

**FRAMING RESISTANCE: INTERNATIONAL FOOD REGIMES
AND THE ROOTS OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY**

by

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Abstract

Since entering into the global arena just over a decade ago, the concept of "food sovereignty" has garnered increasing attention from intellectuals, policy-makers and activists all over the world. Food sovereignty was developed by the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina as a means to address injustice and inequality in the world food system and as a conceptual alternative to food security. Although the food sovereignty movement has been commented upon in the sociological literature, the concept itself has not yet received serious attention. I attempt to fill this gap by analyzing the framing of food sovereignty and situating it within a context of other similar food-related frames throughout history. My theoretical approach combines Harriet Friedmann's concept of food regimes with the social movements literature on framing to explore the ways in which political-economic context has influenced the form taken by food-related frames throughout history. I examine historical and current documents on three such frames - "right to food", "food security", and "food sovereignty" - and find that each reflects the structures and ideologies of the food regime within which it took shape. The right to food and early food security frames reflect several dimensions of the postwar food regime including the political centrality of the nation-state, the subordination of markets to society, and a reliance on food aid. The "household food security" frame, which was developed in the 1980s, reflects aspects of the emerging corporate food regime including a belief in unregulated markets and the prevalence of an individualizing and naturalizing neoliberal discourse. Finally, food sovereignty is also shaped by the corporate food regime and attendant globalization project. Framed from the bottom up, however, it employs language which rejects many aspects of the regime. In addition to challenging the effectiveness of neoliberal reforms, it implicitly questions and politicizes the value system upon which the regime is based. This analysis of food sovereignty as a historically and politically embedded frame allows for a deeper understanding of both the potential and pitfalls faced by the movement.

Introduction

The global food system is dysfunctional. That much is clear. While consumers in developed countries encounter a mind-boggling array of food options and agro-food corporations watch their profits swell, 854 million people remain malnourished across the developing world (FAO 2006). Less clear is how we could make the system function better. How can we remedy a situation in which rural farmers in the Global South, whose export crops feed Northern consumers, often go hungry themselves? Just over a decade ago the concept of “food sovereignty” entered into the global arena as a potential answer to this question. Developed by the peasant producers most affected by the inadequacies of the system, the concept seeks to address the power imbalance fostered by the dominant rhetoric of “free trade” by giving developing nations and small farmers a greater say in what they produce and eat. As Jean Ziegler, the UN’s Special Rapporteur on the right to food, explains:

“Food sovereignty” treats trade as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself, giving primacy to food security and the right to food for the poorest, rather than export-oriented industrial agriculture. Food sovereignty seeks to reclaim sovereignty over decision-making on agricultural and food security policy, challenges the imbalances and inequities in current global rules on agricultural trade, and draws a common position for peasant farmers in the developed and developing world. (Ziegler 2004)

Since its emergence, food sovereignty has received increasing attention from activists, intellectuals, and policy-makers all over the world. Perhaps more importantly, it has seen a groundswell of support from the constellation of international peasant networks engaged in promoting the concept. This support makes it a genuine challenge to the food system status quo.

But why did food sovereignty appear when it did? How is its sudden emergence and rapid popularization to be understood? One possible approach to answering these

questions lies in the literature on international “food regimes”, which describes the political and economic structures behind each successive period of stability within the world food system. Another lies in the social movements literature on “framing”, which examines how social movements deploy language and ideas to mobilize support. In a recent article (2005), Harriet Friedmann suggests a way to reconcile these two approaches. She examines the role played by social movements in both the dissolution and consolidation of food regimes. Her focus is on how, when a food regime enters into crisis, these movements explicitly name the previously implicit workings of the regime which have ceased to function properly, thereby deepening the crisis. She goes on to explain that “arguments over alternative ways of solving problems that arise as a result [of the crisis] take place in part over how to name aspects of the faltering regime. When names catch on, it is a sign that a regime is in crisis” (Friedmann 2005:232). This provides a link between the discursive project of framing and the structures of the food regime.

While Friedmann focuses on how social movements name and rename the *problems* of a food regime in crisis (for example by the labeling of postwar food “aid” as dumping), her analysis points to a parallel project which frames potential *solutions* and aims at constructing a better regime. In other words, framing may also be an aspirational project. Organizations compete over the naming and interpretation of food-related frames which convey their own distinctive visions of how the food regime ought to be structured. What’s more, social movements do not have a monopoly over this project. They are just one of the many actors, including states, corporations, and international

institutions, which engage in framing activities aimed at influencing the structures of the regime.

Such a framing contest is evident in the fact that both *food security* and *food sovereignty* are currently being promoted as the appropriate frame for thinking about access to food under today's nascent food regime. The former is framed by powerful nations and organizations, while the latter is still largely restricted to social movements. The fact that neither is entirely dominant, and both are questioned, reflects the lack of consensus around the current structure of the regime. In other words, everyone agrees that the food system is dysfunctional, but the two groups present very different remedies.

In examining the framing of food sovereignty, it is crucial to understand that the term did not arise in a conceptual vacuum. As suggested above, it is one of several extant frames through which the question of access to food may be viewed. In particular, food sovereignty is both a reaction to and an intellectual offspring of the earlier concepts of the "right to food" and "food security". Though all of these concepts are in current use and may therefore be viewed as contemporaries, they were each framed at a different point in world history and reflect the political and economic climates within which they took shape. In order to fully understand the emergence of food sovereignty, it is therefore necessary to examine the ongoing interaction between food regimes and food frames throughout history. Who has been charged with creating these frames? In what ways have the frames been influenced by the historical period? How have they changed with the shifting political landscape? What aspects of these earlier frames can be seen in food sovereignty?

This thesis represents an attempt to understand how food regimes and food frames have shaped one another throughout history with the goal of better understanding the framing of food sovereignty. The following section contains a conceptual summary of the literature on food regimes, framing, and neoliberalism. I then begin my analysis with a brief look at how demands for food were expressed during the first food regime and earlier, in the absence of a universally recognized frame. Next I examine the two frames that emerged during the postwar food regime: the right to food and “freedom from hunger”. This is followed by a section on the earliest iteration of food security, which was framed when the postwar regime entered into crisis. Finally I examine the two alternative frames which emerged as the foundations of a corporate food regime began to take shape in the mid-1980s. I first explicate the household food security frame, which reflects the neoliberal ideology of the emergent regime. Second, I present a detailed history and analysis of food sovereignty, which reframes the issues so as to explicitly reject most aspects of this regime. Analyzing food sovereignty in this way, as the most recent in a progression of historically embedded frames, allows for a better understanding of both its potential to effect change and the challenges that it faces.

Conceptual Framework

International Food Regimes

The concept of “food regimes” was developed by Harriet Friedmann as a means of linking periods of capitalist accumulation to the international relations of food production and consumption that accompany them. Though they are characterized by relatively stable political and economic relationships, these regimes are nonetheless

temporary. Their historical contingency is perhaps their most defining factor. As Philip McMichael explains, “The ‘food regime’ concept defines an historically specific geo-political-economic organization of international agricultural and food relations” (McMichael 2004:57). The first food regime identified by Friedmann was consolidated under British hegemony and lasted from 1870 to 1914. The next food regime was developed under U.S. hegemony and lasted from 1947 to 1973. Finally, both Friedmann and McMichael have tentatively suggested that a new regime may be emerging from the ongoing crisis that has followed the breakdown of the second food regime. Though the various regimes have been referred to by several different names¹, for simplicity’s sake I will here refer to them as the “first food regime”, the “postwar food regime”, and the “corporate food regime” respectively.

The first food regime (1870 to 1914) was structured by international free trade between European colonial powers and the settler colonies under British hegemony (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). Capitalist agricultural production of temperate crops was relocated to the New World settler states (particularly the U.S., Canada, Australia, and Argentina) and led to the emergence of a global trade in wheat (Friedmann 1978). Commercial family farmers in the settler states became the primary suppliers of cheap wheat and meat used to feed the growing urban work forces of European nations

¹ Friedmann has referred to the regime which lasted from 1870 to 1914 as the “prewar international food order” (Friedmann 1982), the “first food regime” (Friedmann and McMichael 1989), and the “colonial-diasporic food regime” (Friedmann 2005). She has labeled the regime that lasted from 1947 to 1973 the “postwar international food order” (Friedmann 1982), the “second food regime” (Friedmann and McMichael 1989), the “postwar food regime” (Friedmann 1993), and the “mercantile-industrial food regime” (Friedmann 2005). The present, emerging food regime has been termed the “corporate-environmental food regime” by Friedmann (2005), while McMichael has referred to it as the “third food regime” (1992) and the “corporate food regime” (2005).

(Friedmann and McMichael 1989, McMichael 1995). During this regime, the European colonies and former-colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, though they provided Europe with tropical commodities such as coffee, tea, and sugar, stayed largely self-sufficient in food grains (Friedmann 1982). Throughout the period, Britain used its hegemony to push free trade, which was accomplished through international use of the gold standard. The regime was characterized by two related and mutually-enforcing processes: the industrialization of agriculture, and the development of a system of independent nation-states (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). Eventually, the rise of the nation-state system would conflict with the colonial system and contribute to the crisis at the root of the regime's decline (Friedmann and McMichael 1989). The regime, along with the gold standard and free trade, finally collapsed altogether during the Great Depression of the 1930s and WWII, and state regulation of markets became the new norm (Friedmann and McMichael 1989).

The crisis lasted for only about thirty years before a new regime had consolidated, this time under the auspices of U.S., rather than British, hegemony and based on state intervention rather than free markets. During the postwar food regime, relations of production and consumption were focused on protection of national markets as nation-states followed the example of the U.S. in instituting measures such as domestic price supports for farmers, protective tariffs, and export subsidies (Friedmann and McMichael 1989, Friedmann 1993). During this regime, the prevalence of Keynesian economics and Fordist production meant that relatively high working class wages, supporting high mass consumption of durable and value-added foods, were the norm in core countries (Friedmann 1990). In the periphery, a transformation of markets and diets was also

occurring as a result of first world agricultural policies. U.S. farmers were a strong political force during this period, which impacted the nation's agricultural policies, leading the government to subsidize agricultural production in a number of ways (Friedmann 1993, Friedmann 2005). This resulted in chronic over-production of grain in the U.S., particularly wheat, and left the government with an ever-growing grain surplus to dispose of. Eventually the government hit upon an ingenious solution to this problem in the form of food aid, which served the dual purpose of winning Third World allies during the Cold War, and disposing of surpluses in such a way as to cause dependency and create future markets for those grains (Friedmann 1993). This clever arrangement was codified in the form of Public Law 480 (PL 480), the Agricultural Trade Development Assistance Act, enacted in 1954. While the food regime lasted, the rhetoric and mechanisms of food aid went largely unquestioned (Friedmann 2005).

The food aid method for disposing of grain surpluses was particularly effective, due to the fact that the postwar food regime corresponded with what McMichael has termed the "development project". This was "a state-building process in the Free World via economic and military aid, with the U.S. model of consumption as the ultimate, phenomenal goal of development" (McMichael 2005:271). Under the influence of development project ideology, Third World countries came to view the particular trajectory of the settler states, particularly the U.S., as universally desirable and universally achievable through the adoption of mercantilist policies similar to those pursued by the U.S. This meant that agriculture was a national economic sector characterized by production subsidies, economic regulation, and government purchases (McMichael 1992).

Operating under the developmentalist assumptions that modernization was the universal goal, and that it was best achieved through the fostering of domestic industry, Third World countries followed strategies of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). Consistent with the highly regulated economic atmosphere of this period, ISI involved using economic regulation to protect domestic industry. This led to rapid urbanization and dwindling rural populations – a sure recipe for national food shortages. Given this situation, the allure of cheap U.S. wheat was very strong, and many Southern countries began importing much of their food supply, which in turn undermined their agricultural producers yet further and caused even more migration to urban areas (Friedmann 1993).

The postwar food regime came to an abrupt end in the early 1970s as a result of a combination of factors. By this time, the food aid program had done its job of creating markets very effectively, and much of the Third World was highly dependent on imported U.S. wheat (Friedmann 1993). As long as the Cold War continued, preventing the U.S. from trading with the massive potential market of the Soviet Bloc, this situation was sustainable. In 1972 and 1973, however, under Détente policy, the Nixon administration sold 30 million metric tons of grain to the Soviet Union, definitively ending the era of grain surpluses and initiating the world food crisis of 1972-3 (Friedmann 1993). Another cause of the decline of the postwar food regime was that agro-food corporations were rapidly outgrowing the national framework upon which the postwar food regime and the development project had been founded. Agriculture was becoming an international economic sector. Similarly, the increasingly global scope of financial transactions, which included the rise of transnational corporations and banks

and the increase in offshore money markets, could no longer be constrained by the social and spatial limits of the nation-state (McMichael 2000b, McMichael 2005).

This increasing corporate power reflected and intensified growing resistance to the protective national economic policies which had characterized the postwar food regime and the development project in general (McMichael 2005). McMichael has labeled this new trend the “globalization project”, an ongoing process characterized by the internationalization of capital, neoliberal ideology, and a dismantling of the welfare state programs encouraged under U.S. hegemony. The globalization project undergirds the corporate food regime, which aims at the removal of social and political barriers to the free-flow of capital in food and agriculture. According to McMichael:

[In the corporate food regime] the political decomposition of citizenship and of national sovereignty, via the neo-liberal ‘globalization project,’ reverse the political gains (‘welfare’ and ‘development’ states) associated with the period of U.S. hegemony, facilitating an unprecedented conversion of agriculture across the world to supply a relatively affluent global consumer class. The vehicle of this corporate-driven process is the WTO’s Agreement on Agriculture, which,... institutionalizes a distinctive form of economic liberalism geared to deepening market relations via the privatization of states. (McMichael 2005: 273)

For Southern agricultural production, the corporate food regime means an increasing focus on industrial, export-oriented agriculture, increasing dependence of farmers on agro-food transnational corporations for their means of production, and the ongoing dispossession and displacement of peasant populations and their cultures of provision (McMichael 2005).

To Friedmann, this regime is based on the selective appropriation by transnational corporations of certain activist demands, leading to a new round of accumulation in the form of “green capitalism”. While she agrees with McMichael that this new regime entails an ever widening gap between rich and poor consumers across the globe,

Friedmann particularly emphasizes the role of privately enforced quality standards which corporations use to mollify consumers at the end of the most privileged supply chains without altering the basic mode of accumulation. Friedmann stresses that this regime may never consolidate, as it is already contested by the Northern activists whose demands it has incorporated, as well as by Southern peasant organizations which pose a very different sort of challenge in the form of food sovereignty (Friedmann 2005).

Liberalism and Neoliberalism

The work of Karl Polanyi is extremely useful in theorizing the interaction between markets and society which characterized each food regime. Polanyi argues that self-regulating markets are anything but the natural phenomena that they were portrayed as by 19th century economists. Rather, their construction is dependent upon the assumed existence of three “fictitious commodities” – land, labor, and money. Because they were not created for sale on the market, these are not truly commodities and artificially treating them as such is socially and environmentally destructive. Polanyi demonstrated that, as European countries worked to create self-regulating markets over several centuries, a spontaneous backlash began to arise from all corners of society. This response, which took the form of a growing demand for social and environmental protections, was a protective drive aimed at re-embedding markets within the fabric of society. This process, by which a counter-movement develops to restrain markets and re-subordinate them to social institutions in reaction to the excesses of free trade, is what Polanyi referred to as a “double movement” (Polanyi 2001). Polanyi was writing in the aftermath of World War II when it seemed that the experiment in free markets was over and state regulation was understood to be a necessity. The resulting dominant ideology of “embedded liberalism”

(Ruggie 1982) was the basis upon which both the development project and the postwar food regime were founded. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, it became clear that the movement toward free markets was far from dead, as the neoliberal ideology of the globalization project and the corporate food regime rose to prominence. Most recently, the protective counter-movement has proven that it too is alive and well, as the food sovereignty movement, among others, has risen up to demand the re-embedding of markets in society (McMichael 2005).

Recent theoretical work on neoliberalism is also eminently useful in understanding the ongoing shifts in the political economy of food and agriculture. This work picks up where Polanyi left off, theorizing the return to free market economics and limited state intervention which began in the 1980s. Much of this work has been conducted by geographers and therefore focuses on the differential forms and effects of neoliberalism across space. David Harvey, one such geographer, defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005:2). In the realm of policy, the process of neoliberalization is most commonly associated with the “roll-back” policies of the 1980s which dismantled the welfare state in the name of privatization and deregulation (Peck and Tickell 2002). However, Peck and Tickell (2002) point out that we are now in the midst of a “roll-out” phase, in which new modes of governance and new regulatory relations are being constructed through such institutions as NAFTA and the WTO.

In addition to research on the policies of neoliberalism, many scholars have examined the “neoliberal discourse” that accompanies them. Bourdieu (1998) points out that neoliberal discourses are “strong discourses” because they are aligned with the powerful in the global economic system. Neoliberal discourse therefore has a tendency to be self-actualizing, reshaping the social world to fit the picture that it describes (Peck and Tickell 2002). It is so effective at reshaping the world in part because of its strong naturalizing tendencies. It depicts neoliberalization as an inevitable, external force rather than an intentional project (Peck and Tickell 2002). This has the effect of depoliticizing the process, thereby making the task of resistance far more difficult (Peck and Tickell 2002).

Another strand of research on neoliberal discourse uses Foucault’s concept of governmentality to examine how the effect of neoliberalization affects people’s day-to-day practices (MacKinnon 2000, Rose 1999). This work asserts that neoliberal market logic (emphasizing personal responsibility, voluntary action, competition, and efficiency) has restructured social life at the most basic levels. Patricia Allen and Julie Guthman (2006) take this argument a step farther, suggesting that even agro-food activism may inadvertently reinforce “neoliberal governmentalities” through its emphasis on individualized purchasing decisions. They suggest that the farm-to-school programs currently being advocated by activists rely on a neoliberal discourse of consumerism, personal responsibility and choice, thereby contributing to the normalization of neoliberalism. Guthman makes a similar argument about labeling schemes (i.e. organic, locally grown, fair trade), arguing that their reliance on voluntary corporate actions and consumer purchases legitimizes the lack of state action (Guthman 2007a, 2007b).

According to this viewpoint, the power of neoliberal discourse lies in its ability to influence the everyday language and actions available to people. This influence may be difficult to notice and overcome, even in the case of social movements which oppose neoliberal policy changes.

Frames

The concept of “frames” (Goffman 1974) was first applied to the literature on social movements in the mid-1980s (Snow et al. 1986) and has since proven extremely useful for examining the role of language and ideas in activism. According to Snow et al. (1986), frames are “‘schemata of interpretation’ that enable individuals ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large. By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective.” Subsequent work has documented the ways in which social movements use “collective action frames” to motivate and mobilize their constituents. The concept of frames has allowed for an increased focus on “meaning work” within social movements, highlighting the ways in which actors actively struggle over the production and mobilization of ideas (Benford and Snow 2000). Naturally, frames differ greatly in terms of several features, including the scope of issues they cover, their inclusivity, and their flexibility. The most crucial feature of a frame, however, is its “resonance”, or the degree to which it is seen as credible and salient to the population at which it is aimed. More resonant frames are more likely to successfully attract and mobilize constituents.

Rather than examining frames as though they were static over time, theorists have been careful to highlight the fact that the process of framing is dynamic, ongoing, and

frequently contested. Social movements and their opponents often engage in "framing contests" over the same issues. Opponents attempt to discredit the frame used by a rival organization by "counterframing" the same issues in a different light (Benford and Snow 2000). The existence of this counterframe may in turn initiate a reframing process within the first organization, leading to an ongoing struggle. In addition, "frame disputes" may occur within a single organization over the best way to present the issues of concern (Benford 1993). The framing process is also highly sensitive to the political and cultural context within which it is located, and it frequently shifts as new political opportunities become available (Benford and Snow 2000).

A recent push within the framing literature has aimed to better differentiate between frames and the related concepts of ideology and discourse. Oliver and Johnston (2000) explain that, whereas frames are intentionally created and can be altered fairly easily, ideologies are far more deeply held belief systems that carry normative implications (Oliver and Johnston 2000). Steinberg (1998) observed that the focus on framing has led to a marginalization of discourse, and points out that the words themselves are never neutral but rather laden with meaning. Rather than freely manipulating discourse to create frames, he suggests, framing processes take place within "discursive fields" which are structured by hegemony and historical context (Steinberg 1998). Ferree and Merrill (2000) suggest that the relationship between the three concepts can be imagined in the form of an inverted pyramid. Discourses, which are "broad system[s] of communication" are located at the top, followed by the more internally coherent and normative ideologies, and finally the far narrower "cognitive focus" of frames (Ferree and Merrill 2000). Although perfect theoretical clarity has not yet been

gained, the framing concept is concrete enough to provide a valuable analytic device for examining the ideational activities of social movements as well as a host of other actors.

In what follows, I combine the theoretical insights provided by the food regime and framing approaches to gain an understanding of the roots of food sovereignty. I examine how, during each historical period, key dimensions of the dominant food regime entered into the framing of food and agriculture. In so doing I highlight the framing process as one which is both dynamic and historically contingent. The table below provides a simplified guide to the food regimes, their salient dimensions and the food-related frames they gave rise to. In the next section, I begin by examining the period up to and including the first food regime.

Food Regime	Dimensions	Frames
First food regime (1870-1914)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonialism • Free markets • British hegemony • Grain trade between settler states and Europe • Agricultural industrialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No universal frames
Postwar food regime (1947-1973)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System of independent nation-states • Market intervention/regulation • U.S. hegemony • Development project • Cold War • Surplus/food aid complex • Agriculture is a national sector • Agricultural industrialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to food • Freedom from hunger • Food security (<i>emerges only with the postwar regime crisis</i>)
Corporate food regime (began emerging in 1980s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nation-state loses political centrality • Free markets • Globalization project • Neoliberal discourse and ideology • Agriculture becomes an international sector • Increasing power of agro-food corporations • Incorporation of some elite consumer demands • Agricultural industrialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household food security • Food sovereignty

**Claims without Frames:
Public Demand for Food during the First Food Regime and Before**

Though an internationally acknowledged frame for the expression of the human need for food did not arise until the mid-twentieth century, public demands for food as well as government action to supply it have a history that stretches back many centuries. In order to uncover the precursors to the twentieth century frames, it is helpful to examine both the ways in which the public expressed demands for food and the government response to such demands. Although many scholars have documented strongly held moral beliefs behind peasant demands for food, no single concept or theoretical framework for expressing these beliefs extended beyond particular localities. The progression toward claims of a universal right to food, moreover, was anything but uniform. There is reason to believe, in fact, that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the period of the first food regime (1870-1914), actually saw a decrease in public demands for food as such, as well as continued reluctance on the part of the state to provide it.

There is a remarkably rich historical and sociological literature on public demands for food, particularly on European bread riots in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. This work suggests that there was indeed a coherent moral claim to food behind popular actions. In his seminal work on eighteenth century English food riots, E.P. Thompson concludes that these were not simply an instinctual and irrational response to the economic stimulus of high prices, as they had often been characterized by historians. Rather, he suggests that the participants in these uprisings had a coherent "legitimizing notion" for their actions which stemmed from the perceived violation of moral norms. He

goes on to explain that, "By legitimation I mean that the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community" (Thompson 1971:78). Thompson refers to the collection of social norms and obligations that structured early modern peasant life as "the moral economy of the poor" and demonstrates that this was increasingly violated throughout the eighteenth century by the growing prevalence of free markets.

Like Thompson, Charles Tilly sees a unifying moral logic behind peasant demands for food, and attributes these demands to the violation of social norms brought about by increasing economic liberalization in Europe. Here both Thompson and Tilly echo Polanyi's description of how trade liberalization tore at the fabric of social life as it progressed, continuing through the nineteenth century (Polanyi 2001). Trade liberalization led to such violations of peasant morality as the appearance of middlemen in grain markets formerly characterized by direct farmer-consumer transactions and the export of grain during periods of shortage from the area of production to areas with higher purchasing power (Thompson 1971, Tilly 1983).

In his influential book, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, James C. Scott extends and elaborates on Thompson's concept of the moral economy through work in a very different geographic and cultural context. Scott sees the moral economy of his Vietnamese and Burmese study subjects as characterized specifically by a "subsistence ethic" (Scott 1976:7). The social and moral fabric of peasant life, he explains, was structured in such a way as to minimize risk and ensure that subsistence levels of production or income were consistently met. Scott's research focuses on the mid-

twentieth century, but still contributes insight into the collective conceptions of food entitlement that may have existed before the advent of such modern framings as the right to food and food security. This body of literature would certainly suggest that such conceptions did exist, though the specific framings must have varied from region to region rather than any being universally utilized.

The next question to examine is how these claims were received and addressed by governing bodies, particularly the modern nation-state. Though instances of state intervention in the food supply can be found as far back as the Roman Empire, most recorded instances appear to be stop-gap measures to maintain legitimacy in times of crisis, rather than any kind of ongoing acceptance of responsibility (Whitaker 2000). The history of food policy in Europe reveals a strong reluctance on the part of states to intervene in food markets. Indeed, no European government held a national food policy until the twentieth century. Until the mid-nineteenth century, European states considered survival to be the responsibility of the individual or family, and therefore no able-bodied person was considered eligible for assistance in obtaining food, no matter how dire their circumstances (Whitaker 2000). According to Dobbert (1978)

Able-bodied unemployed persons who were destitute risked to be treated in a most savage manner by judicial and administrative authorities and could be committed to work houses or to houses of correction for undetermined periods. Only the lame, sick, old or impotent poor could hope for relief and support under Poor Laws.

The state considered claims to food valid only where they were provided by statute, as in the cases of members of the armed forces, prisoners, or almshouses (Dobbert 1978).

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the period of the first food regime, the state *did* gradually increase its intervention in food markets, through such mechanisms as price controls, import and export duties, and measures for maintaining adequate

agricultural production. These actions were not tied to the recognition of a right to food or any other explicit conceptualization of food entitlement, however, and were more likely intended to improve economic efficiency and quell unrest among the swelling urban proletariat (Dobbert 1978). Regardless of whether they recognized any official responsibility for food provisioning, famine was no longer a politically acceptable event under the auspices of the modern European nation-state. The willingness of states to take action rather than allow a serious food crisis to occur became clear during the "last great subsistence crisis of the western world" of 1816 and 1817, in which European states organized to prevent famine by importing supplies from Russia and the Baltic States (Crossgrove et al. 1990). By the time of World War I, European states still held no official doctrine on the provisioning of food, but most had nonetheless taken on a moderate role of occasionally intervening in markets or ensuring food supply so as to maintain the economic productivity of the people and the perceived legitimacy of the government.

The first food regime consolidated in 1870 against the backdrop of these public claims to food and occasional, albeit reluctant state acquiescence. The claims to food made within this regime are best understood as reflecting the two major political-economic processes of the period: the opening up of markets, and the building of modern nation-states (Tilly 1983). The bulk of hunger riots occurred from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, as liberalization progressed and peasants expressed outrage at their increasingly vulnerable position. By the time that the first food regime stabilized in the late nineteenth century, and indeed as a prerequisite to its stabilization, open markets were well established and the public had begun to adjust their expectations accordingly.

Demands for food were no longer expressed directly in the form of food riots but were filtered through the market mechanism and expressed as class-based collective action to demand higher wages from employers (Helstosky 2000). The claims directed at the state were now largely for money to buy food rather than for food itself.

Both workers and employers – joined often by reformers – urged state action which was aimed, not at guaranteeing food, but at stable income, through social security schemes. Unemployment compensation, disability and sickness benefits, and old age pensions eventually were accepted as state responsibilities in Europe. (Tilly 1983)

Such acceptance by states of responsibility for the welfare of its citizens was a major part of the modern state building process, and helped to guarantee their legitimacy in the public eye. It is not surprising that the chosen method of ensuring citizen welfare should have operated through the market mechanism, as the nineteenth century in general, and the first food regime in particular, were characterized by official belief in the liberal doctrines of Adam Smith (Tilly 1983).

It is important to note that the increasing, albeit indirect, subsistence support that citizens of European countries came to expect during the first food regime was only made possible by the existence of colonies. In the case of England, the settler states of the U.S. and Australia contributed to the progress of both state building and the capitalist economy by exporting massive amounts of grain, providing wheat for the daily bread of the English proletariat. Meanwhile, colonies such as India produced the stimulants necessary to keep the working class working. The native inhabitants of these colonies, though under the jurisdiction of the British state, could not expect any kind of food support, either direct or indirect. In fact, during the period of the first food regime, British administrators in India callously refused to act when famine struck among their subjects, justifying this neglect with Malthusian philosophy about population growth outstripping

food supply (Ambirajan 1976). The poor-laws which aided citizens at home in feeding themselves were certainly not deemed necessary in the case of colonial subjects.

In summary, though the first food regime was characterized by a large and stable international trade in food, this was not accompanied by a conceptual frame expressing the international need for food or any obligation to supply it. This was about to change however. As the dust settled after the World Wars, states found themselves in a new position of responsibility for food supply (Dobbert 1978), and newly created intergovernmental organizations began to conceptualize this responsibility as the right to food.

Frames for the 'Free World': The Right to Food and Freedom from Hunger

The start of the First World War brought a sudden end to the relative stability of the first food regime, throwing the world food system into a crisis that would not be resolved until the consolidation of the postwar food regime in 1947. These massive changes in the global food system were accompanied by changes in the conceptualization of food provision. In 1948, the first universally recognized frame for food access emerged in the form of the right to food. It was in no way inevitable that this frame should have taken the form that it did. Rather, the right to food, as a frame, was a product of the political-economic context within which it emerged, and it was shaped by the structures and ideologies inherent in the newly consolidated postwar food regime.

The right to food frame therefore reflects the development project belief in the nation-state as the primary political entity and in market regulation as a legitimate tool of government. Like the postwar food regime in general, it also developed within the

political confines of the Cold War. Cold War ideology affected the form that it took in international law and ultimately led to its marginalization in favor of less politically charged concepts. Rather than framing food issues in terms of what was aspired to, as with the right to food, international agencies and state governments tended instead to frame them in terms of what was to be avoided, frequently using the frame of freedom from hunger. In both cases, however, the effects of the postwar regime are evident in the emphasis on food aid, increasing agricultural production through technological developments, and nationally controlled development.

The ideological links between the right to food and the postwar food regime are perhaps most obvious in the central role played by the nation-state. Just as the nation-state was the primary political body of the postwar regime, it was also given primary responsibility for the realization of the right to food. This new role for the state can partly be explained by the historical circumstances created by the World Wars. During the wars, European governments assumed previously unheard of responsibilities in the regulation of food supply, setting a precedent for high levels of state involvement in the decades to come. States undertook a range of market interventions such as rationing, subsidized bread, and nutritional education (Helstosky 2000).

This new precedent, combined with the acute food shortages experienced by many European countries after World War II, led to the creation of the right to food as part of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) enacted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948. The UDHR includes both civil and political rights (i.e. the right not to be tortured), as well as economic, social, and cultural rights (i.e. the rights to food and work) with no distinction between the two as would occur in later decades due to the

divisive politics of the Cold War.² The right to food is included in paragraph 1 of article 25 of the UDHR, which states that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (United Nations 1948:7)

This document set the first legal precedent for the right to food and would soon be followed by several others.

The framing of adequate food as a human right has strong legal implications which are not present in the subsequent frames of food security and food sovereignty. Although the international agreements themselves have no mechanism for enforcement, they create a legal precedent within the ratifying countries, allowing citizens or courts to charge states with the obligation to ensure adequate food in situations in which citizens are unable to secure it for themselves (Kent 2005). Although the documents were drafted by international bodies, the obligation to ensure the right to food therefore lies solidly in the hands of the nation-state. This is not surprising given that human rights, despite their claims to universality, have always been closely tied to citizenship rights and dependent on enforcement at the national level (Shafir 2004).

Howard and Donnelly (1986) argue further that human rights, because of their emphasis on autonomy and equality, can only be understood within the context of a

² The inspiration for the UDHR was U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1941 "Four Freedoms" speech, in which he intermingled the civil and political with the economic and social in listing the fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. In addition to freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion, and freedom from fear, Roosevelt listed "freedom from want", which he said was "economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants" (Dobbert 1978:189). He reinforced this message in his 1944 State of the Union message in which he proposed an "Economic Bill of Rights" and stated that "people who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made" (Whitaker 2000:1588).

liberal political regime. They explain that the human rights concept is based on the highly liberal notions that the state must have concern for its citizens and that this concern must be equally directed towards all individuals.

Thus human rights came to be articulated primarily as claims of any individual against the state. Human rights lay down the basic form of the relationship between the (new, modern) individual and the (new, modern) state, a relationship based on the prima facie priority of the individual over the state in those areas protected by human rights. (Howard and Donnelly 1986:804)

The right to food, therefore, though created by international institutions and codified in international declarations, leaves responsibility for enforcement in the hands of the ratifying states and not the international community.

The development of the right to food also parallels that of the postwar food regime in that each was significantly shaped by the politics of the Cold War. While the UDHR did not differentiate between civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social, and cultural rights on the other, the Cold War caused a fissure to develop between these two classes of rights. The United States favored the negative rights of the former category (what an individual has the right to be free from), while the Soviet Union favored the positive rights of the latter category (what an individual has a right to) (Bellows and Hamm 2002). The refusal by each side to acknowledge the class of rights espoused by the other meant that, when it came time to elaborate on the meaning of human rights, the United Nations drafted two separate international human rights covenants.

The positive right to food falls under the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (CESCR) adopted in 1966. The right to food is embodied in article 11 of the Covenant which reads as follows:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

2. The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:

(a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;

(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need. (UN1966)

This document elaborates further on the meaning of the right to food and could potentially have provided a serious foundation for efforts at implementation.

Unfortunately, however, the divisive Cold War ideology which had led to the creation of two separate covenants also led to a failure by the U.S. to ratify the CESC. Many human rights would have to wait until the Cold War wound down to become the topic of renewed interest beginning in the 1970s (Sikkink 2002). Kathryn Sikkink has observed that, despite being created during the postwar period, "human rights discourses were marginal discourses in the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, subordinated to the bipolar discourses of both communism and anticommunism" (Sikkink 2002:303). The Cold War ideology which structured the postwar food regime seriously limited the effectiveness of the right to food as a frame for achieving a more favorable world food situation.³

³ To this day the United States continues to downplay the importance of economic, social, and cultural rights. It therefore failed to ratify not only the CESC but the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* of 1990. It also went so far as to object to the creation of the voluntary guidelines to achieve the right to food at the 2002 World Food Summit, explaining that "the United States believes that the attainment of the right to an adequate standard of living is a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively that does not give rise to any international obligation or any domestic legal entitlement" (World Food Summit 2002). This

Refusal by the U.S. government to accept any state obligation to ensure economic, social, and cultural rights is probably the reason that it was more common during this time period to refer to "the right to freedom from hunger" than the right to food. By posing the concept in such a way, interested organizations made the positive right to food sound more like the negative rights espoused by the U.S., thereby increasing their chances of summoning international support. The right to freedom from hunger is far less contentious because it implies an obligation for state action only in protecting the right and not in actually fulfilling it. A major FAO campaign, initiated in 1960, and directed at fulfilling the right to food, was tellingly called the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. This campaign inadvertently caused a discrepancy in the CESC. Whereas the right to adequate food is referred to in article 11, paragraph 1, the right to freedom from hunger is referred to in paragraph 2. The FAO proposed the wording of paragraph 2 in order to lend legal force to its freedom from hunger campaign. Subsequently, however, the two different wordings in the covenant have led to debate over the extent of state obligation implied by the article (Alston 1984). This debate reflects the difficulty that organizations like the FAO faced in framing their goals so as to garner maximum international support within the ideological constraints of the period.

Although the right to food was developed during the postwar period, its value as the first universal frame for expressing what "ought to be" in the world food system was not fully exploited at that time. Instead, documents dating to the postwar food regime (1947-1973) tend to express ideas about the international food situation in terms of what

position is an extreme one, given that the idea of voluntary guidelines had replaced that of a code of conduct, and was therefore already seen by many as a weakening of governmental obligation.

“ought not to be”, focusing on the continuing prevalence of hunger and what could be done to eradicate it. This harkens back to what we know about conceptions of food during the first food regime and before. European food riots broke out as a reaction to hunger, and Scott tells us that Asian peasants only rebelled when their subsistence was threatened. Though the postwar food regime saw the emergence of a new aspirational framing for food issues, the discussion still focused heavily on the evil of hunger and how it could be remedied.

Regardless of whether the frame used was the positively focused “right to food” or the negatively focused “freedom from hunger”, the food-related discourse of this period strongly reflected another feature of the postwar food regime – a reliance on market intervention. The period was characterized by a political economic ideology of “embedded liberalism” (Ruggie 1982). The state, aside from being the primary political unit, was charged with economic intervention to ensure that markets served the goals of society, such as development and high employment. It was a time when the U.S.-style democratic welfare state was the hegemonic model, and Polanyi was writing with relief that the danger of the unregulated market had finally been averted. State economic intervention was now the expected tool for the improvement of the national and international food situation. Whether this intervention took the form of subsidized food in developing countries, or exports of copious amounts of food “aid” by the United States, state governments, and not the invisible hand, were given primary responsibility for the food supply.

Indeed, the mercantilist policies of the postwar food regime led to a somewhat paradoxical development strategy which emphasized national sovereignty of developing

countries while simultaneously encouraging reliance on external food aid, largely from the U.S. under PL 480. The centrality of food aid to national development plans during this regime affected the way in which issues of food and hunger were framed. The Manifesto produced at the Special Assembly on Man's Right to Freedom from Hunger held by the FAO in 1963 demonstrates this combination of national sovereignty and external food aid, stating that,

No development can be lasting which is not based on a mobilization of national resources. But external aid is indispensable initially to guide and supplement these efforts... The problems are complex, vast and urgent and can be solved only if national efforts are supported by international assistance and cooperation. (FAO 1963:2)

Though the nation is seen as the primary political unit in the battle against hunger, the necessity of foreign aid is assumed. As an entrenched aspect of the postwar regime, U.S. food aid went largely unquestioned and was naturally incorporated by organizations working to solve the world's food problem.

The U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, in discussing a 1959 amendment to PL 480 entitled "International Food for Peace", perfectly demonstrates how development project rhetoric about the national sovereignty of developing countries is used as rationale for the disposal of U.S. grain surpluses in the form of aid:

Peoples who comprise one-third of the human race have in our generation achieved national independence (or are in the process of doing so) and are in revolt against poverty, ignorance, disease, inferior status, and lack of opportunity which have always been their lot. They are determined to achieve that economic and social development necessary to national dignity and individual well-being. To mobilize their resources with reasonable speed and develop their economies to a point where they are self-propelled and self-sustaining they require substantial outside aid over a considerable period of years. If that aid is adequately forthcoming from the free world, they have a good chance to accomplish their purposes in freedom, remaining a part of the free world and contributing to its strength and well-being. If it is not forthcoming, their alternative is to seek it in the Communist world, and in the process to surrender both personal and national freedom.... The Congress declares that the agricultural abundance of the United States is not an embarrassment but a blessing to be used in the service of mankind, that it should be so used to the maximum extent possible, and that if it is so used it can help build essential conditions of world peace and freedom. (U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 1959:2)

This document, which is largely framed in terms of the need to “abolish human hunger”, displays the connection between U.S. food aid, development by Southern states, and Cold War tensions which characterized much of the food-related literature of the period.

The framing of food issues during this period also displays the influence of the postwar food regime as the frames represent U.S.-style development as a universally attainable goal. They incorporate the dominant regime belief that this goal was to be achieved through industrialization and advances in agricultural technology. In a 1968 speech, Addeke Boerma, the Director General of the FAO expressed his belief that the application of new agricultural technologies in developing countries could greatly reduce hunger:

The three basic ingredients required are capital, technology and organization. They are becoming available in increasing measure, and I believe that the agriculture of developing countries is now reaching the point of ‘take off’. (Boerma 1976:21)

The reference to “take off” echoes the stages of economic growth conceptualized by Walt Rostow and reflects a developmentalist approach to solving the world’s food problems (Rostow 1960). In a similar speech in 1970, Boerma reflected optimistically on the potential of modern agricultural technology to increase productivity and improve the world food situation:

Until recently there generally prevailed a sense of hopelessness about the world food problem – a problem whose dimensions seemed to engulf and overwhelm the puny resources we could pit against it. Now we have seen that science and technology can achieve for the developing countries a breakthrough comparable with those which set the industrialized nations on the path to present prosperity. (Boerma 1976:26)

Again, it is assumed that the same path to development taken by the U.S. can and should be followed by all developing countries. Agricultural industrialization is promoted as one

of the best hopes for achieving that development and the freedom from hunger that it would bring.

Whether employing the right to food or framing food issues in terms of freedom from hunger, writings on food from the period of the postwar food regime reflect the influence of the regime in a variety of ways. The centrality of the state and acceptance of market intervention are particularly evident. Cold War and developmentalist rhetoric also played a major role. Policy recommendations were centered on increased production through agricultural industrialization and imports of U.S. food aid as the best means for improving the world food situation. Though the postwar food regime came to a sudden halt with the world food crisis of 1972-3, the language and concepts that characterized the regime would continue to influence the framing of food-related issues for several years to come.

Regime Crisis and Reconceptualization: The Emergence of Food Security

Nowhere is Friedmann's observation that "when names catch on, it is a sign that the regime is in crisis (2005:232)" more clearly true than in the framing of food security at the World Food Conference in 1974. The world food crisis that brought an end to the postwar food regime also forced people to reevaluate their ways of approaching food and hunger. The emergence of the food security frame represents an effort to regain control of the world food situation through the framing of a positive goal which the food regime had ceased to fulfill. In using the term "food security", the delegates to the convention were creating a new frame for food issues to be used as a tool in shaping a better food regime for the future. From this point onwards, food security became the dominant frame for

global food issues. However, shifting political ideologies and food regime rules shaped and reshaped the contours of the frame, causing corresponding shifts in the discourse on how food security could best be achieved. Though the first version of the food security frame lasted a very few years, it is worth examining because it will provide a reference point for my examination of the food security frame as it stands today. The contrast between the earlier and later versions of the same frame demonstrates how sensitive such frames are to the political and ideological changes going on around them. Though they express the aspiration for a better international food regime, they are solidly grounded within the reality of existing conditions.

It is for this reason that the early food security frame, which was initiated in 1974 and already beginning to be replaced in the late 1970s and early 1980s, displays a heavy reliance on the discourse characteristic of the postwar food regime whose failure had brought it into existence. Working in the midst of the initial crisis, the framers had little else to draw on. In, Steinberg's terms, the discursive field within which their framing took place had not yet changed substantially. The discursive field was further limited by the fact that the development project had not yet been dethroned and its discourse was therefore still pervasive. Like the right to food frame before it, the food security frame therefore incorporates several dimensions of the postwar food regime, including the political centrality of the nation-state and the appropriateness of market intervention. In the early food security frame, these dimensions can be most readily observed in the heavy emphasis on maintaining national food stocks. The overriding concern of early food security framers was with aggregate food availability at the national level. The key variables to be assessed were therefore national imports, exports, and production levels

(Maxwell 1996). When economic and political ideologies began to shift in the 1980s, these aspects of the frame would come into sharp relief as their roots in the now-defunct postwar food regime were exposed.

Food security first entered into the official discourse in the *Report of the World Food Conference* of 1974, which called for an International Undertaking on World Food Security. Though food security isn't explicitly defined in this document, it is used extensively throughout the report. Article G of the *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition*, contained in the report, states that:

(g)The well-being of the peoples of the world largely depends on the adequate production and distribution of food as well as the establishment of a world food security system which would ensure adequate availability of, and reasonable prices for, food at all times, irrespective of periodic fluctuations and vagaries of weather and free of political and economic pressures, and should thus facilitate, amongst other things, the development process of developing countries. (UN 1974)

It is immediately clear that the early discourse surrounding food security was based on the ideology of the postwar food regime which had just entered into crisis. Rather than prices being determined on a free market, "reasonable prices" must be ensured (presumably by national governments) without hindrance from natural, political, or economic circumstances. And, of course, ensuring macro-level food availability in this way would help countries achieve their national development goals. Throughout the report, food security is discussed in the context of national food stocks and national development. When it is not discussed at the level of the nation-state, it is in reference to the maintenance of sufficient food stocks at the international level through cooperation between sovereign national governments. Generally, the early food security frame proposed national control over production and markets so as to ensure national-level food availability.

This focus on supply at national and global scales is evident in two of the institutions created by the World Food Conference – the World Food Council⁴ and the FAO Committee on Food Security, both of which initially focused their efforts on the national or global level (Maxwell 1996). The central objectives of the World Food Council were to improve food production and increase the flow of food aid (Talbot and Moyer 1987). One of its main approaches to solving world food problems was to encourage the adoption of national food strategies by the governments of developing countries. These strategies aimed at both expanding national production and monitoring demand-side factors by ensuring adequate national consumption levels (Shaw 2007). The Food Security Assistance Scheme (FSAS), established by the FAO in 1976, also worked with individual national governments to improve food security on a country by country basis. Initially the FSAS focused on national-level storage, food reserves, and emergency needs (Shaw 2008).

In general, the FAO's early work on food security, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, tended to emphasize macro-level availability in the form of national food stocks. A 1981 FAO report explained that,

Food security in its broadest sense is the availability of adequate food supplies now and in the future. In the narrower sense, food security means food stocks and arrangements to govern their establishment and use as a protection against crop failures or shortfalls in imported food supplies. In this sense, too, it has relevance to long-term development strategy. Better food security discourages countries from indulging in costly degrees of food autarky. Also the existence of food security stocks makes it less necessary to interrupt imports of capital goods and other development requisites, as inevitably occurs when foreign exchange has to be unexpectedly diverted to food imports. Finally, stocks are an essential source of emergency supplies for combating sudden famines and other disasters. (FAO 1981:114)

⁴ In 1993, the World Food Council's activities were suspended, and its responsibilities were absorbed by the FAO and other UN organizations (Shaw 2007).

Governments are charged with encouraging national development and with ensuring a steady food supply for their people. International trade is one tool available to states in achieving food security but is by no means the central concern. Although international trade is an assumed necessity, and countries are discouraged from “costly degrees of food autarky”, the economic model evinced in this report is clearly far closer to embedded liberalism than to the neoliberalism that was soon to gain dominance.

The view that food security is a national-level question of food availability best resolved through the accumulation of national stocks can also be found in most World Bank publications from this time period. A 1977 World Bank staff working paper gives the following operational definition of food insecurity: “the probability of food grain consumption in developing countries falling below a desired level due to a fixed upper limit on the food import bill they can afford and an unfavourable combination of poor harvests and world food grain prices” (Reutlinger 1977:1). Once again, the emphasis is on national level supplies, and the major factors involved are imports and production levels.

This emphasis on food availability at the national level went hand in hand with policy proposals that involved strong state action, often including government intervention in markets. Take for example, another 1977 World Bank report, *Toward Greater Food Security for Bangladesh*, which is typical of the time period. After assessing Bangladesh as being highly food insecure (based solely on its national-level “nutritional gap in grain equivalents”), the report recommends a solution based almost entirely upon actions by the national government. These include “a distribution network capable of disbursing between 3-6 million tons of cereals and a storage system of 5

million tons", "a much stronger system of agricultural support services" which would support the "expansion of irrigation, technology transfer and credit (World Bank 1977a:27)", as well as the continuation of the government rationing system, which provides food to the poor. The Bank's recommendations to the Bangladeshi government are based on the belief that government intervention in food markets is not only appropriate, but necessary:

The appropriate level of market prices demands careful examination... Any rise in market prices coming about due to rising market demand and shortfalls in production will need to be buffered by the ration system. The food distribution system might include other foods to encourage production of these commodities. (World Bank 1977a:27)

The government is expected to undertake economic intervention: rationing food, determining appropriate prices, and using its economic power to encourage the production of certain foods over others.

Clearly the development project belief in active government planning and economic intervention as a means to industrialization had not yet been replaced in the minds of the early food security framers. At a time when ISI was considered the best way for a country to develop, it seemed only natural that a similar course of action would prove the best means to feed its population. Though the postwar food regime was over, no new structures or ideologies had yet emerged to take its place, and so, for the first few years, the food security frame relied on the familiar policies and rhetoric of embedded liberalism and national development.

Other elements characteristic of the development project and postwar food regime can be identified in the early food security discourse. It continues, for instance, to reflect the postwar food regime's emphasis on increasing agricultural production through adoption of new technology. World Bank documents in particular have a strong emphasis

on increased productivity through improved irrigation, chemical fertilizers, or high yielding varieties. In a 1977 report on the prospect of food security in India, the Bank states that India was one of the greatest beneficiaries of the "Green Revolution" and lists the many technological advances that constitute the country's best hope for continued production increases. It concludes that "perhaps the most significant part of the recent technological developments in agriculture is the farmers' willingness to invest and take risks, and, in the use of modern inputs" (World Bank 1977b:3). There is still an echo of the Rostovian sentiment that development will progress naturally when people in developing countries adopt the correct mentality (Rostow 1960). Though this faith in a linear development model would be tempered in years to come, the emphasis on agricultural industrialization as the best hope for developing nations is one aspect of the food security frame that remains to the present day.

Early food security documents also continue the somewhat contradictory promotion of external food aid as a means to national development, though they also exhibit an incipient awareness that this arrangement is problematic. The 1974 *Report of the World Food Conference* contains a resolution on food aid which begins by stating that, "while the ultimate solution to the problem of food shortages in developing countries lies in increased production in these countries, during the interim period food aid on a grant basis and any additional food transfers on concessional or agreed-upon terms to developing countries, will continue to be needed" (UN 1974:15). The resolution continues, however, in a vein that demonstrates a growing awareness of food aid's problematic nature, stating that it must be administered in a fashion that is "consonant with the sovereignty rights of nations" and will not hinder national agricultural

development or “act as a disincentive to local production” (UN 1974:15). This being said, however, a continued reliance on food aid is clear, as the resolution calls for a bolstering of the World Food Programme (WFP).

The WFP was founded in 1961 through parallel resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the FAO Conference. Though originally established on a three year trial basis, in 1965 it was established on a continuing basis “for as long as multilateral food is found feasible and desirable” (WFP 2008). The WFP, which still exists today, coordinates the delivery of multilateral food aid from scores of donor countries. However, by far the biggest proportion of its food donations come from North America and it was inspired by the massive amounts of U.S. grain made available for donation through the passage of PL 480 (Talbot 1994). That the *Report of the World Food Conference* called for an increase in WFP aid at the same time as it acknowledged some of the limitations of food aid as a means to achieve food security demonstrates both the crisis in the postwar regime and the persistence of some of its aspects.

To a large extent, the discredited structures and ideologies of the postwar food regime can still be found in the earliest incarnation of food security. Framed when the postwar food regime had just barely entered into crisis, it is not surprising that the framers had little alternative but to draw from the discursive field created by that regime in developing the concept of food security. Food security was therefore originally a frame about how nations could better control their food supplies through market intervention and increased production. However, the void in the wake of the food regime’s collapse would not last for long.

Individual Access, Neoliberal Means: The Transition to Household Food Security

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a major shift began to occur in the discourse surrounding food security. In just a few years, the discursive field within which the food security framers were operating was transformed. The household food security frame that resulted has individual purchasing power at its analytical core and is coupled with policy prescriptions which favor liberalized agricultural markets and a decreased role for national governments. As such, it strongly reflects the neoliberal discourse and structure of the globalization project and nascent corporate food regime.

It is difficult to pinpoint an exact origin of this shift, as it began almost simultaneously among academics working on issues of food security and in the international institutions that had originated the concept. To understand the nature of this reconceptualization, it is perhaps best to begin with the work of the Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen, who had the greatest single impact on the food security frame. In his groundbreaking 1981 book *Poverty and Famines: A Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Sen analyzed the causes of several major famines to prove that national-level food *availability* does not necessarily translate into household-level food *access*. Using his own concept of “food entitlement”, Sen demonstrated that major famines can occur in countries where overall food availability is sufficient simply because a certain region or occupational group suddenly loses the economic ability to obtain food. If a household cannot afford to buy food (suffers from entitlement failure), its members will go hungry regardless of the overall food availability in the country. Furthermore, Sen pointed out, many households have differential food allocation among their members,

with men frequently having far greater access to food than women or children (Sen 1981).

Sen's work had at least two major implications for the food security frame: the appropriate scale of both measurements and prescriptions was now located at the household or individual level rather than the national level, and suddenly everyone seemed to realize the importance of economic access (and therefore income levels) instead of overall food availability. These theoretical revelations had major repercussions for food security policy as well as measurement, which underwent a parallel shift in focus from national supply to individual caloric intake.⁵ The shift was, to a certain extent, already underway at international institutions such as the World Bank, but Sen's work certainly crystallized and hastened the transformation of ideas that was taking place.

Evidence of this shift toward individual-level access and economic entitlement can be seen in the burgeoning literature on household food security starting in the mid-1980s. By the early 1990s, one count uncovered almost two hundred different definitions of food security (Smith et al. 1992). Today, the most basic and commonly used definition of the term is that of the World Bank: "Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life" (World Bank 1986a:1). The 1996 World Food Summit

⁵ Simon Maxwell (1996) argues that, in general, the concept of food security has become progressively more "post-modern" over time, acknowledging diversity, subjectivity, and plurality to an ever-increasing extent. Aside from the shift from the national to the household level of measurement, there has been a transition from an emphasis on food alone, to a broader emphasis on livelihoods. This transition occurred in the late 1980s when people began to realize that households may choose to go hungry in the short term in order to avoid even more food insecurity in the long term. Analysts therefore began to focus on the long-term stability and resilience of household livelihood as opposed to day-to-day food acquisition. A third shift in the concept was from the use of purely objective indicators, such as caloric intake, to the incorporation of subjective perceptions, such as the fear that there will not be enough food to eat (Maxwell 1996). This last shift, however, is less widely acknowledged and is perhaps more accurately described as a divergence in the discourse, with some incorporating subjective measures while others continue to pursue greater objectivity in their measurements (Anderson and Cook 1999).

(WFS) *Plan of Action* gives another frequently cited, but more comprehensive definition, stating that “Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (WFS 1996:4). These definitions stand in stark contrast to how food security was conceptualized in the immediate aftermath of the world food crisis. Both display the central role held by the individual in the language of food security today. Both also use the word “access”, highlighting the shift in focus from macro-level food availability to individual purchasing power.

In general, documents on household food security reveal a conceptualization of food issues which more closely resembles a neoclassical microeconomic model than it does its discursive predecessor. Its neoliberal foundations are evident, for instance, in its shrinking of the scale of the frame. Food security is now a frame about the microeconomic choices facing individuals in a free market, rather than the policy choices facing governments. (Indeed, the household rather than the individual is likely only the scale of choice for reasons relating to ease of measurement.) The 1996 WFS *Plan of Action* specifies that “Individuals and households have a key role in decisions and actions affecting their food security” (WFS 1996). This idea is echoed by the FAO which make its growing emphasis on individual choice explicit in a 1997 publication stating that “food security is as much about individual strategies for survival and well-being as about national programmes and public investments in food production and income generation” (FAO 1997:3). This emphasis on the market decisions of individuals is part and parcel with the dominant neoliberal ideology (Peck and Tickell 2002).

The shrinking scale of the discourse also goes hand in hand with its unquestioning treatment of food as a commodity. I touch on this aspect not because it represents a major departure from the earlier language of national food security, but because it presents a sharp contrast to the food sovereignty frame which I will shortly examine. Sen's highly influential entitlement approach is basically a microeconomic examination of how households gain and lose the purchasing power to buy enough food in the commodity form.⁶ A 1993 World Bank report entitled *Overcoming Global Hunger* sums up the implications of the entitlement approach nicely:

In practice, however, food is a commodity. Access to it is largely a function of income and asset distribution, as well as of the functioning (or malfunctioning) of food production and marketing systems. From this perspective, access to food is governed by the same factors that govern access to any other commodity. It is for this reason that hunger and poverty are so closely linked. (World Bank 1993:134)

From this standpoint, the rules that govern household food security are essentially those that govern access to any other commodity. The key is simply to make sure that people have the purchasing power to buy it. The individualizing and commodifying language of household food security corresponds closely to Friedmann's observations about the corporate food regime (Friedmann 2005). Just as the emerging food regime has appropriated aspects of social resistance by marketing more environmentally-friendly or socially-just products which individuals are then free to purchase, so it addresses food security by examining the choices available to impoverished households and how best to increase their purchasing power.

⁶ It must be noted that though it employs economic language, Sen's work on food security is actually far more nuanced than most interpretations of it have been. Unlike most of the policy interpretations of his work, he sees a combination of market and state action, which he terms "growth-mediated security" and "support-led security" respectively, as necessary to ensure food security. See *Hunger and Public Action* (1989) by Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, for an in-depth discussion of the role of the state in ensuring food security.

Probably the most obvious way in which the current food security frame reflects the neoliberal ideology of the corporate food regime, however, is that it is frequently used in conjunction with policy proposals favoring free markets and a reduction in state services. This approach to development, which McMichael sees as the ideological force behind the globalization project, was already evident in the World Bank's 1986 *Development Report*. This report stresses again and again the negative impacts of distortions in developing country agricultural markets caused by government intervention and, unlike similar reports of a few years earlier, devotes relatively little space to the subjects of buffer stocks and food aid programs (World Bank 1986b). By the time of this report, the Bank was already pressuring developing countries to adopt a neoliberal economic agenda through the granting of agricultural structural adjustment loans – a policy which the report suggests ought to be pursued further (Evenson 1986). Another Bank report from the same year, *Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries*, emphasizes throughout that food insecurity is mostly the result of lack of access in the form of purchasing power rather than lack of availability. The Bank proceeds from this core tenet of the household food security frame, to the need for improved economic growth, and finally, in a deduction that would have astounded economists a decade earlier, to the conclusion that trade liberalization, rather than potentially damaging government intervention, is the best means to achieve this growth.

This logical progression - the problem is individual economic access, the solution is economic growth, the best means to growth is trade liberalization – can be found

behind many of the food security policies proposed today. The concluding comments of the report's overview section end with the following words of warning:

Many countries have intervened in their economies in the name of food security. In some cases, however, these interventions have incurred high costs in terms of sacrificed economic growth. Policymakers need to be sensitive to these costs and to the difficulties of reducing or eliminating interventions once they are in place. (World Bank 1986a:12)

This effortless leap from lack of individual purchasing power to the need for trade liberalization demonstrates the extent to which the current food security frame has been influenced by neoliberal doctrines. The connection is easily made in World Bank documents which are unabashedly influenced by neoliberal economic thought. As one 1996 statement explains, "*A fair trading regime* is critical [to achieving food security], since only then can countries refrain from costly self-sufficiency policies and specialize in producing the commodities which are most profitable for them" (World Bank 1996:1, original emphasis). The unquestioning reference to such economic concepts as comparative advantage makes clear the economic frame of reference that is being brought to bear on issues of food security (though it is confusingly labeled as *fair* rather than *free* trade).

The World Bank is not the only organization whose food security framing now emphasizes market orientation over state intervention. Though the FAO's use of food security is less obviously influenced by neoliberal doctrines, one can still discern a changed perception of the roles of states and markets. National governments are no longer seen as responsible for shaping markets and controlling food supply as they were in the first incarnation of food security. Rather they are charged with "creating macro-economic and fiscal conditions which encourage agriculture [sic] production" (FAO 1997:4). The 1997 FAO document quoted above continues by stating that,

...governments have a key role to play in creating, through correct policies, an environment which encourages investment leading to food security. This environment is characterized by political stability, good infrastructure, liberal trade policies, an effective legal framework and social safety nets for the poorest. (FAO 1997:16)

Though the FAO has not abandoned its traditional stance that national governments should intervene on behalf of their most vulnerable citizens, an important function of states is now to attract foreign investment and enable the smooth functioning of free markets.

This transition within the food security discourse was already evident by the time of the 1996 WFS, organized by the FAO. The *Plan of Action* produced by the WFS provides a sharp contrast to the *Report of the World Food Conference* of 1974 and demonstrates the extent to which neoliberal policies had already entered into the framing of food security. Though it continues to place most responsibility for implementation in the hands of states, the Plan carefully reinforces the commitment to trade liberalization among participating countries. Of the seven commitments contained in the Plan, one is entirely devoted to ensuring free trade. Commitment Four begins with a heading that states: "We will strive to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system" (World Food Summit 1996:22). It continues on:

The Basis for Action

37. Trade is a key element in achieving world food security. Trade generates effective utilization of resources and stimulates economic growth which is critical to improving food security. Trade allows food consumption to exceed food production, helps to reduce production and consumption fluctuations and relieves part of the burden of stock holding. It has a major bearing on access to food through its positive effect on economic growth, income and employment. Appropriate domestic economic and social policies will better ensure that all, including the poor, will benefit from economic growth. Appropriate trade policies promote the objectives of sustainable growth and food security. It is essential that all members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) respect and fulfill the totality of the undertakings of the Uruguay Round. For this purpose it will be necessary to refrain from unilateral measures not in accordance with WTO obligations.

38. The Uruguay Round Agreement established a new international trade framework that offers opportunity to developed and developing countries to benefit from appropriate trade policies and

self-reliance strategies. The progressive implementation of the Uruguay Round as a whole will generate increasing opportunities for trade expansion and economic growth to the benefits of all participants. Therefore, adaptation to the provisions of the various agreements during the implementation period must be ensured... (World Food Summit 1996:22-23)

This is followed by several more pages of specific recommended actions, almost all of which relate to further trade liberalization. The section is more reminiscent of a WTO agreement than of earlier world food statements.

Clearly treatment of food security at the UN has undergone a similar, if less drastic, neoliberal transition to the one which occurred at the World Bank. Now states can intervene to ensure food security only if doing so does not violate their WTO obligations or endanger the country's attractiveness to investment by transnational corporations. The transfer of power from the state to global financial institutions and transnational corporations adheres closely to McMichael's conception of the globalization project in which "the national coherence of states is being eroded by the internationalization of economic relations, supported by the orthodox liberal ideology of free markets" (McMichael 1992:344).

The shift to household food security has brought increased attention to rural populations, but the neoliberal ideology behind the shift means that the strategies implemented to help them tend to be highly market-oriented. The household food security frame leaves more space for the specific problems facing peasant farmers and rural people in general than either national food security or the right to food did before it. In addition to emphasizing the need for sufficient income to buy food, the frame makes clear that the same strategies for increasing incomes will not work for an entire nation, but have to be different for rural producers than for urban dwellers. This has the positive effect of turning the attention of policy-makers to food security in rural areas. The goal of

increasing rural incomes has been pursued, however, through largely neoliberal mechanisms. (Once again, the leap between a need for higher incomes and neoliberal reforms is taken for granted.) The household food security discourse provided a nice match for such neoliberal reforms in agriculture as promoting production of crops for export and cutting back government programs which had artificially depressed producer incomes (Kennedy and Haddad 1992).

A 1996 World Bank publication entitled *Food Security for the World* makes it clear that the role of the state has been redefined and agricultural markets are now charged with the delivery of food security to rural people. According to this document, the five World Bank recommended actions for achieving food security through rural development are:

First, the policy and institutional framework must be supportive of agricultural and rural development, rather than working against them. *Second*, wherever possible, the private sector must be mobilized to provide investment capital, production, and most services. *Third*, the state has new roles, away from heavy intervention in the rural economy, towards providing enabling, sound macroeconomic, fiscal, and sector policy environments. *Fourth*, a variety of institutions is involved, including community-level groups, and lower-level governments, in addition to the central ministries. *Fifth*, projects and programs are decentralized and are designed and executed with a high degree of influence and participation by communities, associates, and local governments. (World Bank 1996:11)

The Bank sees rural development as being best secured through private investment with minimal state interference. It also advocates the devolution of formerly crucial state functions to lower levels of governance, a neoliberal strategy which has been noted by many analysts (Peck and Tickell 2002, DuPuis and Goodman 2005). As I will point out in the following section, it is precisely this type of neoliberal food security policy that would eventually lead disillusioned rural people to create a new frame, food sovereignty, to better represent their needs.

One final characteristic of the neoliberal discourse which can be discerned in the household food security frame is its naturalizing tendency (Peck and Tickell 2002). There is a remarkable lack of debate in the food security literature produced by international development organizations (the academic literature is a bit more varied) over the best means to the desired end. The state-led approach to delivering food security seems to have been discredited in one fell swoop, leaving policy-makers and development planners committed to freer and freer markets as the only possible approach. This uncritical and unreflexive perspective is nicely summarized by the USDA Foreign Agriculture Service on a web page dedicated to food security. The center of the page features a large quote which states simply

Global food security will be greatly enhanced by continued trade liberalization. And in emergency situations, food aid will remain an integral tool for providing humanitarian relief. (USDA 2005)

The quote from Ann Veneman, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture from 2001 to 2005, demonstrates the unquestioning commitment to free markets as the best (if not the only) means to achieve food security.⁷

The shape taken by the current food security frame can easily be traced to the corporate food regime, the globalization project, and the neoliberal economic ideology that both of these rest upon. Its considerable and rapid departure from the original conception of food security can only be understood in terms of the changing political-economic climate and the emergence of a new food regime. Indeed, just about the only major aspect of food security that has stayed constant since the early 1970s is the focus

⁷ As Secretary of Agriculture, Veneman pursued a staunchly neoliberal policy framework, working to eliminate trade barriers and expand exports and helping to launch a new round of WTO trade talks ("Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman" 2007.). In a turn of events that displays the true extent to which free market ideology now permeates international institutions, she is now the executive director of UNICEF ("Executive Director Ann M. Veneman" 2007).

on increasing production through application of agricultural technologies. However, these advances in agriculture are now expected to be brought about through the application of private investment, rather than through the coordination of national government (FAO 1997). The recent collaboration of the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), demonstrates the enduring relevance of agricultural industrialization to the food security frame. This initiative aims to improve African food security through the application of agricultural technologies, mimicking the Green Revolution carried out in Asia and Latin America in the 1970s (AGRA 2008).

The existing food security frame is not entirely homogeneous, however, and one final version of the discourse, community food security (CFS), deserves attention for the unique outlook it contributes. Unlike household food security, which has largely displaced its forerunner in the corridors of power at the UN, World Bank, and other development organizations, CFS originated outside of the ruling bodies which have tended to monopolize the official discourse on food security. Instead, it was developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s by a convergence of intellectuals, professionals, and activists, mostly in the U.S. and Canada, and working in three major fields: nutrition, sustainable agriculture, and community development (Anderson and Cook 1999). CFS addresses many of the same issues as food sovereignty and is, in many ways, its Northern counterpart.

Though several definitions of CFS exist, the essence is that CFS “exists when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice” (Bellows and Hamm 2002:35). Practitioners focus their attention on improving

food access and nutrition in low-income neighborhoods by encouraging market linkages with local producers. They emphasize methods that will result in a sustainable transformation of the entire food system, including entrepreneurial projects as well as advocacy for policy changes. They see this emphasis on building lasting community-based projects rather than providing food or monetary aid, along with their focus on active community participation and empowerment, as what differentiates them from traditional anti-hunger groups. Typical CFS projects include food policy councils, community supported agriculture, farmers' markets, and advocacy to change supermarket zoning or bus routes (Fisher and Gottlieb 1995; Winne et al. 1997). CFS rejects the top-down nature of most food security projects, and insists instead that the community members themselves should have a major role in diagnosing the problems, setting goals, and implementing solutions. CFS is also notable for its emphasis on the cultural appropriateness of the food, a factor which is given very little weight in most work on food security.

However, CFS also leaves unquestioned much of the neoliberal ideology that shapes the mainstream food security discourse. As Allen and Guthman have pointed out, market-oriented initiatives (such as "buy local" campaigns), which make up the bulk of CFS projects, may inadvertently be reinforcing neoliberalism through their unquestioning use of the market mechanism (Allen and Guthman, Guthman 2007a). Even more so than many types of food activism, CFS emphasizes the need for entrepreneurial, market-based solutions in their effort to ensure a durable solution. Another limitation of CFS is that its work has thus far been limited almost entirely to North America. The usefulness of this frame as an alternative for the rest of the world therefore remains untested. Nevertheless,

CFS presents a challenge to the conventional food security discourse and, though the concept is unlikely to be incorporated into mainstream policy, its influence can be seen in writings by international development NGOs.

Counterframe for the Corporate Food Regime: The Food Sovereignty Movement

The concept of food sovereignty was developed in the mid-1990s by Via Campesina, a network of small producers, largely from the global South. It can therefore be seen as the first aspirational food-related frame to be created from the bottom up, framed by peasants rather than by diplomats in powerful international institutions. Though it is sometimes referred to as an extension of the food security frame, it is perhaps more fruitfully seen as a counterframe (Benford and Snow 2000), rejecting food security as a discourse of the powerful and proposing in its stead an alternative which more effectively addresses the needs of marginalized farmers.

Returning to Friedmann's observation that new names are created when a food regime starts to falter, the concept of food sovereignty can be seen as a name given in reaction to the failings of the nascent corporate food regime. Its very existence calls into question the regime's ability to consolidate entirely. Much has already been written on the highly visible countermovement against the globalization project, which manifests itself in the form of such protests as took place at the WTO ministerial meetings in Seattle in 1999 (Smith and Johnston 2002). Food sovereignty can be viewed as a specific reaction to the globalization project's effects in the sphere of food and agriculture. Though not yet fully consolidated, the corporate food regime has already shown itself to have flaws that go far beyond the inability to provide food for everyone. These flaws,

which take the form of social injustice, environmental degradation, and loss of traditional knowledge, to list a few, are repeatedly named and denounced within the food sovereignty frame.

In fact, it can be argued that the food sovereignty frame has been just as heavily influenced by the corporate food regime as the food security frame was before it. The difference lies in the fact that food security is a conceptual tool created and used by powerful (albeit often well intentioned) policy-makers, whereas food sovereignty is a creation of marginalized peasants. Therefore, while the food security framers incorporated many aspects of the corporate food regime and globalization project, the food sovereignty framers rejected almost everything that they stand for.

This section begins with a history of the concept and movement to date. I then examine the ways in which the food sovereignty frame is influenced by the corporate food regime and globalization project. Finally I discuss the implications that this framing holds in terms of both the potential of the food sovereignty movement and the challenges that it may face.

The Historical Development of Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty was first defined and promoted in the global arena by the then newly-formed transnational peasant movement La Vía Campesina. At the organization's Second International Conference in Tlaxcala, Mexico in April, 1996, the concept was explicitly discussed as an alternative to the dominant conception of food security in preparation for the World Food Summit (WFS) that November. At the Summit, Vía Campesina produced the statement *The Right to Produce and Access to Land*, in which they describe the new concept. According to this statement,

Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. (Vía Campesina 1996:1)

This document, as would the many that came to follow, goes on to state that liberalization of trade has had devastating effects for rural producers the world over, increasing rural poverty and hunger, and damaging the natural environment. It asserts that attention to food and hunger must go beyond the questions of either national availability or household access, as typically addressed in the food security discourse. A meaningful discussion of food issues must also address the social, cultural, and political issues surrounding its production.

This first statement on food sovereignty also laid out seven basic principles of food sovereignty which have subsequently been much cited and elaborated upon: 1) A basic human right to food. 2) Genuine agrarian reform which puts land, credit, and productive resources in the hands of peasants. 3) Sustainable agriculture to protect natural resources. 4) Reorganization of the global food trade to prioritize production for domestic markets and to end dumping. 5) The regulation of transnational corporations. 6) Social peace – an end to the forced displacement of peasants and the use of food as a weapon. 7) Democratic control of the international food system (Vía Campesina 1996). Clearly food sovereignty, as conceived by Vía Campesina, is a far broader frame than either of those discussed so far. In framing terms, it has a wide interpretive scope and is highly inclusive (Benford and Snow 2000). This fact can be seen as both a source of strength and a potential weakness. As the above principles make clear, its breadth allows it to attract adherents from many preexisting social movements (land reform, environmentalism, and indigenous rights, to name a few) who formerly might not have seen themselves as

having much common cause. Its breadth also leaves it wide open to misuse and cooptation, however, and therefore necessitates far more vigilance on the part of its originators than a narrower concept would.

It is useful to understand a little about the origins and structure of *Vía Campesina* given that the organization is so intimately connected with the history of food sovereignty. The idea of *Vía Campesina* was born when representatives of eight different small farmer organizations from Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, and North America met at a conference of the Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos (UNAG) in Managua, Nicaragua in 1992. They found that their organizations, though located in both the North and South, shared much common ground, particularly in their beliefs about the destructiveness of neoliberal agricultural policies. They therefore decided to maintain their newly formed international connection (Desmarais 2007).

One year later, forty-six farm leaders from the same global regions met in Mons, Belgium and *Vía Campesina* was officially formed.⁸ The Mons conference was organized by a Dutch NGO, Paulo Freire Stichting (PFS) whose agenda involved the creation of an international farmer-driven research project. Tensions arose in Mons between the representatives of the NGO and the farm organization delegates, who felt that this research project represented a cooptation of their original, highly political plan for international farmer solidarity. They also discovered that PFS had already been taking steps to publicize and seek funding for *Vía Campesina* even before the constitutive meeting took place, a move which many felt violated the farmer-led model envisioned in Managua. The conflict between the NGO and farmer representatives escalated until the

⁸ The meeting at Mons would later be referred to as the First International Congress of La *Vía Campesina*.

PFS representatives left the meeting in anger and the farmers were left to create Vía Campesina as they saw fit (Desmarais 2007). The legacy of this initial meeting still influences the organization, which asserts that it is a people's organization (PO) rather than an NGO. Though it occasionally collaborates with NGOs, it tends to be wary of their potentially patronizing influence and undemocratic structure.

Vía Campesina itself tries to ensure a democratic decision-making structure within the organization (Desmarais 2007). Its membership is divided up between eight regions,⁹ each of which have two delegates (one man and one woman) on the network's main planning body, the International Coordinating Commission (ICC). The main Vía Campesina headquarters also shift every few years between its member organizations in different regions. Originally located in Honduras, they can now be found in Indonesia. Since its formation, the membership and geographic scope of Vía Campesina has increased vastly. It now has 149 member organizations from fifty-six countries. With two thirds of its member organizations located in Latin America and Asia, it is a predominantly Southern network, although Africa is still underrepresented, with only five member organizations (Desmarais 2007). It is this unique origin and organizational structure that provide the backdrop for the development of food sovereignty.

In 1996, members of the young Vía Campesina premiered their even-younger concept, food sovereignty, at the WFS in Rome. The Summit was attended by delegates from 185 countries, and was paralleled by a separate NGO/CSO forum. While discussion at both the official summit and the forum focused on food security, Vía Campesina

⁹ The regions are: Africa, Europe, Central America, the Caribbean, South America, North America, South Asia, and East and South East Asia.

argued instead for their new frame of food sovereignty. Ultimately Vía Campesina refused to sign the NGO/CSO declaration at the summit because, though it adopted the term food sovereignty in the title, it did not elaborate on it or include plans for implementation, and the Vía Campesina delegates did not think that it sufficiently address the needs of peasants (NGO Forum to the World Food Summit. 1996, Desmarais 2007). This was an early indication of the strong stance the organization would take in protecting the concept from cooptation or dilution, a danger which they were well aware of even at this early stage.

After this sudden emergence into the international arena, the term food sovereignty quickly spread beyond Vía Campesina alone, largely through the vehicle of global conferences and protests. Many Northern activists were introduced to the concept at the demonstrations accompanying the WTO Ministerial Meetings in Geneva in 1998 and Seattle in 1999, where Vía Campesina had a very visible presence and promoted food sovereignty as the solution to the failings of the WTO's neoliberal agricultural policy (Desmarais 2007). In this way, Vía Campesina began to create the kind of "principled issue-network" around food sovereignty that Kathryn Sikkink has described in the case of the human rights movement. These transnational networks are composed of organizations with a set of common values which share information and resources through formal or informal structures (Sikkink 1993). In the first few years after the concept was coined, the network of organizations involved in promoting it, both through Vía Campesina and independently, grew much larger and denser.

The increasing appeal of food sovereignty to diverse organizations was already evident at the World Social Forum held in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Food

sovereignty was a central issue under discussion by the organizations in attendance (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005), and a date was set for the first World Forum on Food Sovereignty (WFFS). This event took place that September when roughly 400 delegates from 60 countries and over 200 organizations came together in Havana, Cuba (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005). The *Final Declaration of the World Forum on Food Sovereignty* produced at the end of the week-long forum condemns the neoliberal agricultural policies put into place by the WTO, World Bank, and IMF as a cause of global hunger and presents food sovereignty as the solution (WFFS 2001).

In November of 2001, the Peoples' Food Sovereignty Network, a loose coalition of small farmer organizations and NGOs, released a statement entitled *Priority to People's Food Sovereignty – WTO Out of Food and Agriculture*, which further outlines the concept and offers some concrete proposals for an agro-food system based on food sovereignty. These proposals include an international, legally binding treaty that defines the rights of peasants and small farmers, a reformed and strengthened UN, and an international convention based on the principles of food sovereignty which would replace the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (Peoples' Food Sovereignty Network 2001). What is perhaps most significant about this document, however, is that it represents the collaboration of the peasant organizations involved in Vía Campesina, with such large Northern NGOs as the U.S.-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), Friends of the Earth - England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and the Europe-based GRAIN. The fact that these organizations came together behind food sovereignty is significant given Vía Campesina's distrustful stance toward NGOs. It is also evidence that the food sovereignty frame resonated beyond the peasant and small farmer

organizations that had originated it. Its resonance extended to Northern NGOs from diverse fields, a testament to the inclusivity and broad scope of the frame.

The momentum that had built up behind food sovereignty in the few years since the 1996 WFS was evident by the time of the World Food Summit: five years later (WFS:*fyI*), which was held in June 2002.¹⁰ This follow-up summit was held to evaluate the progress made since the first Summit. As promised, the now numerous advocates of food sovereignty had a powerful presence, this time holding another World Forum for Food Sovereignty parallel to the summit. This forum, which took the place of the NGO/CSO parallel summit of 1996, was attended by delegates from some 700 organizations. It had been coordinated by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC), an international network of organizations which built on the connections established at the WFS in 1996 and began work in 2000 (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005). Several such food sovereignty networks existed by this time, although Vía Campesina remained closely involved in all of them (Desmarais 2007). The forum produced the statement *Food Sovereignty: A Right for All*, which puts forward a more comprehensive definition of the concept, one which is probably the most frequently used today:

Food Sovereignty is the RIGHT of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labor, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies. (NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty 2002:2)

¹⁰ The WFS:*fyI* was originally scheduled to take place in November of 2001, exactly five years after the original WFS. It was delayed, however, due to security concerns after September 11. This is why, in reality, it occurred closer to six years later. In an interesting commentary on the priorities of global leaders, the Doha round trade talks scheduled to take place days later in Qatar went on as scheduled (Desmarais 2007).

This statement also expresses the participants' disappointment with the lack of progress made since the WFS in 1996 and rejects the official declaration of the WFS: *fyl* for its continued dedication to neoliberal policies as a means of eradicating world hunger (NGO/CSO Forum for Food Sovereignty 2002).

The outcome of the WFS: *fyl* is a testament to the massive popularization of the concept of food sovereignty that had occurred during the five (and a half) years that elapsed between the two summits. At the WFS in 1996 the concept had received such perfunctory treatment in the NGO declaration that Vía Campesina felt it necessary to reject the document. At the WFS: *fyl* in 2002 the entire NGO/CSO forum was dedicated to the concept and therefore rejected the official UN declaration and the neoliberal means to food security that it proposed (NGO Forum to the World Food Summit 1996, Desmarais 2003).

The growth of the movement around food sovereignty in Asia was underscored by the People's Caravan for Food Sovereignty, held in 2004. This month-long event was organized by the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific (PAN AP), an Asian network that has become very active in the food sovereignty movement. The Caravan, whose schedule included lectures, rallies, and theatrical performances, passed through 13 countries in Asia and ended with delegates traveling to three countries in Europe (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005). The Asian portion ended in Katmandu with a conference on food sovereignty. The final *Statement of the People's Caravan for Food Sovereignty* ends with a call for the adoption of an International Convention on Food Sovereignty, and for food sovereignty to become the principal policy framework used in addressing food and agriculture (People's Caravan for Food Sovereignty 2004). In conjunction with the

Caravan, PAN AP and the People's Food Sovereignty Network Asia Pacific (PFSN AP) released a draft *Peoples' Convention on Food Sovereignty* which was intended to serve as a model for governmental policy changes as well as a rallying cry for social movements internationally (PFSN AP and PAN AP 2004).¹¹

The most recent chapter in the brief history of food sovereignty took place when yet another WFFS was held in Sélingué, Mali in February of 2007. This conference, named Nyéléni after a legendary Malian peasant woman who was an extraordinary farmer, was attended by over 500 representatives from more than 80 countries (WFFS 2007). The fact that the conference was held in Mali may represent an effort to get African organizations more actively involved in the food sovereignty movement, as the continent is still the least represented among all food sovereignty networks.

To this point, use of the term food sovereignty, has remained largely in the hands of POs, NGOs, and the grassroots networks that connect them. This is due in large part to the fact that Vía Campesina and other promoters of the concept are extremely wary of the threat of co-optation that would come with use by powerful institutions, particularly the WTO, IMF, and World Bank. In fact, it could be argued that the use of food sovereignty by these institutions would automatically be an attempt at co-optation, as the neoliberal policies they promote are antithetical to the principals of food sovereignty. Vía

¹¹ The concept of a convention began with a proposal for a Global Convention on Food Security made by the NGO/CSO forum at the WFS in 1996. This convention was intended to support national governments in implementing food security and to ensure that food sovereignty was prioritized over WTO and other free trade agreements (NGO Forum to the World Food Summit 1996). At the WFFS in Havana, it was referred to as the International Convention on Food Sovereignty and Nutritional Well-Being, and at the Cancun demonstrations against the WTO in 2003, it was the International Convention on Food Sovereignty and Trade (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005).

Campesina has made a point of distancing itself from them, believing that any kind of participation with them would serve to legitimize their actions (Desmarais 2007).

Promoters of food sovereignty have had a much more genial relationship with the UN organizations and in fact, much of their work has been explicitly targeted at the UN in the hopes of strengthening this organization as a countervailing power to the dominance of the U.S. and the WTO (Desmarais 2007). Gradually, the concept of food sovereignty has begun to achieve some official recognition within the UN. The February 2004 report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food includes a section on “this new concept which is emerging from civil society as an alternative model for agriculture and agricultural trade” (Ziegler 2004). The FAO also faces frequent exposure to the concept of food sovereignty, as its civil society regional consultations in 2004 were organized by the IPC for Food Sovereignty. The concept was central to the reports of the regional consultations for both Asia and the Pacific and Europe, although it must be noted that the reports of the other three consultation regions – Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East, and Africa – continued to use the term food security. The European report states that, “the NGOs and CSOs want to underline that food sovereignty is the most important and basic principle for an agricultural policy to end hunger and to develop a sustainable agriculture” (FAO 2004a:55).

Food sovereignty is also slowly entering into policy debates at the national level. The national agricultural policies of both Senegal and Mali now incorporate the concept. Articles 5 and 6 of Senegal’s Agro-sylvo-pastoral Orientation Law mention food sovereignty in the context of ensuring employment and managing economic and environmental health risks for rural people. Article 5 states that:

The State undertakes to provide for all those employed in work relating to agriculture a standard of living which will allow them to provide for their legitimate needs in terms of food, health, housing, clothing, education, training and leisure. The State also strives to provide, in the medium term, a level of food security which guarantees the food sovereignty of the country (Blein and Jeudy 2007:31).

The document does not include an explicit definition of the concept, and from the context of both articles, the focus seems to be on national control of markets and production, rather than the broader interpretation espoused by *Vía Campesina* and others. The government also has set no fixed goals in its drive to achieve food sovereignty (Blein and Jeudy 2007). Mali has also adopted the term, including it in the country's Agricultural Orientation Law. Article 3 of this policy document defines food sovereignty as, "the right of a State to define and to draft an autonomous agricultural and food policy which guarantees sustainable farming based on local production and the accountability of producers, who, to this end, will have access to all necessary means, namely land, water, credit and markets" (Blein and Jeudy 2007:32). While the emphasis is still clearly on national control in the face of rapidly liberalizing global markets, this definition does incorporate several of the core aspects of food sovereignty, suggesting that the government has a fairly broad interpretation of the term.

Food sovereignty was also incorporated into the interim constitution of Nepal, which was introduced in January, 2007 under Article 18 (3) 3, which deals with the fundamental rights of the people. It establishes food sovereignty, along with employment, shelter, health, and education as a fundamental right to be incorporated into the policy framework of the state (PAN AP 2007). This is not surprising given that Nepal has been a center of food sovereignty activism, with the People's Caravan for Food Sovereignty beginning and ending in Kathmandu. Finally, and least surprisingly, leftist Venezuelan

president Hugo Chávez claims that the nation's agricultural policy is now guided by the principles of food sovereignty (GRAIN 2004). Chávez, who has consulted with Vía Campesina on projects (GRAIN 2004), has already banned genetically modified crops, enacted major land reform, and set up a chain of government subsidized supermarkets.

The incorporation of food sovereignty into national politics also brings with it the danger of misuse. In February of 2004, at a speech in Dakar, Senegal, former French president Jacques Chirac called for a reorientation of agriculture toward food sovereignty. In the same speech, however, he touted the benefits of the EU's existing farm policies, which include export dumping (GRAIN 2005). Although this type of misuse indicates the major risk of cooptation that food sovereignty will face in years to come, the fact that it is being incorporated into national politics at all demonstrates its rapid transformation into a serious alternative to the dominant food security frame.

Framing Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty, like the frames that preceded it, is shaped by the political-economic context within which it arose. The major difference lies in the identity of the framers. Since WWII, the frames available for talking about global issues of food and agriculture were all shaped by powerful international institutions like the UN and the World Bank. Food sovereignty is the first framing of food issues that has come to prominence from the bottom up, through the efforts of social movements rather than policy-makers. This does not mean, however, that the concept is unaffected by the power structures and ideologies of the time. Rather, where the household food security frame can be seen as incorporating many aspects of the globalization project and corporate food regime, food sovereignty categorically rejects them. This rejection can be seen in several

aspects of the food sovereignty frame which are almost mirror images of the food security frame. It emphasizes solidarity over individualism and insists that food cannot be treated as a typical commodity, in contrast to the microeconomic language of the food security frame. It criticizes free markets and demands state intervention, in contrast to the calls for trade liberalization which characterize the food security frame. It is also composed of highly political language, which contrasts with the neutral and technical language frequently used when talking about food security. Finally, the framers celebrate diversity at every opportunity, whereas the framers of food security, despite their best efforts, have not overcome the tendency to homogenize.

A difficulty must be admitted here in drawing the line between the actual food sovereignty frame and the frame as described by its adherents. The sharp dichotomy between food security and food sovereignty, described above, is certainly how food sovereignty advocates speak about their concept. It therefore cannot be overlooked as the most salient feature of the frame. Annette Desmarais, a participant in and analyst of *Vía Campesina*, describes the clash of political-economic models seen by the organization:

What is happening is a struggle between two different visions of the world. On the one hand, the forces of neo-liberal economic globalization work to obliterate diversity, to homogenize, and to create one global economy and one global culture based on consumerism and the adoption of Western science and technology... The forces of social resistance, on the other hand, assert difference and embrace diversity. They want to "bring people back in," to "redefine community" and development using a different vision of the world based on a whole set of different values...(Desmarais 2007:24)

Clearly participants in the food sovereignty movement are best able to delineate the contours of the frame that they have created, and their claims must therefore be taken very seriously. On the other hand, the framers of food sovereignty, like everyone else, cannot be entirely consistent in their language and demands. Their work involves a

delicate balance between avoiding cooptation on the one hand, while making demands which have a chance of getting incorporated into policy on the other. The food sovereignty concept, like all collective action frames, is therefore not monolithic but rather dynamic and constantly in the process of being framed. In what follows, I attempt to examine the food sovereignty frame in such a way as to incorporate both the image presented by its advocates and the unstated aspects which may be somewhat less consistent but are equally important.

The most basic way in which the food sovereignty frame challenges the emerging corporate food regime is by calling into question the microeconomic assumptions upon which it is predicated. The framers do this, first of all, by refusing to adopt the individualizing language which shapes the household food security frame. Instead they emphasize unity and collective action. A quote from the Final Declaration of the Nyéléni WFFS demonstrates the type of sentiment conveyed by many food sovereignty statements:

Just as we are working with the local community in Sélingué to create a meeting space at Nyéléni, we are committed to building our collective movement for food sovereignty by forging alliances, supporting each others' struggles and extending our solidarity, strengths, and creativity to peoples all over the world who are committed to food sovereignty. Every struggle, in any part of the world for food sovereignty, is our struggle. (WFFS 2007)

This language of solidarity is often used to express peasant unity, as well as in asserting collective rights and ownership of resources. The emphasis on unity rather than individualism would be bewildering to the economists who write much food security policy.

Food sovereignty advocates take their challenge to neoliberal models a step farther, arguing with the idea that food can be treated as a commodity, a practice which

goes completely unquestioned by even the most broad-minded promoters of food security; CFS activists, for instance, certainly do not take this step. The 2001 Havana Declaration states that, “we affirm that food is not just another merchandise and that the food system cannot be viewed solely according to market logic” (WFFS 2001:2). This statement flies in the face of everything that the corporate food regime is based upon. Similarly, in an article contrasting the “dominant model” (which resembles the emerging corporate food regime seen by Friedmann and McMichael) with the “food sovereignty model”, Peter Rosset explains that the corporations which dominate the world food system “see food as a commodity to be bought and sold. Yet food implies the stewardship of productive resources: it is culture, farming, health – food is life itself” (Rosset 2003:3).¹² This description of food as bearing worth beyond its economic value as a commodity occurs throughout the food sovereignty literature. Here the language of food sovereignty, as McMichael has pointed out (2005), recalls the work of Polanyi. However, to Polanyi’s fictitious commodities of land, labor, and money, the food sovereignty movement would add a fourth – food.

Finally, the food sovereignty frame calls into question the microeconomic framework of the corporate food regime by placing great value on things with little quantifiable economic worth, such as culture, biodiversity, and traditional knowledge. Seeds, for example, are portrayed as valuable far beyond their worth on the market. They have cultural meaning to the people who cultivated and saved them for centuries, not to mention their role as repositories of local biodiversity, all of which makes the patenting

¹² Rosset expands on the idea that food cannot be treated like other commodities in his 2006 book *Food is Different: Why We Must Get the WTO Out of Agriculture*.

of seeds by transnational corporations unjust and inappropriate in the language of food sovereignty (FSPI 2006).

In practical terms, of course, the food sovereignty movement clearly cannot divorce itself from the economic value system within which it is embedded. Most of the small farmers involved in Vía Campesina make their livings by selling the food that they produce, often on the global market. Though the organization's philosophy therefore frequently asserts the value of food *beyond* its market price, in practice, its policy proposals are simply aimed at obtaining a *better* market price. Their demands for an end to agricultural dumping, for instance, treat food as a commodity, and understandably so, as a policy proposal based on the non-economic value of food is difficult to envision.

The framing of food sovereignty also seeks to delegitimize the corporate food regime by questioning the increasingly global-level control of the world food system and demanding instead control at smaller scales. Here again, however, the food sovereignty frame is not monolithic but, generated by a variety of different organizations, it presents an array of sometimes contradictory ideas. There is therefore no single consistent scale of governance to which the frame adheres. Much of the time, food sovereignty is framed in a way that attempts to transcend the boundaries of national or global control. Movement statements often use language which reflects the influence of the many active indigenous organizations among its ranks. A typical sentence from the *Final Declaration of Nyéléni* explains that the movement is fighting for a world "where all peoples have the right to defend their territories from the actions of transnational corporations" (WFFS 2007:2). Repeated emphasis on control by "peoples" (rather than governments), in reference to

“territories” (rather than countries), underscores the movement’s rejection of the entire worldview upon which the corporate food regime is based.

Similarly, the language of food sovereignty also emphasizes the local level. Local governance and local markets are both heavily referenced in framing the concept. This elevation of the local may serve the purpose of uniting the predominantly Southern movement with its Northern member organizations, most of which are family farm organizations such as the National Family Farms Coalition in the U.S. and Confédération Paysanne in Europe, which do much of their organizing around the importance of locally grown food. This emphasis on local control also clearly stems from a massive disillusionment with the emerging corporate food regime, which is based upon increasingly integrated agricultural markets across the globe and regulation by global institutions such as the WTO.

Although local level markets and control serve as an excellent rallying cry for food sovereignty advocates in their battle against globalized agriculture, in practice they cannot avoid frequent recourse to the national level. Calls for a reassertion of control by nation-states in such forms as agrarian reform, affordable food prices, and rural development programs are common. As PFSN AP and PAN AP explain in the *Primer on People’s Food Sovereignty*:

It is the duty of the government to outline and implement an effective food production programme, which is premised on the development of production of the farmers and other food producers. This is achieved primarily through effective implementation of genuine agrarian reform programme, which ensures that productive resources and capital for farming and food production are in the hands of food producers. It is the government’s obligation to ensure that people have access to adequate food that is culture based and meets their nutritional needs....It should ensure that there is sufficient food supply for the whole country and people are able to buy these at affordable prices. (PFSN AP and PAN AP 2004)

Clearly the national government is expected to make most of the changes necessary for achieving food sovereignty. It may be that, while talk of local control sounds good on paper, the nation is a far more practical level at which to make actual policy proposals.

In using the nation as its reference point, the food sovereignty movement is still flying in the face of the prevailing political economic norms. Where the globalization project disempowered the state and the corporate food regime removed it from its role as primary food supplier, replacing it with free markets in agricultural goods, the state is reinstated into a central position in the food sovereignty frame. This manifests itself in frequent demands for national control of agricultural markets. The idea that “national agricultural policies must prioritize [sic] production for domestic consumption and food self sufficiency (Vía Campesina 1996:3)” is a common theme in food sovereignty statements, and reasserts the primacy of the national scale of government.

This impulse to re-empower the nation-state may be tied to the writers’ strong belief in democracy, which they see as undermined by the undemocratic structure of the WTO and other international financial institutions. The national level provides a much more promising arena for the exercise of democratic governance (Our World is Not for Sale Network 2001). It is also tied to their mistrust of the global-level control exerted by transnational corporations. To food sovereignty advocates, “the control of transnational corporations over not only global but even national food and agriculture policies and production is eroding people’s access to nutritious and safe food” (PFSN AP and PAN AP 2004:1). In rejecting global-level control by corporations and international financial institutions in favor of democratic control at the national or local level, they are rejecting

one of the most basic foundations of the emerging food regime as described by both Friedmann and McMichael.

The movement's use of the word "sovereignty" demonstrates the multiple scales at which the discourse operates, reinforcing national-level power while simultaneously calling it into question. The word sovereignty has distinctly national implications. Sikkink points out that, even in the age of globalization, "Most views of sovereignty are so penetrated by state-centric logic that they continue to focus almost exclusively on states and the understandings and practices of states as the sole determinant of sovereignty" (Sikkink 1993:413). Use of the word sovereignty may serve as a means to establish legitimacy for the movement by drawing on the historical importance of the nation-state. However, the movement applies the word in a variety of contexts which are completely alien to its conventional national implications. The discourse involves frequent references to the sovereignty of communities and peoples, for instance, blurring the very meaning of the word. While the globalization project attacks the state-centric meaning of sovereignty from above, therefore, food sovereignty stages its own attack from below. The national implications of the word will not easily disappear, however and account for much of its power.

The food sovereignty frame not only challenges the neoliberal dimensions of the corporate food regime through demands and language which implicitly shore up the state, but by constantly calling into question the supremacy of free markets. Aside from the frequent, outright demands to increase market regulation, of which abolition of the WTO Agreement on Agriculture is probably the most common (Our World is Not for Sale Network 2001), the legitimacy of unregulated markets are brought into question in

innumerable other ways. In what could be a modern day paraphrasing of Polanyi, many food sovereignty statements point out that trade is meant to serve humans and not vice versa. "Global trade must not be afforded primacy over local and national developmental, social, environmental and cultural goals" (Our World is Not for Sale Network 2001:2). Polanyi would only have added to this statement that if such social goals were not given primacy over trade, free markets would end up by destroying the fabric of society. Similarly, the movement's demands that Southern farmers be allowed to produce culturally appropriate food for their own consumption can be seen as a rejection of the global division of labor of the corporate food regime, in which their role is to produce exotic crops for export to Northern countries (McMichael 2005). According to the food sovereignty vision, comparative advantage in the free market is no longer sufficient criteria for deciding what crops to produce.

Perhaps the most powerful challenge that the food sovereignty discourse poses to the corporate food regime, however, is its politicization of food and agriculture. While food security takes on the naturalizing tendencies of neoliberalism, presenting the existing agro-food system as the natural outcome of spontaneous market forces, food sovereignty explicitly names the actors within the system that benefit by maintaining the status quo. To food sovereignty advocates, the food regime is socially constructed and maintained by those that benefit from its organization. The People's Coalition for Food Sovereignty states that, "the WTO is nothing but an instrument by the major powers to promote neoliberal policies on food and agriculture" (PCFS 2007:2). The movement takes advantage of the ample targets for resistance provided by the onslaught of roll-out neoliberalism. Politicizing supposedly neutral policy tools, such as the WTO Agreement

on Agriculture, has proven a powerful weapon in their fight against the corporate food regime.

This politicization of food issues is reflected in the types of campaigns carried out by food sovereignty organizations. For instance, in October of 2007, an armed militia hired by the Swiss transnational Syngenta killed a peasant member of the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST)¹³ that was occupying fields owned by the corporation. In response, rather than organizing a protest which operated through the market mechanism, such as a boycott of Syngenta products, Vía Campesina members held protests outside of Syngenta headquarters and Swiss embassies all over the world and directed a letter writing campaign toward the Swiss government (Vía Campesina 2007). This use of political, rather than economic actions to create change is typical of the food sovereignty movement. The language used by food sovereignty advocates also tends to be highly political and confrontational, especially when compared to that of food security. Food security documents often use technical terms and a scientific rhetoric which emphasizes the importance of improving measurement techniques through the identification of appropriate food security indicators (Frankenberger 1992). Food sovereignty, on the other hand, makes no attempt at scientific neutrality, but instead uses highly charged language replete with accusations, demands, and value-laden statements.

One final aspect of the food sovereignty frame deserves attention: the central role it allows for diversity and plurality. All forms of diversity are embraced and emphasized within the food sovereignty frame. The list of different types of producers whose demands are represented by the call for food sovereignty, for instance, seems to grow

¹³ The MST is a member organization of Vía Campesina.

longer in each successive declaration, now including “small farmers and peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples and other small-scale food producers” (WFFS International Steering Committee 2007:1). Cultural diversity is also highly valued by many food sovereignty activists. This was clear at the 2007 World Forum for Food Sovereignty where a traditional cultural ceremony, or *mistica*, was performed at the start of each day (Holt-Gimenez 2007).

This respect for diversity also affects the operation of the food sovereignty networks themselves, as member organizations are encouraged to pursue different strategies appropriate to their own localities (Desmarais 2007). A sentence from the planning pamphlet for the most recent WFFS in Mali encapsulates the emphasis placed on diversity and difference: “Food sovereignty includes a rich diversity of concrete local initiatives and policies appropriate for local and national situations, different cultures, and the aspirations and needs of different peoples. (WFFS International Steering Committee 2007:3). This approach presents a stark contrast to much of the official work on food security which, though it pays ample lip service to local diversity of conditions, is frequently intent on identifying commonalities for use in measuring the extent of food insecurity (Frankenberger 1992).

The different levels of diversity accepted within the two discourses likely stems from the identity of the framers. The dominant food security discourse is framed in a “top-down” manner by international institutions whose task is simplified if they can construct a single strategy for addressing food insecurity all over the world. In this way it corresponds with the observations of James Ferguson and others, who have found that international development organizations have a tendency to apply the same one-size-fits-

all solution to a variety of different local contexts, often with spectacularly unsuccessful results (Ferguson 1994). The food sovereignty movement, on the other hand, has only a minimal level of organization at the international level, maintained through internet communication and the occasional global conference. Almost all planning and action occurs at the local or national level, thereby maintaining a high degree of diversity within the networks (Desmarais 2007).

This practical and ideological espousal of diversity is just one of the many ways in which the food sovereignty movement refutes the hegemony of the food security frame. As a counterframe to food security, food sovereignty reacts to the emerging corporate food regime in a way that politicizes its power structure, names its assumptions, and generally threatens its chances of successful consolidation.

The Potential and Pitfalls of Food Sovereignty

A thorough examination of the food sovereignty frame helps to reveal both the movement's potential and the pitfalls that may lie ahead of it. The potential of the food sovereignty frame stems from the fact that it presents a real and immediate challenge to the consolidation of the corporate food regime. This potential is great precisely because it has been framed so as to reject almost all aspects of the regime and the globalization project in general. This makes it a genuine alternative to (rather than just a variant of) the existing model, and reduces the risk of cooptation. While several international social movements falling into the category of antiglobalization have received scholarly attention, food sovereignty is unique among them for the extent to which it rejects the language of neoliberalism and creates a viable discursive alternative. Allen and Guthman's claim that agro-food activism may inadvertently reinforce, rather than hinder

“neoliberal subject formation” could be levied at several such movements that use consumer purchasing power as their primary tool and target corporations rather than political bodies. This claim also matches many of the tactics used by the community food security movement. Though it genuinely addresses the needs of poor consumers, CFS does so in a way that emphasizes entrepreneurial activity – a comfortable fit with the neoliberal model. Guthman further asserts that many food-related movements ultimately have the effect of depoliticizing their subject matter: “Put another way, agro-food activism is often quite removed from a politics that names and addresses actually existing neoliberalisms of the food system” (Guthman 2007a). The highly political food sovereignty frame could not be farther from this description.

The potential of the food sovereignty frame therefore also stems from the way in which it explicitly politicizes issues related to food and agriculture, rather than treating them as the neutral realm of experts. In musing over the impact of antiglobalization protests, Peck and Tickell (2002:400) say that,

What remains to be seen is how far these acts of resistance, asymmetrical though the power relations clearly are, serve to expose the true character of neoliberalism as a political project. In its own explicit politicization, then, the resistance movement may have the capacity to hold a mirror to the process of (ostensibly apolitical) neoliberalization, revealing its real character, scope, and consequences.

Here they point to perhaps the greatest potential of the food sovereignty frame. Whereas the right to food and food security frames address problems with the global food system in legal and economic terms respectively, food sovereignty is framed in a political language unheard of in the other frames examined. This allows it to bring to light the power relations which have led to the formation of the food regime and gives it greater transformative potential than its predecessors.

This observation relates to the structure of the corporate food regime that Friedmann sees taking shape. Within this regime, the demands of environmental and food activists have been selectively appropriated by private corporations which now sell them the high quality, environmentally responsible products they desire while maintaining the typical exploitative production system for the far greater part of their products (Friedmann 2005). Stephen Gill warns of a similar phenomenon in his observations on “new constitutionalism”, a term for the political and legal changes behind neoliberalism. Gill explains that, unlike its liberal predecessor, this neoliberal form of governance “requires not simply suppressing, but attenuating, co-opting and channeling democratic forces, so that they do not coalesce to create a political backlash against economic liberalism and build alternatives to this type of socio-economic order” (Gill 1998:2). In Polanyian terms, this cooptation side steps the emergence of a cohesive protective movement that could threaten the neoliberal economic agenda. Food sovereignty advocates greatly reduce their odds of cooptation by not only refusing contact with the WTO and other organizations that espouse neoliberal beliefs but by employing a frame which is, in most ways, antithetical to that of the corporate food regime that they are trying to overturn.

The discourse surrounding food sovereignty also reveals, and in some cases creates, the potential dangers facing the movement. For instance, food sovereignty advocates make frequent use of rights-based language. The right to food is at the heart of food sovereignty and, as its most accepted principle, brings legitimacy to a concept whose other aspects are seen by many as radical or impractical. In addition to the right to food, however, advocates also use rights-based language to describe a host of other

demands such as the right to produce food sustainably and the right to productive resources, among others. In so doing, they attempt to extend the perceived legitimacy of human rights, using the word “right” to describe many of their demands (Vía Campesina 1996). Though this tactic may be effective, it runs the risk of blurring the distinction between legal and conceptual rights. There is an inherent danger of reducing the hard-won legal status of the right to food, leading it to be seen as just another unenforceable conceptual right. The movement would therefore benefit from more precision in its use of rights-based language (Windfuhr and Jonsén 2005).

A related set of potential problems facing the food sovereignty movement have to do with the way that the discourse deals with scale. Food sovereignty advocates frequently promote democratic control of food and agriculture at the local level as the best way to stop the damage caused by the corporate food regime. However, given that their targets are highly organized and powerful international financial institutions and transnational corporations, food sovereignty advocates tend to revert to talk of state power and national-level regulation, which is more recognizable and empowering. This has led some theorists to see food sovereignty as *primarily* focused on the national level (Menezes 2001). Food sovereignty advocates have worked hard to characterize their frame as a “new paradigm” or an “alternative modernity” (Desmarais 2007). Frequent calls for increased national control in the face of globalization could create a perception of the movement as being simply reactionary. Food sovereignty advocates will be more effective in achieving their goals if they are seen instead as proposing a genuine alternative based on their unique demands as peasant producers. In order to ensure this,

the frame would benefit from further theorization of when local control and markets should be encouraged and when national-level intervention is more appropriate.

This brings me to another potential problem evident in the food sovereignty frame. As the concept has become more and more popular over the past few years, it has been adopted by a growing number of organizations representing very different types of constituencies. This increases the difficulty of maintaining the concept's original, unique nature. It would be particularly easy, for instance, for the meaning of food sovereignty to blend with that of food security. This danger is clear in the speech by Jacques Chirac mentioned above (GRAIN 2005). It would also be unrealistic to assume that food sovereignty could avoid changing in various ways, just as food security has. The term's usage already appears to differ somewhat between its predominantly Southern peasant originators and the Northern NGOs that have subsequently adopted the concept. While the former group tends to emphasize the rights of producers, focusing on issues such as pesticide drift and land reform, the latter group is more likely to emphasize food safety and environmental concerns (see for example National Family Farm Defenders 2007). The challenge of the food sovereignty movement over the years to come will be to strike an appropriate balance – allowing enough flexibility in the concept to form a large and powerful coalition of users while simultaneously maintaining enough control over its meaning to prevent its dilution or cooptation.

In the long run, the prospects of the movement will be shaped in important ways by the resonance of the food sovereignty frame. Ultimately the question is whether the frame will have a broad enough appeal to effect meaningful change. Can a frame which predominantly reflects the perspective of Southern producers appeal, for instance, to the

Northern consumers that Friedmann believes are partially responsible for shaping the coming food regime? Or is a frame such as community food security, which shares the typical food security focus on consumption, simply more appropriate for a Northern setting where the vast majority of the population is no longer involved in production? Even if food sovereignty can continue to increase its following in both North and South, will it comfortably accommodate people from such different backgrounds without its original message becoming diluted? These questions remain to be answered; however, it seems that the best hope for the movement lies in maintaining the integrity of the food sovereignty frame as a genuine alternative to the corporate food regime and the mainstream vision of food security.

Conclusion

The concept of food sovereignty is the most recent in a series of frames created to address global food issues.¹⁴ These frames can be seen as becoming progressively more aspirational over time. Increasingly they seek to alter the food system by framing its solutions rather than its problems. What little framing existed during the first food regime was cast in terms of avoiding hunger. During the postwar regime, though the right to food was positively framed, Cold War politics meant that the negative freedom from hunger

¹⁴ For the sake of clarity, I have described each food-related frame as a discrete entity. In reality, however, the boundaries between the frames are permeable. The right to food is heavily cited by both the food security and food sovereignty frames, as its legal content lends them greater weight than either of these political concepts could achieve alone. The UN has recently been using the right to food as a means of grounding its food security efforts. The guidelines created after the WFS: *h*l in 2002, for instance, are officially called *The Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security*, demonstrating how these two concepts are intertwined (FAO 2004b). The food security and food sovereignty frames are also highly connected, despite the ideological divide between them, as the creators of food sovereignty clearly capitalized on the ubiquitousness of the food security frame in naming and shaping their counterframe.

frame was still most common. Finally, food security and food sovereignty are both positively framed, depicting what ought to be, rather than what ought not to be. The solutions presented by food sovereignty advocates are the most ambitious yet, imagining a better food regime based on a very different worldview.

Each successive frame has been historically contingent, rooted in the existing food regime and influenced by the dominant political and economic ideology. The right to food and freedom from hunger frames were created during the postwar food regime by relatively powerful diplomats. They therefore incorporated several dimensions of the regime, including the supremacy of the state in directing development and regulating the economy, the subordination of markets to social concerns, and the system of international food aid underwritten by massive U.S. grain surpluses. They also reflected the political centrality of the nation-state and the polarizing politics of the Cold War. These politics led the right to food to be marginalized until the human rights movement flourished in the 1980s.

When crisis struck the postwar regime, delegates to the 1974 World Food Conference reframed the issues in terms of food security. Though this new frame was created in response to the failings of the postwar regime, its language and associated policies continued for several years to reflect aspects of that regime as well as of the development project.

In the 1980s, the food security frame underwent a major reformulation that led to a focus on household incomes and individual food acquisition. Not surprisingly, this shift occurred just as the lineaments of a new, corporate food regime began to emerge from the unstable lacuna left by the breakdown of the postwar regime. Once again the framers

were largely in the seat of power, and the frame therefore incorporated many features of the corporate food regime. These features reflect the regime's neoliberal ideology, and include a transfer of power from the state to international financial institutions and transnational corporations, the further transnationalization of agriculture, and a disembedding of markets from society. The household food security frame continues to dominate the language of international institutions, national governments, and many NGOs.

Over the last decade, however, food sovereignty has arisen as a counterframe based on a rejection of most aspects of the corporate food regime and demonstrating that this regime has not yet (and may never) reach the hegemonic status of the two regimes before it. Framed by the traditional underdogs of the world food system, food sovereignty rejects wholesale the neoliberal economic beliefs behind the globalization project and the corporate food regime. Food sovereignty advocates defy the increasing pressure to liberalize, demanding local and national control of markets instead. The food sovereignty frame also features a discourse of unity rather than individualism, diversity rather than homogeneity, and emphasizes non-economic types of value rather than the commodity form. The strength of food sovereignty lies in its ability to frame a true alternative to the corporate food regime and its mainstream vision of food security.

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