The Right to Food and Negative Duties:

The urgency of an alternative approach toward hunger amidst an overbearing institutional order.

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Abstract

Hunger currently plagues over one billion people around the world, leaving mainly women, children and rural communities in post-colonial developing countries unable to obtain their most basic need for nutrition. The fundamental human right to food is found to be a complex human right involving a combination of both positive and negative duties by states and international institutions in order for its guarantee. Hunger is not only remediable but is highly preventable. Main causal factors of hunger are outlined, with a focus on Thomas Pogge’s claim that coercive international institutions are largely responsible for world poverty. In this way, global institutions are responsible not to cause harm in their economic policies and unfair trade rules in order for individuals to obtain economic access to food and thus remedy their hunger.

Keywords: Hunger, poverty, the right to food, subsistence, basic needs, basic rights, Pogge, negative duties, SAPs, development

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Abbreviations

S: US Dollars
ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council (United Nations)
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization
ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO: International Labor Organization (United Nations)
IMF: International Monetary Fund
MT: metric ton or 1000kg
NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
SAP: Structural Adjustment Policy
Sonacos: Société nationale de commercialisation des oléagineux du Sénégal
UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN: United Nations
UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund
US: United States of America
WFP: World Food Programme (United Nations)
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of topic
The number one preventable cause of death in the world is hunger, taking more lives each year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.\(^1\) Adding fuel to the fire, world food prices are currently soaring in light of a volatile global economy, making the question of food security and factors contributing to its violation more relevant than ever. Each day an increasing number of people throughout the world are facing financial hardship and poverty, both of which are main determining factors in an individual’s ability to obtain food.

In 2009 the FAO reported a staggering 1.02 billion people do not have adequate food and are malnourished.\(^4\) Food is a human right that is nowhere near being fulfilled and attempts towards conquering hunger are facing a remission in progress.\(^2\) The increasingly vast number of people living in hunger today, combined with an increasingly bleak global economic situation, makes the urgency of this devastating crisis relatively clear. Perhaps a new understanding toward the right to food needs to be taken into account amidst an international structure that breeds insecurity, instability and inequality particularly for the world’s poorest nations.

1.2 Aim and Research Problem
The aim of this thesis is to discover why over one billion people are not secure in their right to food and to find out who or what is ultimately responsible. Taking into account the crisis of hunger and the high likelihood that international institutions are in some way responsible, this paper will explore the human right to food and seek to discover how large of a role international institutions play in causing hunger.

Despite serious humanitarian efforts and progress that was made to reduce the total number of people living in chronic hunger in the 1980s and early 90s, the number of people chronically hungry has gradually been on the rise. This number increased especially between 1995-97 and 2004-06 and despite of the fact that countries such as Brazil have made tremendous progress toward food security by making it a number one priority,\(^3\) any small gains towards hunger reduction are now threatened as a result of escalating food prices.\(^4\) The World Bank reports that overall food prices have increased more than 75% since 2000 with prices in 2008 reaching their highest since the 1970s.\(^5\) Hunger is a crisis that global resources...
are more than able to provide for, yet economic factors are what prevent individuals from accessing food today.\textsuperscript{6} In 2008 the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) held a special session on the world food crisis and it’s negative impact on the realization of the right to food. This was the first time a special session was ever held for an economic and social right in UN history.\textsuperscript{7} The right of one billion people to adequate food depends on how seriously states and international actors are willing to take responsibility in their moral obligation to not harm human rights.

This paper seeks to explore the human right to food and present the case for food as a fundamental and most basic human right. How exactly the human need for food became a right, why it is of primary importance, and what actualizing the human right to food entails will be researched. The central question of negative and positive duties attributed to the right to food will be discussed through focusing on factors contributing to global hunger. Of particular concern are economic factors, though environmental and other elements will also be addressed. The reasons for hunger are complex and constantly debated, and it is for this reason that this paper aims to uncover the degree to which international institutions are likely to blame. Food as a human right requires responsibility to be taken by those who cause harm toward people’s ability to obtain food. In this way, negative duties toward the right to food will be applied to likely violators, and effective alleviation of over one billion people’s chronic hunger is proposed.

1.3 Research Questions
- How vital is subsistence for the implementation of all human rights?
- What criteria are required for enjoyment of the right to food as a human rights claim and who is responsible for upholding this right?
- Are international institutions the main cause of hunger and if so what are their duties?

1.4 Theory, Method and Selection of Material
The theory guiding this thesis is that human rights are not strictly positive rights demanding positive duties and negative rights entailing negative duties. According to Henry Shue, rights are not positive or negative in themselves, but rather it is duties toward rights that are positive or negative in nature.\textsuperscript{40} Furthermore, human rights are extremely complex and multifaceted, often requiring a complex combination of both negative and positive duties.
Through this theoretical understanding, questions will be posed toward the right to food, which will be explored through argumentative analysis and philosophical discussion drawing from philosophers of human rights Thomas Pogge, Henry Shue, James Nickel, and psychologist Albert Maslow. Language and meaning used in UN human rights articles relevant to the right to food will also be examined. This philosophical analysis will create a baseline through which to further analyze and understand the human right to food, not outlining a specific package of requirements for its fulfillment, but rather highlighting aspects of this human right which tend to be neglected.

Through this normative framework empirical information will then be presented to uncover the likely connection between international institutions and victims of hunger. Global and national statistics as well as specific examples involving developing countries, international institutions and Western states are drawn upon to construct a strong argument for the negative duties global actors, particularly Western states, have towards the right to food.

All gathered material comes from human rights organizations such as the United Nations, Third World Network, the World Bank, the FAO, and NGOs as well as news reports, articles from journals and UN treaties. A wide array of sources was consulted to produce the most conclusive of results. Developing countries used as examples were selected based on their involvement with international organizations, their level of economic debt, and their hunger prevalence. The US was selected as an example due to their strong economic power historically and as currently being the largest economy in the world involved in many institutional decision making processes. The second largest economic player is the Eurozone, with a GDP just below the US. These economic and institutional factors guided the collection of data and the synthesis of normative and empirical information through analysis.

Though the selection of case material consists of extreme examples, often examples as such can be used to make generalizations and better understand a phenomenon by seeing a strong and obvious correlation. According to Flyvbjerg, extreme cases can give us general yet useful information due to the great amount of actors involved. Furthermore, he states it is possible to generalize from a specific case because one intensively studied single case can give us more extensive information that may not be revealed in studies towards a large group or when looking at statistics.
1.5 Disposition
This thesis begins with an introduction to the problem that is hunger before moving onto a chapter that explores basic needs and basic rights, with an analysis regarding the primary importance of the human need for food. Next, the human right to food is addressed taking into account rights claims, duty-bearers and the moral responsibility human rights implementation entails. Negative and positive duties are then explored in historical and contemporary contexts of understanding, followed by an empirical presentation exemplifying major causal factors of hunger with a focus on explaining the likely role global institutions and powerful Western states play in violating the right to food.

1.6 Delimitations
Due to the epistemic nature of my research questions I cannot conclusively prove global institutions and actors as primarily responsible for violating the right to food, but it also cannot be proven otherwise. Therefore, depending on interpretations by the reader, the findings of this thesis will hold various degrees of validity. Furthermore, due to the nature of the information gathered in this thesis, undoubtedly connected with political matters, it is therefore subject to being affected by different interpretations.
2. HUNGER

2.1 What is hunger?

Over one billion people live in hunger today. They are weak, extremely vulnerable to disease due to a weakened immune system and unable to participate in physical and mental activities. Hunger is experienced when an individual does not receive an adequate amount of food, or calories and nutrition. Chronic hunger can lead to malnourishment, illness, disease, and a shortened lifespan. Hunger is alleviated through the intake of adequate calories and nutrition. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) the acceptable daily calorie intake for the average human being is 2,100 kilocalories and should be obtained through food containing sufficient nutritional values.¹

The staggering amount of hungry or malnourished people would actually be higher, were it not for the high mortality rate attributed to victims of poverty. Between the years 1987-2001 there was a 7% decrease in population size in those areas living on $1/day or less but a 10.4% population increase in areas living below $2/day.¹⁰ The success or failure of a population’s health is largely determined by economic factors, which enable access to nutrition.

While in referring to “hunger” throughout this paper for practical reasons both hunger and malnutrition will be included, but it is important to make a distinction between the two. Hunger or undernourishment is experienced by persons insufficient in or completely lacking a caloric intake. Hunger is also synonymous with starvation, as a human being chronically hungry or facing “extreme hunger” can also be said to be experiencing starvation, a situation leading to early mortality.¹¹

Malnutrition, on the other hand, refers to a person experiencing a lack of micronutrients, including but not limited to essential vitamins and minerals. Such micronutrients are vital for the cellular functioning of life-dependent organs and especially for a healthy nervous system. The physical function of an individual is impaired to the point where he or she can no longer maintain natural bodily capacities such as growth, pregnancy, lactation, learning abilities, physical work and resisting and recovering from disease.¹ Malnutrition are especially important for children as they grow and develop. Even though a child may receive sufficient calories, the nutritional quality of these calories is significant in that a lack of micronutrients will lead to stunted growth and other irreversible disabilities.¹¹
Furthermore, victims to hunger are stuck in a cycle of impoverishment since, while undernourished, people are unable to concentrate and take initiative.11 Both of these qualities, the ability to take initiative and to concentrate, are extremely important attributes for a human being strapped with hunger, struggling to survive and obtain nourishment. This hunger dilemma can easily lead to a poverty trap. A poverty trap is defined as “any self-reinforcing mechanism which causes poverty to persist.”12 Malnourished people, due to a lack or even absence of food, cannot easily take initiative and seek food or employment in order to gain food. Should they attempt to obtain remedy, their weakened body and mind cannot focus and concentrate on tasks at hand. Cognitive functioning is necessary for sustained employment. The bottom line is that people need food to get food; herein lies the hunger-trap.

2.2 Who are the hungry?

At any moment in history the world’s seven billionth person will be born13 and there is a 1 in 7 chance that this baby will be born into hunger. Each day over one billion people, mainly women, children and people in rural communities, go to bed hungry.1 This means that there are more malnourished or starving people in the world than the populations of the US, Canada and the European Union combined, making hunger the world’s number one health risk.

The UN reports that roughly 70% of the world’s hungry are women or girls. This is not because women have less access to food than men; rather the contrary is true. Women are responsible for producing an estimated 60-80% of food in the world,14 but due to a complexity of societal factors, are often the ones who go hungry. Focusing on the health and nutrition of women is crucial for building healthy and capable societies. A malnourished woman is likely to mother a malnourished and underweight baby with stunted mental and physical capacities. Stunting is a problem that carries long-term consequences since children never recover from the harms of stunting if they are able to grow into adults.11 This can result in a malnourished and crippled society, victim to a cycle of impoverishment bound to repeat itself.

Asia is home to the majority of the global hungry. In this large continent, 515 million people or 24% of the continent’s total population experience hunger daily.1 The percentage of hungry people is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa where 34% of the region’s population or 186 million people are permanently and severely undernourished. Roughly three-quarters of chronically hungry people live in low-income rural areas of developing countries principally in higher-risk farming areas, however the share of the hungry in urban areas is rising.1
2.3 The Hunger-Poverty-Economic Connection

The World Bank measures extreme poverty as living on $1.25/day or less and further defines it as “living on the edge of subsistence.” Estimates released in 2005 state that 1.4 billion people are living in extreme poverty, spending less than $1.25/day on subsistence. More recent estimates will not be released until the end of 2011, but the number of people in extreme poverty is projected to greatly increase in light of the global recession that began in 2008. Over 1 billion of these 1.4 billion people are chronically hungry, making hunger a main issue in addressing poverty and poverty a central issue in tackling hunger.

Surely other factors contribute to world hunger such as natural disasters, war and climate change, but as stated by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in addressing the right to food, by far the greatest reason hunger persists for a large proportion of the global population is not an absence of available resources such as food, but a deficiency in the economic means necessary to purchase basic needs, inter alia, because of poverty. In fact, environmental factors, natural disasters and war are estimated to account for only 8% of global hunger. The large majority of victims to hunger, 92% or roughly 940 million people, are chronically hungry due to factors relating to poverty and a lack of resources. The impoverishing financial situation of an individual directly correlates with their ability to obtain basic needs, including food.

Since poverty is the leading cause of hunger, and those living in hunger are also living in extreme poverty, addressing the economic barriers keeping the worlds poorest chronically poor is the key through which basic needs can be fulfilled, the right to food effectively enjoyed, and hunger eradicated.

2.4 What criteria are necessary for alleviating hunger?

In 1999, the ECOSOC held a session pertaining to issues arising in the implementation of the ICESCR. At this meeting they outlined a specific premise on which ensuring the right to food depends. The first of the criteria is food availability, in a “quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture.” While having a sufficient supply of food is important, WFP spokesman Amjad Jamal says that not having access to food is linked to prices rather than availability.

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* Data is according to the International Poverty Line, using 2005 prices converted to local currency and based on PPP conversion factors as estimated by the International Comparison Program.
Take for example the country of Pakistan with a reported 48.6% of Pakistan’s 165 million people facing food insecurity. Although the country is producing a sufficient amount of food for its population, and is even experiencing a growth in production, food insecurity has increased. Furthermore it can be said that hunger persists not due to a lack of available food, but a lack of access to food.

In addressing the problem of access to food, the Council states, “The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.”

Physical and economic access to food is the key to alleviate hunger. Physically accessing food is most often dependent upon economic access, especially in light of climate change and its affects upon poor farmers in developing countries. Therefore addressing issues of economic accessibility are of greatest importance for the right to food being realized in today’s climate.

Economic accessibility to the Council means that the ability to purchase enough food to obtain “an adequate diet” should not interfere with the satisfaction of other basic needs. For example, one should not starve so they can have shelter, or trade one basic right for the satisfaction of another. People must have enough resources to access all of their basic needs. Ensuring the right to food by measuring economic accessibility is a strong approach through which to effectively move towards practical steps toward the enjoyment of this right.

It is important and relevant to point out Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that grants everyone the right to “a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.” Such rights and freedoms in the UDHR include the right to food, therefore it can be stated that in order to remedy the chronic violation towards the right to food, an international order creating an environment adequate for economic access to food must be enacted if hunger is ever to be remedied.

Economic accessibility is paramount in ensuring the right to food, and will continue to be analyzed in light of Pogge’s claim against coercive global institutions as the primary cause of poverty, inter alia, due to economic accessibility. The shape national economies take, determined by international institutions guided by Western states, provide the framework through which great gaps between the wealthy and the poor exist and major human rights violations take place.
3. BASIC NEEDS: THE BASIC RIGHT TO FOOD

While the previous chapter outlined the severity of hunger and poverty and what is required for its fulfillment, this chapter will explore the normative aspects of food as a human right. Measuring and outlining norms and standards in terms of basic human needs is fundamental to practically address hunger and alleviate its causes. Analyzing how food as a human right came to be understood by the UN as well as their normative approach to food as a rights claim will create a clear framework through which to critically and relevantly analyze the global institutional factors keeping hunger alive.

Food as a human right, as a moral norm for all mankind, was first recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25(1) states, “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family.” This “adequate standard of living” could produce a variety of definitions and the UN chose to include food, clothing and shelter in theirs. These objects constitute the most commonly understood definition of basic human needs and are baseline factors from which absolute poverty is measured by institutions such as the World Bank. After being introduced in the UDHR, the phrase “adequate standard of living” was addressed in 1976 at the World Employment Conference by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as they brought the concept of basic needs onto the world stage and into the human rights discussion.

3.1 Basic Needs & Maslow’s Motivation Theory

In and of itself, the wording of the term “basic needs” infers the primary importance of such needs, but despite the seemingly simplistic nature of the question, expertise in human behaviour has been drawn from American psychologist Albert H. Maslow’s widely respected motivation theory in order to clarify. In this theory, Maslow outlines the existence of a “hierarchy of needs,” with basic needs driving all human behaviour. His work has strongly influenced the premise through which basic human rights have come to be understood and accepted today.

The central tenet of Maslow’s Motivation Theory is that fulfilling ones needs is what motivates individuals, and that human needs “arrange themselves in a hierarchy of pre-potency.” He states that one need being met depends on the prior satisfaction of another pre-potent, more powerful or influential, needs being met. This is the logic that formulates Maslow’s infamous hierarchy of needs. At the base of this hierarchy and as a prerequisite for the obtainment of ‘higher’ needs lies basic human needs. These basic needs include air, food,
drink, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, etc.; any such needs that can be “localized somatically” and stem from a biological imbalance which affects human functioning. All physiological or biological needs required for physical subsistence are included in basic needs, described by Maslow as the most pre-potent of all human needs.

Within all of the basic needs, Maslow claims that hunger is the strongest and most predominant. Maslow defends his claim by describing how “a person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else.” Hungry people push all higher or psychological needs into the background and their existence is dominated by physiological needs. Hunger becomes the only thought of the victim to starvation and Maslow labels people in such a state as existentially hungry. A hungry person’s “consciousness is almost completely preempted by hunger,” and they place all their capacities into achieving hunger-satisfaction. It is necessary to wonder how individuals in such a state of mind, consumed physically and mentally by their hunger, can attempt to either physically work and grow crops or gain employment and the economic means necessary to alleviate their hunger. Maslow described it well: “He dreams food. He remembers food. He thinks about food. He emotes only about food. He perceives only food. And he wants only food.” All human functions, capacities and desires outside of those helpful in obtaining nourishment are preempted by hunger.

Exceptions are made to include food as a basic need for individuals who have never experienced chronic hunger or a deprivation of their basic needs. According to Maslow, such an individual will commonly undervalue their fundamental need for food and adequate nutrition for the sake of higher emotional needs. Increasingly common in affluent Western societies today is the self-deprivation of calories for the sake of beauty, or in contrast, for the sake of comfort or pleasure, increasingly common is the over-consumption of nutritionally void junk food. Anorexia and obesity related diseases are the outcome of such emotionally motivated behaviour, where emotional or esteem needs are placed above basic needs. Psychological motivations toward food are not included in Maslow’s first level of needs, rather only physiological and biological needs, motivated by factors of physical subsistence, are included in his theory of basic needs.

Similar arguments have been made for the primary position of food in regards to human rights agenda. In 2000, when the UN gathered and set their Millennium Development Goals, the aim of eradicating hunger by the year 2015 was placed at the top of the list as a number one priority. The UN recognized that fulfilling the human right to food would be necessary for achieving any of the other development goals.
3.2 Basic Rights: Shue and Subsistence

Much akin to Maslow’s work regarding basic needs is Henry Shue’s theory regarding basic rights. Shue considers a right to be basic if it would be impossible for any other right to be effectively implemented without that right. Shue argues the universal human right to subsistence, along with security and liberty, are basic rights. A parallel can be found in Article 3 of the UDHR: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” The term subsistence is used by Shue to include the physiological needs outlined by Maslow, but further determines sufficient levels of such goods. Subsistence by definition is “the action or fact of maintaining or supporting oneself at a minimum level.” The phrase “minimum level” is rather ambiguous, but one can presume that obtaining adequate physiological functioning and sustained biological health are good indicators of the minimal level required for subsistence.

Pogge outlines a similar understanding towards basic needs or subsistence by using a slightly different language. He attributes a “minimally adequate share” of basic goods as necessary for human flourishing. Pogge outlines such necessary basic goods to be physical integrity, freedom of movement and action, basic education, economic participation and subsistence supplies. These basic goods are far more extensive than basic needs and though more specific they are in line with Shue’s approach to basic rights through subsistence, security and liberty. To determine the amount of basic goods required for individuals, Pogge uses “human flourishing” as a measure. Pogge defines people to be flourishing if “their lives are good, or worthwhile, in the broadest sense.” He chooses to leave the definition rather broad in order to comprehensively and therefore more accurately assess and address quality of life.

3.3 Is there a Hierarchy of Rights?

In arguing for the high priority of subsistence rights, Shue takes a “presuppositional” approach much like Maslow. He states that the three basic rights, subsistence, security and liberty, presuppose all other rights in that they all must be effectively implemented before any other right can be effectively enjoyed. In this way, a hierarchy of rights is created akin to a hierarchy of needs, granting certain rights more relative importance than others. His strongest claim is that a trade-off of basic rights is actually a denial of all rights. This would mean that when subsistence is not met, all rights are violated. Shue’s argument that basic rights are of primary importance and prerequisites for non-basic rights being met would mean that all
economic and social rights usually thought of as being secondary to civil and political rights, the first generation of rights, presuppose such rights and are necessary for the later fulfillment of civil and political rights. Through this restructuring of rights based on their hierarchy of realization, all human rights can be actualized though a smooth and continual progression towards the obtaining of higher rights until the ultimate goal of complete human right satisfaction is achieved.

Morality can also be used to determine which rights presuppose other rights. Based on utilitarianism, it is morally indefensible that Western citizens live in abundance while other people are left to starve. Philosopher Peter Singer reasons that when one person is living comfortably, making attempts to gain further comfort are far less morally important than saving a life. In other words, when one's basic needs are met and such a person is able to prevent the starvation of another human being, it is morally right for them to assist that person who faces starvation. Acting any other way would be considered morally wrong. On moral grounds it is a horror to permit malnutrition and starvation while something can be done about it. Furthermore, in judging the higher value between one person starving and another person buying goods beyond what is required for subsistence, it can be deduced that the value of human life is greater than the value of economic freedom. Here morality can be seen as playing an important role in the prioritizing of rights.

Arguing against this moral prioritizing of basic rights is libertarian theory. Libertarianism believes that private morality is not the concern of the state and that laws regulating private affairs should not be implemented. Social and economic rights, requiring “legislative and other state actions,” are taken off of the public rights agenda in favor of “proper rights.” Civil and political proper rights are described as being self-executing, obliging only negative duties upon the state, and as such are upheld in favor of welfare rights. In this way, libertarianism lacks a concern for social justice or matters pertaining to the private sphere of a society. Basic needs and subsistence are understood not as being rights but rather “aspects of wealth” and as such are considered to be goals. Though libertarianism is not a political philosophy adhered to by all Western countries, certain libertarian values are shared in their economic and social policies.

Holding a view that all human rights are of equal value and not prioritizing certain basic rights over non-basic rights is setting up for the failure of all human rights. The high likelihood of conflicts arising, combined with a missing framework or normative understanding through which to address competing rights, will not grant individuals involved in a dispute effective remedy or solution. Conflict between human rights often occurs,
therefore by maintaining the view that all human rights are equal in priority and that a hierarchy of rights does not exist, conflicts cannot be resolved and duty-bearers cannot take responsibility and remedy violations.

Shue makes the argument that “a person who does not have an effectively implemented right to subsistence enjoys no rights at all.”27 His claim means that in order for one of the three basic rights to be enjoyed, they must all be enjoyed. Subsistence, security and liberty therefore depend upon one another and carry equal weight or priority. Shue fails to address the issue of conflicts between basic rights. As can be seen between the subsistence rights of a hungry person and the liberty rights of a Western capitalist, conflicts constantly arise between the enjoyment of even these basic rights. States carry out a “trade-off” of rights, violating subsistence rights in order to implement liberty rights. This is excused by the hope that liberty rights may generate the means through which people are able to obtain their basic needs. Clearly, a prioritizing of rights is important, even among basic rights.

In regards to the prioritizing of rights, Maslow makes the strongest case for a hierarchy of needs by insisting that the right to food is vital to ensure the right to life.20 The right to life, spurring on the UDHRs creation, is what began the human rights movement and the formation of the UN itself. Avoiding mortality or death is foremost dependent upon basic needs or subsistence being met. Therefore addressing the right to food as equally important or even synonymous with the right to life is a valid approach and key in fulfilling the right to life. Such is an approach taken by India’s supreme court where the right to life was ruled to include the duty of the state to implement food schemes and distribution in cases of starvation. By law in India, violating the right to food is a violation of the right to life itself.28 Having adequate food is therefore necessary for life to sustain and for the right to life, among many other rights, to be fulfilled.

One can also examine the language from within Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) where it states “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.” While no conclusion can be drawn that the right to food is the most primary of all human rights, from the word “fundamental” strong conclusions regarding the rudimentary nature of this right can be accepted. If something is fundamental it is “of central importance” and forms “a necessary base or core.”21 Conclusions can be drawn therefore that issues of food security and alleviating hunger form a pivot-point from which all other non-fundamental rights revolve and rely upon.

Maslow’s theory of basic needs is useful in understanding why food is a human need of primary importance, but in the practical implementation of ensuring all people have an
adequate amount of nutrition, Shue’s basic rights approach to food and nutrition is functional by focusing on the right to life and other rights dependent upon the right to food being realized. A human rights approach introduces a normative aspect to food and nutrition that the basic needs approach is lacking. Such normative content includes the implication of a beneficiary to a certain right, otherwise known as the “claim holder,” and implies duties or obligations on those whom the claim is against known as the “duty-bearer”.29 The structure of accountability generated by a basic human rights approach is what basic needs strategies towards hunger are lacking. In addressing the problem of hunger faced by over one billion people, the focus needs to shift from a basic needs approach to a claim rights approach involving rights and duties.

3.4 Chapter Summary

Furthermore, taking into account the basic rights arguments of Shue, the fundamental approach of the UN, and especially the necessities of human biology in terms of sustaining life itself presented by Maslow, it can be said that the right to food is a high-priority claim of primary importance, necessary for the satisfaction of all other human needs. The dependence factor that other rights place upon the right to food being enjoyed is an especially pressing point in addressing the urgency in the global hunger crisis.
4. HUMAN RIGHTS & THE UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO FOOD

4.1 Rights Claims Create Responsibility

Human rights claims are an effective way to ensure the basic needs or basic rights of individuals. The FAO writes, “Only through effective human rights-oriented policies and coordinated rights-based strategies can duty-bearers fulfill their obligations to enable rights-holders to feed themselves.” A human rights-based approach involves understanding what the definition of the right to food as a claim really is and what duties are necessary for it to be upheld. The right to food does not depend upon a violation in order for it to exist as a right, but a claim towards the right to food means the introduction of negative duties and a responsible duty-bearer.

Human rights, people having the justifiable right to have something or to be free from something, suggest that individuals can invoke rights or in other words make a claim. A claim effectively carried out ensures a duty-bearer will take appropriate measures in their conduct. Without an effective claim there can be no duty-bearer and the right will cannot be guaranteed. A human rights approach requires the “strengthening the capacity of duty-bearers to carry out their obligations” as well as “assisting communities and rights-holders to empower themselves and demand accountability.” People must have the self-esteem and channel through which to make a claim and the duty-bearer must have the capacity to conform to their responsibilities.

A human rights claim requires a duty-bearer to take responsibility in order for that rights claim to be remedied. In this way, the human right to food can only be ensured if another human being morally agrees to uphold their duties. Human rights have a substantive nature, which means they have a basis in rights and duties as opposed to specific rules or law.

4.2 Do Human Rights Contain Legal Guarantees?

As Pogge points out, human rights do not carry any legal guarantees. Although legal rights may be effectively enforced in a country, this does not mean that all citizens are able to realize them. Knowledge and resources required to pursue a legal claim are not available to uneducated and poor persons who are generally not aware of how to contend for their rights in the first place. Furthermore, simply because a state has ratified the UDHR or the ICESCR and claim to agree with the moral significance and value intrinsic to human rights it does not
bind them to guarantee human rights. This is especially true when a state is not willing to fulfill their most basic duty towards human rights conventions: allowing a claim to be made.

Such is the case of the US and their reservations towards the ICESCR, which are incompatible with the covenant goals themselves. While the US did ratify the ICESCR in 1992, they made five reservations, five understandings and four declarations. The most troubling was the declaration that articles 1-27 of the Covenant not to be self-executing. The US has yet to accept a single claim from within the ICESCR. Furthermore, not a single domestic law has been changed in the US to correlate with the norms of the Covenant, an expected duty of states who ratify the ICESCR.

With so many reservations, especially in terms of actualizing the social and economic rights they claim to value, the ICESCR is basically rendered useless in terms of its purpose. In international law, under article 19 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1980) it states that a reservation is void if it is “incompatible with the object and purpose” of a treaty. Not allowing its citizens to claim rights from within the ICESCR, US reservations to the Covenant are incompatible with its purpose of empowering individuals to actualize their rights under the cooperation of the state and the international community. Concerns have been expressed by the UN and member states regarding non-compliance of the US towards the ICESCR, since to ratify the ICESCR after making such reservations is not only superficial and futile but is subversive behaviour that works against the universal legitimacy of international rights agreements.

4.3 Moral Responsibility: Universal vs. Culturally Relative

While human rights are not able to provide legal guarantees, perhaps they can effectively provide moral guarantees. Professor of philosophy and law James Nickel states that human rights are “basic moral guarantees that people in all countries and cultures allegedly have simply because they are people.” Human rights rest upon the acceptance of the universality of morals and believe that those basic human rights outlined in the UDHR and the ICESCR for example are applicable to all people, in all countries and all cultures. The basic morals agreed upon by UN member states to be universal do not discriminate against race, age or gender.

Human rights fundamentally rest upon moral universalism. Pogge insists that the right to food has universal moral value in that it is applicable and necessary for all people regardless of their culture or identity. Moral relativists would warn against the dangers in attempting to apply specific morals to all cultures and people. Their argument is based on the
observation that due to globalization creating pluralistic societies, within even one country there often exist a wide variety of fundamental moral beliefs, principles or practices. The individualistic nature of human rights doctrine is often argued as being not compatible with or applicable to communal societies of Asia or Africa. By implementing moral human rights in culturally differing societies, there exists the threat of cultural and moral imperialism by replacing communal values of East or South civilizations with the individualistic values of Western civilization.

Moral relativists oppose the notion of universal human rights since human rights presume a universal moral agreement on values. To have a right to something, or to claim a right, is to believe in the value of that claim and the implications it entails. A perhaps legitimate point made by proponents of human rights is that arguments of moral relativism may be nothing more than a guise to justify oppressive political systems.

To counter the seemingly strong arguments of moral relativism, one must only point out the absurdity of respecting the moral values of culturally unique Nazi Germany or Apartheid South Africa. Relativist arguments are usually held by “political elites within those countries whose systematic oppression of their peoples has attracted the attention of advocates of human rights.” Totalitarian dictatorship and systems of racial segregation believed their acts to be acceptable because Jewish people and tribes in South Africa, lacking citizenship, had no right to life under the legal system of the political state. What wasn’t formally agreed upon by nation states during the Third Reich is now advocated by nations intervening in the name or human rights and morality around the world.

One can even argue that there is a relative way in which to implement human rights universally. Human rights in themselves do not claim cultural specificity. This is a claim that has been made against founding countries of the UDHR, Western states, by anti-rights advocates justifying morally wrong actions through claims of cultural relativity. Human rights, and the carefully worded documents they comprise, contain abstract concepts such as life, freedom and security that possibly conjure up a variety of culturally specific interpretations, hence making human rights relative and relevant to even communal societies.

A further point to make is that the third generation of human rights does in fact address issues of group rights that is more applicable to the lives of people whose identity is largely based in a community or collective. Human rights, though originating in values of Western cultures, are striving not to be culturally bound, but to transfer easily into communal societies while having a strong basis in individual rights necessary for life.
Maslow addresses arguments from moral relativists regarding the issue of cultural specificity when it comes to basic needs. He believes differences between cultures to be superficial rather than basic, and that the commonalities shared between cultures are greater than the differences between them. Superficial preferences for certain types and flavours of food, for example, are culturally relative, while the basic need for nutrition in general is on a subsistence level. Subsistence is universally applicable to all human beings and therefore all cultures as a matter of biology. He states basic needs to be fundamentally universal, sharing great commonalities, relative to superficial desires of preference that vary greatly between cultures. While preferences in the arts, religion and politics may vary between cultures, human life cannot sustain longer than 40 days without food, making the universal need for nourishment absolute. The right to food is indisputably a universal value necessary for all people within every culture. In this way, the right to food is one of the stronger human rights due to its clear universal applicability and need.

4.4 Summary

Human rights claims are of central importance in that they create accountability and place responsibility on a bearer of duty. This allows rights-holder to have their claim fulfilled and their rights ensured. While human rights do not carry any legal guarantees, moral guarantees can be granted through state ratification of treaties and signatories carrying out their moral obligations. Moral relativists argue against the universal moral stance of human rights, but nourishment is universal, applicable to all cultures, making the right to food a strong case for universal morals and international human rights.
5. THE RIGHT TO FOOD: NEGATIVE VS. POSITIVE DUTIES

As discussed in the previous chapter, human rights claims create the role of a duty-bearer. The key role duties play in the fulfillment of human rights makes analyzing what types of duties the right to food requires especially important. This chapter will seek to understand the type of duties necessary to negate harm towards the right to food. In this way, specific responsibilities can be placed on likely instigators of poverty and hunger.

5.1 The Myth of Positive and Negative Rights

Social, economic and cultural rights, such as the right to food, usually rely upon fulfillment or positive provision of certain objects to satisfy the claim. In other words, as a rights claim it is categorized as being a positive right that places positive demands on duty-bearers to act. The wording of the right to food implies a positive measure is required to achieve this right. Having a right to something entails the positive provision of that good. The right to food according to the UN is a social or welfare right, of which are positive rights requiring positive duties. The right to food, from within this framework of welfare rights, has largely focused on positive duties from states.

Since the UN has categorized the right to food as a positive right, how can negative duties successfully be attributed to this right? Shue points out, “Rights are not in themselves either positive or negative; these labels are more properly attached to the duties rights entail.” Shue refers to this dichotomy of attributing negative and positive qualities to rights and duties as “intellectually bankrupt.” As an example he argues that the right to security requires a government to refrain from killing or torturing its citizens as well as protect them from such an attack. In this case the negative duty is to refrain and the positive duty is to protect, a combination necessary for fulfillment of the right to life and security. Furthermore, Shue claims most or even all rights require negative and positive duties for effective implementation and goes on to say that like the right to life, subsistence rights are far more negative than positive in nature. In this way, human rights such as the right to food are likely to contain a combination of both negative and positive duties, but more importantly negative duties.

5.2 Historical Context of the Right to Food

When the ILO began its focus on basic needs in the 1970s, their approach towards addressing poverty and hunger based strongly in the measurement of individual consumption of goods.
By targeting undeveloped national economies, they have sought to alleviate hunger by strengthening economies and creating jobs to help individuals obtain the means for food. The ILO calculated average annual rates of economic growth required for each country over the next 25 years in order to fulfill the basic needs of the world’s poorest 20%. By taking the target GDP and calculating how much economic growth per year each country required in order to achieve an economic level capable of ensuring the basic needs their citizens, quantified development goals were set.

Addressing food as a basic need rather than a basic right, with a focus on human consumption rather than human rights, is bound to result in placing burdensome positive moral obligations and duties on global actors. In this way, it is no wonder such a consumption-based approach towards poverty has dominated the developing world in their struggle for development and sustainability. Basic needs infer that something is needed and positive action taken in order to fulfill such needs. The central understanding here is that responsibilities are not placed on duty-bearers beyond the moral provision of minimally sufficient goods. So in a case where certain actions are causing the violation of many rights, leading to enough harm that the right to food cannot be achieved, negative duties are necessary to not harm other rights which are needed for individuals to obtain subsistence.

Furthermore, addressing hunger through basic needs treats individuals as biological mechanisms, needing minimal dietary subsistence, rather than the multi-dimensional, capacitated and intelligent rights-holders they are, capable of claiming and realizing all human rights should they be given their presupposing most basic rights.

5.3 ICESCR & State Duties toward the right to food

By looking at the language used by the UN pertaining to the right to food, understanding can be gained as to why food is popularly thought of as a strict positive right. Part III of the ICESCR contains rights that necessitate individuals right to work and achieve economic freedom. The right to food is included in these rights, where it is outlined that hunger will be addressed through agricultural development using knowledge and technology as well as by striving for “equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.” The word “distribution” focuses on the positive actions required by states to alleviate hunger, making it easy to understand why the approach towards ensuring the right to food has largely focused on positive duties.

The ECOSOC proposes three levels of obligations towards states in regards to their duties. These include state obligation to respect, to protect and to fulfill. Contemporary efforts
to combat hunger have focused on the duties of states and institutions to carry out measures to fulfill the right to food. Fulfillment contains both an obligation to assist and an obligation to provide, both of which are positive actions. More recently the Council has adapted their understanding of fulfillment as meaning “to facilitate” as well as to provide. The Council states facilitating to mean “the State must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people’s access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security.” Facilitating this right is not considered the responsibility of the international community, but rather the responsibility of the state. This means that states have the responsibility to actively implement structures that allow people the means, or economic access, to food. This is a dilemma for developing countries that lack the national funds or resources to facilitate and regulate the right to food through providing a fair and stable national environment.

Under this UN definition the positive duty of providing food has largely been undertaken to assist people in obtaining food. Emergency food aid provision and policies targeting economic growth and development meant to facilitate access have been the focus. Both of these solutions require mobilized action, a great deal of resources and place a heavy burden on the Western World. This positive approach of equally distributing food supplies and aiding countries in need does not solve the primary roots of such inequalities.

5.4 Positive Duties: Costly and Unfeasible?
Shue points out that the right to food as a positive right needing fulfillment carries costs much too high for the international community. He refers to social and economic claims as expensive rights, and civil and political claims as inexpensive rights. Under an approach of positive provision, should this right ever be ensured for one billion hungry people in the world, the costs would be astronomical by focusing exclusively on aid and development plans. Furthermore, if only food provision was the focus and the global order with Western-led economic models remained, inequality and extreme poverty would surely arise once again.

Another argument against positive duties from James Nickel is their lack of feasibility in actualization. According to Nickel, economic and social rights as outlined in international human rights documents far surpass the circumstances that lead to a “minimally good life.” The European Social Charter (1961), for example, includes many ideals such as the “protection of health” and the goal of removing “as far as possible the causes of ill-health.” While this right sounds proper and moral, Nickel believes it to be unfeasible. He claims that
states, signatories responsible for ensuring such positive rights, cannot be to blame for failing to prevent illness and provide for all aspects of citizen’s health. Positive measures to protect the right to life, including “measures to eliminate malnutrition and epidemics” are difficult to implement.

Furthermore, public enforcement of a healthy diet by removing the causes of ill-health such as processed junk-foods from grocery stores for example, in order to prevent diabetes and other obesity related illness in the Western World, would be not only infringement upon individual freedom, but completely unfeasible in attempting to control and regulate individual consumption. This extreme example of fulfilling the right to health through positive duties, if fulfilled, is a financially burdensome means of ensuring public health. Such ideals are “excessively grandiose” and go far beyond Maslow and Shue’s concepts of basic needs or subsistence.

In addition, British philosopher Maurice Cranston argues “social welfare rights cannot be real human rights because many societies lack the resources to make them practicable.” By agreeing that food is a basic human right that needs to be fulfilled but without enough means to remedy its chronic violations, states in agreement on the right to food are setting themselves up for failure. Developing countries obviously lack the resources, but increasingly many affluent states even cannot bear the cost of providing basic services to their own citizens. Viewing the positive duty toward the right to food as a goal, an idea proposed by Nickel, is perhaps a more realistic approach.

In line with Pogge’s view on positive duties, I do not argue that we should forget the understanding of the right to food as a right demanding positive duties of states. Certainly states have a moral responsibility to fulfill the right to food through positive duties when other human beings are in crisis. The future health of over one billion people would look increasingly dire if positive duties were forgotten and they were left to fend for themselves. The primary importance of food as a basic right and the existence of the hunger-trap displays the importance of continuing to provide aid and such positive duties, but such efforts must combine with efforts to protect individuals from harm and ensure that their rights are respected.

Many people accept hunger as inevitable and something that will always be with us. They believe hunger is a natural product of factors beyond their control, and that beyond donations to UNICEF or the WFP there is nothing that can be done. At best they can alleviate hunger, but not prevent it. The opposite is in fact true, as most of the world’s chronic hunger “is now a man-made catastrophe, caused by one anonymous decision at a time, one day at a
time, by people, institutions, and governments doing what they thought was best for themselves or sometimes even what they thought at the time was best for Africa.47

In this way we see factors actively causing hunger, therefore making it a preventable crisis. The response to the right to food in terms of negative duties would mean that people, institutions and governments have the responsibility to cease activities that cause harm to undeveloped nations and poor people affected in their access to food. Alleviating hunger through positive duties of fulfillment is not a sustainable answer nor complete solution.

5.5 Duties To Respect and Protect

While addressing the right to food by attributing positive duties to fulfill is moral and important for the significant amount of victims needing immediate food-aid, such a consumption-based approach provides only temporary solutions to assist and provide. Emergency food aid eventually subsides, therefore without an approach from the base of the problem, most probably global institutional structures themselves, a long-term solution is unlikely be realized. Sustainability in ensuring the right to food can be assured through respect for and protection of food access.

“A fundamental misunderstanding in the implementation of the right to food, has been the notion that the principal obligation is for the state to feed the citizens under its jurisdiction (fulfilling the right to food), rather than respecting and protecting the rights related to food, as well as emphasizing the obligations of individuals and civil society in this regard.”

-Mary Robinson (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) 48

States have the responsibility to enable all citizens within their borders not only to be free from hunger, but also to enable citizens to produce or obtain food with human dignity that is adequate in order to be healthy and active.49 People must be able to obtain food in civil ways, and when they cannot, removing the actions that prevent individuals from fulfilling this right is a responsibility that must be placed on guilty parties. States are responsible to protect the right to food from not being respected. A lack of respect toward the right to food can be found through state action or “entities insufficiently regulated by States” such as global structures.50 In this way, states are responsible for protecting food access, especially economic access. Failing to regulate activities of the private business sector and transnational institutions allows for potentially devastating consequences for the right to food.

It can be said in criticism that negative duties carried out by international institutions and those who uphold them require positive actions to carry out such negative duties. For example, institutional reform is a positive action rather than a negative action to not do
something. In addressing this issue, Pogge points out “the negative duty gives rise to positive obligations only through prior voluntary conduct: one’s promise, or one’s involvement in upholding a coercive institutional order.” So by previously ratifying moral agreements such as the ICESCR and carrying out actions within the framework of global institutions that oppose the negative duty not to harm people’s access to food, states have an obligation to change their conduct through positive measures to prevent harm in the future.

As Pogge explains, in light of international institutions violating their negative duty to not harm individual’s economic access, the right to food needs to be viewed as a right requiring negative duties to refrain from actions that infringe upon enjoyment of this right. Negative duties towards food can be looked at much like the negative right to life. Just as human beings have the right to not be killed, they must also have the right to non-interference in their physical and economic access to food. Not interfering in people’s economic access means that people must be able to live in a respectful and remedial environment through which they can successfully seek and gain employment, providing sufficient means to obtain all of their basic needs. When states do not take measures to protect the right to food, acknowledging it as a claim-right, negative duties cannot be placed on duty-bearers.

5.6 Summary:
This chapter outlined how the right to food has been largely understood to contain only positive duties from states much like so-called negative rights are thought to contain only negative duties. Human rights are neither positive nor negative in themselves, rather it is duties that can be more accurately described as positive or negative, of which most human rights demand a combination of. The right to food is such a right. States have the positive duty to fulfill the right to food when it is within their capacity. In addition states must respect and protect as well as facilitate the right to food.

Though positive duties are important, they are costly, short-term, and even extravagant. States must not only fulfill their duty toward food, but they must respect and protect this right from harm. When the right to food is not being respected, and protection is missing, negative duties can be assigned to states or actors who failed in their duty not to harm. Negative duties are useful to solve the roots of hunger through removing the conduct that prevents individuals from obtaining economic access to food.
6. THE CAUSAL FACTORS OF HUNGER

This chapter seeks to identify the main causes of poverty. Environmental and political factors will be briefly discussed, followed by a thorough discussion using historical and current examples of the actions of global institutions and their likely role in instigating hunger and poverty.

6.1 Natural Disasters, War and Climate Change

As previously mentioned, natural disasters, war, climate change and environmental factors relating to physical access to food are estimated to account for 8% of the total hungry. A better understanding of how militancy can affect individuals right to food can be gained through taking the conflict-ridden Federally Administered Tribal Areas along the Pakistan-Afghan border. The food security situation for the entire country of Pakistan is dire, as nearly 50% of the population without adequate access to food, but alarmingly 68% of those who live in the conflict zone along the Afghan border are reported to be facing hunger. The fact that such stark contrast lies between conflict and non-conflict zones when it comes to measuring hunger, gives great proof that there is a strong link between militancy and hunger. When war is present, people are hungry.

In addition to the threat war poses toward the right to food, the inadequate or devastated environment millions of people face amidst global warming is increasingly worrisome. Climate change is contributing to a difficult environment where farmers cannot grow food due to harsh weather conditions and a lack of water. Nobel laureate economist Paul Krugman believes that climate change is the biggest factor impacting agriculture, making it the biggest reason for the recent sharp rise in world food prices. The FAO likewise declared global warming to be a huge threat to the world food supply. In order to feed everyone they estimate that by 2050 a 70% increase in the global food production will be required, a goal most likely unfeasible since climate change is expected to continue altering temperature and precipitation patterns, factors upon with agricultural farming greatly depends.

Drought in the Horn of Africa, in the barren landscape where Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya meet, has caused a devastating famine to spread causing 10 million people to need humanitarian aid. UNICEF estimates that more than 2 million children are malnourished and in need of life saving action. The drought has forced people to mobilize into the world’s largest refugee camp located in Dadaab, Kenya now home to 380,000 poor and vulnerable
refugees. Disheartening amidst this crisis is the fact that humanitarian aid has steadily decreased worldwide.

By focusing next on the global structures upheld by Western actors, why the right to food requires a strong focus on negative duties to be realized in a sustainable and long-term way will be easily understood.

6.2 International Institutions

Since an estimated 92% of people are hungry due to a lack of economic access, arguably the greatest reason why hunger persists throughout the world is international institutions of trade and economics and Western beneficiaries who control the terms. The neoliberal framework held within organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF is an economic approach that influences an environment of inequality. The relationship that exists between the poorest most highly indebted nations of the world and global financial institutions, which began during colonialism, sheds a fundamental light on understanding world poverty in today’s post-colonial world. It is reasonable to deduce that there is something amiss within the current global financial order when billions of people throughout the world fail to meet their basic needs within it. In order to understand the problem of poverty, how exactly undeveloped countries fell into this economic trap must be analyzed and understood.

6.2.1 The World Bank and Post-colonial Senegal

Today’s international order stems directly from colonization. Globalization and international trade all began when developed countries sought to expand their empires through discovery and exploration of new lands and resources. European colonialists plundered nations throughout the world, finally granting such colonies independence throughout the later portion of the 20th century.

As European colonialists physically returned to their homelands, they left a great deal of political and economic structure behind. In particular, the economic structure they left behind was carried on by new nations looking to the West as a model for growth and development. The trade routes created during colonization continued to link the north and the south. Western countries that became dependent upon the low cost of importing foreign goods, gladly facilitated trade with developing nations.

In this way, with an economic system already determined by their colonizers, newly independent nations began participating on the global market of imports and exports and without any safeguards against price uncertainty, were often overcome by the volatile nature
of supply and demand. Such was the case for the post-colonial country of Senegal. Senegal is a country in West Africa with a population of 12.9 million people, 60% of who live on less than $1.25/day in extreme poverty. The number living below the poverty line in farming areas is much higher, as 85% of rural populations of Senegal are estimated to be living in extreme poverty. According to the UNDP Human Development Index, this low-income, food-deficit nation ranks 155th out of 187 countries.

Since being brought to West Africa by the Portuguese in the 16th-century, groundnuts† have been grown in Senegal for centuries. When Senegal obtained independence from France in 1960 their main export crop was groundnuts and they continued to specialize in groundnuts in order to maximize productivity. In this way Senegal focused on the goods they produced best, groundnuts, and began importing other goods that were not available on their domestic market. While independence was formally declared in Senegal, “independent” was far from an accurate description regarding this nation as it looked to global institutions for national development. Like many newly independent African states, Senegal lacked the resources to invest in their specialization and economic development and therefore needed a foreign loan to set up infrastructure. This was when the World Bank stepped in and granted Senegal their first international loan.

Unfortunately, in the 1980’s something unexpected happened. Due to the seemingly lucrative and stable nature of groundnuts as an export crop, other developing countries began to focus on growing groundnuts as a means to gain valuable foreign currency as well. As more countries began to produce groundnuts, more groundnuts were on the markets, thus displaying the economic principle of supply and demand and driving down market prices. With such a low income generated by exporting groundnuts at their low market price, Senegal had to borrow even more money from the World Bank just to stay afloat.

In order to repay their growing debt, the World Bank encouraged Senegal to continue specializing their economy in groundnuts, exporting this basic commodity on the world market for the US dollars needed to pay off their loan. Influenced by the powerful World Bank, Senegal was stuck exporting basic commodities to foreign countries in order to escape from their debt. Herein lies the catch-22. Indebted and developing countries such as Senegal have been forced by lending institutions to export basic commodities in order to obtain the

† Groundnuts are a cousin of the peanut.
strong US dollars needed to become debt-free, but the low-profit associated with the export of basic commodities means poverty is a high-risk.

In dealing with commodities produced in undeveloped countries, it is the importer who decides and controls prices and quantities, making the export market very unstable. In contrast, exporters of manufactured goods are largely able to control their price of export on the world market. This export of commodities and import of processed goods is known as an “unequal exchange,” as the price of the export commodities is not equal to the price of the imported goods. In addition, exporting commodities generates low-grade jobs, whereas manufacturing employs skilled personnel for higher wages, creating a longer chain of production and economic profit, a “multiplier effect,” growing the domestic economy. This export of basic commodities made it impossible for Senegal to repay their debt. Furthermore, since all their money was going towards debt-repayment, they had no opportunity to develop their economy by producing manufactured goods at a higher price. Exporting nothing but groundnuts for export, their population was bound to unpredictable low-wage employment and unreliable economic access to food.

6.2.2 Structural Adjustment Policies & Trade Liberalization

After accumulating a seemingly insurmountable amount of debt and facing the prospect of bankruptcy, Senegal turned to World Bank economists for help. Motivated by the Washington Consensus, a set of ten economic policy prescriptions recommended for developing countries in crisis advocated by the IMF, World Bank and the US Treasury Department, Senegal adopted a structural adjustment policy (SAP) with the aim of economic restructuring and debt repayment. This meant the privatization of industry by reducing state regulation, cutbacks on important social services and the removal of trade restrictions. In this way, World Bank economists encouraged Senegal towards the popular economic movement of the time: trade liberalization.

Trade liberalization is the process of making trade more liberal or free by removing barriers. Trade barriers such as tariffs and duties were removed in Senegal, and foreign goods, including foreign nuts, were imported tax-free. Privatization of the economic sector led to zero government involvement in Senegal’s industry. State-run groundnut company, Sonacos, which usually guaranteed prices to Senegal farmers, became privatized, impacting the employment and livelihood of many who depended upon state-control over industry. At the same time, the government made significant cuts in public spending. The Senegalese
population was left without a social or welfare system, making public education and healthcare no longer accessible basic human goods, but hopeful luxuries.

Over the next 10 years Senegal implemented recommended structural adjustments, but the situation on the world market for groundnuts only became worse. The price of nuts went from $1,745/MT in 1975, to $850/MT in 1985, to only $638/MT in 1995. Senegal’s debt at this point became uncontrollable. Today, Senegal is officially one of the world’s most heavily indebted nations, and has qualified under the World Banks Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative to help them in this regard. Senegal spends far more money paying their debt than they do on healthcare and education combined.

Following this neoliberalism ideology, by encouraging such SAPs, “the IMF and World Bank have demanded that poor nations lower the standard of living of their people.” Neoliberalism strongly supports civil and political rights over economic and social rights. This creates a trade-off of health, education and development, vital aspects for societies stuck in extreme poverty, in favour of debt repayment and economic policies through less government involvement and regulation. While economic growth following the Western model of free trade might appear to be a long-term solution for countries needing to develop as Western countries have, the fact is that the freer trade becomes, the worse the situation of the world’s most poor becomes. Economic liberalization strongly enables Western countries to access cheap commodities for production, creating inequality within economic exchange, and an unfair advantage for manufacturing countries.

At the 2005 G8 Summit, economist Yaya Orou-Guidou from Benin, a country in West Africa, stated, “If we content ourselves with selling our agricultural or mining products in their raw states, they will always feed Western factories which provide jobs for (the West’s) own people.” Such a statement is grounded and makes the key point that developing countries, such as Senegal, in exporting raw materials and agricultural products, will not fight poverty within their own borders but only feed into the economies of the West and breed further inequality. As undeveloped nations export commodities on the global market to developed nations, those developed nations process the raw materials and in turn sell the processed and manufactured goods at a much higher price both on their domestic market and internationally.

6.2.3 Agricultural Subsidies

American peanuts are one of the most protected cash crops in the world. Without needing a foreign loan to set up infrastructure, the US government invested heavily in the peanut trade,
set up all the necessary equipment, and to this day heavily subsidizes the industry. US peanut farmers receive a cash bonus for each ton of peanuts they produce, which allows them to sell the nuts at a much lower and competitive price. The US is the largest global producer of peanuts with 50,000 peanut farms contributing $4 billion/year towards the US economy. With a strong domestic demand, no debts to repay and high subsidies driving down world peanut prices creating a large global market for cheap American peanuts, farmers in the US have had very little to fear.

Subsidized crops from the Western world are a main factor in driving down the world price of basic commodities. Agricultural subsidies negatively affect poor countries such as Senegal who lack the public spending needed to subsidize farmers so as to negate the price effects of an uncertain commodity export market. Privatization of industry through SAPs and cutbacks in public spending leaves no safeguard for poor farmers competing against highly subsidized farmers in the West. On an increasingly competitive commodities market, driving down the price of commodities, subsidy policies are to blame for the disparity of poor and disadvantaged farmers in developing countries. In fact, export subsidies granted to farmers in OECD countries in 2006 totalled $1 billion/day, meaning that market stalls in Senegal contained subsidized European produce at much lower prices than local produce. In this way, Senegal farmers have been unable to compete against subsidized European farmers, and largely remain in extreme poverty lacking economic access to basic goods.

A further example is in Mexico, were it is estimated that 15 million Mexican farmers and their families have been displaced from their livelihoods and indigenous lands as a result of the NAFTA and competition with subsidized US maize. On a competitive international market where prices are increasingly low due to a surplus on the market, farmers are unable to sell their commodities for profit. When special rules are applied to poor countries in debt, disadvantaging them towards economic success and preventing them from ever escaping that debt, farmers and entire nations become trapped in poverty.

6.2.4 The Business of Hunger
A further problem in terms of rules governing agriculture is US food-aid policies. Since the 1940s the US has followed a policy that all US food-aid must be grown domestically and then shipped internationally to countries in need. Bewildering is why the US does not send cash-

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1 The average American eats nearly 3kg of peanuts/year.
aid to buy up local surplus on markets in countries needing food relief, supporting desperate economies and farmers, and secondarily send US crops to cover any shortage in supply. US officials calculate that roughly half of US costs to provide food-aid to hungry populations is consumed by transportation, storage and handling. This creates an astronomical waste of the financial resources that could better be used toward humanitarian aid. Through a long chain of production, a multiplier effect, food-aid has become big business in the US. Although the US accounts for half of all international food-aid, this generosity appears to be in their economic self-interest. In fact, one could even say that American agricultural industry depends on famine in other countries.

In 2003 US farmers were producing twice the wheat needed domestically and farmers were anxious to move this surplus before prices fell. A coalition of US farmers lobbied for their government to “Keep the food in Food Aid” in order to get rid of their excess commodities. Before 2003, US food-aid totalled $250 million/year, but after lobbying from US wheat farmers, this amount jumped to $500 million/year. Some US farmers are reported to earn a third of their income from food-aid, creating a strong dependency factor toward food-aid not by the beneficiaries in this case but by the producers.

The main goal of development, ensuring all humans live long and healthy lives in freedom is “often lost in the immediate concern for the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth.” Nothing could be truer in the case of the US where a dichotomy exists between food-aid and the agriculture sector. Food-aid is intended to help feed people, but if people were able to sell their local goods at a fair price, if US agriculture wasn’t dominating the world market, the food aid may not be needed in the first place. By continuing to grow food for aid, US farmers are sure to maintain the need for such aid. Through food-aid policies in America, and the advocacy displayed by powerful US farmers, a business has been made out of starvation.

6.2.5 Commodity Speculation
Business has also been made out of contracts meant to insure farmers during times of market price fluctuations. French President Nicolas Sarkozy recently stated that commodity speculators are to blame for current world food price increases. Futures contracts have been used for hundreds of years to help farmers deal with the environmental uncertainty associated with farming. Obtaining a futures contract means a farmer is able to sell their crops at a future date at a guaranteed price. Futures contracts worked well until the 1990s when bankers, wanting to create another product for revenue, successfully lobbied the deregulation of such
markets. Banks, hedge funds and private investors buy and sell these contracts, attempting to profit from the changes in food prices over time, but in doing so create price volatility. Deregulation has meant that commodity speculators share of the market for basic goods such as wheat has grown from 12% in 1996 to 61% today.\textsuperscript{69} Essentially, commodity speculators are “betting on the price of food” with complete disregard for the agricultural sector or the relative price itself. Contributing most to increasing price volatility are “the big financial institutions that use computerized high-frequency trading to take advantage of price changes.”\textsuperscript{69} Termed as the “financialisation of commodity markets,”\textsuperscript{69} commodity speculation reduces futures contracts into financial instruments for profit, making a business out of the unpredictable and unstable occupation that is farming.

6.2.6 Privatization and Agriculture in Niger

Business and privatization in Niger has created increased poverty especially among farmers. The livelihood of nomads and peasants in Niger has long depended upon trading their highly valued cattle, sheep and camels. After the IMF imposed SAPs on Niger’s agricultural sector, the privatization of the national veterinary office has meant that pastoralist farmers can no longer afford vaccinations, medicines and vitamins for their livestock at the prices charged by commercial traders. Furthermore, due to privatization there is no central system through which pastoral farmers can buy health certificates for the trade of animals as required by the WTO. Because of this, buyers force down the price of the animals, leaving farmers and families in Niger even poorer.\textsuperscript{70} Privatization has also meant that Niger’s transport industry, necessary for the transport of animals and crops for trade as well as emergency food aid, has become expensive and difficult. Transport companies responsible for distributing food in times of crisis no longer travel to rural areas due to bad roads and new economic incentives of cost and benefit.\textsuperscript{70}

6.3 Summary of Causal Factors

This chapter analyzed several main factors contributing to poverty and global hunger. War, climate change and natural disasters were briefly discussed using examples in Pakistan on the conflict-ridden Afghan border and drought in the Horn of Africa. A plausible argument for the main cause of poverty, the global institutional order, was then explained through the historical context of colonialism. When countries such as Senegal gained independence from European colonialists, the World Bank granted them loans and agricultural infrastructure was set up in hopes of economic development. When price volatility did not allow for indebted
countries to develop, more loans were borrowed from the Bank on the condition that they continue to export commodities and follow the Washington Consensus to ensure debt repayment. The Washington Consensus outlines a specific SAP meant to privatize industry, reduce state regulation, cut public spending, and make trade freer.

Despite their intention, SAPs create a debt-trap for nations since they cannot compete with subsidized Western farmers. In addition, specializing in the export of commodities is low profit and creates an unequal exchange, as costly produced goods need to be imported. Freer trade creates a flow of imports onto struggling undeveloped markets while Western markets maintain trade barriers as well as access to cheaply exported commodities for their developed manufacturing sectors. Commodity speculation is also to blame for global food price volatility, where banks and private investors are making profit by trading futures contracts. In addition, making profit off humanitarian crisis as with US farmers and American food-aid policy, the US is not only wasting resources but actually contributing to the economic problems in such undeveloped countries that led them to need food-assistance. Furthermore, the privatization of all public sectors, as encouraged by international lending institutions, has led to serious trade-offs in terms of prioritizing debt repayment over healthcare and education.

In recognizing that these are highly complex issues, conclusive judgments regarding the relations between international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, economic actors such as the US and the EU, and post-colonial countries in poverty such as Senegal cannot be absolutely drawn. Surely such global actors and institutions contribute positively in many ways toward helping those in poverty, but through presenting and analyzing specific examples and drawing on the consistencies between a limited amount of examples, a general idea of the way in which harm has been and continues to be systematically inflicted upon poor nations can be found.
7. ANALYSIS

7.1 International Institutions

Though colonial rule ended in the 1960s, global institutions today continue in the same trend of exploiting and profiteering resources in developing, often post-colonial, states. The ECOSOC recommended that the IMF and the World Bank should “pay greater attention to the protection of the right to food in their lending policies and credit agreements and in international measures to deal with the debt crisis.” The Council also pointed out that in light of SAPs, the right to food is not being protected, and that the World Bank and the IMF should “avoid actions that could have a negative impact upon the realization of the right to food.” The negative duty not to harm people’s ability to economically access food requires an internationally agreed upon shift in how to economically approach developing countries so they might climb out of poverty.

Instituted upon highly indebted countries as a strategy for economic growth and debt repayment, SAPs have drastic consequences upon social or welfare rights of citizens in such countries. The World Bank and the IMF are responsible for requiring developing countries lacking resources to re-pay their loans, to privatize all sectors, remove government involvement, liberalize trade and cut social programs. Each of these factors has clear negative effects upon poor populations, thus being a highly probable contributor toward the inability of citizens in such countries to gain economic access to food. Removal of the harm that creates barriers toward human subsistence means that the right to food must focus toward negative duties from global actors such as the World Bank, IMF and Western states who uphold and encourage the current global system.

In carrying out their negative duties, states have an obligation to change their conduct to remove the cause of harm. This change in conduct involves institutional reform “insofar is reasonably possible” in order to secure individuals right to food. To what degree institutional reforms can be considered “reasonably possible” is debatable, as beneficiaries of any current economic advantage or benefit would undoubtedly hesitate toward such a manoeuvre. Western nations are more focused today than in recent years on stimulating growth and liberalizing markets.
7.2 State Responsibility

As stated earlier, responsibilities toward the right to food are both positive and negative in nature. Duty-bearers must not only fulfill this right but to protect and respect it as well. The human rights claim to food obliges both positive and negative duties upon duty-bearers, in this case Western states, the World Bank, IMF, as well as other coercive institutions. These players must focus on their negative duties not to cause harm toward individual realization of their right to food. Regarding positive measures to fulfill the right to food, certainly greater attention must be paid in regards to the connection between hunger and environmental factors. In this case, positive duties are morally right for states and institutions to carry out so long as it is within their means. Fulfillment in the form of food-aid, shelter in camps and other basic needs to help victims of catastrophe fulfill their life-dependent needs such as the provision of security or safety, are all examples of positive duties. Taking into account populations who are at a high hunger-risk due to war, climate change and natural disasters, it is the moral duty of states to fulfill the universal need for food.

Arguably more pressing than positive duties and of greater moral consequence in light of hunger’s chronic nature are the negative duties of states and institutions to not cause harm. Whereas nature is a causal factor that cannot be controlled, global institutions, which are shaped and upheld by Western countries, are a cause that likely can be better regulated. As UN special rapporteur on the right to food Oliver De Schutter observes, “Hunger is not a natural disaster- it’s a political problem.”

Political decisions regarding global economics shape the livelihood of the majority of today’s globalized population.

As Pogge points out, “international institutions are structured by those who govern them.” This means that the US, the EU and other Western countries that govern the World Bank and the IMF for example, are directly in control of setting the rules and creating the international framework. Ensuring all individuals have respect and protection towards their right to food requires states to monitor and negate causes, as well as pinpoint contributing factors to it’s violation. In this case, a transparent approach is necessary, as it is most probably states themselves that are to blame for the harm being carried out. In this way responsibility can be assigned to Western states upholding international institutions so they may carry out their negative duty to abstain from harmful interference of people’s economic access to food.

Freedom is synonymous with being limitless, or without restraint. In light of this fact, unregulated freedom expressed through popular economic systems in the West such as capitalism is given no boundaries. States and participants in global institutions should enjoy
their freedom up to the point of causing harm. Moral considerations by participants are not fully taken regarding the inequality bred by global systems of trade and economics today. If liberty rights by powerful states in the West continue to deprioritize basic human rights, especially subsistence rights, the undeveloped world will continue to be subjected to an unfair advantage and their citizens will be condemned to live and die below the poverty line.

Western states, especially in the current economic climate, are primarily concerned with their national economic situation, and negate their negative duties to not harm poor nations in order to ensure their own economic liberty and security. Liberty rights and economic freedom are being upheld as hierarchically greater than ensuring basic rights for the world’s poorest population. Surely this is an understandable quandary, as the loss of employment in Western countries is resulting in a greater amount of poverty, leading to hunger within their own population. Why should a country in economic crisis worry about the poverty of other nations? They are primarily responsible to their own citizens. Countries in the West’s main priority is creating jobs nationally therefore bolstering growth within their national economy. The fate and development of poor and powerless nations is left to the concern of their own economically bankrupt and often corrupt governments. The UN states, “Wide disparities in economic power between States mean that powerful States negotiate trade rules that are neither free nor fair [which] severely affect small farmers and threaten food security, especially in developing countries…”

The economic power enjoyed by countries in the West does allow for a great deal of liberty, but it is their moral duty to consider the human rights of other nations and the suffering of others, especially when they are responsible for such harm and are able to remedy it.

Pogge addresses the issue of placing blame upon corrupt political leaders in such poor countries. He argues that just as democratically elected leaders from wealthy states shape our global institutional order, so does the global institutional order radically shape governments and upper-class members of weaker, developing states. Corrupt government, bad leadership and even civil wars within developing countries are not isolated to local causes of influence, but according to Pogge are “strongly encouraged by the existing international rules and extreme inequalities.” Weak and desperate governments are willing to act dishonestly, or become corrupt, through prioritizing wealthy foreign governments, corporations and tourists over the basic needs of their own impoverished citizens. The international structure is increasingly interconnected, making endorsers of the current global order, Western countries, indirectly responsible for corrupt leadership occurring on a national level in the world’s poorest countries.
Individual Responsibility

If Western states are likely to be responsible for violating the right to food, and citizens of Western countries are responsible for democratically electing it’s government, does that not make individual citizens responsible towards the right to food as well? Individuals in the West vote in democratic elections and are, based on the principles of democracy, responsible for instating their government. On the other hand, it is increasingly obvious in countries such as the US that democracy is not being fully realized as the state and large corporations have become mutually dependent despite overwhelming public outcry that began on Wall Street in September 2011.\(^7\)\(^5\) Even though a government election may be democratic, the way the US government makes decisions regarding big business, banks and bailouts without the consent of it’s citizens is not democratic. When this is the case, and democracy is lacking, individuals cannot be said as being responsible for government actions. The state may not live up to their campaign promises and the original expectations of citizens may not be met. Citizens elect their government based on hopes and promises and in light of government failure to live up to such promises and the lack of democratic power, citizens cannot easily be given blame. In this way, it is unreasonable to attach responsibility associated with the negative duties of the Western states upon their citizens.

Furthermore, placing responsibility on citizens is unfeasible when it comes to the right to food and negative duties. Surely it is impossible to trace back all the hands that participated in various capacities within the institutional framework responsible for poverty. From importers of commodities, manufacturers, and exporters, to neo-liberal politicians, subsidized farmers and even consumers, an uncontrollable amount of citizens in the West participate in the current economic and political structures. Furthermore, can such a Western citizen be said to be responsible for the society they were born into? In this sense, they were not able to choose the nation they would be employed under, therefore cannot be held accountable to the relatively long-standing structures that are Western nation states.

Furthermore, average citizens do not decide on the level of agricultural subsidies maize farmers will receive or which sort of development policy will be used to help poor indebted nations. In this way, negative duties cannot be accurately and fairly placed upon citizens in Western countries, but perhaps it can be said that all citizens have the responsibility to respect others right to food without suggesting that they have the positive duty of charity to fulfill this right for others, nor that they are responsible for the policies carried out by international institutions and supportive governments.
Public policy, according to Sen, is “the programs and rules by which government and other public agencies arrange our lives in society,”\textsuperscript{76} and is meant to benefit human beings and achieve their pursuit of happiness. Primary in an individual's pursuit of happiness, or actualization of higher needs as explained by Maslow, are basic needs. When public policy does not allow people to meet their basic needs, individual freedom is violated. Human morality, ethics and human rights do not seem to be taken into account by governments in the West in constructing trade rules and economic policies that most likely cause a great deal of harm. As is the case in the world today, agricultural, trade, development and aid policies are all intended to arrange human lives for the better, but it appears to be quite probable that they are granting a greater amount of inequality and poverty to the global population than they grant happiness and benefit, at least for disadvantaged undeveloped countries.

When states sign and ratify international human rights documents such as the UDHR or the ICESCR, they are required to fully comply “with the principles of accountability, transparency, people’s participation, decentralization, legislative capacity, and the independence of the judiciary.”\textsuperscript{77} States are responsible to the agreement they made to uphold agreed upon morals and values through openness, fairness and public engagement. All of these principles of good governance are necessary for all human rights to be morally guaranteed. Furthermore, states have obligations toward the right to food, ensuring its safeguard by regulated agricultural markets with increased transparency.\textsuperscript{72}

Negative duties in the context of trade and development would remove the unequal barriers separating the Western World from the Third World, and over time people would enjoy an environment where they have access to food or the means to obtain it. In this way, positive duties regarding the obligation to fulfill the right to food should be carried out in conjunction with duties to respect and protect the right to food from interference and harm as steps towards a sustainable solution.
8. FURTHER REFLECTIONS & SUMMARY

8.1 Discussion of Results

Achieving development cannot be achieved through a strictly national focus on economic growth through freer trade and less social rights. Since subsistence is a hierarchically basic need it must first be ensured before any other rights and freedoms are to be enjoyed, including economic liberty. Since moral reasoning largely guides the norms and values pertaining to the actualization of human rights, it is increasingly worrisome that Western states are choosing to be guided by libertarian values of economic freedom rather than prioritizing extreme poverty and chronic hunger of developing countries. Pogge makes the interesting observation that “our shifting morality merely trails the shifting interest of those who control capital, technologies, land, and natural resources. Any protection and relief moral norms afford the weak and the poor is merely incidental.” In this way, the moral framework through which human rights are prioritized and addressed today has shifted to favour the interests of already wealthy states over the interests of impoverished states needing to develop out of poverty. The incidental relief afforded to victims of hunger may ironically be thanks to American agricultural lobbyists, pressing for policies of economic freedom regarding the lucrative market of food-aid.

Poor countries indebted to the World Bank should not be forced to compromise the well-being of their citizens through drastic cuts in public spending. Privatization only breeds greater inequalities within developing countries, since without any mechanism for regulating private business, economic liberty is free to cause unregulated harm. Compromising between human rights, especially in regards to basic rights such as the right to food, should not be necessary for debt repayment. The World Bank has the duty not to cause a trade-off between rights.

The World Bank, operating under an increasingly unpredictable institutional framework, is likely placing their efforts for development in the wrong direction, expecting undeveloped states to succeed through neoliberal SAPs. Development strategy needs to be about more than economic profits and growth. Furthermore, why Western states and global institutions continue to focus on expensive positive duties to provide aid rather than negative duties with far less cost is striking. By restructuring the current system and removing unfair trade terms, an equal opportunity market of non-discrimination could be an international reality whereby post-colonial nations could at least have a fair chance at economic development.
The current economic system not only historically and currently fails the Third World, keeping one billion people financially poor therefore chronically hungry, but it is failing even the First World today. Surprisingly ironic is the economic harm inflicted not only upon economically weak countries, but also upon the very states that uphold and impose the institutions themselves. The United States, Greece, Italy, among many other developed Western States are facing great harm through chain reactions within the global economic system. The international community must take responsibility and recognize their economic and trade system to have failed even the developed world and perhaps in turn create a new Washington Consensus; a new structural adjustment policy that can be implemented upon coercive international institutions themselves. In this way trade liberalization would cease to create inequality and privatization would not take priority over basic rights. By unveiling the most probable central cause of poverty, that is economic disparity inflated by global organizations, and taking serious measures to change unequal institutional terms and remove development barriers, global hunger could be a humanitarian crisis of the past.

8.2 Final Summary and Conclusion

Earlier after discovering the serious crisis that is hunger, through argumentative analysis and philosophical discussion, it was said that the right to food is a primary human need of central importance to the actualization of other basic needs. Through this baseline, taking into account central misunderstandings regarding the right to food demanding purely positive duties, discovering the centrality in negative duties towards the right to food was found. By analyzing the right to food as a basic human need, requiring recognition as a basic right in order to ensure it’s value, and the importance of human rights for victims to claim their right to food, the necessity of a duty-bearer complying with negative duties not to cause harm was discovered. Furthermore, responsibilities and duties were found to be both positive and negative, as all rights require both positive and negative obligations for their enjoyment. The right to food can be said to oblige both negative and positive duties upon international institutions and states.

In the context of poverty being the central cause of hunger, and the central cause of poverty being a lack of economic access, having the monetary means to obtain food is far more pressing than the availability of food. Therefore the negative duties states and institutions have toward the right to food are far more important than they positive duties they carry out today. An analysis of empirical data and examples allowed understanding as to how SAPs and the global trade system have been implemented upon undeveloped poor nations by
the World Bank, the IMF, and Western states such as the US, only to cause harm. History links the West to the current economic predicament affecting the farmers and citizens of many post-colonial countries.

Hopefully the high death tolls produced by hunger will soon create universal seriousness towards this critical situation. It is an issue that demands immediate attention and remediable discussion in order for more global citizens to become aware of the causal factors producing the greatest harm. In today’s highly globalized age, all people all over the world are affected in increasingly more negative ways as economic declines have states in a panic and where liberty rights are being upheld and respected far more than basic rights of subsistence and security. For the West to so strongly advocate human rights in speech and theory, it is highly incoherent for them to deny the hierarchical value that nutrition has, trade-off social rights for liberty rights, as well as ignore the causal effects of their policies and international economic relations. Western states, insofar as they are able, which in relative terms they certainly are, have negative duties toward the rudimentary, vital and universal basic need all humans have for food. One billion people are without enough of it. One billion people are waiting for the Western World to show that they truly do believe in human rights and prove life is valued above excessive liberty, and fairness above greed.

The solution must start on the first wrung of the ladder, through properly addressing the basic human right to food as a complex right in desperate need of not just positive duties, but primarily negative duties. In this way, surely Western states, proponents of human rights and moral justice, can spare a portion of their economic liberty and grant some dignity to those in hunger.

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