

The international politics of food security: How to conciliate global health guidelines for massive food production with fair trade in the third world?

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Abstract

This paper explores the interplay of global public health guidelines to both shape food security policy for the third world and promote free trade of commodities. The massive food production system rather than a facilitator to the eradication of hunger contributes to major human rights and environmental violations. As a by-product of a broad human security agenda, the notion of food security may not be dissociated from fair trade imperatives. By targeting the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development enhances a multidisciplinary scope, transforming the relationship among individuals, communities, states, international organizations and non-state actors, such as NGO's and private companies. Against this background, the main argument investigates whether the institutionalization of global public health operates as a major obstacle to promote food security in the third world.

Keywords: Food security, Public health, Food industry, International law, Fair trade, Commodities.

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Abbreviations: TWAIL: Third World Approaches to International Law

Introduction

The struggle against extreme poverty, hunger and malnutrition informs the notion of food security enhanced at the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The right to have access to safe and nutritious food, reaffirmed at the Zero Hunger Challenge launched at Rio+20 at the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development, implies not only permanent access to food, but also increase in smallholder productivity and income [1,2]. As a response to unprecedented population growth, the increasing demand of agricultural and livestock demand transformed the whole channel of food production. The rise of mass farm production transformed the use of the land, impacting the workforce, the environment and threatening the survival of local communities through the global south [3,4]. The demand for commodities increases the market value, not necessarily resulting in benefits for the collective. Instead, the food industry mechanization and standardization adds to the unbalance of powers among states. To have a share in the global market, the food industry in the developing economies have to comply with sanitary requirements. Multilateral cooperation to enforce global public health guidelines, initially designed to prevent the spread of epidemics and food intoxication, turned into an asset to boost the rise of the value of commodities subverting the logic of mass food production as a tool to eradicate extreme poverty [5].

Food security, as part of a broad human security agenda, nevertheless, means different challenges for the third world, connecting environmental, health and economic security concerns alike [6-10]. On the opposite side, the food industry constant search for profit radically transformed the uses of the land. The triumph of the genetic engineering and Artificial

Intelligence means rising the productivity while offering less work places. The standardization of agricultural and farm practices though domestic and international regulations enhances sanitary premises dictated by medical and pharmaceutical researches funded in the rich north. As a result, the food industry constant search for profits changes also the dynamic of production itself. By overrating the sanitary regulations to guarantee the security of crops, animal food and livestock, the global health policy for food security overshadows the human, social, economic and environmental cost of massive food production for local communities in the global south [11-14].

The Politics of Food Security for the Global South: Concepts and Challenges

Post-cold war multilateral cooperation paved the way for the inception of new concepts to reframe the language of international law. The 1993 Vienna Declaration and Program of Action initiate the shift to a human rights oriented perspective: [15-18] 'All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms' [19].

The interdependence of political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights overcomes the previous ideological division that politicized the priority of civil and political rights, from the capitalist side, and the superiority of social, economic and cultural rights from the communist bloc. The universality,

indivisibility and interdependence, nevertheless, enhance the so-called third generation human rights, informed by the rise of the environmentalist agenda. For the global south, the need to subordinate economic interests to sustainable development threatens to overshadow social rights gains. Fair trade may be the coherent response to avert negative side effects of social and environmental dumping in connection with the spread of outsourcing as a tool to reduce costs and raise revenues to the rich north industry [20-22].

The risk management of costs turns into an asset to attract foreign investment to third world economies [23,24]. Not exclusive to the global south, the Brexit crisis and Trump administration rupture with multilateral trade and environmental agreements suggest similar patterns. The impacts of international politics to the survival of previous legal frameworks to foster global consensus, contributes not only to the erosion of institutional cooperation mechanisms, but also undermining the trust among state and non-state actors.

Global Public Health in the Age of Massive Agriculture and Live Stock Production

The rise of the value of commodities, such as grains and livestock, increases the weight of developing economies in the global trade [25-28]. To have a share at the market of massive food production, states shall adopt several guidelines to assure the compliance with international regulations [29-33]. The multilateral cooperation among states may be part of a regional integration project, such as the European Union, MERCOSUR and NAFTA [34,35]. Yet, free trade agreements may still be considered a marginal feature of the politics of food security [36]. Massive farm production as an effective tool to fight the fear from hunger, in practice, threatens social and environmental justice in the third world [37,38]. The negative side effects of the expansion of international food systems may threaten the local systems, leading to an exodus of the rural population to urban outskirts [39,40].

The disregard of fair trade as a key instrument to decrease social-economic inequalities land occupation, resulting in the displacement of large populations from the country side to urban centers. The agriculture and livestock sectors occupy vast areas of developing states, especially in South America [41]. The commodities market fuels both the animal food demand for soy beans and corn, and livestock. The concentration of land in the name of massive farm production as such displays also links with modern day slavery, facilitating the allocation of cheap work force to remote areas [42,43].

A closer look at the meaning of massive export for developing economies highlights another side effect of globalization. In some cases, the price to progress also implied corruption, as it is the case of the JBS (a major livestock export conglomerate located in Brazil) involvement at the Car Wash scandal in Brazil [44,45]. The experience of Brazil, as a periphery actor within the management of international peace and security, and still a major player in matters of international trade dispute [46,47], sheds a light at some of the many challenges to the very legitimacy of global mechanisms designed to implement fair trade standards in connection with food security imperatives [48-50].

Global Public Health Institutionalized

The rise of health concerns as a global issue may be founded in the very starting of the international organizations as a channel to promote cooperation to prevent the spread of epidemic diseases across borders. As part of the so-called second generation of human rights, the right to human dignity impacts social and cultural relations under the flag of universalism [51-53].

This Universalist perspective reassesses the foundations of state security, to address the security of the human beings. The rise of food security concerns, in this sense, may be considered as a by-product of the human security doctrine that challenges the state-centered sovereignty concept [54,55].

Despite the legacy of the European imperialism, the creation of the International Health Office in 1908 later incorporated by the League of the Nations as a Committees of Health embodies both a continuation and a rupture with the white man civilization project [56].

The United Nations system enlarge the range of international agencies acting to promote international cooperation in several areas connecting not only health concerns, but also its implications for agriculture, social-economic transformation through education and fair trade [57]. The rise of the environmental agenda, nevertheless, shifted the human rights discourse resulting in a reassessment of the relationship between states, individuals, transnational enterprises and NGO's.

To enforce global standards, several UN agencies perform a pivotal role. The World Health Organization, WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO, the International Labor Organization, ILO, and the Animal Health International Organization, OIE, advance international agreements and directives to public health guidelines for massive food production [58]. The widespread use of pesticides, antibiotics and hormones in food animals and as diseases prevention to grant standardization of growing livestock still lacks liable sources [59]. The magnitude of the potential harm of medical and pharmaceutical authorized practices to guide the system of massive food production lacks coherent and long-range liable researches [60,61].

Global Public Health and the Politics of Food (in) Security in the Third Word

The notion of food security in connection of free and fair trade may have pervasive outcomes to third world countries. A universal concept of human security, in practice, reproduces Eurocentric supremacy in a new fashion [62-64]. The digital revolution facilitated the rise of global trade, shifting the power balance between the rich north and the poor south. Yet, the outsourcing of manufacture and the continuing demand for natural resources, such as gas and oil, may be considered only a glimpse of the big picture.

The Breton Woods institutions, such as the IMF, World Bank and GATT, despite the its ideological foundations, entrenched at the premise that international security may not be achieved

without economic stability, never addressed fair trade. Social and economic rights remained outside capitalist hegemony until the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The possibility of agreement between former rivals paved the way for a paradigm shift to human-rights oriented approach [65,66]. The UN 2030 Agenda enhances both food security and fair trade goals as part of the same project. Free trade agreements, though authorized to cooperate with the Universalist human rights agenda, remain outside the UN framework. The creation of the World Trade Organization, also a by-product of the post-cold war transition process, strengthens the role of transnational, aggravating the democratic deficit [67,68]. The cross retaliation, as an effective mechanism of enforcement through international channels, often harms the same sector that raised the claim. The state's autonomy to choose to apply subsidies otherwise deemed illegal in other areas considered as more profitable [69,70].

The international trade dispute mechanisms lack of democratic participation reflects the continuation of the state-centered international law [71]. On the opposite side, the development of international criminal law and international legal frameworks granting access to of non-state actors and individuals to international and regional tribunals, strengthen the Universalist conception entrenched at the UN 2030 Agenda [72-74].

Conclusion

The international politics of food security reflects the permanent tension between liberal and welfare state conceptions. The coexistence of contradictory frameworks to mediate trade disputes and foster sustainable development for the global south unveils some of the major obstacles to enforce a coherent plan of action to end hunger in accordance with fair trade imperatives.

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