famines created by occupying powers. The blockade and destruction of agriculture by Israel, coupled with ineffective and often harmful international aid efforts, underscore the need for robust food sovereignty policies to protect the rights and well being of vulnerable populations regardless of global politics or economic motivations of external actors that transcends the neoliberal vision of the world.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Implications

7.1 What is the solution?

The very concept of sovereignty itself is at a crossroads. Traditionally, sovereignty has been understood as the authority of a state to govern itself without external interference. However, when applied to the idea of food sovereignty, this concept reveals its limitations. The notion that each state could independently produce all the necessary food for its population is impractical and outdated. Food sovereignty must be viewed as a scenario of global interaction, transcending the traditional boundaries of state sovereignty. Just as digital sovereignty cannot be confined to a single state due to the global nature of technology, food

sovereignty also requires a global perspective. The issue of food sovereignty extends beyond international relations to challenge the very concept of sovereignty. It necessitates a critique of the political economy and the global social relations of capital, which influence state sovereignty. As such, food sovereignty involves a critique of the singular dimension of state sovereignty, highlighting the need for a global approach to food governance.

As mentioned by Fontana et. al, "Food sovereignty is not an endpoint in achieving food security; rather, it is an ongoing, adaptive capacity for a community to overcome food system threats, leading to resilience" (Fontana et. al, 2022, 3). And in this way we can see that resilience is the end goal. Food sovereignty is the solution that empowers communities with the ability to foster resilience: against famine, against a global monoculture and against a capitalistic system that does not value their wellbeing nor their cultural values. Ultimately, food sovereignty must be seen through a macro lens, addressing issues that no single state can govern alone. This redefined concept of sovereignty acknowledges that the social relations of capital and the interconnectedness of global systems necessitate a collaborative approach to achieving true food sovereignty.

The aim of this thesis is not only to explore the ways in which communities should be empowered to have food sovereignty outside of the construct of the state, but also to advocate for why existing communities who already have food sovereignty, such as those mentioned in this thesis, should be able to maintain their way of life without the imposition of state centralized control. The state's restrictions and regulations, coupled with the corrupting influence of capitalistic and Western values, do not serve communities. Instead, they operate solely for profit and enforce a system of standardization, often at the expense of those who neither want nor need it.

7.2 Conclusions

Food sovereignty, necessitates a redefinition beyond the confines of individual state sovereignty. Food sovereignty must be envisioned as a scenario of global interaction.

Sovereignty is a precise political concept rooted in the historical context of state governance, but the challenges of food sovereignty require solutions that transcend individual state boundaries. This issue is not merely a matter of international relations but requires a critique of the political economy of global capital relations, which influence state sovereignty. The concept of food sovereignty should challenge the limitations of state-centric sovereignty, recognizing that the social relations of capital transcend borders and require a global approach.

The conclusions drawn in this paper underscore a critical imperative: the complete eradication of famine in the 21st century necessitates a multifaceted approach that extends beyond mere technical solutions, such as advancements in food production and distribution. It is evident that addressing the complex issue of famine requires a substantial augmentation of political will, both at the national and international levels, surpassing the current levels of commitment observed thus far.

Drawing from the comprehensive analysis presented in the case studies, it becomes apparent that history often repeats itself, highlighting famine as an effective tool employed by colonial powers to assert political and economic dominance over regions. The recurrence of famines underscores a systemic issue deeply intertwined with the dynamics of power, exploitation, and control. These tragedies are not random occurrences but rather deliberate outcomes of historical and contemporary colonialism.

To effectively combat the persistent threat of famine and break the cycles of oppression, it is crucial to empower nations to reclaim control over their food production and distribution systems. This means fostering autonomy and self sufficiency, reducing dependence on external forces that exploit and manipulate. Equally important is amplifying discussions on the devastating impact of artificial famines, highlighting the intricate web of factors that enable their occurrence. By exposing the deliberate orchestration and perpetuation of famines by colonial powers, both past and present, we can deepen our understanding of these tragedies and drive meaningful action toward their prevention and mitigation.

In essence, the eradication of famine requires a paradigm shift, one that prioritizes the sovereignty and self determination of communities, challenges entrenched power structures, and fosters global solidarity in the pursuit of justice and equity. Only through concerted efforts, guided by unwavering political will and a commitment to confronting historical injustices, can we hope to create a future where famine exists only in the past, rather than perpetuated as a weapon of oppression.

Building upon this foundation, my research contributes to existing knowledge by framing food sovereignty as a critical lens through which to analyze the ongoing impacts of colonialism and the political economy of global capital on contemporary food systems. It underscores the necessity of viewing food sovereignty not just as a local or national concern but as an integral component of global justice and equity. This perspective calls for a reevaluation of the frameworks currently used to understand food security, emphasizing the need for collaborative, transnational efforts that reflect the interconnectedness of our global food system. For future research, I recommend exploring the role of grassroots movements and indigenous knowledge systems in shaping food sovereignty initiatives. Investigating how these local efforts intersect with global policies could provide invaluable insights into creating sustainable, equitable food systems. Additionally, further analysis of the historical contexts of artificial famines can deepen our understanding of their recurrence and offer pathways for advocacy and reform aimed at dismantling the systemic inequities that continue to foster these tragedies. The culmination of these efforts of fostering food sovereignty can lead to a more just and equitable global food system, where communities are not only able to feed themselves but also thrive without the threat of artificial famines facilitated by state policies and international frameworks.

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