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The Rise of Food Realism:

Food security paradigm change at a time of global crisis

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Abstract

In late 2007 and early 2008, the price of food on international commodity markets rose rapidly to unprecedented levels. This period of time has since been known as the global food crisis; a time characterised by growing poverty, malnutrition and political unrest. Food prices have since settled, though at a higher level than before, but during and directly after the crisis governments around the world were eager to protect themselves and their populations from the effects of a volatile market and an uncertain future where staple foods might no longer be cheap and readily availiable.

In this paper, I explore the actions taken by governments through the lense of security theory and characterise both a pre- and post-crisis set of security norms in world food politics. The latter is achieved through a dimension-based analysis of the ideas present in crisis responses from over 80 countries, where the characteristics of neo-realist security theory are contrasted with the critical, emancipatory vision of the Welsh School of security studies.

By comparing pre-crisis security norms to my analysis of the post-crisis situation, I shed light on a time of changing ideas and security strategies where states seem increasingly willing to pursue their food security interests aggressively, at the expense of international trade and cooperation. Despite this, the normative influence of international organisations appears strengthened, with many states looking to these for new ways of improving food security for vulnerable populations.

Key words: food security, realism, critical security, liberalism, food price crisis
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1 Introduction

In the winter of 2007 and the spring of 2008, world staple food prices rose to unprecedented levels. In one year the price of wheat had increased by 130% and rice was trading at prices 70% higher than at the same time in 2007 (Conceição & Mendoza 2009:1159). This sudden inflation of global food prices caused a number of problems. The World Bank, for example, estimates that an additional 44 million people became chronically undernourished during this period, while at least 100 million more were driven into poverty (Coates et al. 2009:91). The crisis also caused widerspread political unrest, with riots and large demonstrations in 40 developing and middle-income countries, where households typically spend a large portion of their income on food (Galtier 2011:526).

In the international arena, food price rises challenged trade relations between countries as they attempted to secure the nutritional needs of their own populations. At the same time the subject of food security was brought to the forefront of international debate. The world seemed to be waking up to the idea of a future where consistantly low and stable food prices would no longer be a reality, and forging food security for all must be a national and international priority.

At the core of this debate lies the many-faceted term security. Though the study of security has traditionally been preoccupied with the use of military force by and between states, many would argue that food is fundamental to the security of nations and individuals alike. Therefore, the international and national politics of food can also be understood as the politics of security. Indeed many of the central discussions in security studies are touched upon in the study of food politics; the role of the state, the relationship between states in competition or cooperation and whether the experiences of individuals should be allowed to shape our concept of security and the politics that stem from this.

The 2007/ 2008 world food crisis provides a backdrop against which it is possible to explore the reactions of states to an acute security problem that poses challenges on many levels. How do relationships between states change in a situation like this, and how do we explain food policy changes? All of these questions will be discussed further in this paper, but beyond this I wish to address the broader question of which norms shape the actions of governments and the international community when they are faced with growing resource scarcity.

As much research on the topic points out, we are entering a new era of food price volatility and supply instability due to climate change, land degradation, biofuel demand, growing populations and increasing speculation on staple food markets (World Bank 2008:1, Von Braun 2008:1, Fan & Heady 2010: xv-xvii). In 2011, food prices hit new record levels, underlining again the growing importance of food as a security concern and not simply a commodity (FAO 08.12.2011;

FAO et al. 2011:9). With this in mind I would argue that further analysis of the ways in which food security is understood by governments and international organisations is not just appropriate, it is necessary.

1.1 Purpose and Problem

In 1978 Raymond Hopkins and Donald Puchala outlined the eight characteristic norms or rules of what they called ”The World Food Regime” (Hopkins & Puchala 1978:600- 604). They based their work on the argument that conditions in global food systems ”... *occur because people make decisions about production, distribution and consumption that accord with commonly accepted and widely prevailing norms…*” (Ibid. 598). Inspired by their work, I wanted to explore these prevailing norms from a contemporary point of view, as well as the idea that world food regimes are fluid and changeable. To this I add my own idea, that a crisis may be the sort of catalyst that is needed to cause noticable paradigm change in a short space of time.

This research builds on the hypothesis that the food price crisis of 2007/ 2008 provoked a change of direction in world food politics. That is, that the security ideas that lay behind the *old* world food regime have given way to new security paradigms and a *new* world food regime. By characterising a pre-crisis regime and comparing this to my analysis of crisis response policies, the hypothesis explained above may be tested and discussed, and tendencies in food security politics mapped. To further define and concretise the purpose of this work, I have formulated the following problem or question that I ultimately intend to answer;

Was there a paradigm shift in food security politics after the global food price crisis of 2007/ 2008?

1.1.1 Scope of Study

In a study such as this one there are multiple ways of narrowing down the field of research to make it manageable in size and therefore provide sound and meaningful results. One choice that I regrettably had to make was not to give an in-depth overview of events surrounding the food price crisis. I have attempted to give what information is needed in the course of narration.

The choice to study one particular period in time and one particular crisis is also part of this narrowing process. But, as I have mentioned earlier, the nature of a moment of crisis may enable us to see changes that are more dramatic and more easily observed than thy would be had they happened gradually.

In the other dimension where it would be possible to constrain the scope of this study, space, I have chosen not to do so. In other words, instead of focusing on a single or limited number of countries, I have chosen to base my research on a holistic analysis of the policies adopted by all countries affected by the rise in

food prices. There are obvious dangers to this approach. The chance of missing information is large, because of the sheer number of countries that were affected and the multitude of policies adopted, on short-term, long-term and medium-term levels. Especially in the long-term dimension, a study that takes on all countries is likely to miss policy-making that has happened a while after the crisis, but that still may have been devised with the crisis in mind.

However, Hopkins and Puchala believe that it is possible to study global tendencies in world food politics. This study builds upon that assumption, necessitating the mapping of action on a global scale. With such comprehensive information availiable about policy action from studies by Demeke, Maetz & Pangrazio (2009); FAO et al. (2011); Von Braun, Sheeran & Ngongi (2008) and the World Bank (2008), alongside single-country studies, enough information can be compiled to provide a thorough account of the global response. Indeed, this wealth of information means that should certain policy measures be overlooked, tendencies can still be observed in a way not possible in the study of a single country or region.

1.2 Methodology

The focus of this research is on the policy responses of governments around the world to the food price crisis of 2007/ 2008. In an attempt to characterise the inherent or underlying concepts of security in each category or type of policy measure, I will analyse these through an idea analysis framework. In order to do this, the (competing) security paradigms of realism and critical security studies, or CSS, will be outlined and reduced to a number of key dimensions. Each policy measure, or group of policies, will be classified according to these dimensions. What is left will hopefully be a true picture of the ideas present *behind* political reactions to the food price crisis.

The analysis of ideas may be carried out in a variety of ways, depending upon ontological assumptions and scientific ambition. In the case of ontology, it is worth noting that this study builds upon a basic stance as to the nature of ideas and their existance. Namely, that an idea may exist and be discernable from a statement, independently of the intentions of the sender and the understanding of the audience. This means that a political response to food price volatility may *contain* the idea that one state cannot trust other states (suspicion in an anarchic international system) despite the fact that the policy-maker did not conceive the policy with this specific idea in mind. This is an important assumption. Because this study does not look at the discourse surrounding and justifying each seperate policy measure, the intentions of the sender or the perception of the audience cannot be portrayed or taken into account. We must assume the independent existance of ideas in order to proceed any further from this point.

With this understanding of the nature of ideas in mind, we can go on to discuss the type of idea analysis used in this paper. Because my ambition is descriptive; to describe the prevailing security norms at play in world food policy,

it is natural for to use a semi-quantitative method. According to Bergström & Boreus (2005:155), quantifying expressions of an idea can be particularly useful when one wishes to describe paradigm shifts or study the ideas present at a certain place or moment in time; precisely what I will go on to do.

In order to study ideas, I will use the analytical tool of dimensions, self-defined categories by which we may understand some underlying concept in the statements, policies, presented in part 3. As a tool, dimensions are versatile, and I have been able to define these myself, according to tendencies observed both in the theoretical and empirical parts of my work. This versatility is the reason I have chosen to work with dimensions, and though there are few constraints as to how one may define and employ ones dimensions, Beckman (2005:25) presents one basic rule: Each dimension must be distinct from the others and measure something that the others do not. Only then can they be meaningfully deployed in the search for knowledge.

However suitable a method may be, some space should be given to a discussion of the problems one could encounter in using it. In this case, I feel the need to question how meaningful it is to quantify ideas in an international arena where some are far more influential than others. This is the problem of power. Just because an idea *appears* to be dominant, i.e. lots of countries subscribe to it, does that necessarily mean it is the idea *of* the dominant? Hopkins and Puchala offer some perspectives on this problem: They believe that the norms guiding international food politics arise from the interactions between states. At times these norms may be bargained, reflecting the relative strength of the parties that make these bargains, at other times they reflect the universally accepted will of a hegemonic power (Hopkins & Puchala 1978:604).

So, the norms we will find in this work may already be the product of international patterns of influence, shaped by dominant actors, thus rendering my problematisation of the issue obsolete. However, asymmetry in power between actors cannot be overlooked and I will return to the topic in the course of this paper.

2 The World Food Regime

In this chapter I will develop ideas about what a regime is, how it can be characterised and analysed, and how the World Food Regime has changed since Hopkins and Puchala first used the term in 1978.

2.1 What is a Regime?

Before we proceed with looking at the political structure of food politics in the years before the crisis, we must discuss the concept of a regime itself, the definition of which is important to future concepts and discussions.

In *Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World,* Arthur Stein describes what one might call the defining characteristics of a regime. According to him, a regime cannot simply be the result of a series of independent decisions, instead, it must arise through conscious bargaining between self-interested actors. There must be some sort of sanction imposed upon those who defect, though the regime does not necessarily need to be institutionalised. Indeed, several institutions, including the UN, are deemed by Stein to be non regime-setters, precisely because they cannot ”*constrain and shape subsequent actions*” (Stein *in* Baldwin (ed.) 1993:45- 46).

On the other hand we find a view that Stein explicitly disagrees with (Ibid. 53). This is the Hopkins and Puchala view, that *all* sets of guiding norms at a particular point in time constitute a regime (Hopins & Puchala 1978:598). It is this perspective upon which I base my studies, allowing then for two regime influences that Stein does not; the first of these being the normative influence of non-sanctioning international organisations, such as the FAO, and the second being the influence that *domestic* food politics- independent decision-making without international cooperation or collaboration- may have on the international politics of food. In other words, the norms of the regime are transferred from the international arena to individual countries and vice versa, visible in both collaborations and independent decisions.

The last point is exemplified with the case of rice markets during the food price crisis. The decision to restrict exports made by India prompted others to do the same or to panic-buy rice at steadily increasing prices. The situation was only partially resolved when Japan announced the re-sale of its rice stocks back to international markets, calming prices and increasing supply. A potentially risky indepedent decision by Japan, that changed again the ”rules of the rice game” as one by one countries lifted export restrictions and price volatility calmed down (Fan & Headey 2010:45).

2.2 The World Food Regime Prior to 2007

We start the characterisation by going back to the eight points set up by Hopkins and Puchala in 1978, and reworking these to suit a more contemporary context. Of the eight points Hopkins and Puchala give, five are beyond the scope of this study. The four I intend to discuss further are;

1. Respect for the free market.
2. Low priority for national food self-reliance.
4. Avoidance of starvation

To these I add my own two points;

2b. Priority given to export agriculture.
3. Disengagement of the state from agriculture.

Respect for the free market. Hopkins and Puchala state that, at the time of writing, most major participants in the international food arena believed that a well-functioning free market would guarantee an efficient distribution of agricultural goods (Hopkins & Puchala 1978:600).

Two developments in particular have kept this statement relevant. The first being the structural adjustment or conditional loans programmes instigated by the World Bank and the IMF in the early 1980's. Dupraz & Postolle suggest that out of 39 loans given by these institutions to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, 80 % entailed conditions that affected agriculture in some way (2010:110). Conditions included opening up markets to global import and export, and removing the state from involvement in agricultural matters.

The second push towards greater global trading of agricultural goods came with the Washington Consensus policies of the 1990's. Built upon a set of poltical recommendations given by economist John Williamson, these ten policy recommendations became some of the most dominant ideas in development for the next decade (McCleery & De Paolis 2008:438; Gore 2000:789). The idea behind them was that trade liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation would bring economic and social development.

The increasing degree of integration in world markets for agricultural commodities is shown in practice by the fact that imports of food staples to developing countries rose fast during the 1980s and 90s (Dupraz & Postolle 2010:110). For example, sales of US corn to Mexico rose 175 % in the ten years prior to 2004, as a result of the NAFTA free trade agreement (Echols 2007:1116).

Low priority for national self-reliance and ***priority for export agriculture***. Looking at the Mexican example above, it is apparent that self-reliance in staple foods has not been a priority for countries, many instead taking advantage of their increasing access to consistantly cheap food on global markets (Dupraz & Postolle 2010:125).

However, this emphasis on global trade and food imports followed a wave of African self-sufficiency policies, conceived in the wake of the food price crisis in 1974 (Ibid. 111). We cannot see the end of this tendency independently from the movements described under the section above, whereby the regime rules changed and free market functioning became the central aim of agricultural politics. In this context it is particularly interesting to mention the Berg report for the World Bank (1981), which prescribed the rapid development of an African agriculture designed to benefit from a comparative advantage in the production of cash crops such as coffee and chocolate, while adviseing countries to import staples (Ibid. 110). This led to the current situation where 35 out of 47 African countries are net importers of *food* but net exporters of *agricultural products* (Fan & Headey 2010:57).

Disengagement of the state from agriculture. Aside from leading to a bias in favour of export crops, the normative dominance of the free market as the provider of food security has led to what Dupraz and Postolle call ”the breakdown of food governance”, meaning the removal of the state from the planning and development of agriculture (2010:118). This is apparent in the decreasing agricultural budgets that were observed in developing as well as developed countries, as well as in the international sphere (Rossett 2011:22; FAO 2009:2).

Washington Consensus policies of the 1990s included strategies governments should *not* pursue such as affecting prices on markets and involvement in the distribution or production of goods (McCleery & De Paolis 2008:441). Though compliance with these recommendations cannot have been universal, Galtier (2011:526) argues that non-intervention in food prices has been the dominant global strategy for the last two or three decades.

Avoidance of starvation. The norm, that starvation should be avoided, is present in the priorities, actions and declarations of international organisations like the FAO or World Food Programme, as well as in the actions of the many states that support these organisations financially or who distribute food aid (see Sheeran *in* IFPRI 2008:11-14).

2.3 Liberal Security Concepts in the Pre-Crisis Regime

An interesting characteristic of the issue of food security is the way it straddles the field of security thinking, from those ideas that deal predominantly with economics to those that deal with the use of military force and all thinkable constellations between. This means a great deal for the relationship between food and security theory, as some neo-liberal theorists would prefer to keep a distiction between the economic sphere and the sphere of national interest (Chatterjee 2003:131). In contrast to this view we may argue that issues of food security are

firmly planted in both areas, rendering the distinction meaningless. Therefore, neo-realist, neo-liberalist and critical conceptions of security can be applied to food security problems and contrasted with each other.

When characterising the underlying *security concepts* of the pre-crisis food regime, it is possible to discern four main features of global food security strategies. First, that there existed a moral dimension *beyond* the needs and interests of participating governments (see *avoidance of starvation*). The belief in an international moral dimension is a feature of the liberalist schools of security thought, where the objective rights of man are stressed as a guideline for international behaviour (Hough 2008:4-5). In this respect, liberalism differs from the realist and neo-realist security theories where it is the interest of the state, and the perhaps inherent immorality of the pursuit of state interests, that are seen as the reality of the international arena (Ibid. 3).

However, a reading of the norms guiding the old food regime presents a challenge to the idea of international anarchy, the second feature of the regime being a large amount of regulated international cooperation (see *respect for the free market*). Though neo-realists would not deny that cooperation of this kind is possible, some, like Joseph Grieco, believe the issue of national interest *in* such cooperations has been overlooked and that states will prefer to secure relative gains for themselves in cooperative relationships rather than the absolute gains neo-liberalists believe states may pursue together (Grieco *in* Baldwin 1993:131-132; Baldwin *in* Baldwin 4-5).

The terminology and the ideas behind this discussion of gains can be found in the Prisoners Dilemma game, which is used by many neo-liberalists to illustrate the possibilities created by international cooperative trade (see Lipson *in* Baldwin (ed.) 1993:66). A case for the Berg report vision of agricultural free trade, where developing countries were encouraged to develop export agriculture, is easily argued with the PD idea: Developing countries would be able to secure currency to finance infrastructure and debt repayments, while staple exporters would be able to access new markets upon which they might sell their cheap, industrially produced grains *as long as* both cooperated in the game. Indeed, we cannot say that there did not exist single, or even substantial, defections from this model of global agricultural security, but we can observe substantial subscription to the strategy.

Faith in international regimes and institutions (such as the World Bank/IMF or free markets) was a dominant idea in the food regime and that these were able to govern state behaviour when states attempted to defect from regimes out of self-interest (Echols 2007:1124). This form of liberal institutionalism is a direct challenge to realist concepts of security, where there is *no* international hierarchy with the power to constrain the self-interest of states and the international arena is categorically anarchic.

The food security regime in the pre-crisis years of the early 2000s is characterised by a **dominance of (neo)liberal security concepts**, though this need not necessarily reflect the views of all. In fact, there are strong indications that a few hegemons set the terms of pre-crisis agricultural policy to their own advantage (Echols 2007:1125). It would be a digression to discuss whether or not

the countries that were compelled to comply found the terms advantageous or not. Instead, we must now look at how countries andinternational organisations reacted when food commodity prices rose to unprecedented levels in the winter of 2007/ 2008.

3 Political Reactions to the Food Price Crisis

When Hopkins and Puchala were characterising the World Food Regime in the late 1970's, they took into account norms and rules that arise both within and between states (Hopkins & Puchala 1978: 615). In this chapter, where political responses to the food price crisis of 2007/ 2008 are mapped and explained, I will work with the same two levels. In addition to this I add a time element to the picture, so that policies pursued are classified as either short-term or long-term in scope. This leaves us with the four policy groups that are displayed below in a matrix adapted from Conceição and Mendoza (2009: 1176).

	Time Scope of Policy →	
Actor ↓	Single country Short term (A)	Single country Long term (B)
	International actor Short term (C)	International actor Long term (D)

FIGURE 1. Policy scope and level matrix.

In this chapter I will continue to refer to policy measures by group (A, B, C or D), as this distinction makes further discussion and analysis more precise. This is the case both when it comes to establishing whether or not it is possible to discern long-term trends in world food politics and when making assumptions about the immediate (crisis) reactions of states to food insecurity.

3.1 Group *A* Policy Reactions

In accordance with the classification described above, group A contains short-term policy measures implemented by single states. The information availiable about the measures in this group has been compiled by Demeke, Maetz and Pangrazio (2009) in their 81-country study for the FAO. Here, policy responses are divided into three categories; those that target trade, consumers and producers, and I will therefore continue to use these categories in this paper.

3.1.1 Countries Targeting Trade

Demeke et al (2009) name three ways of stabilising domestic prices through trade-related means. The first of the three, reducing taxes and tariffs on food commodities, is reported to have been used by 23 of the 81 countries, while 21 countries attempted to control domestic retail prices in a number of ways. These include the government taking over the sale of maize (Malawi) or setting maximum or ceiling prices on staple foods (Sri Lanka, Malaysia) (Demeke et al 2009: 6-9).

The third domestic policy option entails the release of grain stocks to increase market supply and press prices downwards, a measure taken by 35 countries in the study. It is worth noting that globally, such stocks were, at the time of the crisis as well as now, low and declining. The WTO recommends that world stocks lie at 18-20 % of consumption, while world stocks at the time of the crisis were no greater than 14 % (Demeke et al 2009: 6; Fan & Headey 2010: 34).

In contrast to this trend, China holds relatively large stocks, meaning that the goverment could instigate the release of large amounts of grain onto markets at the time of higher prices, as did the governments of 14 other Asian countries, 13 in Africa and 7 in the LAC region, bringing the total to 35 (Huang et al 2008:455; Demeke et al. 2009: 7). However, the domestic price suppressing effect of stock releases may lead to arbitrage possibilities, whereby policy effects are cancelled out. A country that pursues such measures would then need to isolate its domestic market from international trade (Huang et al 2008: 455), as roughly half of stock-releasing countries did (17). It is this policy option we will go on to look in the following passage.

Trade policy changes that were internationally influential belong to two groups. Though several countries (12 to be exact) chose to follow both paths, we may, in the spirit of generalisation, say that net food importing countries (see Aksoy & Ng 2008:11) were eager to decrease import restrictions (tariffs and customs fees), whereas food exporting countries, like Argentina and Brazil, chose to ban or restrict the export of their domestic production during the food price crisis. In total, 43 countries lifted import barriers, while 25 imposed export restrictions or total bans (Demeke et al. 2009: 7)

3.1.2 Countries Targeting Consumers

This group of policies were directly aimed at consumers, either to increase their buying power or their access to food outside conventional market mechanisms. Among measures in this group we find the introduction of new social safety nets or expansion of already existing programs, alongside measures that increase the disposible income of certain sections of the population (Ibid. 2009:13).

In comparison with trade-based policy measures, consumer targeting was relatively little used. In total, 23 countries chose to increase or introduce cash transfer programs to the most vulnerable, while 19 countries based social safety net measures on the direct transfer of food; either as food aid, through school feeding programmes, food-for-work programmes or by selling certain staples at subsidised prices to those that most needed it. In other words, these social safety net policies were *specifically targeted* at the sections of the population who were experiencing the greatest food insecurity (Ibid 2009:12).

The World Bank report (2008:11) suggests that the use of targeted safety nets like these is the most efficient way of combating short-term food insecurity, as does the report from FAO et al. (2011:31), stressing that cash-based transfers are particularly efficient and easily tailored to fit a specific situation. Despite this, a total of 16 countries, predominantly in the middle east, chose to increase the purchasing power of certain groups without targeting the poorest or most food-insecure (Demeke et al 2009: 13). In Egypt wages for civil servants were increased by 30 %, in Algeria by 15 %, Syria 25 % and in Lebanon the minimum wage was increased by 65 % (Saif 2008:4). It is worth noting though that in the case of Lebanon, while increases in the minimum wage may be seen as targeting the poorest section of society, a large segment of the population in that country is employed informally or on a casual basis. This means that changes in minimum wage legislation cannot be seen as a *targeted* safety policy in the same way as cash or food transfers.

3.1.3 Countries Targeting Producers

The Demeke et al report cites two types of producer-based response. The first category does not involve intervention in markets. Instead, 35 governments chose to provide immediate production incentives without market intervention, mainly by increasing or introducing production subsidies, *untargeted* input (seed and fertiliser) subsidies or improving access to credit. A further 15 countries introduced targeted input subsidies for those farmers that were not benefiting from higher prices, poor smallholders, and 6 introduced programmes that increased access to improved seeds or fertiliser types. The latter would of course also be specifically targeted at the poorest smallholders (Ibid. 2009:19).

The second category of producer-targeted policy implies a government presence or greater involvement in domestic food markets. Significant agricultural producers like China, India and Russia have increased the minimum purchasing prices for rice and wheat for domestic producers, while both India and Russia

have significantly raised the prices at which they purchase grain for national reserves (Von Braun *in* IFPRI 2008:5). Market intervention of this kind, meant to act as both incentive and insurance for local producers, was found in a total of 15 contries (Demeke et al 2009: 18), though this number does not include Russia.

3.2 Group *B* Policy Reactions

In group B we find long term responses on a single country or national level. It must be mentioned that because of the short time span between the crisis and the time of writing, comprehensive information about long-term trade strategy changes or increasing agricultural investment is not availiable to this study. However, certain indications of a post-crisis long-term response have been observed by a number of researchers on the subject.

First of all, there is some speculation a possible shift of strategy, whereby states will increasingly base food security not on trade, but on staple self-sufficiency (Ibid. 2009:21). China is among the countries currently pursuing self-sufficiency in the long term, with *"[food self-sufficiency] as the basic strategy of food security in China"* (Gao 2010:43). Of the four other countries mentioned by Demeke et al (2009:21) all are predominantly rice-consumers (Malaysia, Philippines, Senegal and Indonesia), possibly showing a particular fear of price rises repeating themselves on this market.

Simultaneously another related global trend has become apparent; the increasing aquisition (purchase or lease) by wealthier governments of agricultural land in poorer, developing countries, for export to domestic markets (Von Braun *in* IFPRI 2008:5). World Bank sources suggest that a total of 32,1 million hectares of African land were bought or leased in the single year following the food price crisis (Byerlee & Deininger 2011:52). Perversely, this means that a number of countries are in fact producing food *abroad* in order to become more nutritionally self-sufficient.

Finally in this section, It is worth pointing out a growing intervention of governments in the agricultural sector and in food security politics. Compared to the pre-crisis or liberal food regime, many governments are increasing political regulation and planning of agriculture, through long-term goals of self-sufficiency, incentives for staple farming, greater regulation of agricultural commodity markets (Ibid. 2008:8) or restricting biofuels production (Huang et al 2008:456). It is apparent that the failure of markets to supply food security to people and states alike has prompted many governments to become more involved, and a growing number of countries are currently working on implementing the so-called Right to Food policies- a comprehensive social reform programme created by the FAO aimed at improving individual access to sufficient nutrition (FAO 2011).

3.3 Group *C* and *D* Reactions

It is here we look at inter- and non-governmental responses to the food price crisis. Again, the information availiable about this sector is by no means as comprehensive as that for group *A*. However, this is not a huge problem, as it is important that we do not overplay the relative importance of international actors in the construction of norms and rules in the world food regime. This applies however broadly we choose to define a regime; both Stein and Hopkins & Puchala would postulate that states are the central actors in regimes, though they disagree about other criteria (see Stein *in* Baldwin (ed.) 1993:46). On the other hand, I have chosen to include this category as it would be short-sighted to assume that there is no normative exchange or influence exerted between states and international bodies.

Group *C* responses include emergency relief provided by the World Food Program (the United Nations food relief coordinator) and immediate fiscal support for goverments that could not otherwise have afforded the additional pressure on social security systems and other safety nets, provided by the World Bank (Sheenan *in* IFPRI 2008: 14-16; World Bank 2008:7).

Group *D* reactions include less concrete responses, such as the organisation of various fora for international debate and cooperation to increase focus and funding for food security (see FAO 2009 *Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security*) as well as pledges from the World Bank to increase spending and lending in the long-neglected field of agricultural development and infrastructure (World Bank 2008:9).

Both Sheenan and Demeke et al. mention that the WFP scope for action was limited by funding constraints that coincided with the higher prices the WFP itself was having to pay for grains. In 2008, confirmed donations to the WFP, that provides targeted food assistance in 80 countries, ran to only $2.8 billon while at least $6 billion were needed (Sheenan *in* IFPRI 2008:11- 13). This serves as an illustration of the continuing reliance of such organisations upon the goodwill of states.

4 Towards a New Food Security Paradigm?

"Food is not a commodity like others. We should go back to a policy of maximum food self-sufficiency. It is crazy for us to think we can develop countries around the world without increasing their ability to feed themselves." (Bill Clinton in Smith 2008)

With these words, Bill Clinton was ushering in a new era in food policy, based upon the concern he felt for those in the developing world who were suffering from decreasing access to food. But was there real policy change, and if there was, who was it designed to benefit? In order to answer this question, both context and in-depth analysis are needed. Therefore, my first task in this chapter is to outline a model, containing two possible ways of viewing food security and the actions pertaining to it, through which we will classify the policies described under section 3, finally comparing the outcome to the old food regime described in chapter 2.

4.1 Model for Analysis

4.1.1 A Realist Concept of Food Security

The realist paradigm is singularly preoccupied with the state, both as the only legitimate actor in the politics of security, and *per se* as the object that is to be secured. In order to seek greater security for itself, the state must try to maximise its power in an anarchic international arena. For traditional realists, this definition only covers the military sphere, which, of course, would not include the actions of states in the name of food security. However, a broader definition, where extra-military power is also considered of interest to the state can be found in newer, neo-realist, thinking, like that of Kenneth Waltz (Hough 2008:5; Chatterjee 2003:128)

Neo-realist ideas allows us to analyse food security issues from a realist, statist, perspective. Food security is important to a state, its strength and its economic power, because a healthy population is a productive population. This definition can be extended even to developed countries, where the relatively modern problem of obesity (itself often the result of inadequate nutrition) is seen as a challenge to nations and the national interest, rather than simply to the humans it affects (Frum 2010). Gao (2010:42) stresses the national security perspective, calling food security the "*basic guarantee for national security*".

Similarly, Rosset (2011:22) argues that if the population of a country depends on the volatile movements of the global economy for their next meal, that nation is not secure. A preoccupation with the national interest, including but not exclusively national security, is a defining characteristic of realist security theory (Hough 2008:4).

This definition of the national interest entails that the interests of the state, or the regime governing it, are synonymous with the interests of the nation. A strong regime is capable of giving security to a population in a way that a weak regime is not (as described by the Hobbesian social contract). This is also an argument for the concentration of power to a strong government, rather than amongst a plurality of actors. Therefore, though realists recognise that there exists substantial cooperation between states in international fora and organisations, they do not accept that these hold power or normative influence over the actions of states. Instead, the states that participate in these do it out of pure self-interest and are prepared to defect from cooperation at any time in order to preserve or augment national power (Ibid. 3).

In relation to food security, this would mean that as long as food was readily availiable, at an advantageous price, through (the institution of) international free markets, states would be willing to participate. However, when resources become scarce, or inaccessible because of rapidly increasing prices, states would be tempted to defect from this cooperation.

4.1.2 A Critical Concept of Food Security

Critical security studies are a broad school of thought, including feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist challenges to traditional (read realist) ideas of security. However, there are a number of discernible directions inside the discipline, of which we will continue to work with and refer to the ideas of the Welsh or Aberystwyth School of critical security studies. The Welsh School offers a broad definition of security that covers food (”freedom from want”), while narrower definitions choose to focus on ”freedom from suffering in times of conflict”, a more traditional view of security studies (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010:20- 24; Acharya 2003:3).

The Welsh School, established by Richard Wyn Jones and Ken Booth, is best known for its emphasis on emancipatory security. That is, a vision of security based on freeing the *individual* from ”*those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do*” (Ken Booth *in* Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010:24). Already we see a stark contrast to realist thinking; in critical security studies it is the experiences of individuals, rather than the relationship between states, that creates the background upon which security is defined. This is expressed thus, that the referent object of security, that which is secured, rather than being a state, is an individual human who is in some way experiencing insecurity (Ibid. 22).

Looking at food insecurity, the emancipatory ideal of Welsh School theory strikes a chord; what would an *individualised* concept of food security mean other

than the emancipation of humans from the constraints of hunger? To the idea of emancipation we must now add the logical conclusion of this ambition; that the aim of gaining knowledge about the insecurity of humans must be to facilitate their emancipation, that theory must lead to practice.

In terms of the practice of individual liberation from food insecurity, there is an already existing framework provided by the Right To Food movement. One of the movements defining features is the belief that food should be the legal right of each individual human on earth; indeed this is the case in a handful of countries (notably India and Brasil) and has been successfully pursued in their courts a number of times (Nhlapo 2004:2; De Schutter 2010a:4) . In practice, this means removing the food security of individual humans from the whim and priorities of governments, making it a goal more important than the sovereignty of a state to define its own policies. A similar scepticism to the primacy of the state exists in Welsh School thinking.

In a wider context, other critical security thinkers also challenge the ability of the state to create and safeguard human security needs. Amitav Acharya (2003:15) specifically links the security needs of a regime, national security on a domestic level, to the violation of individual security, using examples from the war on terror. However, this does not mean that all, or even most, critical theorists are anti-state or have no faith in this institution as an actor for the security of individuals and communities. Lodegaard (2000, point 8) points out that in reality, we cannot escape the fact that the state, in its current form, has a unique capacity to provide for the security of citizens in ways concurrent with the ideas of CSS. Based on this argument, I will henceforth view the state as both a possible creator of emancipatory security *and* a possible violator of the same.

4.1.3 Dimensions for Analysis

From this theoretical background, I have gleaned three key dimensions with which we can measure the degree to which a policy measure conforms to each of these competing views of security. Each category or dimension includes two or three sub-categories, to aid in the process of classification.

1. Referent object of policy measure: State – Regime – Individual

This dimension demands little further explanation. As described above, the CSS school places **the individial human** as ”that which is to be secured”, while realist thinkers instead place **the state** in this position. But how do we operationalise the referent object of security in a policy? The answer is that we look at the aim of food security responses; who ends up benefiting? Particularly, this distinction is important in cases of domestic politics, where some policies that seemingly benefit food insecure consumers have instead been engineered to diminish food price-related dissent against **a regime** by targeting groups where such dissent may be found. This is the so-called *urban bias* in food security politics that Dupraz & Postolle describe, whereby governments choose to placate consumers rather than

helping small-scale producers, themselves often amongst the most food insecure, become more productive (2010:125).

2. International integration and cooperation: More – Less

An emancipatory approach to food security, like the Right To Food (RTF) approach, entails a **large degree of integration between domestic policies and the norms and rules created through international organisations and regimes**, particularly because it is in the international sphere that the normative concepts of human security, as well as an individualised food security, are strongest. For example, the RTF guidelines ask states to include into domestic legislation the right to adequate nutrition given in the International Covenant of Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (as well as other international legislation). In addition to this, the organisations that front the approach, notably the FAO, serve in an advisory and consulting role to those countries that wish to implement RTF principles (De Schutter 2010b:4).

In contrast, a realist approach to food security must necessarily be fronted by a state that enjoys complete sovereignty over decisions about its agricultural and food policy, perhaps secondarily entering into international cooperation should it deem this to be in its interest. Therefore, the degree of international integration of food policy should be **small enough to facilitate room for the state to manouvre** freely within the field, according to its changing interests. After all, a realist state is sceptical of others, and must be able to respond to changes in the balance of power.

3. *The presence of morality: Present – Not Present*

One of the defining features of the realist paradigm is the assumption that there is no moral view- for example pertaining to human life or rights- that is of primary concern to the state. In fact, on the contrary, realists acknowledge that the pursuit of national interest is amoral (Hough 2008:3- 5). In food security terms this leaves us with a realist response to food insecurity that, instead of building on the moral view that hunger and malnutrition are wrong and must be combated *per se*, is based on a fear of the political of social instability or disorder that angry hungry people may cause.

Contrarily, the emancipatory CSS standpoint is that the constraints of insecurity must be lifted from those that experience them, the Gramscian theory-practice-nexus (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2010:26). This ideal contains a moral view, that those with the power to do so are obliged to change the conditions of insecurity in which others find themselves.

4.2 Dimensional Analysis

4.2.1 Referent Object of Security

In order to classify the referent object of security in each policy group, we return to the results from part three, shown in the table below, each categorised according to referent object; a lower-case x symbolising some degree of uncertainty in the classification. An explanation of the classifications made follows the table.

Policy Measure/ Group/ Number of countries adopted if applicable	**Referent Object**			
	International Influence		Domestic Influence	
	State	**Individual**	**Regime**	**Individual**
1. Reducing domestic foodstuff taxes (*A)* ***23***			x	
2. Controlling retail prices (*A)* ***21***			x	
3. Releasing buffer stocks (*A)* ***35***			x	
4. Reducing import barriers (*A)* ***43***	X			
5. Ban or restrict export (*A)* ***25***	X			
6. Cash transfers/ Social safety nets (*A)* ***23***				X
7. Food transfers (incl school feeding/ food-for-work) (*A)* ***19***				X
8. Increase disposable income (*A)* ***16***			x	
9. Untargeted production support (*A)* ***35***	X			
10. Targeted production support (*A)* ***21***				X
11. Production support w/ market intervention (*A)* ***16***	x			x
12. Greater government involvement in agriculture *(B)*	X			x
13. Goal of self-sufficiency *(B)* ***>5***	X			
14. Oversees land aquisition *(B)*	X			
15. Emergency relief *(C)*		X		
16. Fiscal assistance for safety nets *(C)*		x	x	
17. Long-term international coordination for future food price stability *(D)*		X		
18. Coordinating the realisation of the right to food*(D)*		X		

FIGURE 2: The referent object of security in food price crisis responses on national and international levels.

Categories 1, 2 and 3: All three of these policy categories have been characterised as regime-securing. This is based on the assumption that, although the aim of these strategies has been to reduce food prices on domestic markets, the price decreases in question would be minimal and would not, in their entirety,

benefit the most vulnerable in society. Instead, the cost to governments would be large (forgone tax income, reduced stocks that need to be replenished) while the money invested in policies would lead to savings for both the richest and poorest sections of the population. Indeed, the richest, who consume more per capita than the poorest, would be reaping the larger per capita share of the benefits.
Another point that must be mentioned is that of Huang et al (2008:455); that when a government makes cheaper food accessible to all, grain traders will see arbitrage possibilities in the situation, and the government is compelled to protect domestic markets by restricting export or see the effect of its investment annulled.

Inherent in these strategies is the urban bias, meaning that governments prefer to protect the urban poor and lower middle classes from food insecurity because these are the groups that are more prone to violent protest or audible dissent. Von Braun (*in* IFPRI 2008:4) believes that the particular connexion between food insecurity and political unrest was overlooked by many analysts after the food price crisis, but that this has been a driving factor of many govermental responses. Judging by the observations described above, this would seem to be the case.

4 & 5: Though these two policy categories would seem to be diametrically opposed to one another, there are greater similarities than one might assume at first glance. Reducing barriers to import could be viewed as a cooperative measure between countries, but we may also argue that this is a competitive strategy where a state tries to secure as much food as possible for itself from a pressed international market. Whatever the interpretation of the situation we land on, it is the state that is acting, on behalf of its own security and self-interest. As neo-realists point out; states are not averse to the pursuit of cooperation when it serves the preservation of the state itself (Grieco *in* Baldwin (ed.) 1993:124-125).

It is easier to see the referent object in the policy of export restriction. The state sees rising prices on a global market as a threat to its food security and decides, if it has the means, not to allow its own food resources onto this market so that they must be bought back at great expense. Interestingly, even countries that may have found a fiscal benefit in exporting their agricultural surplus at times of high prices, like massive producers of staples Brasil and Argentina, decided to restrict export. Preserving the power of the state relative to others is a stronger motivation, it seems, than reaping financial rewards of ones own comparative advantage. This is a classic situation where relative gains (security in ones own food supply) outweigh the absolute gains that may have been created through trade (depressing world prices as well as increasing income from export crops).

6, 7 & 8: The first two policies here have the individual human being, who is experiencing food insecurity, as the point of reference. States must, in order to carry out these responses, identify the poorest and target food security policies to this group. This also adds the CSS concept of individual experience, since many social safety nets allow for self-targeting (the individual him- or herself decides whether to participate or not) (Demeke et al 2008:12). Of course, in order to be successful, self-targeted programmes must be non-discriminatory and accessible to those that need them, but this is a level beyond the scope of this study.

The case of school feeding should perhaps be given a particular mention. On top of being a targeted security system for individual, vulnerable, humans, an extra level of empowerment, or emancipation, is added. As the voluntary guidelines to support the realisation of the right to food (FAO 2005:18) suggest, the advancement of human capital, especially through education, is an important element in a rights-based food security strategy.

However, group **8** policies are not oriented at the most vulnerable individuals. The policies here, mainly wage increases for public sector workers, carry the same middle-class or urban bias as previously discussed, and have therefore been filed as regime-securing.

9, 10 & 11: When agricultural support, credit and subsidies are not targeted, a risk is run that it is larger commercial producers who will reap the greatest benefit. These producers were already profiting from higher prices on global markets, to which they have access (Demeke et al 2008:20). This would increase income to the state but not access to affordable nutrition for the rural poor. On the other hand, smallholders who sell on local or regional markets, can be encouraged to increase or improve their production, thus directly benefiting local food security. This is also the preferred strategy of the RTF movement (FAO 2005:13).

12, 13 & 14: Classical realist Morgenthau prescribes self-sufficiency as the rational approach to state food policy because *"[states] need not divert their energies and foreign policies [...] to make sure that populations will not starve in war"* (Baldwin *in* Baldwin (ed.) 1993:17). Though there is substantial debate about the suitability of a self-sufficiency strategy to secure the individual right to food, I have chosen to place the state as the referent object of a self-sufficiency strategy (see Haugen 2009). I would argue that the confines of state boundaries are not necessarily the most logical ones on which to base well-functioning and ecologically sound food systems, and confining food security to a state must instead be seen as a strategic measure in the pursuit of power over others.

The pursuit of power over others is likewise at the centre of the foreign land aquisition currently being pursued by wealthier nations around the world. This is expansive state behaviour that borders on the military and places itself firmly within the realist view of the world. Resources are power, and if they do not sufficiently exist within the confines of the state, the state must aggressively seek them elsewhere.

On point 12 there is some ambivalence to the referent object, though a strong, well-regulated and productive agricultural sector is, in times of increasing food insecurity, a factor of national power.

15, 16, 17 & 18: These are measures carried out by organisations in the international community that enjoy a certain freedom to act independently of state members, on behalf of the vulnerable worldwide. In the case of the World Bank, states must ask for financial assistance, but the bank decides which projects to support. The fact that it shows a bias in favour of social safety nets creates a precedent that is founded in the broader principles of emancipatory CSS.

However, it is worth pointing out that securing the financial resources to put in place social safety mechanisms would strengthen a regime in the role of provider, as is reflected in the table above.

4.2.2 International Integration and Cooperation

In the short term perspective, one trend in relation to international integration is immediately visible; that of the restriction of agricultural exports. This measure is particularly drastic when it goes as far as to a complete ban on export, as happened in the cases of China, India, Egypt, Pakistan and others (Demeke et al 2009:10). Export restrictions can be related to security theory in a number of ways. First of all, let it be stressed that had countries chosen to export agricultural surplus freely, the world would have been spared some of the worst price rises, especially in the rice markets (Fan & Headey 2010:46). This would in turn have entailed less suffering on the part of the affected, so export bans cannot be seen as advantageous from a Welsh School, state-sceptical, CSS point of view.

Export restrictions represent a break with or denial of international cooperation and the global free market institution. Another feature of the decision was the chain-like way in which countries implemented it, indicating that there was a preference for doing it sooner rather than later, a symptom of the mistrust that exists between power-maximising states (Ibid. 45).

On the other hand, many countries went in the opposite direction, attempting to encourage the import of staples. But these decisions were unilateral and competitive, each country attempting to secure the largest amount for themselves at the best possible price. This uncoordinated demand surge drove prices even higher, to the disadvantage of those who needed to buy food at market prices (Ibid. 43- 50).

The short term picture shows a clear preference for unilateral strategies aggressively pursuing national interest but the long term picture is slightly more nuanced. On the one hand we see further unilateralism and trade isolationism in the pursuit of food self-sufficiency by some countries. However, these are not many in number. More indicative of long-term food realism is perhaps the advent of land grabbing, the scale of which is, as mentioned before, huge (see Byerlee & Deininger 2011).

On the other hand, several countries are adopting individualised human rights-based strategies for food security, and though I would not argue causality, there was an addition or increased participation of eight RTF-implementing countries in 2008 alone. Amongst these we find the two growing economic powers Brasil and India (De Schutter 2010a:4). The number may seem small, but it is a drastic measure by government to guarantee access to legal remedy *against that same state* for individuals whose right to food has been violated.

4.2.3 The Presence of Morality

The morality in question is a judgement about whether there lies, implicit in a policy pursued, a judgement that all hunger is wrong for the suffering and limitations it imposes upon those who experience it. This can be tricky to work out because it is tempting to imagine and attempt to empathise with the motivation of those who designed the policy. But this is not our aim. As I have said before, the intentions of the sender are immaterial. It is the implicit idea, seen through the lense of security theory, that we are after.

Realism teaches us that there is no morality in the pursuit of national interest and power. Policies that seek to augment power on a macro-economic arena cannot be said to contain a moral standard. We subsequently disqualify these.

In the question of morality, we must return to the idea of targeting, or demographic mapping as it is also known. If an action is based on the desire to correct a situation in which immorality is present, that action should target either the source of the immorality or seek to free the sufferer from its constraints. Given that demographic mapping allows an authority to alleviate the hunger of exactly those who are suffering this immorality, I would classify this group of policies as containing a fundamental moral interpretation. The same could be said of production supports that enable smallholders to improve their livelihoods. However, this *must* not be the case, especially if authorities have a vested interest in the particular support of these populations.

5 The New World Food Regime: Summary and Conclusions

5.1 Summary of Dimensional Analysis

From the first dimension, where we analysed the referent object of each policy category, the following mathematical results may be presented. Of those measures that are quantifiable, 116 had the state in the international arena as the object of security, 95 regime security in domestic politics and 71 held the security of the individual to the front. Though this is not a summary of *which* countries *believe* what, since many are represented in all of the three categories, it does shed some light on the relative importance of different referent objects to governments and policy-makers.

In the second dimension, it became apparent that the short-term responses to the food price crisis were largely competitive, non-cooperative between states, and often isolationist. Some nuance to this picture was given in the long-term perspective in which a number of countries are integrating domestic food security planning with the Right to Food guidelines stipulated by the FAO. However, a number of others have geared their future food security strategies toward foreign land aquisiton and staple self-sufficiency policies.

The third dimension raises the question of morality on the international arena. Now, as in the pre-crisis food regime and at the time Hopkins and Puchala first launched the term, a moral aversion to hunger seems to be apparent. This is true both in the norms represented through the actions of international organisations and the policies pursued by many countries. However, reactions to the immorality of hunger are not the only, or even main, priority of states in crisis. In many cases this is most likely due to the economic status of the state; in many middle-income countries rising food prices would prompt families to change patterns of consumption, often missing out on education or healthcare, rather than going hungry (Sheeran *in* IFPRI 2008:11). This is food insecurity, but it is not the sort of humanitarian crisis that prompts a moral response.

5.2 Towards a new Food Security Paradigm

So, does this represent food security paradigm change? And if it does, who wins? Is realism still the default state of states, or are the ideas of emancipatory security gaining ground?

First of all, in comparison with the old food regime, characterised as it was by liberal ideals, something has changed. The rules of the old game (respect for the free market, low priority for self-reliance, priority for export agriculture and disengagement of the state) have been upended. We now see states that are sceptical of the free market, considering self-reliance strategies, encouraging local staple production and, above all else, getting involved in agriculture again. The only prevailing norm, then, is that we should avoid starvation.

But have the norms of the regime *really* changed. After all, the state and regime-centrism we have found in the analysis of referent objects is by no means incompatible with a liberal idea of security. But add to this the fact that many countries are choosing to individualise security and target those who are experiencing it, and we might imagine that it is possible to discern slight shift from the realm of traditional security ideas. However, I must argue that this is not the case. Although this may indicate that states are not simple realists, with no frame for action but the preservation of themselves, liberal ideas are not incompatible with a certain degree of state morality, and though the state itself is seen to be the object of security on the international arena, this need not exclude a different approach in domestic politics, built upon a human rights morality.

Perhaps the greatest observable difference between the two regimes, the liberal pre-crisis and the post-crisis, is in the relationship between states and international cooperation. Belief in this system for the pursuit of common gain seems to have been weakened and it is not hard to see why states, finding themselves in a situation where insecurity is seemingly imported from global markets, would choose to isolate themselves from these markets or try to keep their resources to themselves. The knee-jerk response to the crisis, especially relating to the international arena, seems to have been staunchly realist, perhaps vindicating realists like Grieco in their challenges to liberal institutionalism.

Finally, though, one last point of change must be mentioned. This is in the ideas and actions of the international organisations mentioned in this work, the World Bank and FAO. Whereas both of these organisations have for many years been proponents of a liberal, though equitably bargained, trade regime, they seem to have changed their tone. It is here we find the strongest indications that CSS may have won ground, and I would go so far as to argue that there has been real paradigm change in this field. As Gore (2000:789) explains, international organisations are often the normative avant-garde in development. He may be right, and the future will show how influential these institutions will be in transferring norms to the global food regime.

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