
Feasting on Foreign Aid

*A political economic examination of foreign aid's potential role in
perpetuating chronic hunger and starvation in Malawi*

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University of Cape Town (2015)



*A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the
degree of MSocSci IR (Masters of Social Science in International Relations)*

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Abstract

Foreign aid to Malawi has the ability to perpetuate the country's fifteen-year long hunger crisis. For millions of Malawians, chronic starvation is attributable to their inability to access food available on internationalised markets. Bilateral foreign aid to the Southern African state is aimed at stimulating development which, if successful, should also lift the country beyond threat of chronic, long-term malnourishment for the poorest of its citizens. Donor's, however, measure developmental aid's success along a narrow set of indicators – such as economic growth – dictating the direction of policy for recipient nations wishing to maintain the inflow of aid. For Malawi, this is all but inevitable as foreign aid accounts for 40% of government revenue. As a result of this dependency on external income, Malawi's government has targeted economic growth in order to maintain its aid support. Economic growth in Malawi has been fuelled by public spending and is unsustainable in the long term. The rapid growth was accompanied by high levels of inflation and the further entrenchment of a perennial trade accounts deficit, leaving the national currency weak. In addition, the majority of public spending reinforces the country's economic identity of an agricultural state, ensuring that 90% of Malawians who rely on agriculture for an income will remain poor due to the imbalance of trade. The indirect perpetuation of an agricultural economy, alongside unsustainable and unstable growth, has led to a situation where most Malawians cannot afford to buy food.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor John Akokpari for all the feedback and guidance throughout writing. I am equally indebted to the UCT Political Studies Department for the opportunity to receive feedback on my thoughts and ideas, as well as a space to express them in a formal manner. Lastly, this paper would not have materialised if not the support of Mandira Bagwandeem's continued support and assistance.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms	8
<u>Chapter ONE:</u> Introduction	9
1.1 Malawi	10
1.2 Outline and Proposed Argument	11
<u>Chapter TWO:</u> Theoretical Framework	14
2.1 Foreign Aid	14
2.1.1. <i>The Properties of Foreign Aid</i>	14
2.1.2. <i>What Aid Does – Theoretical Contention</i>	16
2.1.3. <i>Foreign Aid as to be used in this Paper</i>	18
2.2 Food Security	19
2.2.1 <i>Food Security</i>	19
2.2.2 <i>Access and Availability</i>	21
2.2.3 <i>Starvation and Famine</i>	23
2.3 IPE and Ideology	25
2.3.1 <i>International Political Economy (IPE)</i>	25
2.3.2 <i>Marxism</i>	26
2.3.3 <i>Structuralism</i>	27
2.3.4 <i>World Systems Theory</i>	29
2.4 Combining the Theory	31
<u>Chapter THREE:</u> Malawi and the World	34
3.1 International Trends in Food Security	35
3.1.1 <i>An International Concern</i>	35
3.1.2 <i>The Post War Period</i>	36
3.1.3 <i>The Era of Price Volatility</i>	37

3.1.4 <i>Post Cold-War Reality</i>	38
3.2 International Food Regimes	39
3.2.1 <i>Food Regime Theory</i>	39
3.2.2 <i>The Dominant/Core Food Regime</i>	41
3.2.3 <i>The Emerging/Peripheral Food Regime</i>	42
3.3 Recent Food Crises	43
3.3.1 <i>The Regime in Practice</i>	43
3.3.2 <i>Food Crises</i>	44
3.4 Malawi's Food Crises	48
3.4.1 <i>Early 21st Century</i>	48
3.4.2 <i>Six Years of Hunger</i>	50
3.4.3 <i>Contemporary Food Crises</i>	51
3.5 Malawi in Context	52
3.5.1 <i>Socio-Economic Overview</i>	53
3.5.2 <i>Foreign Aid and Scandals</i>	54
3.6 Summary	56

Chapter FOUR: Aid, Dependency, and Starvation 57

4.1 Critiquing Foreign Aid	57
4.1.1 <i>Critique from the Right</i>	57
4.1.2 <i>Critique from the Left</i>	59
4.2 Foreign Aid and Food Security	60
4.2.1 <i>Access, not Availability</i>	60
4.2.2 <i>Access and the Malawian Economy</i>	61
4.3 Negative Effects of Foreign Aid in Malawi	62
4.3.1 <i>Taxes and Government Apathy</i>	62
4.3.2 <i>Aid and Corruption</i>	64
4.3.3 <i>Donor Conditionality and Policy Effects</i>	66
4.3.4 <i>Economic Knock-on</i>	68
4.3 Aid and Food Access in Malawi	70
4.4.1 <i>The Effect of Unstable Growth – Currency Worth</i>	70
4.4.2 <i>Asymmetry and Imbalance</i>	72

4.4.3 <i>Compliance to the Neoliberal Food Regime</i>	74
4.5 Summary	75
<u>Chapter FIVE:</u> Conclusion	78
Appendix	85
Bibliography	89

List of Acronyms

ADMARC	-	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investment
FISP	-	Farm Input Subsidy Program
GATT	-	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
IBRD	-	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IFAD	-	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGO	-	International Governmental Organisation
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
INGO	-	International non-Governmental Organisation
IPE	-	International Political Economy
IR	-	International Relations
ITO	-	International Trade Organisation
LDC	-	Less Developed Country
MWST	-	Modern World Systems Theory
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPEC	-	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OXFAM	-	Oxford Community for Famine Relief
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Program
WB	-	World Bank
WFP	-	World Food Program
WHO	-	World Health Organisation
WST	-	World Systems Theory
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Stunted growth, increased susceptibility to bruising, rashes, the thinning of hair, a loss of bone density, joint inflammation, and a weakened immune system can all be caused by undernourishment – a phenomenon which, despite great advances in technological achievements over the centuries, remains one of the most pressing concerns facing millions. Additionally, undernourishment is also able to induce: anaemia, diarrhoea, disorientation, night blindness, mental deficiencies, enlargement of the thyroid gland, decreased reflex times, and amenorrhea (the disruption of reproductive regulation, particularly menstruation). Although mostly manifesting through physical ailments, undernourishment does have the ability to affect people negatively in many non-physical manners as well – such as psychologically, socially, and politically.

Ultimately resulting in death if not addressed, it is wholly evident that undernourishment has severe consequences for anyone unable to meet their minimum nutritional needs, regardless of the duration and outcome of the episode of hunger. Of the nearly 900 million persons who are still faced with undernourishment on a daily basis, 98% of all starving peoples are located in third world nations. This suggests, at first glance, that the answer to staving off hunger lies with states' ability to reach the level of development already enjoyed by the developed world. After all, if the vast majority of states enduring mass undernourishment are LDCs,¹ then surely something endemic to all these states accounts for the presence of food insecurity.

As such, the international community's efforts at promoting development throughout the underdeveloped world are increasingly important in order to foster food security for millions of people located in at-risk communities. Foreign aid programs are the foremost tools used by wealthy and influential members of the international community in the hope of stoking development. If successful in promoting development, the prevailing

¹ Less Developed Countries

logic dictates, food insecurity should also be addressed; the plight of millions of people, therefore, rests upon the assumption that efforts at development also promote food security. This paper, however, argues that efforts at promoting development may, contrary to expectations, hinder a state's food security.

1.1 Malawi

Ethiopia, Biafra, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Somaliland are all regions with reputations of famines and food shortages. Being all African, their reputations have been tainted by their experience with food crises and has come to be the archetypical image representing the whole. Consider the perception of Africa by the world: for all the major tropes applied to the continent, hunger and poverty seem to be among the most common and consistent among its depictions by those unfamiliar with its realities. Major international crises, such as the food blockade on Biafra or the various droughts in the Horn of the continent (catapulted into the international public's eye through initiatives such as Bob Geldoff's Live Aid) have become symbolic of the plight of many Africans.

Of course, this generalisation is exactly that: a generalisation. It is precisely this misinformed depiction of Africa, including other negative stereotypes such as corruption and civil war, which Africans are attempting to address. For Malawi, however, the trope of a starving African child is an all too true representation of the country's reality. Malawi's past, present, and foreseeable future was, is, and will be characterised by mass hunger. A relatively small, landlocked country in Southern Africa with an equally small population, Malawi's plight was always doomed to be relegated to the margins of the world's collective psyche.

Since independence in 1964, Malawi has faced numerous episodes of widespread hunger. However, instead of abating in frequency as expected, Malawi's hunger problem has evolved into a protracted saga characterised by long-term undernourishment among a large percentage of the country's population. In the past, the country's hunger concerns were attributed to droughts, floods, and other similar disruptions in the country's ability to supply its citizens with food. By 2002, the country faced yet another bout of flooding, destroying much of the annual agricultural output. The following 13 years would see hunger

and malnourishment linger throughout the country. Similar disasters to the flooding of 2002 have been experienced in the ensuing 13 years, the most recent (as of at the time of writing) occurring in January of 2015.

At this point, it seems as if the country's food problems can be attributed to natural disasters – to exogenous events – making the state incredibly unfortunate, but hardly the victim of malignant foreign intervention as this paper will claim. In fact, the prevailing language used by media in descriptions of Malawi's food crises underlines this belief, with the various crises being repeatedly labelled as famines – carrying connotations of being caused by external, uncontrollable, and unforeseen forces.

Critically, this paper will base its argument upon the notion that food insecurity in Malawi is misattributed to a lack in supply of food. If Malawi's current food crisis has been caused by a lack in the amount of food available, then issues affecting the country's supply of food – such as flooding – would be pertinent. It will be argued that the food crisis Malawi is currently weathering, however, is caused by the inability to *access* food, not the unavailability thereof. As such, in order to argue that foreign aid is indeed a contributing factor in Malawi's on-going food problems, it will be necessary to demonstrate the effect had by aid on Malawi's ability to *access* food.

1.2 Outline and Proposed Argument

This thesis will argue that:

The presence of foreign aid in Malawi is detrimental to the country's attempts to become food secure as it constrains the nation's ability to access food.

Chapter Two will introduce the various terms which underwrite the argument and which will be used throughout the remainder of the paper. Firstly, foreign aid will be explored, explaining what it does and how it will be viewed in context of the argument at hand. Three theoretical stances on foreign aid will be presented from: the Realist, Liberal, and Marxist schools of International Relations. Secondly, a discussion on the issue of food security will follow in order to not only define it, but to highlight key details in its understanding –

namely the four components of food security and the four levels of society which are affected by issues of food security. Thirdly, the chapter will present the overarching framework of International Political Economy as suitable for arguing foreign aid's negative effects on food security. Branches of the Marxist school of thought, Structuralism and World Systems Theory, will be used due to the structural nature of its interpretation of world affairs.

Understood via the overarching structuralist framework advocated by a Marxist interpretation of the world, Chapter Three introduces the various building blocks constituting the particular structure within which Malawi exists and is subjected to. The various elements comprising the structure can also be regarded as contextual aspects. Starting with global post-World War II trends in international food security, the evolution of food crises is presented in order to highlight both the reality of food security on the international stage, as well as how the world addresses the problem. The two food regimes (the dogmas dictating policy making on food security) will be introduced via a Marxist understanding – that is to say, as a core and peripheral set of norms dictated by the historical trends in global food crises. Recent global food crises will then be put into perspective via these trends and food regimes before introducing the case at hand. Malawi's own food crises will be discussed, with particular emphasis placed upon the years ranging from 2000 to 2015, before disclosing various aspects of Malawian society, economy, and political context which is pertinent to the argument.

Finally, drawing on the terminology introduced in Chapter Two and the outline of the prevailing context provided in Chapter Three, Chapter Four shall focus upon the pertinent elements present in Malawi's case and in line with the argument. With this focus, the argument of foreign aid will be critiqued along the right-left political continuum. Foreign aid's effect on food security will follow, placing emphasis on the potential effect foreign aid plays on access to food, before applying this critique specifically to Malawi. Foreign aid, it will be argued, has the following negative effects upon Malawi: promoting government apathy, enabling corruption, enforcing the adoption of unsuitable and short-sighted policies by donors, and numerous negative economic knock-ons (on the balance of trade, inflation, currency volatility, and so forth). These different effects are not only dependent on foreign aid's

ability to induce apathy among government, but to keep Malawi's national government dependent on the aid it receives.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

The following chapter will introduce the three main components that comprise the theoretical framework which will underwrite the argument that foreign aid is promoting and perpetuating food insecurity in Malawi. These three components are: *foreign aid*, *food security*, and the Marxist perspectives of *Structuralism* and *World Systems Theory*. These three components will be introduced in isolation before being synthesised into a working blueprint for the remaining two chapters.

2.1 Foreign Aid

2.1.1 *The Properties of Foreign Aid*

Usually, as pointed out by Tomohisa Hattori,² conceptions of foreign aid are largely ideologically inclined - more geared towards describing foreign aid through what it is used for, rather than conceptualising the term in the abstract. In other words, the literature on foreign aid focuses on the question “what does foreign aid do?” instead of asking “what are [the] properties of foreign aid?”³ Writing in 2001, Hattori aims to refine and present a more apropos definition of the concept of foreign aid, but ultimately frames his definition upon facets of social constructivism, thereby failing (ironically) to be ideologically-neutral in itself.

Despite this, his inquiry remains pertinent to the conceptualisation of foreign aid. In searching for an operationalised definition, Hattori notices that when popular conceptualisations of the term “foreign aid” attempt to answer the question “*what does aid do?*”, the answers given are based upon a preconceived notion of what aid is at its most

² Hattori, 2001

³ Hattori, 2001: 634

fundamental level. Without some kind of working conception of what aid is, the question of what it does cannot be answered. Therefore, Hattori – working from the assumption that social reality is layered – uses this aspect of foreign aid within the literature to infer from the common assumptions of the popularly held definitions, via retroductive reasoning, theorising that:

“foreign aid consists of material goods or services that are owned or controlled by donors, the allocation of which may vary according to their purposes and interests.”⁴

This is a similar position given by many more overtly ideological scholars of foreign aid, such as Hans Morgenthau (who had written in the Realist tradition). Foreign aid, Morgenthau states, comes in many forms but has a common core: “the transfer of money, goods [or] services from one nation to another.”⁵ The Liberal Internationalist scholars Hollis B. Chenery and Allan M. Strout state, in a similar vein, that foreign aid refers to the “transfer of resources” such as “skills and organisational ability[,] domestic savings[,] commodities and services.”⁶ In all these definitions, the idea of a *transfer of resources* remains critical.

The language surrounding aid also merits a brief examination. The “aid” referred to in the concept *foreign aid*, for example, conjures associations with the idea of *giving* and *resource allocation*. According to economic anthropologists Marshall Sahlins⁷ and Marcel Maus,⁸ there exist “three types of resource allocation in human society: economic exchange, redistribution, and giving.”⁹ Despite this, foreign aid has largely become “commonly perceived as” being exclusively one of these types of exchange – “a gift extended from one country to another.”¹⁰ Emma Mawdsley, taking gift theory as a springboard for a discussion on aid as a *gift*, states that “there is an ambivalence in the performance of the gift – it must be conducted as voluntary, disinterested and ‘free’” while simultaneously carrying across the undertones that an obligation exists for future

⁴ Hattori, 2001: 635

⁵ Morgenthau, 1962: 301

⁶ Chenery & Strout, 1966: 681

⁷ Sahlins, 1972

⁸ Maus, 1967

⁹ Sahlins, 1972: 185-230 in Hattori, 2001

¹⁰ Hattori, 2001: 636

reciprocation.”¹¹ This differs from the perception that aid garners neither certainty of return nor political entitlement. This aspect of foreign aid, however, is a contested notion among the different ideological schools of thought (as will be discussed later).

Other terms, such as “donor”, should not be solely equated to the act of giving (as referred to above) as it oversimplifies the complexity behind the ideological nature of foreign aid as a concept. Although the common understanding of the term “donor” implies the *giving of a gift*, used in the context of foreign aid the term “donor” is merely used to indicate the actor transferring the resources in question. No judgement concerning altruistic intentions should, in theory, be considered. Theory and ideology do, however, play a role in the conceptualisation of *foreign aid* and needs to be taken into consideration.

2.1.2 What Aid Does - Theoretical Contention

Foreign aid, like many concepts within the field of International Relations, is not immune to the push-and-pull exerted by the many theoretical and ideological schemas underwriting the discipline. Consequently, operationalizing a working definition of the concept can prove to be more difficult than a first glance may offer. Writing in 2001, Hattori attempts to navigate this politicised landscape and seeks to answer the question “[w]hat is foreign aid?”¹² He suggests that the term has commonly manifested among three ideological lines found within IR – Realism, International Liberalism, and the traditionally Marxist World Systems Theory.

In essence, Realists regard foreign aid as a tool of Foreign Policy. Writing in 1962, Hans Morgenthau (considered by Hattori as being the most prominent amongst realist scholars writing on the issue) noted that foreign aid, as a concept, does prove to be controversial through the assumption – which he promotes – “that [foreign aid] is an instrument of conducting foreign policy”¹³ (emphasis added). Furthermore, Morgenthau makes the argument that all foreign aid is *explicitly* political and therefore provides additional weight to the argument of foreign aid as a tool in the accomplishment of foreign

¹¹ Mawdsley, 2011: 258

¹² Hattori, 2001: 633

¹³ Morgenthau, 1962: 301

policy goals. The popular idea that foreign aid is an act of giving, therefore, does not fit the Realist worldview as foreign aid suffers “neither certainty of return nor political entitlement”¹⁴ associated with the act of giving. Even cases of humanitarian foreign aid, such as emergency supplies sent to a state after a natural disaster, could be considered as being *implicitly* political (as opposed to explicitly carrying intent of political gains) – that is to say, that some return or political entitlement is to be accrued from the resources provided.¹⁵

Liberal internationalists lean more towards the functionalist aspects of foreign aid, yet still maintain a largely ideological perspective of the concept – attempting to promote a more humanistic approach to foreign aid. Proponents of this school of thought maintain that foreign aid’s *raison d’être* is the purportedly neutral reason “to contribute to efforts to overcome worldwide poverty, underdevelopment, and distress.”¹⁶ Prominent idealist David H. Lumsdaine, for example, counters the popular realist perceptions of aid by society in his systematic study of foreign aid programs in the years 1949-1989. His study concludes that “donors have been less motivated by political and economic interests than by humanitarian ones.”¹⁷ This view is in stark contrast to the view held by Realists such as Morgenthau. It does, however, fall in line with the idea that foreign aid is an act of giving – and therefore carries the implicit characteristics of being “voluntary, disinterested and ‘free’.”¹⁸ This is further evidence that foreign aid, as a concept, is difficult to remove from its ideological undertones as even the minority of supposedly a-political definitions could easily be characterised as humanistic by other advocates of liberalism.

Finally, the World System Theorists stay true to the Marxist undertones of the theory, proposing that foreign aid assists in the perpetuation of a world divided into a core and a periphery, “promoting the unequal accumulation of capital in the world.”¹⁹ The stance lends itself to ideas promulgated by neo-Gramscian IR scholars. For example, it is argued that foreign aid programs have been linked with a particular “development trajectory”

¹⁴ Hattori, 2001: 636

¹⁵ Morgenthau, 1962: 301

¹⁶ Nowak-Lehmann, Martinez-Zarzoso, Klasen, & Herzer, 2009: 1184

¹⁷ Pierre, 1993: 195

¹⁸ Mawdsley, 2011: 258

¹⁹ Hattori, 2001: 633

which is “aimed at the creation and buttressing of multilateral capitalism” which favours donor nations.²⁰ Again, this differs from the supposedly politically neutral conceptualisation that foreign aid is characterised by an absence in expected returns or political entitlement espoused by the term “*giving*”.

2.1.3 Foreign Aid as to be used in this Paper

For the ends of this paper, foreign aid will be treated along the same lines delineated by Hattori above. Thus, foreign aid is to be understood as something which encompasses all types of resources – physical goods, skills and technical know-how, financial grants, gifts, or loans – as transferred by donors to recipients. Acknowledging that foreign aid, as a concept, carries ideological undertones due to the very language it employs, the term *transfer* will be used in place of the term *giving*.

As mentioned above, conceptualising foreign aid is difficult to do in the absence of ideology. This dissertation proposes Marxist and Realist conceptualisations of foreign aid in its attempt to answer the question “*What are the possible consequences of Foreign Aid inflows in impacting the hunger crisis in Malawi?*”. The main reason for the choice of Marxist and Realist interpretations of foreign aid can be contributed to the acceptance by both schools of the political nature of foreign aid. This differs from the functionalist (and supposed a-political) overtures presented by Liberal Internationalists in their esteem of foreign aid as an act of giving, espousing an absence of political entitlement or certainty of reciprocation.

The decision to use Marxist and Realist conceptualisations also comes in light of the work done by Alberto Alesina and David Dollar on the issue of foreign aid’s purpose. Alesina and Dollar²¹ concur with the sentiment expressed by Morgenthau. In their study “*Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?*”, Alesina and Dollar ask whether the giving patterns of aid donors reflect the recipient states’ economic and political realities – or whether a recipient’s receipt of assistance is mirrored by indications of the society being likely to utilise the aid in an effective manner, such as improving growth or reducing the levels of poverty.

²⁰ Hawley, 1987: 748

²¹ Alesina & Dollar, 2000

Their findings suggest that donors are “dictated as much by political and strategic considerations, as by the economic needs and policy performance” of the recipient states.²² These political indications are things such as colonial links, alliances, strategic interests, and so forth. Interestingly, their study directly contradicts Lumsdaine’s study finding that aid is allocated due to humanitarian interests, as mentioned above.

Furthermore, Alesina and Dollar highlight that “given considerable evidence” the endowment of foreign aid is sensitive to political variables, whereas economic incentives and “good policies” promotes the flow of FDI instead.²³ In effect, this strengthens the critique of foreign aid as being possibly wasteful and counterproductive in as much as the primary concern of giving aid lies *not* with the titular task of *aiding* a state or society, but as a self-serving tool in achieving specific goals. This is not to say that foreign aid cannot produce positive outcomes, but rather that these positive outcomes are largely secondary goals to political interests.

2.2 Food Security

2.2.1 Food Security

Food Security falls under the “human security” framework,²⁴ and can be broadly described as “freedom from fear [and] freedom from want for all people,” protecting and empowering the world’s most vulnerable people.²⁵ The seven main categories found under human security, according to the UNDP, are: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security.²⁶ Human security encompasses two broad aspects – protection from chronic threats, and protection from sudden threats. Food security falls into both these categories.

²² Alesina & Dollar, 2000: 33

²³ Alesina & Dollar, 2000

²⁴ Sen, 1981; McDonald, 2010: 17

²⁵ Ogata & Cels, 2003: 273; McDonald, 2010: 24-25

²⁶ McDonald, 2010: 25; King & Murray, 2002:589

At the most basic level, *food security* is defined as: “the availability of food and people’s ability to access it.”²⁷ Chisholm and Tyers, writing in 1982, state that food security concerns obtaining “an adequate supply of food for all people at all times.”²⁸

Prior to the rise of the term *food security*, nations and scholars embraced the discourse surrounding the concept of “food policy”; Amartya Sen and Shlomo Reutlinger’s work concerning human security, and particularly starvation, led to the evolution of “food policy” into “food security.”²⁹ Internationally, attitudes surrounding the causes of food security (as a concept) can be gauged from the various World Food Summits. The first summit, held in 1974 (and as a response to the world food crisis of 1972-1974), was centred upon the idea of food insecurity as a result of inadequate supply (both at the national and the global level).³⁰ The definition used by Roumasset (which he claims to be widely accepted at the time) is “the ability to meet target consumption levels in the face of fluctuating production, prices, and incomes.”³¹ Two decades worth of debate would see the World Food Summit of 1996 change tact, moving away from supply related causes of food insecurity to issues concerning “the inability of people to gain access to food due to poverty”, noting issues of access.³² This new reconceptualisation was critical, given that at the time “over 32 possible definitions of food security” existed.³³ In 2001, the World Food Summit further agreed upon the importance of “social access” to food.³⁴

Through this debate among its members, a more nuanced definition has been agreed upon by the FAO - the agreed upon definition of food security, in addition to issues of availability, also encompasses physical, economic and social *access* and is the standard definition used today, the definition used by various scholars.³⁵

²⁷ McDonald, 2010: 15

²⁸ Chisholm & Tyers, 1982: 5

²⁹ Maxwell & Slater, 2003: 531

³⁰ Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:200

³¹ Roumasset, 1982: 129

³² Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:200; McDonald, 2010: 16-18

³³ Runge, Senauer, Pardey, and Rosegrant, 2003: 5

³⁴ McDonald, 2010: 15

³⁵ Rayfuse and Weisfelt, 2012: 3

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”³⁶

2.2.2 Access and Availability

As mentioned, the broadened definition is built upon issues of *access*, *availability*, and *reliability*. If any of these three elements are lacking, food insecurity can be said to be present.³⁷ The World Health Organisation (WHO) agrees that food security must address “people’s dietary needs as well as their food preferences,”³⁸ but argue that in addition to access, availability and reliability, state that *food use* (or utilisation) be considered as a fourth element of food security – where *food use* delineates “appropriate use based on knowledge of basic nutrition and care” and “sufficient nutrients for a productive and healthy life.”³⁹ Therefore, food security rests upon issues of availability, access, reliability, and food use.⁴⁰

Food security is implicated at four overlapping, and nested, levels: global, national, household, and individual.⁴¹ The first two levels concern the *availability* of food, whereas the last two concerns both *availability* and *access*. *Food use* and *reliability* are inherent at all levels. While the global level encompasses total world food production, the national level is determined by factors such as domestic production, availability of food stocks, net imports of food, and food aid.⁴² Handy Williamson notes that during the early stages of its politicisation (coinciding with the Rome conference on Food in 1974), many writers identified food security as only a concern at the national and global levels of food availability.⁴³ An indication of this is an early definition of food security being delineated as “the ability of countries to meet target consumption levels.”⁴⁴

³⁶ FAO, 2009

³⁷ FAO, 1996

³⁸ WHO, 2014

³⁹ Tweeten, 1999: 475; WHO, 2014

⁴⁰ see appendix, figure 2.1

⁴¹ Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:201; Power, 2008 (see appendix, figure 2.2)

⁴² Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:201

⁴³ Williamson, 2001: 732

⁴⁴ Chisholm & Tyers, 1982: 5

At the level of the household, *availability* is determined by the preceding levels (referring back to the nested nature of the framework) – unavailability of food at either the global or national levels has the chance of producing or exacerbating an instance of food insecurity at the level of the household.⁴⁵ In addition to the effect on food availability by processes at the global and national levels, *accessibility* to food “is determined by a household’s ‘full’ income.”⁴⁶ This links with Amartya Sen’s notion of food security and biological measures of poverty, stating that “starvation is the most telling aspect of poverty,”⁴⁷ thereby linking income and the issue of food security. Although the issue of poverty was finally adopted in 1996 at the second World Food Summit, its link to the concept had been recognised almost immediately following the publication of Sen’s work; for example, Chisholm and Tyers state that the elimination of poverty would be of paramount importance in any restructuring of the global economy aimed at fighting food insecurity.⁴⁸ Even the World Bank’s definition of food security (1986) makes reference to nutrition, stating that the concept concerned “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.”⁴⁹

Full income denotes both financial and physical income – both money and goods earned; this allows for the inclusion of food security maintained in other ways, such as via bartering or in cases of subsistence production. This is important to note (methodologically) as households might be low earners, but might be food secure through other means (this includes private donations, such as aid and charity). Furthermore, it is important to note that a household’s ability to provide food for itself is in competition with other basic needs of the household – such as medical care, education, and so forth. A situation where a household’s access to food is in conflict with access to other basic needs, is not considered a food secure household.⁵⁰

Lastly, at the level of the individual, the nutritional aspect of food becomes important. Without nutritional security, the goal of food security is not achieved; “without

⁴⁵ Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:201

⁴⁶ Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:201

⁴⁷ Sen, 1981: 12

⁴⁸ Chisholm & Tyers, 1982: 4-5

⁴⁹ Maxwell & Slater, 2003: 532

⁵⁰ Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000:201-202; Frankenberger, 1996

an assurance of nutritional adequacy food security has very little meaning.”⁵¹ Nutritional security is achieved when the food consumed is “utilized such that adequate performance is maintained in growth, resisting or recovering from disease, pregnancy, lactation, and physical work.”⁵² A further two determinants of nutritional security are non-food related – these are “health” and “care”. Nutritional security at the level of the individual implies issues of access.

Craig Pearson states that the existence of food insecurity is simply explained: “food production and its distribution do not meet the needs of the world’s population.”⁵³ Pearson’s focus on *production* and *distribution* corresponds to the ideas of availability and access (respectively). Although food insecurity at the different levels can be driven by many causes – such as war, climate change, population growth, political instability, inequality, and so forth – approaching the issue of food insecurity from these four different levels highlights two basic components of insecurity: “insufficient national food availability and insufficient access to food by households and individuals.”⁵⁴ Insufficient food availability at the national level falls under the domain of “food sovereignty”. The term *food security* encompasses ideas of “food sovereignty”.

2.2.3 Starvation and Famine

Food insecurity has historically been associated with “local famines, caused by crop failures, plagues, war or an increase in population.”⁵⁵ The problem with this association, however, is that it carries the inherent claim that food insecurity is only caused by external shocks to the system; occurrences which can only be partly prevented or mitigated by planning and policy. Sen discusses this misconception, stating that although the presence of famines implies starvation, the presence of starvation does not in turn necessarily imply the presence of a famine. Furthermore, and in connection with the biological measurements of poverty, Sen states that starvation indicates the presence of poverty, but that poverty does not ensure the presence of starvation. He explains this link between starvation and poverty

⁵¹ Vyas, 2000: 4403; Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000

⁵² Frankenberger, 1996

⁵³ Pearson, 2012: 19

⁵⁴ Smith, el Obeid, and Jensen, 2000: 200-201

⁵⁵ Pearson, 2012: 19

by stating that “the absolute dispossession that characterises starvation is more than sufficient to be diagnosed as poverty” regardless of relative measures.⁵⁶

There also exists a difference in categorisation between famines and what Sen labels “a starvation”. Famines are characterised as a sudden collapse of the level of food consumption and the sudden outbreak of acute starvation. However, “a starvation” is associated with a lowness or declining level of food consumption, as well as the “existence [or worsening trends] of much regular starvation.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, famines are differentiated in the people it affects in comparison to “a starvation” – although famines can be widespread, “there is no reason to think that it will affect all groups in a famine-affected nation.”⁵⁸ Famines, he claims, are primarily a rural phenomenon,⁵⁹ whereas “a starvation” affects both urban and rural based populations.

The issue of long-term and short-term food security is partly associated with this categorisation (also referred to above as chronic and sudden threats). For example, *chronic* food insecurity (“a starvation” in Sen’s words) is “a problem [tackled by] decreasing poverty.”⁶⁰ The expansion of food security, as a concept, has also allowed for the expansion of the time variable inherent in food security, and human security as a whole – policy makers must address both the possibilities of danger emanating from the sudden or unexpected (such as the famines discussed by Sen) as well as threats which are pervasive (more characteristic of “starvation”).⁶¹ In essence, famine is largely differentiated from “a starvation” due to its underlying cause; famine denotes a lack in availability of food, whereas “a starvation” denotes a lack in accessibility to food.

⁵⁶ Sen, 1981: 39

⁵⁷ Sen, 1981: 39-40

⁵⁸ Sen, 1981: 40

⁵⁹ Roumasset, 1982: 129; Sen, 1982

⁶⁰ Roumasset, 1982: 133

⁶¹ McDonald, 2010: 26-27

2.3 IPE and Ideology

2.3.1 *International Political Economy (IPE)*

It is important to take note that the problem addressed in this paper is not an issue to be solely dealt with through economic inquiry; foreign aid emanating from an external actor demonstrates the political nature of the question, since choices to give aid are effectively enabling *donors* to decide “who gets what, when, and how,” (to quote Harold Laswell). However, because the issue does connote aspects of developmental economics, a hybrid approach to the problem must be taken.⁶² Thus, elements, ideologies, and theoretical understandings from the sub discipline of IPE will be employed.

In essence, IPE is concerned with the “mutual influences of the market and sources of authority, including the state”⁶³ – that is to say, “the interplay of economics and politics”⁶⁴ at the international level. The assumption behind IPE is that aspects of “[t]he international, the political, and the economic”⁶⁵ do not operate and interact in a void. Other than the interplay of economics and politics, social and cultural aspects must be taken into consideration as well.

The elements of IPE that will be used in attempting to answer the problem statement are: the ideas of relational and structural power, the three differing levels of analysis (already touched upon in discussions of food security above), and the idea of power structures.

While *relational power* largely exists in its most “potent form at the level of the state”⁶⁶ and involves inter-actor dynamics, *structural power* concerns the ability “to shape and determine the structures of the global political economy.”⁶⁷ This is important, since markets, states, and individuals are (according to Susan Strange)⁶⁸ connected to one

⁶² Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 12

⁶³ Leysens & Thompsons, 2007: 68

⁶⁴ Frieden & Lake, 1995:1

⁶⁵ Balaam & Veseth, 2001:3-6

⁶⁶ Balaam & Veseth, 2001:17

⁶⁷ Strange, 1998

⁶⁸ Strange, 1998

another by varying power structures – such as the international structures of “security, production, finance, and knowledge.”⁶⁹ Lastly, IPE offers three distinctive perspectives, based on different values and beliefs, through which to explain events concerning political economy; these perspectives are *Mercantilism*, *Liberalism*, and *Structuralism*⁷⁰ (Marxism). These perspectives mirror the IR traditions of Realism, Liberalism, and Marxism. Discussions above on the differing ideological interpretations of “what foreign aid does” highlight this. For the purpose of attempting an answer to the problem statement presented, a Marxist perspective will be taken.

2.3.2 Marxism

Discussion around Karl Marx’s writings, as well as any Marxist offshoot thereof, can realistically be the subject of many books, let alone academic essays, and thus remains firmly beyond the scope of this dissertation; therefore, the following examination will be restricted to elements relevant to its application to IPE and the problem statement at hand.

Marxism is a form of Socialism, based in the promotion of a stance against Capitalism “in the attempt to provide a more humane and socially worthwhile alternative.”⁷¹ Marxist theory espouses a *materialist conception of history*; that is to say, that past and future “processes of historical change are ultimately a reflection of the economic development of a society.”⁷² In a Marxist’s esteem, it is economic developments which are the catalyst behind changes throughout history. The central dynamic of these aforementioned economic developments is the tension present between the *means of production* and the *relations of production* – or dialectical materialism – that “form the economic base of society.”⁷³ The systems of production found in each society “creates ruling and ruled classes”⁷⁴ divided among economic lines. The upper classes, according to Marxist thinking, are concerned with extracting wealth from society, often at the expense of “lower” classes, creating a “fundamental imbalance of power.”⁷⁵ The bourgeois class (the owners of the means of

⁶⁹ Brown, 1999; Palan, 1999

⁷⁰ Balaam & Veseth, 2001:17

⁷¹ Heywood, 2007: 99

⁷² Hobden & Jones, 2008: 145

⁷³ Hobden & Jones, 2008: 146

⁷⁴ Bucholz in Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 71

⁷⁵ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 71

production) exploit their proletariat counterparts (those who sell their labour) as the bourgeoisie attempt to extract wealth by maximising profits.

This exploitation of the masses leads to alienation: alienation of the proletariat “from the product of their labour” as they produce commodities to be sold for profit and not for subsistence; alienation from the process of work itself, as they are “forced to work under the supervision of... managers”; alienation from their fellow working class peers since the “work is not social [and workers] are encouraged to be self-interested;”⁷⁶ and alienation from their own humanity as the mounting dehumanisation of the economic structure reduces the working classes to a commodity, void of creativity and fulfilment. The end result is “a mass of proletarian misery,”⁷⁷ inevitably fuelling a Socialist revolution.

Strands of Modern Marxism, in particular, have sparked a keen interest in the humanistic aspect of Marx’s philosophy, highlighting the continued dehumanising effect modern capitalism has on workers. Furthermore, scholars falling under the label of Modern Marxism, such as Antonio Gramsci, have been able to disassociate from the “rigid base/superstructure straightjacket”⁷⁸ of dialectic materialism. Gramsci, for example was a forerunner of the idea popularised by Susan Strange; the idea that an actor (the bourgeoisie) are able to shape the rules of the system in their favour through maintaining hegemony in the knowledge structure of society. This hegemony is enforced through:

“the spiritual and cultural supremacy of the ruling class, brought through the spread of bourgeois values and beliefs via civil society – the media, churches, youth movements, trade unions and so on.”⁷⁹

2.3.3 Structuralism

Marxist theories of international relations can also be referred to as Structuralist or Economic Structuralist theories. This relates to Marx’s belief in a material conception of history (mentioned above) whereby “it is the [economic] structure that dominates events,

⁷⁶ West, 1969; Horton, 1964; Heywood, 2007: 121

⁷⁷ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 71

⁷⁸ Heywood, 2007: 127

⁷⁹ Heywood, 2007: 127

more so than ideas, nature, or military generals.”⁸⁰ The Structuralist aspect of Marxism is also partly down to the core belief by Marxists that “the social world should be analyzed as a totality;”⁸¹ as a whole and not the sum of its parts. In this manner, it partly shares the view of IPE as a discipline that dividing the social world into distinct spheres of inspection and analysis is unhelpful and counterproductive. Furthermore, this Structuralist perspective regards the international political economy “in terms of class exploitation driven by market forces.”⁸² It dictates the dissemination of wealth and power, often in a self-perpetuating manner, creating a virtuous cycle where power begets wealth which in turn begets power.

The role of the state, in the esteem of Structuralism, is not as an independent force (as espoused by Realist and Mercantilist traditions) or as a constraint to the free flow of economic activity (as advocated by International Liberalism), but instead as an inherently capitalist machine... no matter what its form.”⁸³ The existence of the state runs concurrent to the interest of the ruling class, being virtually “intertwined”.

Additionally, the institutions identified as part of the international capitalist weltanschauung are deemed to be “inherently biased in favor (*sic*) of the dominant powers” as they are “primarily responsible for reorganizing (*sic*) and reproducing... institutions of class, property, currency, contract, and markets.”⁸⁴ Since the focus is not on states, but on class divisions, Marxists such as Vladimir Lenin proposed the idea that “exploitation is transmitted internationally” as enabled by the dominant international structures present – such as the knowledge and security structures. Critically:

“[s]tructuralists argue that security structures linking rich countries with poorer ones are another aspect of imperialism.”⁸⁵

This is not limited to the security structures of the global political economy either; structuralists argue that the same dynamic is enabled via the knowledge structure. One hypothetical scenario of such subjugation via the knowledge structure is the example of

⁸⁰ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 73

⁸¹ Hobden & Jones, 2008: 145

⁸² Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 74

⁸³ Hay, 1999: 154

⁸⁴ Gindin & Panitch, 2012: 8; Balaam & Veseth, 2001

⁸⁵ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 78

limiting the dissemination of productivity-enhancing technologies to poorer countries (for example, through international patent and information laws) to maintain an economic advantage in terms of production among richer states.

Ultimately, exploitation is systematic – present in “each of the four IPE structures: production, finance, security, and knowledge.”⁸⁶ Without having the structural power (largely produced through wealth), an actor is doomed to the status quo.

2.3.4 World Systems Theory

World Systems Theory (WST) developed in response to the advancement of critique and thought of the nature of the capitalist system in the aftermath of Karl Marx’s writing. The world had seen not the collapse of the Capitalist system and a subsequent revolution of the proletariat (as predicted by Marx), but had instead seen the emergence of what many Marxist scholars (such as Lenin) labelled “*monopoly capitalism*”. This monopoly capitalism saw to the intensification of class stratification. As a result, a “socially structured and socially reproduced... power hierarchy” was born.⁸⁷ This hierarchy traditionally consisted of two tiers. These tiers would come to be known as the more developed *core* and the less developed *periphery*, denoting the global parallel to the bourgeois and proletariat classes (respectively). This advancement, it was theorised, brought about internal divisions in the global proletariat class as wealth extracted by the core from the periphery could be used “to improve the lot of their own working class.”⁸⁸

These ideas were advanced by the South American leftist tradition, particularly by the Argentinian economic scholar Raul Prebisch, building on the work of the German Hans Singer. Their subsequent collaborative hypothesis, known as the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis, proposes that the divide between the haves and the have-nots will only be exasperated due to a “declining terms of trade” where the price of manufactured goods “increases more rapidly than that of raw materials.”⁸⁹ These ideas were supported and promoted by scholars such as André Gunder Frank and the then to be Brazilian president, Henrique Fernando

⁸⁶ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 78-79

⁸⁷ Chase-Dunne & Grimes, 1995: 389

⁸⁸ Hobden & Jones, 2008: 147

⁸⁹ Prebisch & Singer, *in* Hobden & Jones, 2008: 147

Cardoso.⁹⁰ Of all the scholars of World Systems Theory, however, it is the work of the American sociologist, Immanuel Wallerstein, which garnered the most attention.

Dubbed as “Modern World Systems Theory”, Wallerstein’s work (along with the work by other scholars, such as Christopher Chase-Dunne) maintain the general Marxist attitude that capitalist forces within the world system determine and shape “the political and social relations... within and between nations and other international entities.”⁹¹ These capitalist forces are continually creating and re-creating the institutions of the modern world – institutions found within the domains of the structures of the global political economy.⁹²

In addition to the *core* and the *periphery* of the traditional Structuralist perspective of IPE, WST includes the addition of a third class – the *semi-periphery*. This semi-periphery, “although dominated by core economic interests... has its own relatively vibrant indigenously owned industrial base.”⁹³ It acts as a buffer between the core and the periphery, soaking up superfluous industries from the core not deemed to be profitable anymore (such as textile and manufacturing industries). It also provides a surplus of labour for industries located in the core in order to counteract any market forces which might potentially push labour costs up. Other than acting as an economic “stabiliser”, the semi-periphery also acts as a political “stabiliser” as well.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the core, semi-periphery, and periphery tend to be geographically distinguishable – largely due to historical exploitations such as the forces unleashed by imperialism. These geographic zones are loosely referred to as the “global north” and the “global south” (the core and the periphery, respectively). Crucially, although the state does play a role in WST, it is not the only actor under consideration since the main concern

⁹⁰ Hobden & Jones, 2008: 147

⁹¹ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 79

⁹² Chase-Dunne & Grimes, 1995; Gindin & Panitch, 2012

⁹³ Hobden & Jones, 2008: 148

⁹⁴ Gunder-Frank, 1980

remains “class relations and patterns of exploitation.”⁹⁵ Capitalists from the core merely make use of the authority conferred by the state as a means to maximise individual profit.⁹⁶

The interlinked aspect of these three zones perpetuates the exploitive relationship sustaining the core; in this tripartite relationship, wealth continues to be “drained away from the [global] periphery to the core.”⁹⁷ Consequently, as wealth drains from the periphery, the rich only become more powerful in their ability to influence the political economy in their favour. As a result, positions become entrenched, thus ensuring that the core remains rich at the expense of a periphery that is compelled to remain poor by design. The virtuous cycle of the “global north” comes at a cost: perpetuating prosperity and power in the *core* conversely perpetuates the on-going vicious cycle in the “global south”.

2.4 Combining the Theory

This paper aims to present an argument based on the idea that foreign aid is negatively impacting the human security of Malawians. Human security is a multi-faceted concept, encompassing a myriad of issues – from economic security to environmental security. However, for the ends of this paper, foreign aid’s impact will be centred upon one of these issues contributing to the human security framework: the notion of food security.

Food security loosely mirrors most IR work in its presentation of the world via different levels (as in the traditional third, second, and first levels of IR theory). However, in addition to the global, national and individual levels, the concept of food security incorporates a fourth level between the level of the state and the individual – the household. These levels are nested; each level is contained by its predecessor. The topmost layer is the global, followed by the national level, the household level, and the bottommost level, the level of the Individual.

Food security implicates issues of *availability*, *access*, *food use*, and *reliability* (see appendix, figure 2.1). Whereas issues of *food reliability* and *food use* are inherent at all

⁹⁵ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 80

⁹⁶ Hay, 1999

⁹⁷ Hobden & Jones, 2008: 148

levels of society, the issues of *access* and *availability* are unique to different levels of society. The issue of *availability* is implicit at both the international level (the global level) and at the level of the state (the national level). The issue of *access* is implicit at the household level and at the level of the individual (see appendix, figure 2.2). If conditions regarding adequate *food availability* are not met at the levels comprising the superstructure (at the global and the national levels), then issues of *access* to food at the individual and household levels are at risk. *Availability* and *Access* can also be labelled as *Production* and *Distribution* (respectively).

Foreign aid is not regarded by this paper as being a politically neutral tool merely aimed at achieving functionalist goals, as is espoused by many liberal proponents; instead, this paper treats foreign aid as being inherently political and, therefore, is not primarily developmentally focused. Consequently, unfavourable outcomes are possible. Foreign aid impacts the food security of Malawi at all four levels – from global to individual. The following chapter, Chapter Three, will deal with foreign aid's effect on Malawi's *food availability* at the global and national levels. Chapter four will detail the impact of foreign aid on Malawi's *access to food* at the level of the household and the individual.

Critical to this analysis is the recognition that Malawi is *not* experiencing a famine. Famine, as detailed above, delineates a *sudden* collapse of the available levels of food, followed by high levels of acute starvation particularly among rural populations. Malawi's food insecurity, on the other hand, has been on-going for over a decade, gradually intensifying and affecting more and more people, both rural and urban. This is a situation more accurately labelled as a "starvation". If the situation in Malawi had fit the categorisation of a famine, foreign aid would not be a plausible contributing factor to the problem, since the phenomenon could easily be explained away, as a result of an "external shock to the system".

Finally, the issue of foreign aid negatively affecting a state's food security falls into the four main domains of IPE – the knowledge structure, the production structure, the finance structure, and the security structure. Following on from this, the impact of foreign aid on Malawi's food security will be assessed through the Marxist lenses of Structuralism and World Systems Theory as control of these different IPE structures are apparent. Foreign

aid, it will be argued, perpetuates the ability of the *core* (or Global North) to not only extract wealth from states in the periphery, such as Malawi, but also perpetuates the relative positions of the actors involved. Therefore, foreign aid helps to entrench donors' position as *core* (rich) nations while similarly embedding aid recipients' position in the global *periphery* (as poor nations).

CHAPTER THREE

Malawi and the World:

Trends and Realities affecting Food Security in Malawi

Food security does not exist in a vacuum. The ideas and theories surrounding food security are not immune to politicisation, and neither are the attempts to design policy to tackle the issue. In order to understand one of the main arguments presented by this paper (that foreign aid is contributing to structural hunger in Malawi), some background elements need to be introduced. The following chapter will begin by outlining the international development and evolution of food security as a global concern to be tackled after the devastation of the Second World War, with memories of pre-war famine and starvation imprinted on the psyches of policymakers. A brief description of the evolution of trends in international food security will then follow into the era of price volatility before arriving at the contemporary post-Cold War era of food security.

Section 3.2 will then elucidate upon the politicisation of food security, and the policy surrounding it, by detailing the dominant international food regime as a product of both the trends of food security throughout the 20th Century and hegemonic interest. The competing food regime – namely the *food sovereignty* food regime – located on the periphery of international discourse, will also be explored. Section 3.3 moves on to discussing recent food crises throughout the world in light of the prevailing, *dominant*, food regime. The various causes of food crises will also be examined before touching upon the plight of the third-world.

Section 3.4 moves on from discussing food crises in the macrocosm of the international sphere to the microcosm of Malawi. Malawi's last decade and a half will be highlighted (ranging from the turn of the century to the present day), with special emphasis being placed on 2002, 2006, and the years leading up to the present situation. The last section, section 3.5, attempts to put the information introduced in 3.4 into perspective by detailing the various socio-economic aspects of Malawi's current situation. Lastly, a brief

description of Malawi's reliance on aid is given with the hope of introducing the idea of aid's role within Malawi.

3.1 International Trends in Food Security

3.1.1 An International Concern

As noted previously, there is a tendency to conflate the concepts of *food security* and *hunger*. Hunger, however, is just one aspect of food security (as discussed in the previous chapter) as concerns of malnutrition are equally relevant to the framework. The two ideas, although closely related, are not synonymous. Malnutrition denotes aspects of “undernutrition” (as seen in people developing anaemia from a dietary lack of iron and/or vitamin B12, as well as those lacking vitamin A and iodine) and “overnutrition” (present in those who are overweight).⁹⁸

This is an important aspect of food security to note as, internationally, food security remains an omnipresent concern among all states and communities since “hunger and malnutrition... [is] the number one challenge to... health worldwide.”⁹⁹ Although the discourse surrounding food security is usually focussed upon issues of hunger and starvation, food security is as pertinent to states not facing any looming food shortages as it is to societies staring down the barrel of hunger and famine. In many regions of the world where food is abundant, the issue of quantity of food comes second to issues of quality – that is to say, people are “deeply concerned with the quality of [their] food [instead].”¹⁰⁰ For example, issues concerning tainted meat – such as beef from infected cattle – influence food security concerns as much as fears concerning a shortage of meat altogether.

Consequently, being a matter affecting *all of humanity*, the issue of food security is – and will realistically remain – a global concern. Societies not experiencing widespread hunger participate in the same debates as those societies more acutely affected with issues of hunger. These debates and dialogues have, however, preceded the contemporary situations in which they are implicated today. Thus, it is important to trace the “continuous

⁹⁸ Mechlem, 2004: 636; Shiuian-Huei, Chi-Tang, Sui-Lin, & Chi-Fai, 2014: 154

⁹⁹ Shiuian-Huei, Chi-Tang, Sui-Lin, & Chi-Fai, 2014: 154

¹⁰⁰ Nuijten, 2006: v

evolution of international food security governance”¹⁰¹ as well as the debates and the realities which have informed the discourse surrounding food security.

3.1.2 The Post War Period

According to Margulis (2013), one of the major international concerns following WWII was the experience of frequent episodes of hunger throughout the international community. Led by the US, efforts at rebuilding Europe and rejuvenating the global economy was guided by newly established international institutions, such as the Bretton Woods monetary system and the IBRD. With the US still recovering from the “Dust Bowl” era of ecological and agricultural disaster, memories of food shortage among Americans led to renewed efforts to achieve the goal of “eradicating hunger”.

The fight against hunger was firmly perceived by the US as the “international community's collective responsibility”, and therefore was channelled through the edifice of the UN. However, the creation of the Food and Agriculture Organization in 1945 – as a specialised agency of the UN – was at the impetus of the post-War hegemon, the USA. The FAO’s initial mandate sought to tackle food shortages through coordinating international “grain production and trade” so as to more easily redistribute surplus among states in need of assistance. Soon after its creation, however, major grain producing states (such as the USA, Canada, and Australia) “did not fully support international coordination and instead steered the FAO to focus its work” on improving macroeconomic policies of developing countries, especially in areas of food and agricultural management. As Lee (2013) states: “In the post-war global North, agricultural productivist frameworks prioritised national self-sufficiency.”¹⁰²

However, a perceived *Malthusian pressure* began to build among the developing world. As rates of growth in food production failed to keep pace with the “rapid population growth” of the 1960s, fears of an “impending world food shortage.”¹⁰³ loomed large. What was originally mandated for the FAO was insourced to a subsidiary – the World Food

¹⁰¹ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹⁰² Lee, 2013: 216-217

¹⁰³ Margulis, 2013: 55

Program. Finally, “multiple humanitarian [and] trade” objectives were being tackled in the global South, with “domestic farm policy objectives of the main aid donors”¹⁰⁴ also benefitting from this interaction. The cross pollination of developing capital and expertise with local realities in the developed world led to “technological transfers and the introduction of higher-yield seed varieties, fertilizers, and pesticides”, leading to a boom in production – commonly referred to as the Green Revolution. This intensification in agricultural practices had increased the global supply of food approximately 2.5% per year (1960-2005).¹⁰⁵

3.1.3 The Era of Price Volatility

Despite the gains made by an increase in global production, many countries were still facing looming food shortages. With the majority of the world being net importers of food, a “scramble” amongst most of the developed world ensued in order to shore up sources of supply.¹⁰⁶ This insatiable demand, however, ensured that global prices for basic commodities swelled. This, for many, was considered as the first major food crisis in the post-War era and “revealed a new driver of hunger to policymakers: price volatility”¹⁰⁷ and the uncertainty of a reliable food supply from an internationalised set of markets.

The fear of a sudden shock to the international price of food supplies soon became a reality after oil-producing nations (OPEC), unilaterally raised the price of oil and petroleum in 1973¹⁰⁸ from US \$2.90 per barrel to US \$11.65 per barrel – “a jump of over 400 percent.”¹⁰⁹ Due to the largely intertwined global economy, the impact of the oil shock was severe. Industry across the globe faltered, and food prices skyrocketed as transport and production costs were dependent upon oil. The already strained international market for food was, subsequently, put beyond the reach of most of the developing world.

¹⁰⁴ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹⁰⁵ Shiu-an-Huei, Chi-Tang, Sui-Lin, & Chi-Fai, 2014: 151

¹⁰⁶ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹⁰⁷ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹⁰⁸ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 32

¹⁰⁹ Balaam & Veseth, 2001: 372

Policy makers, aware of the correlation between price volatility and global food insecurity, “challenged assumptions about how world food markets worked.”¹¹⁰ In 1974, policy makers at the FAO organised the World Food Conference, which spawned “[s]everal new international institutions”¹¹¹ (such as the International Fund for Agriculture and Development) in order to tackle emerging sources of food insecurity as related to market forces. At this point, major crises to global food security had been met, on three separate occasions, by the creation of a multilateral institution – the FAO, the WFP, and the IFAD. Although each institution was created in response to major problems in international food trends, the urgency behind each organisation waned as soon as the return of stability on international food markets”¹¹² re-established the pre-crisis status quo.

3.1.4 Post Cold-War Reality

As stated above, with the advent of the post-War efforts at rebuilding Europe and strengthening international governance, global agricultural production increased dramatically. “However”, as one can infer from the narrative, “after nearly 40 years, hunger and malnutrition issues [were] still great challenges to the world.”¹¹³ In 2005, the FAO released figures stating that, on average, nearly six million children die each year from hunger or malnutrition. In 2010, the FAO estimated that 925 million people were undernourished – close to one seventh of humanity. It is estimated that 98% of these 925 million people are located in the developing world.¹¹⁴ As of 2014,¹¹⁵ the number had fallen to 805 million undernourished people.¹¹⁶

Despite the stellar improvement, the number remains high and, largely, geographically distinguishable with high rates of undernourishment in Africa and Western-Asia.¹¹⁷ Although global levels of undernourishment have fallen, in parts of the developing

¹¹⁰ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹¹¹ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹¹² Margulis, 2013: 55

¹¹³ Shiu-an-Huei, Chi-Tang, Sui-Lin, & Chi-Fai, 2014: 151

¹¹⁴ worldhunger.org, 2015; Shiu-an-Huei, Chi-Tang, Sui-Lin, & Chi-Fai, 2014

¹¹⁵ the most recent year with available statistics at the time of writing

¹¹⁶ FAO; 2015

¹¹⁷ FAO; 2015; worldhunger.org, 2015

world “[t]he number of hungry people in the developing countries as a group was however elevated.”¹¹⁸

The construction of increasingly complex and integrated international food supply chains has led to an implicit reliance on a “trade-oriented notion of food security.”¹¹⁹ This trade oriented food regime has also led to a rise in “agri-food export chains [in the Global South] servicing retail markets in the global North.”¹²⁰ The problem, therefore, seems paradoxical – with food insecure nations exporting food to largely food secure nations. With this in mind, the problem “cannot be simply reduced to issues of poverty and food supply.”¹²¹

3.2 International Food Regimes

3.2.1 Food Regime Theory

As noted above, there seems to be a paradox in the efforts at promoting a food secure world. With decades of endeavour, bolstered by numerous multilateral organisations, the problem persists and, in some locations, intensifies. Although the international post-War narrative demonstrates the trends and attitudes in policy-making surrounding international food security, it fails to challenge and discern the cause of these trends. Food security is inherently informed by a material reality (by the quantity and quality of food). This, however, is a simplistic reduction of the issue and faces the critique similarly faced by strands of Realism: that the material world is not the sole driver behind action and policy-making.

What is absent in the prevailing narrative, therefore, is the role played by the ideological framework in guiding international food security’s post-War trajectory. Ideology, as understood in this context, is informed by a set of “[n]orms, ideas, and identities” – all of

¹¹⁸ Shiu-an-Huei, Chi-Tang, Sui-Lin, & Chi-Fai, 2014: 153

¹¹⁹ Lee, 2013: 216-217

¹²⁰ Lee, 2013: 216-217

¹²¹ Margulis, 2013: 54

which play a critical role in international relations “alongside material factors.”¹²² As described by Margulis (2013), *norms* are important as they are:

*“the underlying cognitive frameworks that shape actors’ identities and preferences and construct the principles, rules, and institutions that constitute the international system.”*¹²³

In this regard, *Food Regime Theory* (or food systems theory) is a pertinent fit as “[regimes], as used here, refers to the sets of norms and principles that apply to an issue area.”¹²⁴ Food regime theory is a useful point of departure in understanding the paradox of a world still seemingly at risk of food insecurity despite decades of intervention. *Food regime theory* is an attempt at uncovering and explaining prevailing attitudes, norms, identities, ideas, and preconceptions which guide policy-making on issues of food security.

Food regime theory, in its broadest conception, is a taxonomical attempt at ordering and organising schools of thought surrounding policy approaches dealing with food security. Having Marxist roots (from the World Systems Theory school), the theory tends to organise schools of thought into “dominant” (read *core*) regimes and “emerging” (read *peripheral*) regimes. *Food regime theory* does face the critique that by focusing on policy at the international level, the theory is blind to the intricacies and realities present within the lower, nested levels of the international system – that is to say, that the *food regime* framework, to use the expression, focuses on the forest at the expense of the trees. This is a similar critique levelled against Kenneth Waltz’s third image-centric, structural neorealism. Its strength, however, is also applicable to *food regime theory* as a structural paradigm. As with neorealism, there is an assumption that the different levels of the international system are nested; therefore, although emphasis is placed on the topmost level (the international level), the superstructure does affect the national, household, and individual levels as well. A ripple at the top can cause waves at the bottom.

Through the lens of food regimes theory, this paper will thus turn its attention to the dominant international food regime before contrasting and comparing it to the emerging

¹²² Margulis, 2013: 55

¹²³ Margulis, 2013: 55

¹²⁴ Ulvin, 1992: 301

counter (and perhaps retaliatory) food regime. Both will be traced through their evolutions parallel to the trends in global food security (as elucidated upon previously).

3.2.2 *The Dominant/Core Food Regime*

Perhaps the best summary of the dominant regime comes from the former deputy director of the WTO, Miguel Rodríguez Mendoza, who stated that: “national food security strategies should be premised upon international trade.”¹²⁵

Phillip McMichael (considered to be one of the founders of food regime theory alongside Harriet Friedman) states that the current *corporate food regime* “was institutionalized (*sic*) via WTO rules and protocols” which privilege “agro-exporters from the US and Europe in global food markets.”¹²⁶ This privilege is also entrenched in light of the trend in rising agri-food exports from food insecure nations in the Global South to the Global North.¹²⁷ The current status quo – which favours the industrialised, Global North - is the result of decades of institutionalisation following the Second World War, instilled via numerous multilateral organisations, often overriding the actions of the institutions designed to promote food security.

As discussed previously, in the post-War era, the US-led Global North embarked upon the rebuilding process cognisant of the need for international cooperation and coordination between the various actors involved – thus spawning a myriad of IGOs. As highlighted previously, specialist agencies dealing with food (such as the FAO, WFP, and IFAD) were set up specifically to deal with international issues concerning food security. However, although these specialised organisations were considered to be the main drivers for promoting positive policies concerning food security, they were limited and constrained by the mandates of non-food oriented IGOs. Other organisations set up in the milieu following the end of the Second World War, such as the IMF, the IBRD, ITO and GATT (to become WTO), have systematically instilled the idea that:

¹²⁵ Lee, 2013: 222

¹²⁶ McMichael, 2013: 48

¹²⁷ Lee, 2013: 216-217

“food security [is] premised upon international trade and the maximisation of comparative advantage between countries producing export commodities and food products.”¹²⁸

This mantra is important to note as it essentially constrains the efforts of the specialist agencies (such as the FAO) by forcing them to work within the constraints of a larger neoliberal framework governing interactions across many spheres, setting up a “neoliberal agro-industrial food regime.”¹²⁹ Menezes (2001) writes that modern food security remains threatened by (amongst other things) both: “[the] trade deregulation and economic policies designed to usher in structural adjustments; [and the] trade regulations imposed by spheres outside the countries [at risk].”¹³⁰ Both these threats, however, are seen in a different light from the vantage point of advocates of neoliberal practices: they argue that all actors will be food secure if they take advantage of their comparative advantage. This, in effect, puts any blame of food insecurity on the actor and their inability to take full advantage of the comparative advantage.

3.2.3 The Emerging/Peripheral Food Regime

The discourse around the above-mentioned corporate, trade-oriented food regime implicitly “argues that moving towards food self-sufficiency poses a threat to food security.”¹³¹ This food regime suggests that, thanks to comparative advantage, a state or society does not need to grow its own food as a prerequisite to be food secure as self-sufficiency lies in the actor’s ability to trade. With markets taking centre stage in the discourse on food security within this prevailing corporate food regime, IGOs and multilateral processes favouring trade-deregulation have become both highly contested and protested. A pointed example of this is the stalled Doha round of the WTO debate.

Neoliberal markets have become a hallmark of globalisation. Globalisation has also led to an increased number of participants engaging IGOs and multilateral talks, thus fermenting an opposition to the dominant food regime. *La Via Campesina*, an international

¹²⁸ Lee, 2013: 222-223

¹²⁹ McMichael, 2013: 49

¹³⁰ Menezes, 2001: 29

¹³¹ Lee, 2013: 229

peasant's movement,¹³² has popularised a food regime to challenge the prevailing one; it is known as the *food sovereignty* movement. Lee (2013) has labelled it an oppositional and populist social movement.¹³³ La Via Campesina defines the food sovereignty movement as:

“the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce the staple foods of its peoples, respecting productive and cultural diversity.”¹³⁴

As such, supporters of the idea of food sovereignty “rebut[s] the trade deregulation process[es]” as well as “economic policies [which usher in] structural adjustments”¹³⁵ promoting neoliberal practices. It is in stark contrast to the idea espoused by the prevailing trade-oriented food regime which argues that trade deregulation and free trade are the drivers of food security. According to the discourse surrounding food sovereignty, these practices promote “hunger and poverty all over the world, [while] destroying local production capacities and impoverishing rural societies to an increasing extent.”¹³⁶

Ultimately, the two regimes (the trade-oriented food regime and the food sovereignty food regime) appear to be irreconcilable paradigms.

3.3 Recent Food Crises

3.3.1 *The Regime in Practice*

The emergent food sovereignty movement has been fuelled by the dissonance apparent in the wake of the hegemonic food regime; in the incongruity between theory and praxis. While proponents of the neoliberal, trade-oriented model espouse food security through unfettered trade, much of the world lacks the requirements to ensure their food security under the rules of the hegemonic framework – namely, globally competitive economies. This incongruence between the “accepted” routes to food security, as instilled via the dominant food regime, with the situational reality becomes increasingly stark given the numerous food crises experienced throughout the world at both the local and international

¹³² La Via Campesina, 2005

¹³³ Lee, 2013: 216

¹³⁴ La Via Campesina, 1996

¹³⁵ Menezes, 2001: 30

¹³⁶ Menezes, 2001: 30

levels. Severe fluctuations in food supply do not only fuel food shortages but, as a result of the forces of supply and demand, also affects the access to food.

3.3.2 Food Crises

As Berazneva and Lee,¹³⁷ Margulis,¹³⁸ McMichael,¹³⁹ Menezes,¹⁴⁰ and Minot¹⁴¹ have all implicitly illustrated through their work on recent food related disasters, modern food crises are largely associated with elevated food prices. At this point in history, food shortages cannot be equated to a lack in supply as “the world produces enough food to feed everyone”¹⁴² (a sentiment echoed by multiple IGOs and INGOs, such as the WFP,¹⁴³ OXFAM,¹⁴⁴ and the WHO¹⁴⁵). Using a 2012 study on crop yields, it has been estimated that global outputs of food production was (at the time of the article’s publishing in 2012) sufficient to sustain 10 billion people, approximately three billion people more than the current global population status quo.¹⁴⁶ However, despite this abundance of food, food crises still occur. As Thurow writes:

“Even now, enough food is being produced to adequately feed every person on the planet; the fact that nearly one billion people are nonetheless going hungry is a damning indictment of the world’s food-distribution system.”¹⁴⁷

Much of the world’s food problems stem from apprehension over long-term concerns potentially caused by changes in global climate; not in the objective changes in *current* levels of food produced worldwide. Estimates indicate a 10-20% global increase in

¹³⁷ Berazneva & Lee, 2013

¹³⁸ Margulis, 2013

¹³⁹ McMichael, 2013

¹⁴⁰ Menezes, 2001

¹⁴¹ Minot, 2013: 45

¹⁴² worldhunger.org, 2015

¹⁴³ World Food Programme, 2015

¹⁴⁴ OXFAM Canada, 2015

¹⁴⁵ WHO, 2015

¹⁴⁶ Seufert, Ramankutty, and Foley, 2012

¹⁴⁷ Thurow, 2010: 102

food insecure people by the year 2050 as a result of climate-driven changes.¹⁴⁸ These speculation-fuelling concerns are nourished by evidence of:

“higher average temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, rising sea levels, and increases in the frequency, variability and unpredictability of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods and cyclones.”¹⁴⁹

Africa, presently facing the brunt of an international food supply subject to speculation, “is already under pressure from climate stresses.”¹⁵⁰ Consequently, intensified by global concerns over food production, policy makers expect “widespread disruption of socio-economic conditions” if these concerns over climate instability do materialise.¹⁵¹

Violence and social disruption are, however, already apparent - food price hikes in early 2008 sparked protests across the globe, with many protests turning violent.¹⁵² International grain prices (considered as the most important staple food crop due to its widespread consumption)¹⁵³ had become increasingly volatile in the years between 2007 and 2010 before plateauing at a stable rate.¹⁵⁴ Although prices are increasingly stable, Minot argues that attention “should be given to the (high) level of food prices... rather than volatility per se” as prices do remain unrealistically high for many to ensure food secure existences.¹⁵⁵

In addition to speculation over future crop yields affected by uncertain climates, other causes of the global food price hikes are what Margulis has labelled as the perfect storm of: “surging energy prices, biofuel policies, food trade bans, and speculation on [non-agricultural] commodities markets.”¹⁵⁶ Increases in oil price led to increases in fertiliser price, “as well as the cost of trucking food from farms to local markets and shipping it abroad.”¹⁵⁷ Another big contributor is part oil-driven, part climate-driven as policymakers

¹⁴⁸ Parry et al., 2009 in Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

¹⁴⁹ Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

¹⁵⁰ Parry et al., 2009 in Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

¹⁵¹ Parry et al., 2009 in Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

¹⁵² Walt, 2008

¹⁵³ McMichael, 2013: 50

¹⁵⁴ Minot, 2013: 45

¹⁵⁵ Minot, 2013: 45

¹⁵⁶ Margulis, 2013: 53

¹⁵⁷ Walt, 2008

seek alternatives in the form of bio-fuels, effectively siphoning away large segments of crop yields previously destined for human consumption – this results in less food, and higher prices.¹⁵⁸

Finally, changing diets in a world characterised by rapid urbanisation, and under a food regime promoting “the logic of the *comparative advantage*” has stimulated the creation of a globally homogenised diet, “destroying age old eating habits.”¹⁵⁹ Westernising the diets of a rising middle class in countries such as China and India has elevated demand for meat. Subsequently, more staple crops – such as grain – are being diverted to feed livestock. In 2010, Weis noted that “about half of global grain production is consumed directly... while 35% feeds livestock and 17% is dedicated to biofuel production.”¹⁶⁰ To highlight the complexity of the global food network, it is pertinent to consider the fact that most food crises are caused by short term food-shortages whereas the food-price hikes experienced from 2008 onwards came during a period “when the world's farmers reaped a record grain crop.”¹⁶¹

Minot notes that “[it] is almost universally accepted that food prices in Africa have become more volatile in recent years.”¹⁶² Africa, however, is not alone in experiencing food price volatility – both emerging powers (such as India and China) and developing, “third world” countries experience (and are cognisant of) food price volatility¹⁶³ – the global price of rice, for instance, “shot up by 255%” in four years “while wheat and maize prices rose by 80–90%” in the same time period.¹⁶⁴ Although these are aggregated estimates, these prices were experienced at different levels of severity in different locations. As Beraneza and Lee highlight, “many African countries do not commonly have any safety net programs in place,”¹⁶⁵ and as a result many African states faced these price increases without being able to mitigate the impact on their citizens. This trend comes in light of the world’s eyes turning to Africa – seen as the potential “final frontier” for a revolution in agricultural production

¹⁵⁸ Walt, 2008

¹⁵⁹ Menezes, 2001: 32

¹⁶⁰ Weis, 2010: 327 *in* McMichael, 2013: 50

¹⁶¹ Bourne, 2009

¹⁶² Minot, 2013: 46

¹⁶³ Margulis, 2013: 53

¹⁶⁴ Headey and Fan, 2008, *in* Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

¹⁶⁵ Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

needed to out-produce the demand of a projected nine billion people in 2050.¹⁶⁶ Once again, it bares reminding that the current global production outpaces even the projections of earth's 2050 population size.

In 2010 and 2011, global food prices again experienced a sharp increase, resulting once again in “widespread global speculation about a looming ‘great food crisis’.”¹⁶⁷ This global debate on food insecurity was further stoked by the effects that volatile food prices were seemingly having on the polities of Africa and the Middle East, with calls for “bread and freedom” being used by social movements against “long-standing autocratic regimes” (such as was the case in both Egypt and Tunisia’s respective revolutionary movements).¹⁶⁸ Unfortunately, speculation on the future of food availability acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy, as it can be partly attributed as a factor in pushing the price of food up.¹⁶⁹

As noted, global food production far exceeds that which is needed by the current global population. This illustrates the misdiagnosis of hunger and starvation in many cases throughout the decades since the Green Revolution of the 1960s, as many of the most vivid examples of mass starvation accompanies local droughts while being mislabelled as “famines” (most notably among these is the case of Ethiopia in the 1980s). The logic of this claim follows as such: a drought localised in a part of the world should, in theory, have minimal impact on food security of the drought-affected nations if the world does indeed produce more than what is needed; it is thus not an issue of *supply* (as denoted by the label “famine”) but an issue of access.

¹⁶⁶ Thurow, 2010: 102-103

¹⁶⁷ Berazneva & Lee, 2013: 30

¹⁶⁸ Margulis, 2013: 53

¹⁶⁹ Margulis, 2013: 53

3.4 Malawi's Food Crises

3.4.1 Early 21st Century

The start of the 21st century saw Malawi experiencing relative food stability in part thanks to two preceding years of good harvests (between 1998 and 2000). By 2001, however, a sudden shock to Malawi in the form of “localised floods [had] reduced the 2000/01 maize harvest” by 237,000 metric tonnes.¹⁷⁰ This loss equated to 30% of local maize production and resulted in a 300% increase in the price of the staple food-crop.¹⁷¹ In the year following this shock, and in the absence of major carryover stock from previous seasons,¹⁷² thousands of Malawians reportedly died from starvation and malnutrition¹⁷³ while “one third of the [state’s] population [became] dependent on food aid.”¹⁷⁴ Due to the knock-on effect had by the previous season’s shock, the following year’s grain output had dropped by another 10%.¹⁷⁵

In light of these events, Dorward and Kydd (2004) ask how such “relatively mild weather shocks” (in comparison to the previous agricultural disasters) could snowball into a food crisis¹⁷⁶ as “the climatic shock was not a typical for the region.”¹⁷⁷ Hajdu *et al.* ask a similar question, stating that despite the *relative* mildness of the shock to local grain production, the 2002 food crisis had (unexpectedly) caused “many more deaths.”¹⁷⁸ The rainfall causing the flooding, for example, although erratic, [was] average for the 2001-2 season.¹⁷⁹ Even more worrying was that the food crisis did not seem to be limited to Malawi as 14 million people in Southern Africa were at risk of food shortages; 6 million of these 14

¹⁷⁰ Action Aid, 2002: 2

¹⁷¹ Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 6

¹⁷² Stambuli, 2002: 1

¹⁷³ O’Grady, 2007: 5

¹⁷⁴ Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 6

¹⁷⁵ Stambuli, 2002: 2

¹⁷⁶ Dorward and Kydd, 2004: 343

¹⁷⁷ Bookstein and Lawson, 2002: 635

¹⁷⁸ Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 6

¹⁷⁹ Bookstein and Lawson, 2002: 635

million were located in Mozambique, Zambia, and Malawi.¹⁸⁰ Malawi was, with over 3.2 million people at risk, the region's worst affected nation.¹⁸¹

Across the region, as mentioned above, food aid was being delivered so as to prevent a huge loss of life. However, in many cases, the impact of the food shortage had already taken a toll on many people who had resorted to "high-risk strategies to survive" – such as consuming potentially poisonous plants, cutting caloric intake to extend food supplies, stealing crops, or in some cases, resorting to prostitution and other criminal activities.¹⁸² This last survival strategy is a poignant indication that the problem was not a lack of food *per se*, but an increase in food-prices.

On the 27th February, 2002, Malawian President Bakili Muluzi declared a state of emergency.¹⁸³ The remainder of 2002 saw Malawi "desperately mobilizing resources to import some 585,000 tonnes to fill the 2002 food gap" – a tactic which Malawi's former Chief Economist, Dr Kalonga Stambuli, labelled as "an act of firefighting."¹⁸⁴ At the time, Malawi was spending more on grain imports than petroleum.¹⁸⁵ By 2005, the country had designated 'agriculture and food security' as a number one priority in its Growth and Development Strategy "emphasising how important the issue of food security is in present-day Malawi."¹⁸⁶ The importance of food security to Malawi runs beyond the human aspect – Sahley (2005) reports that the state's legitimacy "depends heavily on the availability and affordability of maize."¹⁸⁷ As Bookstein and Lawson highlight, a large contributing factor to vulnerability to food crises is the inadequacy of agricultural policies, justifying the need for Malawi (and other states across the region) to reevaluate their food security strategy.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁰ Bookstein and Lawson, 2002: 635

¹⁸¹ Stambuli, 2002: 1-2

¹⁸² Bookstein and Lawson, 2002: 635

¹⁸³ King, 2002

¹⁸⁴ Stambuli, 2002: 2

¹⁸⁵ Stambuli, 2002: 2

¹⁸⁶ Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 7

¹⁸⁷ Sahley, 2005 *in* Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 7

¹⁸⁸ Bookstein and Lawson, 2002: 635-636

3.4.2 Six Years of Hunger

2005's re-emphasis on policy surrounding food security was timely, as Malawi faced yet more food shortages. As before, locals blamed "the food shortages on drought and a bad harvest."¹⁸⁹ The reality, however, mirrored the situation in 2002: although rainfall had been erratic, "it was by no means a disaster situation."¹⁹⁰ Even on the surface, the shortage was not apparent - it was reported that livestock were not dying, and that hospitals were not experiencing a "siege by the starving" as before.¹⁹¹ This deceptive nature of the crisis led OXFAM to note that it was one of the "less visible crises".

Ultimately, it was estimated that 4.7 million people in Malawi, a third of the population, were under threat of food shortages throughout the crisis.¹⁹² Between 2001 and 2005, Malawi had faced chronic food shortages, with many people *expecting* an annual lean season "from December up to the March/April harvest"¹⁹³ – 2005 marked a sixth season characterised by food shortages across Malawi.¹⁹⁴ Women and children were disproportionately hard hit by the crisis – Menon reports that of the 4.7 million people at risk during the crisis, 2.2 million were under the age of 18; 750, 000 of these 2.2 million people were under the age of five. Hospitals throughout Malawi were eventually besieged by the starving and treated, on average, 29% more children for conditions related to malnutrition (such as kwashiorkor), with some regions experiencing a 40% increase in malnutrition-related hospital admissions.¹⁹⁵

During such situations, where international food aid is provided, INGOs and IGOs such as the WFP rely on foresight, as "it can take up to four months to move food from abroad to the affected region."¹⁹⁶ It is unfortunate, therefore, that the crisis starting in 2005 had not been sufficiently foreseen as even international relief agencies had "been taken by

¹⁸⁹ Barkham, 2005

¹⁹⁰ Barkham, 2005

¹⁹¹ Barkham, 2005

¹⁹² Menon, 2007: 1

¹⁹³ Corcoran, 2005

¹⁹⁴ Menon, 2007: 1

¹⁹⁵ Barkham, 2005

¹⁹⁶ Corcoran, 2005

surprise by the emerging scale of the problem.”¹⁹⁷ In these cases, agencies rely on private donations to source food from local markets what would otherwise be sourced from abroad. The fact that this is an option points to the crisis not being one of supply, as the many labels of *famine* would suggest.

3.4.3 Contemporary Food Crises

The cycle of chronic hunger throughout Malawi continued past 2005. Inaccurate projections of the state’s future harvests from 2005 onwards exacerbated slight shocks – in 2007, for example, the Malawian government estimated that the yearly maize crop will yield 1.2 million tonnes; on the basis of this projection, the national government aimed to sell 400,000 tonnes of grain to struggling Zimbabwe. The projection, however, had been elevated and, consequently, exacerbated a food crisis that could have been weathered with government reserves.¹⁹⁸ The inaccurate projection led to grain prices skyrocketing.

Early 2008 saw warnings of a possible food crisis in 2009 across the region.¹⁹⁹ At the time of the publication of a study detailing the looming crisis, maize prices in Malawi were “near historic highs in inflation-adjusted terms.”²⁰⁰ Government responded to the price shock in staple foods by imposing various trade caps (for example, imposing a fixed rate of 52 kwacha per kilogram – approximately US \$0.30 in 2008 – for small scale traders), subsidising farmers, and banning private sale of grain. Government also enabled the parastatal ADMARC (Malawi’s Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation) to attempt to control grain prices via quantitative easing and buying of excess grain.²⁰¹

Despite these events, mixed messages were being received by many – by 2010, Malawi was being “celebrated... as the scene of a modest Green Revolution,”²⁰² with some asking whether this was “a [potential] model for Africa.”²⁰³ By 2011, however, people were experiencing acute hunger once more – this time, no drought or weather shock was present

¹⁹⁷ Corcoran, 2005

¹⁹⁸ IRIN, 2008

¹⁹⁹ IRIN, 2008

²⁰⁰ IRIN, 2008

²⁰¹ IRIN, 2008

²⁰² Charles, 2010

²⁰³ Ashton, 2010

and “there was plenty of food in the markets.”²⁰⁴ Staple food prices increased dramatically: maize prices rose by 50%,²⁰⁵ leading to calls for rationing and government subsidies. By 2012, grain exports were banned as the hunger problem intensified.²⁰⁶ Pertinent to note is the seemingly paradoxical fact that Malawi had experienced “a bumper harvest of 3, 2 million tonnes of maize against a national consumption of 2, 4 million tonnes.”²⁰⁷ Despite all the supposed success of Malawi’s “Green Revolution”, as well as government subsidy programs, 1.7 million people faced a food crisis.²⁰⁸

2013 and 2014 followed suit as hunger remained a problem. By 2015, Malawi once again experienced a shock in the form of erratic weather – flooding throughout the region left displaced households in Malawi, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, in “crisis.”²⁰⁹ The flooding, however, also affected Malawians not stricken by flooding as maize production dropped by 27.7%, while other crops experienced projected losses as well, triggering fears of impending widespread hunger throughout the nation.²¹⁰

3.5 Malawi in Context

Food insecurity in Malawi does not exist within a vacuum – in addition to the global trends in food security, politicised food regimes, and global food crises, Malawi’s socioeconomic situation plays a crucial role. As such, an introduction to Malawi’s socioeconomic reality is vital in contextualising the state’s food problem. Additionally, the issue of foreign aid’s presence in Malawi will be touched upon since aid exerts significant pressure in shaping the socioeconomic situation of Malawi. Lastly, the discussion surrounding Malawi’s socioeconomic reality and the role of foreign aid has thereupon, presents a basis for the argument that is to follow in Chapter 4.

²⁰⁴ Vidal, 2011

²⁰⁵ Nyasa Times, 2011

²⁰⁶ Nyasa Times, 2012

²⁰⁷ Nyasa Times, 2012

²⁰⁸ Nyasa Times, 2012

²⁰⁹ Wells, 2015

²¹⁰ M’bwana, 2015

3.5.1 Socio-Economic Overview

With a population size of 17,3 million, Malawi is one of the smaller nations in Southern Africa. However, with a population of 17 million, the aforementioned food crises are put into perspective – the 2002 food crisis left an estimated 3.2 million people at risk of starvation, a third of the population in 2002. In 2005, 4.7 million people were at risk – also equating to one third of the country’s population.

As of 2014, only 16.1% of Malawians live in urban areas. This largely rural-based populace is driven by the nature of the state’s economy. As the country’s economy is largely agricultural, most of the population remain close to rural areas for sources of agricultural-based work. The role of agriculture in Malawi cannot be understated, as it “accounts for about one-third of [Malawi’s] GDP and 90% of [the state’s] export revenues” – approximately US \$1.198 billion of an estimated US \$1.332 billion. Conversely, Malawi imports goods worth approximately US \$2.498 billion; this leaves the country with a trade deficit of US \$1.166 billion, almost the same amount earned via exports. This trade deficit severely constrains government spending – national debt runs at 48% of the country’s GDP of US \$4.408 billion (2014 estimates).

So far, in discussing the various food crises which Malawi has experienced over the past decade and a half, maize has been highlighted as a crucial crop. It is, however, not the prime component of its agricultural sector, and therefore economy; “the performance of the tobacco sector is [the] key to short-term growth as tobacco accounts for more than half of exports”. In fact, as a percentage of all agricultural products, tobacco makes up 53% of all exports. The next four biggest earners are: tea, coffee, sugar, cotton. Malawi’s four biggest expenses, conversely, are importing: food, petroleum goods, semi-manufactures, and consumer goods.

Imports are also disproportionately more expensive than imports to neighbouring states – this is due to a multitude of negative externalities, the largest being the fact that Malawi (as a landlocked nation) has no access to ports beyond lake Malawi/Nyasa. Furthermore, poor transport infrastructure pushes up the prices of goods transported from the coast.

Of Malawi's 17.3 million people, 46.9% are children under the age of 14; the 15-24 year old age group makes up 20.2% of the population. One implication of this highly skewed demographic makeup is that Malawi's labour force is only 5.74 million people – 33.17% of the population. In effect, every labourer acts as a breadwinner for three people (including themselves). This puts Malawi's GDP per capita of US \$800 into perspective. A further caveat to contextualise the earning power of the country's labourers is that Malawi's GINI coefficient is 0.462 – almost halfway between complete equality and inequality.

Malawi experiences some of the world's highest levels of growth at an average of 7% between 2009 and 2014.²¹¹ However, much of this growth is seemingly unsustainable as it relies on government expenditure on the agricultural sector (as mentioned above) – a policy which Malawi's government cannot sustain while in debt. Beyond the unsustainable nature of policies promoting growth, the advances made are expected to fall flat if certain obstacles are not confronted. One of the biggest obstacles to Malawi's high levels of growth is the country's electricity problem – less than one out of ten Malawians have access to electricity, and even those with access “enjoy the services... half the time” as “electricity supply is intermittent like disco lights.”²¹² Overall, the public service delivery system is dire – along with chronic food crises, Malawi also undergoes chronic water shortages, partly due to external shocks and partly due to mismanagement of utilities.²¹³ All these factors have traditionally kept foreign direct investment away from Malawi, despite the country's stellar growth over the past half a decade.

3.5.2 Foreign Aid and Scandals

Malawi's post-colonial history has been replete with foreign aid. Over the past decade and a half, for example, foreign aid has comprised “40 percent of the national budget [and]... has contributed approximately a fifth of the country's gross national income”²¹⁴ - this equates to, approximately, US \$505.6 million and US \$881.6 million respectively. To state that Malawi is dependent on the foreign aid it receives would be an understatement. Foreign

²¹¹ Our Africa, 2015

²¹² Nyasa Times, 2015

²¹³ Thornbury, 2014

²¹⁴ Wroe, 2012: 136 (See appendix, item 3.i)

aid, it has been argued, has enabled Malawi's government to spur short term growth via the various short term agricultural programs (mentioned above).²¹⁵

Despite this injection of much needed funds, however, the state remains poor and unable to provide much needed services to the nation. Misuse of funds has also been a problem – in 2010, it was uncovered that the then president, President Bingu Wa Mutharika, had purchased a private jet for executive use using US \$13.26 million of donor money.²¹⁶ It is this very visible misappropriation of aid and inability to provide for Malawians which has ignited public protests against government on numerous occasions – in 2011, for example, protests and rioting broke out across Malawi ultimately leading to police and military intervention, resulting in 19 deaths.²¹⁷ The uncovering of the purchase of the jet led to withdrawal of a portion of aid by donor countries such as Britain, before later suspending aid altogether due to the “economic mismanagement and poor governance.”²¹⁸

After President Bingu Wa Mutharika's sudden death in April of 2012, Vice President Joyce Banda took charge of the executive role. One of her first acts was to sell off the private Jet in order to assist Malawians facing food crises.²¹⁹ She also planned to sell off additional luxury items bought by government, such as 60 Mercedes Benz vehicles used by MPs and other members of government in addition to cutting her own salary by 30%.²²⁰ Aid returned to Malawi. Unfortunately, the goodwill was short-lived as the “Cashgate” scandal sullied the positive perception of Malawian government created by Joyce Banda.

The Cashgate scandal is the moniker given to the “systematic looting of public money” by government officials during President Banda's short tenure.²²¹ Investigations surrounding the Cashgate scandal revealed that “[e]stimates indicate that 35 percent of government funds may have vanished over the last decade.”²²² Donors immediately withdrew aid worth US \$150 million in response to the revelations.²²³ At the time of writing,

²¹⁵ Wroe, 2012: 136

²¹⁶ Newstime Africa, 2010

²¹⁷ Wroe, 2012: 135

²¹⁸ Nsehe, 2011

²¹⁹ Banda, 2013

²²⁰ Laing & McElroy, 2012; Banda, 2013

²²¹ The Economist, 2014

²²² Wood, 2014

²²³ Wood, 2014

some of the aid has returned to Malawi, however, there are calls once more for cutting aid to Malawi as new president, Peter Mutharika, has reportedly suggested buying another jet for presidential use.²²⁴ As before, donors are threatening to withdraw aid from the nation.

3.6 Summary

As stated in the introduction, food security does not exist in a vacuum. In order to comprehend the complexity of the political aspect of modern food security, the various contributing elements have been introduced in an attempt to contextualise food insecurity in Malawi. Section 3.1 presented a narrative of international food security trends, highlighting the responses by global powers to international food insecurity throughout the 20th century. It also implicitly emphasised the role played by global powers, which was then underlined in section 3.2. The discussion then demonstrates the role played by global powers in dictating policy. The dominant food regime, it has been argued, is shaped by the global north to favour policy born out of the neoliberal beliefs centred upon free trade. This food regime was contrasted to the opposing, peripheral regime – the food sovereignty regime – which opposes the pre-eminence placed upon neoliberal trade as a route to food security.

Section 3.3 shifted attention towards recent global crises in food, to be understood in context of the discussions on both the global trends and food regimes. In discussing recent food crises, the issue of *price* was demonstrated as being the key concern when discussing modern food crises. Various factors given for food crises were also presented – such as changes in diets and concerns over climate change. Section 3.4 introduces Malawi's struggle with hunger over the past decade and a half. It focuses on the major food crises of 2002 and 2005-2006 before outlining the trend of continued, chronic hunger throughout the years leading up to the present (2015). Lastly, 3.5 puts the situation of chronic food crises in Malawi into further context by detailing Malawi's socioeconomic reality, placing special emphasis on foreign aid as it accounts for much of Malawi's national budget.

²²⁴ Batchelor, 2015

CHAPTER FOUR

Aid, Dependency, and Starvation: How aid can perpetuate food crises in Malawi

The argument put forth by this thesis states that foreign aid plays a role in perpetuating chronic food crises within Malawi. To illustrate, the following will attempt to demonstrate the logical reasoning behind the argument, starting with a critique of foreign aid by highlighting possible negative outcomes. It will then propose that food security in Malawi is premised upon access, not availability, before demonstrating how foreign aid negatively impacts Malawi's ability to economically access food.

4.1 Critiquing Foreign Aid

As Jean-Phillipe Thérien notes, "Left and Right are notions little used in the study of international relations," but among other fields the classification "has long been recognised as a meaningful distinction."²²⁵ The critique against foreign aid can benefit from this distinction as well, despite its international nature, as a large proportion of the critique is based upon economic and social claims entrenched in left-right discourse. Critique comes from both sides of this often-used political spectrum as *opponents* and *proponents* of government intervention present critique of the purpose and effects of foreign aid on recipients.

4.1.1 Critique from the Right

Aid has been criticised from various fronts; however, it should come as no surprise that a large proportion of the critique comes from liberal economics. The neoliberal zeitgeist which dictates international economic interaction experienced a renaissance in the 1980s.

²²⁵ Thérien, 2002: 450

Although challenged, contemporary international relations remain largely guided by neoliberal standards.

The idea of government intervention in economic affairs, it is argued, is a “perversion of market forces” whereby artificial demand or supply forces are introduced.²²⁶ Milton Friedman, the Nobel Prize winning advocate of free market economics, did support the idea of *military aid* but was opposed to the idea of economic aid which encourages development by “requiring comprehensive planning and control by [the donor or recipient] government.”²²⁷

Peter Bauer, a contemporary of Friedman’s, opposed the idea of development aid at an even more fundamental level. Bauer questioned the *raison d’être* behind foreign aid, challenging the logic behind the role played by foreign financial support provided by donors. This traditional logic follows that because underdeveloped countries are poor, they cannot generate the capital to develop; and without development, these countries remain poor. Aid, therefore, plays the role of the needed capital in order to stimulate development. Bauer disputed this fundamental characteristic behind aid by asking: “how did any other rich countries ever become rich [if] they all started out poor?”²²⁸ Thomas Sowell points out that this idea of stimulating development by providing capital was traditionally not questioned and was considered “conventional wisdom” prior to the 1980s’ resurgence of liberal economic norms.²²⁹

In addition to this line of questioning of foreign aid’s purpose, Bauer highlights the oft-lamented concern of donor publics regarding corruption, stating that: “[b]ecause aid accrues to the government, it increases its resources, patronage, and power in relation to the rest of society.”²³⁰ As a result, not only is a recipient government’s influence on society enhanced via the increased opportunity for patronage, but the addition in centralised financial resources “increases the stakes in the struggle for power,” potentially harming

²²⁶ Watkins, 1995: 517

²²⁷ Lensink and White, 2001: 43, 48

²²⁸ Friedman and Sowell, 2005: 442

²²⁹ Friedman and Sowell, 2005: 442

²³⁰ Bauer, 1991: 45

democratic efforts by incentivising government positions as a means of personal enrichment.²³¹

In recent years, the neoliberal argument against foreign aid has been popularised and reintroduced to the public through the economist Dambisa Moyo's diagnosis of aid in Africa (labelling it *Dead Aid*).²³² Moyo critiques Africa's current aid-fuelled development paths along the same lines as Friedman, Sowell, and Bauer. Aid to African states, she argues, "chokes off the export sector and results in laziness on the part of African policy makers" as they are not incentivised to "pursue tax revenues" (since foreign aid props up government budgets instead).²³³ Services which should be funded via tax revenues are funded instead by foreign aid, effectively removing a degree of accountability and feedback between government and the electorate.²³⁴ An additional critique lobbed against aid in Africa is shared by critics from the left of the political spectrum – namely, that foreign aid strips agency from recipient nations in lieu of aid conditions imposed by donors.

4.1.2 Critique from the Left

Modern standards of foreign aid have "remained biased in favour of those developing countries that adopt market-friendly economic policies."²³⁵ In spite of this, the international donor community has come to accept "that macro-economic discipline does not [necessarily] suffice" in attempting to curb or reverse poverty.²³⁶ As such, critique of poverty-reducing efforts from the political left has been re-examined.

According to Thérien, three major areas of critique (stemming from the political left) exists surrounding foreign aid's purpose as a tool for poverty-reduction. The first issue echoes the apprehension of the political right concerning the misuse of funds and resources

²³¹ Bauer, 1991: 45-46

²³² Moyo, 2009

²³³ Glennie, 2009

²³⁴ Glennie, 2009

²³⁵ Thérien, 2002: 457

²³⁶ Thérien, 2002: 457

as “developed countries devote few concrete efforts to poverty alleviation.”²³⁷ Secondly, foreign aid as development assistance, it is argued, does not:

“take into account the fact that the Third World is also affected by the policies of the developed countries in the areas of commerce, finance, agriculture, the environment and immigration.”²³⁸

The third issue relates to the second critique, but expands upon the idea: certain critics “[see] aid as one element in a broader neo-colonial project” whereby aid “corresponds to the interests and values of the developed countries.”²³⁹ The issue of “tied aid”, or aid which is provided with strict conditionality, provides much of the kindling for the idea of a donor exploiting recipients dependent on aid through stipulations “enshrining the Washington Consensus.”²⁴⁰

4.2 Foreign Aid and Food Security

4.2.1 Access, not Availability

Food security, as delineated previously, is reliant on four elements: availability, access, reliability, and food use²⁴¹ - if any one of these elements is missing, food insecurity is present. The label of *famine* is oft given to all food crises – however, famine denotes the absence of *availability* of food. Malawi’s multi-decade food crisis is frequently labelled as a *famine* – for example, both the 2002 and 2005 food shocks were labelled as *famines* by the media.²⁴²

However, as multiple IGOs, INGOs, and NGOs have echoed, “the world produces enough food to feed everyone.”²⁴³ Some estimates indicate that the world produces enough to feed 10 billion people, an estimate which is rising as food production technologies

²³⁷ Thérien, 2002: 458

²³⁸ Thérien, 2002: 458

²³⁹ Watkins, 1995: 517

²⁴⁰ Ranis, 2011: 76

²⁴¹ See appendix, figure 2.1

²⁴² Tenthani, 2002; Corcoran, 2005

²⁴³ worldhunger.org, 2015; World Food Programme, 2015; OXFAM Canada, 2015; WHO, 2015

advance.²⁴⁴ This sentiment, however, must be viewed in context of the prevailing international food regime – “the underlying cognitive frameworks that shape actors’ identities and preferences and construct the principles, rules, and institutions”²⁴⁵ – which dictates that:

“food security [is] premised upon international trade and the maximisation of comparative advantage between countries producing export commodities and food products.”²⁴⁶

Famine, in the context of global supply and international norms of food security, is only possible if the location in question is isolated from the international community and is self-reliant. Malawi does not fall into this category; it is neither an international pariah (such as North Korea) nor attempting food self-sufficiency. Attaching the label of famine to Malawi over the years, thus, is deceptive: if Malawi is party to the international neoliberal food regime, then their food crises do not arise out of a lack of *availability* of food as global food production outpaces demand. Malawi’s food crises, therefore, can thus be attributed as a lack of *access* to food (and subsequently, *reliability thereof* as well).

Recent global food crises have been premised upon elevated food prices.²⁴⁷ Not being able to afford food is an issue of access, not availability. In 2002, Malawi’s staple food crop, Maize, shot up in price by over 300%,²⁴⁸ triggering a food crisis as many Malawians could not keep pace with the inflated cost of food. The sudden shock was deemed strange due to the relative mildness of the shock to local grain production, but produced a significantly higher amount of at-risk individuals as well as death and risk-seeking behaviour from poor Malawians.

4.2.2 Access and the Malawian Economy

The examination of the term *famine* and its use goes beyond semantic purposes; mislabelling food crises and starvations as famines, and thus as an issue brought about by a

²⁴⁴ Seufert, Ramankutty, and Foley, 2012

²⁴⁵ Margulis, 2013: 55

²⁴⁶ Lee, 2013: 222-223

²⁴⁷ Berazneva & Lee, 2013; Margulis, 2013; McMichael, 2013; Menezes, 2001; Minot, 2013: 45

²⁴⁸ Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 6

shock in the food supply, carries the implicit assumption that the cause is largely exogenous and unforeseeable – brought on by events such as natural disasters, conflict, or other disruptions in food distribution. However, as an issue of access, causes of food crises differ. As noted, Malawi’s food crisis of 2002 was deemed abnormal by certain spectators due to the relative mildness of the shock to the local food supply. Given the global nature of food stocks, this is tantamount to an understatement – during these crises, food was available, but not affordable and, thus, inaccessible to the poorest of a country already infamously poor.

Malawi’s chronic food crisis is characterised by the inability to access food. This access to food is conditioned by the neoliberal food regime which normalises the paths to food security through trade, not via self-sustainability. Malawi is structurally unable to ensure access to food due to economic and political reasons. Therefore, in order to argue that foreign aid negatively impacts Malawi’s food security, one needs to demonstrate the negative impact of foreign aid on the country’s economic and political reality.

4.3 Negative Effects of Foreign Aid in Malawi

4.3.1 Taxes and Government Apathy

Malawi’s governmental budget is tax-based. Using taxes as a means of raising funds serves the dual purposes of relying on a diversified source of income, as well as acting “as a measure of government performance, transparency and accountability.”²⁴⁹ In general, governments are incentivised to implement economic and service delivery policies which will result in a steady (or rising) flow of revenue accrued from tax so as to increase the national budget. A slump in tax revenue – and therefore in a government’s budget – should be followed by the necessary steps to regain stability. This acts as a feedback loop sensitive to “a government’s social and economic policy priorities.”²⁵⁰ Thus, disabling the feedback

²⁴⁹ Kalimba, nd: 1

²⁵⁰ Kafunda, 2012

provided by the “nexus between expenditures and taxation”²⁵¹ can result in an apathetic government, effectively impacting society as:

*“the absence of effective transparency and accountability mechanisms [such as taxation]... are the major constraints to effective service delivery, effective implementation of poverty reduction programmes and promotion of local economic development.”*²⁵²

In an econometric study conducted by John Thornton, it was tested whether “foreign aid reduces tax revenue”. Thornton concludes the study by stating that he “find[s] emphatic support for the hypothesis that aid causes a reduction in tax effort.”²⁵³ As Moyo pointed out, this can “result in laziness (*sic*) on the part of African policy makers” as they are not incentivised to “pursue tax revenues.”²⁵⁴ Karen Remmer agrees with the sentiment, finding that “aid dependence is linked with reduced revenue generation.”²⁵⁵

Foreign aid accruing to a central government may disable the feedback provided by tax collection (depending on the impact of the aid on a government’s income) as the funds provided by donors prop up a government’s annual budget. Remmer’s research points out that aid is “an important determinant of government size.”²⁵⁶ The higher the percentage of aid to the recipient’s national GDP and state budget, the larger a government is prone to grow as a state’s bureaucracy swells (itself a sign of patronage).

The concerns of the neoliberal critics of foreign aid, as emphasised by Thornton’s results, is apparent in the case of Malawi, where an average of 40 percent of the national budget has been made up by foreign aid over the past decade and a half (2000-2015).²⁵⁷ Arguably, the dependence on foreign aid in the national budget may undercut tax payers’ interests as the feedback delivered to government via tax-collection becomes less pronounced.

²⁵¹ Remmer, 2004: 88

²⁵² Kalimba, nd: 1

²⁵³ Thornton, 2014

²⁵⁴ Glennie, 2009

²⁵⁵ Remmer, 2004: 88

²⁵⁶ Remmer, 2004: 88

²⁵⁷ Wroe, 2012: 136

In theory, Malawi's government does not have the same incentives to make policy which will raise revenue accrued via tax collection. Similarly, Malawi's government is not incentivised to maintain service delivery or improve infrastructure, such as roads and telecommunications – services and public goods which have the ability to positively affect economic development. Ultimately, whether a policy succeeds or fails is irrelevant as Malawi's government will still be paid.

The World Bank estimates that Malawi spends 6% of its income on sustaining and creating infrastructure. For similar nations (low-income, non-fragile African states), the figure rises to 10%, making “Malawi's infrastructure funding gap... US \$0.3 billion per year”. Not only is Malawi lagging in infrastructure development, but the current generation of infrastructure is mismanaged – Water and Electricity, for example, actually costs Malawi an additional 1.8% of its GDP due to mismanagement and failed upkeep. In other areas, “[d]istribution losses are almost 35 percent, while revenue collection is estimated as low as 50 percent.”²⁵⁸

4.3.2 Aid and Corruption

Perhaps the biggest strain on continued donor presence in Malawi lies with the presence of corruption in recipient nations. After Malawi's Cashgate scandal broke, public pressure on aid programs mounted, resulting in the United Kingdom, Norway and the European Union's decision in 2013 to halt “financial aid programs amounting to more than US \$150 million a year.”²⁵⁹ This particular suspension of foreign aid, however, is not an isolated instance – Britain (Malawi's biggest, and most influential donor) enacted a similar moratorium on its aid program in 2011 following the purchase of President Bingu Wa Mutharika's presidential jet worth US \$13.26 million of donor funds – Britain, however, attributed the decision to Malawi's “failure in economic management”, which may or may not be seen as a euphemism for corrupt practices.²⁶⁰ As of 2015, Britain has not resumed direct, bilateral foreign aid to Malawi, but does continue to deliver aid through private channels. Unfortunately, even this initiative is under fire as Malawi's current president, Peter

²⁵⁸ Foster & Shkaratan, 2011: 26

²⁵⁹ Fortin, 2013

²⁶⁰ Tran, 2011

Mutharika, vowed to buy back the presidential jet, once again stoking complaints from donor publics.²⁶¹

As noted above in discussing government apathy, foreign aid is “an important determinant of government size.”²⁶² In general the higher the amount of aid given, the larger a government will grow. Rajeev Goel and Michael Nelson link the size of government to the manifestation of corruption: through scrutinising state-level data, the authors find that “government size, in particular spending by state governments, does indeed have a strong positive influence on corruption.”²⁶³ This seems to imply a correlation between foreign aid and corruption. However, the literature provides a mixed consensus on the issue, despite the logical conclusion concerning separate studies on government size, corruption and foreign aid. For example, authors José Tavares,²⁶⁴ Keisuke Okada and Sovannroeun Samreth²⁶⁵ conclude, using separate methods of analysis, that foreign aid actually *decreases* the incidence of corruption.

Despite this, the literature does offer caveats pertinent to Malawi’s case – indicating that aid may be incentivising rent seeking: Okada and Samreth state that, when it comes to *decreasing* the incidence of corruption “bilateral aid from the world’s leading donor countries, including France, the UK, and the US, has no significant effect.”²⁶⁶ Although there are multiple sources of foreign aid in Malawi, the biggest sources are bilateral in nature – as in the case of Britain, Norway and the EU. Tavares points to Alesina and Dollar’s paper “*Who Gives Aid to Whom and Why?*”,²⁶⁷ stating that since motivation behind donor programs are generally driven by interests held by the donor nations, “one cannot infer from [their] results that when more aid is observed lower corruption will follow.”²⁶⁸

In the case of Malawi, a cursory glance at recent history suggests that foreign aid has had an effect on instigating corrupt behaviour. Whether this is an inherent effect of foreign aid, or whether the corrupt behaviour would be present without aid, one can still attribute

²⁶¹ Batchelor, 2015

²⁶² Remmer, 2004: 88

²⁶³ Goel & Nelson, 1998: 117

²⁶⁴ Tavares, 2003

²⁶⁵ Okada & Samreth, 2001

²⁶⁶ Okada & Samreth, 2001: 4

²⁶⁷ Alesina & Dollar, 2000

²⁶⁸ Tavares, 2003: 104

foreign aid as having played a role if for no other reason than providing an increased incentive for rent seeking practices as more funds are available.

4.3.3 Donor Conditionality and Policy Effects

Craig Burnside and David Dollar address the question whether foreign aid has an impact on the recipient's economic growth. Taking their lead from various authors who conclude that foreign aid does not have an effect on economic development (operationalised via a measure of growth), Burnside and Dollar expand on the number of cases and have retested the hypothesis. Their findings point out "that on average aid has had little impact on growth" except for "in a good policy environment."²⁶⁹ In reference to Malawi, a good policy environment is, ironically, not present partly due to the presence of foreign aid (as noted in discussing aid-induced government apathy); therefore, a potential positive effect induced by the introduction of aid on growth in Malawi is not expected. However, Malawi's performance over the past half-decade contradicts these expectations as Malawi experienced some of the world's highest levels of economic expansion, growing at an average of 7% between 2009 and 2014.²⁷⁰ The growth, although high, was erratic during this period.²⁷¹

Positive economic management and growth in Malawi is an implicit condition applied in many bilateral donors' aid packages to the country, such as the aid given by Britain. The mere label given to the aid program (billed as "developmental aid") reinforces this conditionality. The decision by Britain in 2011 to suspend bilateral funding to Malawi was, as noted, officially attributed to "the country's repeated failure to address concerns over economic management and governance."²⁷² Between 2009 and 2014 (the years in which Malawi experienced high rates of growth) Britain had withdrawn aid on two separate occasions – from 2011 to 2012, and again after the breaking of the Cashgate scandal. Despite the disruption in aid, growth was unaffected. The question, therefore, becomes: how was Malawi achieving growth if what Burnside and Dollar call "a good policy environment" was not present?

²⁶⁹ Burnside & Dollar, 1997

²⁷⁰ Our Africa, 2015

²⁷¹ See appendix, figure 4.1

²⁷² Tran, 2015

Dependency on aid may, paradoxically, provide an answer to this question. If a government is increasingly apathetic to its role in providing for its people due to aid funding a government's budget, development and upkeep of the economy is relegated in favour of maintaining aid flows. In Malawi's case, growth has been stipulated by donors as a means of sustaining or increasing aid flows since the largest donors (such as Britain) measure development via economic expansion. As pointed out in the previous chapter, "the performance of the tobacco sector is [the] key to short-term growth."²⁷³ Recognising this, sectors of Malawi's government (following the publishing of the Growth and Development Strategy in 2005-2006) implemented the much-lauded Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP), whereby government subsidises fertiliser for millions, focussing on the country's poorer small-scale farmers.²⁷⁴ As a result, agricultural production has been increased.

In light of Malawi's poor state capacity, partly incurred by foreign aid's effect on inducing "a lack of motivation and interest to develop" institutions and infrastructure, the growth accrued from agriculture is not sustainable in the long-term.²⁷⁵ The poor state capacity and infrastructural base sees that:

*"Malawi's product space will remain too underdeveloped to ensure, by itself, that the 2003-13 growth acceleration regime is translated into a growth maintenance regime in the next ten years."*²⁷⁶

Furthermore, as Ricker-Gilbert and Jayne point out, "it is unlikely that using public funds to subsidize roughly 90% of the fertilizer cost for farmers is an effective strategy to reduce poverty."²⁷⁷ Olivier de Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur to Malawi on the right to food, in 2013 concurred with the idea that the policy of subsidising fertiliser was ill-conceived when he "asked the government to reassess its agriculture priorities."²⁷⁸ De Schutter states that the FISP "is not working as planned" and that it is "draining a lot of funds that could be used to develop other agricultural programs."²⁷⁹ The critique that the subsidy program is

²⁷³ CIA World Factbook, 2015

²⁷⁴ Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 7

²⁷⁵ Said & Singini, 2014: 37

²⁷⁶ Said & Singini, 2014: 37

²⁷⁷ Ricker-Gilbert & Jayne, 2012: 16

²⁷⁸ Masina, 2013

²⁷⁹ Masina, 2013

not working as planned is partly associated with the short-term focus by government, perhaps attempting to placate or lure donors: although subsidised fertilisers have been boosting output, increasing production and spurring economic growth, heavy fertiliser usage is short-sighted. A subsidy program aimed to encourage fertiliser use only solves soil infertility in the short-term; extended fertiliser use does not address the underlying issue of improved soil fertility over the long term and may, in fact, damage long-term soil fertility.

In summation, as growth becomes a goal to sate donor-imposed “developmental” conditions, Malawi’s government is incentivised to achieve short-term growth through agriculturally intensive subsidy programs whereas the conditions needed for long-term growth, such as developing infrastructure and the state’s capacity, remain neglected.

4.3.4 Economic Knock-on

The argument presented that foreign aid promotes unsustainable and short-sighted economic policies should be viewed in light of the country’s economic performance in areas other than growth.

In 2009, early in the period of Malawi’s boom in economic growth, the country was running a trade deficit of US \$241 million, comprising 5,6% of national GDP. At the start of 2014, after over four years of experiencing an average 7% growth,²⁸⁰ Malawi’s trade deficit *increased* to US \$769,81 million – comprising 20,77% of Malawi’s GDP. Malawi’s trade deficit during the time of economic boom, fuelled by aid-funded short-term agricultural growth, nearly quadrupled the country’s trade deficit (as a measure of its GDP).²⁸¹ Despite Malawi’s GDP experiencing an average growth of 7%, there was also an increase in imports while exports failed to keep pace, leading to the ballooning of the trade deficit.²⁸²

A trade deficit, it should be stated, is not necessarily considered as a disadvantage in the short-term. A trade deficit may just be an indication of rapid growth – during which imports are expected to surge as people spend more. Governments are able to manage trade-deficits with good fiscal policy. However, long-term deficits do cause investor

²⁸⁰ Our Africa, 2015

²⁸¹ The World Bank, 2015; CIA World Factbook, 2009; CIA World Factbook, 2015

²⁸² See appendix, figures 4.2 & 4.3

confidence to plummet and can also negatively affect a currency's exchange rate as currency flows out of a country. Repeated trade deficits may also impact a nation's foreign reserves negatively, forcing governments to borrow money in order to finance budgetary needs. Malawi already relies on foreign aid to prop up its national budget, and therefore is left facing options focussed on foreign investment and quantitative easing (whereby it mints new currency) in order to finance any deficit. Minting new currency depreciates the value of the currency.

In 2011-2012, Malawi faced the nadir of the cyclical bust-boom induced by this macro-economic cocktail of high inflation, a trade deficit, and a volatile exchange rate. The effect of the "steadily rising import bill, fuelled in part by fertilizer imports"²⁸³ used in subsidising smallholder farms through the FISP program, was compounded by drops in the price of burley tobacco leaves (the country's primary export)²⁸⁴ and oil price volatility.²⁸⁵ President Joyce Banda eventually devalued Malawi's Kwacha, the national currency, by a further 50% on recommendation by IGOs and INGOs.²⁸⁶

In Malawi's case, investor confidence is already low with the withdrawal of aid support by foreign governments in response to the Cashgate scandal.²⁸⁷ Additionally, President Mutharika recently stated that, despite economic growth (driven by the agricultural sector) the country's foreign exchange reserves "still remain lower than adequate"²⁸⁸ and that there is a need to reduce "the structural trade deficit."²⁸⁹ Inflation also remains high – in 2012, inflation hit 21,3% and peaked a year later at 27,3%; at the time of writing, inflation rates in Malawi remain high at 18,8%.²⁹⁰ The Kwacha has been devalued overall from its position in 2011,²⁹¹ failing to bounce back to pre-2011 levels.²⁹² The devalued Kwacha can be attributed to the country's high rate of inflation, its structural trade deficit, and volatile or low investor confidence.

²⁸³ Pauw, Dorosh, & Mazunda, 2013: 1

²⁸⁴ Bloomberg Business, 2012

²⁸⁵ Wroe, 2012: 137

²⁸⁶ Pauw, Dorosh, & Mazunda, 2013: 1

²⁸⁷ Msukwa, 2014; Nyasa Times, 2013

²⁸⁸ Chiumia, 2015

²⁸⁹ Nyasa Times, 2015b

²⁹⁰ Trading Economics, 2015

²⁹¹ See appendix, figure 4.4

²⁹² Fx-rate.net, 2015

4.4 Aid and Food Access in Malawi

The role foreign aid potentially plays in perpetuating food insecurity in Malawi is premised upon the ideas highlighted above in explaining the effects of aid's disproportionate presence in making up Malawi's governmental revenue. Malawi's government has become dependent on foreign aid funding its continued and enlarged bureaucratic operations. The dependence by those in power results in three related outcomes affecting the country's economic access to food: perpetuating an agrarian economy, stoking inflation and currency depreciation, and maintaining compliance to the dominant neoliberal food regime. All three issues are dependent on the Malawian government's attempts at appeasing donors via the conditionality of development – development which is operationalised as economic growth. The government achieves this goal by favouring unsustainable, short term growth in the agricultural sector while neglecting infrastructure and state capacity.

4.4.1 The Effect of Unstable Growth – Currency Worth

The effects of unstable and unsustainable growth fuelled by short-term initiatives negatively affect Malawi's food security at the national, household, and individual levels. A devalued currency, coupled with high inflation, does not bode well for the poorest of Malawians. On one hand, high growth rates allow the poorest of Malawi to purchase more, including foodstuffs; on the other hand, if growth is too rapid (when it becomes unsustainable or exceeds long-term averages), the economy faces inflation which affects the nation's currency. Although growth levels have been high, growth was erratic²⁹³ – resulting in inflation. In Malawi, where inflation rates are high and the currency remains weak, the high rate of growth does not necessarily result in poverty reduction as items become more expensive and the worth of people's savings decline.

Nationally, as already covered, Malawi's imports far outpace the state's exports. Furthermore, as Malawi's currency weakens, imports become more expensive. Over the past decade and a half, Malawi has traditionally imported "food, petroleum products, semi-

²⁹³ See appendix, figure 4.1

manufactures, consumer goods, [and] transportation equipment.”²⁹⁴ Within the prevailing global food regime, trade is deemed as the route to food security; however, as the Kwacha remains unstable, trade-induced food security remains uncertain. The price of food imports, in particular, is subject not only to forces present at the national level, but is sensitive to forces from the international arena as well – such as the effect of oil on international trade.²⁹⁵ For example, “the Malawian economy was subjected to... unprecedented global oil and food price shocks during 2008-2010” which negatively affected the Kwacha’s value, compounding the drain on Malawi’s foreign reserves.²⁹⁶

Malawi, as of writing, does not produce any petroleum products,²⁹⁷ therefore putting the country’s petroleum needs squarely dependent on imports. Malawi’s landlocked status already makes their oil imports expensive due to the externalities involved in transporting the commodity from ports, through neighbouring countries, via poorly maintained transport infrastructure. A fluctuating exchange rate (whether induced by external shocks or internal policies) makes oil expensive – with an increase in oil, comes an increase in costs in other areas of Malawi’s economy, in turn negatively affecting Malawi’s citizens both commercially and privately. Lastly, an increase in the oil price will increase the price of food imports as well.

At the level of the household, the pressures on Malawi’s ability to afford the needed imported food also affect consumers. Oil price increases affected costs worldwide, pushing food prices up around the globe; the North African/Arab Spring was partly attributed to the price increase in basic foodstuffs, sparking protests and riots across Tunisia.²⁹⁸ International corn prices doubled during the time, while in Malawi corn prices shot up 174% between 2011 and 2012.²⁹⁹ The devaluation of Malawi’s Kwacha affects not only government’s ability to afford imports, but also the ability of consumers to afford basic foodstuffs. For example: after high levels of growth, people can buy more bread; but as inflation takes root, and the

²⁹⁴ CIA World Factbook, 2015

²⁹⁵ Agbor, 2011

²⁹⁶ Agbor, 2011

²⁹⁷ Oil deposits within Lake Malawi has been under consideration, but has not yet been seized upon.

²⁹⁸ The first nation to undergo a popular uprising against its government

²⁹⁹ Los Angeles Times, 2012

Kwacha loses value, bread becomes more expensive, once again limiting access to food for many Malawians.

4.4.2 Asymmetry and Imbalance

Although inflation and currency depreciation play roles in perpetuating food insecurity in Malawi, the policy of stoking short-term growth via multi-million dollar farm subsidies also plays a deeper structural role as it promotes the preservation of an agricultural-based economy. In a country where an estimated 54% of people live below the poverty line, the agricultural sector absorbs 90% of Malawi's workforce.³⁰⁰ This force comprises approximately a third of Malawi's population – carrying the implication that, statistically, every person in the workforce supports three people (including themselves).³⁰¹ Among the poor, largely situated in rural areas, this dependency is more severe.

An agrarian-based economy, upon which millions of Malawians depend, has long-term negative effects. For explanatory purposes, consider tobacco's role in Malawi. It is referred to by many Malawians as "green gold"³⁰² due to the disproportionately large role it plays in providing work and foreign exchange for the country – as of 2015, the sale of burley tobacco leaf comprises 53% of the nation's foreign exchange (among commodities exported).³⁰³ However, agrarian production is generally a low-income endeavour due to the fungibility³⁰⁴ of the product (as is the case with agricultural commodities in general). One farmer's tobacco crop is nearly indistinguishable from another farmer's tobacco crop.

Due to the agrarian nature of tobacco, the industry is perhaps more vulnerable to external shocks such as the impact of flooding, droughts, fires, and other natural disasters. For example, as Malawi's maize crops were negatively affected by flooding over the years, Malawi's tobacco production suffered similar setbacks.³⁰⁵ As was shown above, even non-agrarian industries may affect the volatility of tobacco supply (such as the effect which oil has on the transportation of the crop, the machination of the process, the increased cost of

³⁰⁰ CIA World Factbook, 2015

³⁰¹ CIA World Factbook, 2015

³⁰² Lynman, 2007; Chauwa, 2015; Nyasa Times, 2015c

³⁰³ CIA World Factbook, 2015

³⁰⁴ Fungibility refers to the substitutability of one item for another – as in most commodities.

³⁰⁵ Action Aid, 2002: 2; Hajdu, Ansell, Robson, van Blerk, & Chipeta, 2009: 6; Stambuli, 2002: 1

labour transport, and so forth). Even though these types of externalities affect all economic activity, the impact on low-cost products such as agriculture commodities are much higher. With external shocks such as these, many farmworkers are economically impacted, affecting their ability to *access* food.

In 2008, for example, tobacco prices started strong on a “very high note with prices reaching the phenomenal price of 11 dollars per kg” on the first day of the trading season.³⁰⁶ However, by the second day, prices stabilised at a rate ranging “between 2.30 dollars and 60 cents for the same quality crop.”³⁰⁷ This volatility in the price of tobacco leaf continues, generally remaining low. According to AHL Tobacco Malawi, prices of tobacco at the time of writing averaged US \$1.60 per kilo.³⁰⁸ Over the past, the cost of tobacco has continued to fluctuate wildly.³⁰⁹ Between 2004 and 2009, tobacco prices increased by 50%, however *decreased* the following year by 22%, decreasing again the next year by 37%.³¹⁰

More crucially, however, is agriculture’s income-earning potential in relation to other sectors. Once again, consider tobacco: on average, a pack of 20 cigarettes contains 12.5 grams of tobacco.³¹¹ Therefore, for every one kilogram of tobacco sold, an average of 80 packs of cigarettes (containing 20 cigarettes each) can be manufactured. Cigarettes are imported to Malawi, and a pack of cigarettes in Malawi, comprising the 12.5 grams of tobacco, currently costs US \$2.8 (as of writing).³¹² Each pack of cigarettes, therefore, contains the equivalent US \$0.02 worth of Malawian tobacco. In order to afford one pack of cigarettes, a tobacco farmer must sell 1.75 kgs of tobacco. In other terms, in order to afford a product containing 12.5 grams of tobacco, a Malawian would need to sell an additional 1.7375 kg of the leaf.

Although the scenario above only mentions tobacco, the same dynamic is present in most (if not all) agricultural products and is generally true for commodities used in manufacturing. As stated, the impact of maintaining an economy dependent on agriculture, like Malawi, is

³⁰⁶ Semu-Banda, 2008

³⁰⁷ Semu-Banda, 2008

³⁰⁸ AHL Malawi, 2015

³⁰⁹ See appendix, figure 4.5

³¹⁰ Masanjala, 2011

³¹¹ Wood, Mould, Ong, & Baker, 2005

³¹² cigaretteprices.net, 2015

that the amount of revenue generated by agriculture is low. In terms of the ability to generate revenue, agriculture falls at the bottom of the list – above it lie industries categorised by: light, heavy, and mass manufacturing, mass marketing, computerisation, and knowledge (in order). Other than food and petroleum products (which counts as manufactured goods due to the process of refinement), Malawi’s next biggest imports are “semi-manufactures, consumer goods, [and] transportation equipment.”³¹³ The issue of losing reserves to imported goods is apparent to certain members of government: President Peter Mutharika, for example, has called for measures such as “increased investing in cigarette manufacturing.”³¹⁴

As a consequence of this structural imbalance in revenue generation, Malawi will increasingly lose foreign exchange as the products they produce and export cost significantly less than the products imported in return. Not only does this drain the country’s foreign reserves, but it also entrenches farm workers’ low purchasing power, influencing the food security of households by limiting economic access to food available on (and influenced by) the international market.

4.4.3 Compliance to the Neoliberal Food Regime

Malawi is dependent on foreign aid. Without it, the national government loses approximately 40% of its annual budget. As such, Malawi is not at liberty to oppose donor nations. The dependence on aid is evident by Malawi’s government’s response every time a foreign government withdraw financial aid from Malawi following scandals, mismanagement of funds, or failure to meet the conditions stipulated for aid. In response, the national government seeks to restore foreign aid flows as soon as possible, pledging “to restore relations with donors.”³¹⁵

The dominant norms surrounding ideas of development, for example, mirror the standards held by the dominant food regime: namely that unfettered trade is the route to ensuring growth, and thus development. Malawi, as a de-facto client of donors benefitting

³¹³ CIA World Factbook, 2015

³¹⁴ Phiri-Mana, 2015

³¹⁵ Fletcher, 2011; VOA, 2012

from this framework, is obliged to adhere to the same international framework lest losing out on foreign aid.

4.5 Summary

In order to argue that foreign aid has an effect on perpetuating food insecurity in Malawi, the critique of foreign aid must be understood in context of the norms dictating food security trends. Internationally, the dominant food regime compels nations to achieve food security not through self-sustainability, but via international trade. The global supply of food, therefore, is the source of food security and insecurity – not the production of food locally (as advocated by the challenging food sovereignty movement). According to various INGOs and IGOs, the international food supply outpaces international demand, yet Malawi's various food crises are labelled as famines.

The label of *famine* indicates a supply issue – an event where levels of food production cannot meet demand. Malawi neither attempts food self-sufficiency (solely attempting to grow the needed food locally), nor is a pariah state cut off from trade: therefore, categorising Malawi's food crises as *famines*, and therefore as problems caused by an insufficient supply of food, is incongruent with the dominant international food regime which it is party to. If food security is ideally achieved via international trade, and the supply of food internationally outpaces demand, then a food crisis cannot be labelled as the result of inadequate supply. The issue, therefore, is the *access* to the international food supply by communities where access is predicated upon trade, as dictated by the international neoliberal food regime.

Thus, linking food security and foreign aid in Malawi requires one to show the effect of foreign aid on a state's ability to *access* food; foreign aid's economic impact, therefore, is crucial. A critique of foreign aid, like much else concerning political issues, is ideologically inclined. A useful ideological framework for critique of aid is the left-right continuum used in other fields. On the right of the political spectrum, the critique of aid focuses around the perversion of government intervention of an essentially self-regulating economic activity as well as the negative effect had upon government as a result of this intervention. On the left,

the critique of aid is centred upon the efficacy of aid and the social effect upon the recipient.

According to the critique of foreign aid, bilateral financial support to Malawi may induce government apathy. As a government's revenue increasingly derives from foreign aid, other sources of income are relegated to secondary concerns. In Malawi, the national government is traditionally funded by taxation. However, as foreign aid composes an increasingly large portion of the government's operational resources (40% of national government), maintaining a flow of tax-based income is relegated to concerns of maintaining funding from foreign donors. This is not to say that taxation of citizens is overlooked, but that it is instead a second-thought to issues of foreign aid. As such, not only is the feedback between a government's economic and social governance fragmented (since tax flows provide feedback on policy successes and failures), but spending is shifted away from infrastructure, services, and welfare, to concerns of placating the donor nations' aid conditionality.

As Malawi's government income largely derives from foreign funding, its bureaucracy swells and opportunities for rent seeking and political patronage increases. Malawi's Cashgate scandal is indicative of this, if for no other reason than foreign aid offering increased opportunity for corruption. Flows of foreign aid become increasingly important as government becomes dependent on the revenue provided by foreign donors. These donors attach conditions to the continued presence of aid in Malawi, most notably development. The norms dictating development are the same which dictate the international food regime: subsequently, one indicator of development is economic growth.

Dependent on aid for government funding, Malawi's national government targets development to sate the donors' conditions, resulting in economic growth taking centre stage in policy considerations. In order to sate donors, however, Malawi's national government invoke unsustainable policies of growth by subsidising fertiliser for poor farmers, thus increasing output and spurring economic expansion. Unfortunately, this growth is short-sighted and unsustainable as fertiliser programs do not address the underlying problem of long-term soil fertility. Furthermore, the policies spurring short term growth is unstable, causing negative economic knock-ons, such as inflation and a volatile

currency. Inflation and currency volatility effectively cause poor Malawians purchasing power to decline or remain the same. Economic access to food, therefore, remains precarious for many despite economic expansion.

Additionally, perpetuating an agrarian based economy ensures that most Malawians will continue to earn a low income due to agriculture's low earning potential. This not only limits households' access to food, but perpetuates the country's structural trade deficit as imports continue to outpace exports. In turn, the trade deficit may fuel economic instability and negatively impact the ability of households to access food. Finally, the dependence on aid virtually ensures that Malawi remains trapped within a neoliberal framework which does not favour those most at risk.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The presence of large flows of foreign aid to Malawi is detrimental to the country's food security. This argument is largely dependent on the theoretical understandings of the two main elements – foreign aid and food security – as well as the interaction of these concepts within the context of international and historical political forces.

Foreign aid is, firstly, understood as consisting of all types of resources which are transferred from one international actor to another. Secondly, foreign aid differs from trade as it is not explicitly accompanied by a transaction, whether fiscal or otherwise. The purpose of foreign aid is conditioned by an ideological perspective: whereas Liberal Internationalists espouse an apolitical functionalist view of foreign aid, proponents of Marxism and Realism view foreign aid as being inherently political. This paper, in agreement with the findings of Alesina and Dollar, agrees with the idea that foreign aid is inherently political as donors have the power to decide “*who gets what, when and how*” (to quote Harold Lasswell). This affords donors political power over recipients. The terminology surrounding foreign aid is similarly coloured by whichever ideological lens it is viewed through.

Food security falls under the human security framework. Over many decades, the concept has evolved and is now considered to exist:

“when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”

This evolution of the concept of food security is notable as it embodies the recognition for the need for a broadened understanding of the concept to encompass issues of access to food in addition to issues of supply. Access largely denotes the economic, social, and political ability to obtain food. In addition to a broadened understanding of the concept, the evolution of the term has widened the range of actors who may be considered food insecure. Just as the concept's prior scope had limited it to concerns of supply, previous iterations of the concept similarly considered the state and the international levels as the

main units under consideration when discerning food insecurity. The evolved understanding, however, has come to highlight issues of availability, access, reliability, and food use at the levels of the household and the individual in addition to the national and international spheres. This expansion on the understanding of which actors are affected by food insecurity operates in a nested manner – that is to say, food insecurity at the level of the international system will similarly present itself at the sub-levels of the national, household, and individual as well. Any level has the potential to affect the food security of the various levels below it.

As the concept has evolved, so has the understanding of food crises. Famines, possibly the most notable and publically recognisable of the types of food crises, have grown to represent an instance whereby a long-term food crisis is characterised by a lack in a *supply* (or availability) of food. A logical step, then, would be to recognise that a long-term food crisis which is not caused by the unavailability of food cannot be labelled as a famine. Amartya Sen has proposed the use of the term “*starvation*” to denote a long-term food crisis characterised by a lack in access.³¹⁶

Tackling food insecurity over the century has followed a path dictated by the history of international economic interaction as well as the international community’s experience with fighting hunger during the post-war years. With the advent of a neoliberal world order, a neoliberal path to food security has grown in popularity and is treated as gospel among many states, IGOs, and INGOs. Trade and economic growth has been regarded as the escape route leading out of a state of food insecurity. This emphasis on trade and economic growth also indicates an acceptance of the issue of *access to food* as a crucial element in combatting malnourishment. Of course, this would not have become dogma had the global *supply* - or *availability* - of food been inadequate, since no amount of economic growth can grant one food security if there simply is not any food to gain access to. This comes in light of a global surplus in food production (as estimated by INGOs and IGOs). This dogma of a trade-based solution to food insecurity, known as the *neoliberal* or *corporate food regime*, is challenged by the idea of *food sovereignty* – a food regime which proposes that states be empowered to be self-sustainable in providing food for itself in order not to fall victim to the volatility of international economic interactions which may dictate an actor’s ability to access global food supplies.

³¹⁶ Sen, 1980

In the recent past, the international trend in food insecurity has been observed to be one characterised by a lack in access – what Thurow calls a “damning indictment of the world’s food-distribution system.”³¹⁷ Although global food production theoretically outpaces demand, it is not realised in practice. Food shortages in areas around the world as diverse and spatially removed from one another such as Tunisia, Pakistan, Mozambique, China, India, and Chile³¹⁸ (among others) have led to rioting, political upheaval, malnourishment, and death. Africa and many parts of Asia remain most liable to be negatively affected by this failure of the international distribution system, marking these regions as being perennially at risk of not being able to access food (and thus food insecure).

Malawi is one such nation. Since the country’s independence from Britain, it has combatted numerous cases of widespread hunger. With the advent of the 21st century, however, the country’s food problems have become perpetual. Since 2001, Malawians have been increasingly at risk of being undernourished. Between 2001 and 2015, the state experienced widespread flooding on several occasions, destroying large swathes of the state’s annual agricultural yield. Many have pointed to these events as the reason why the state is unable to stave off hunger, putting Malawi’s problems squarely in the hands of natural phenomena beyond human control. The problem, however, is that the dynamic between Malawi’s experience with flooding and its food problem has been misconstrued – reporting of the incident has largely and implicitly labelled Malawi’s food problems as a *famine* by attributing the destruction of the maize crop as a the cause of its hunger problem.

The idea that Malawi’s experience with flooding has caused an insufficient level of food, and therefore hunger, ignores two crucial aspects of food insecurity: (1) that global food production outpaces demand, and (2) that the dominant food regime espouses trade as the route to food security. With that in mind, Malawi should be able to trade its way to food security regardless of flooding, drought, or any other factors which inhibit the domestic supply of food. Malawi’s hunger problem is not one of availability, it is one of access. Malawians are food insecure as they are unable to afford food – not because none is available.

³¹⁷ Thurow, 2010: 102

³¹⁸ DeHaemer, 2011

Foreign aid's role in perpetuating the food insecurity in Malawi, therefore, rests on its capacity to promote the inability to afford food at the national, household, and individual levels. Bilateral foreign aid to Malawi makes up approximately 40% of the national government's budget. Such a large percentage of dependence on external fiscal support has, it is argued, led to several negative consequences for the country's economic position. Not only does a country's governmental bureaucracy swell with the presence of large amounts of foreign aid, but such bloating of government – coupled with an increased budget - may promote the likelihood of rent-seeking behaviour.

A government dependent on foreign funding for a large percentage of its revenue is increasingly incentivised to ensure that the flow of external fiscal support remains stable. In order to achieve this outcome, recipients aim to sate any conditions set by donors. As such, the fate of a government's policies lies in the hands of the donor. Recipient governments may become largely apathetic towards the expectations held by its citizens in lieu of those expectations held by donating entities. This may translate into a perversion of policy making whereby the national electorate is supplanted with a foreign constituency which bankrolls the continued operation of government activity.

For Malawi, foreign aid has assisted in funding agricultural subsidy programs, providing fertiliser to hundreds of thousands of the country's poorest smallholder farmers. As a result, the state has experienced high levels of economic growth as farmers are able to produce more food, thanks to the improvement of soil fertility. If Malawi was not subject to the international corporate food regime, the increase in agricultural output would be a welcome boon. However, as already noted, the increased production of food locally should have little impact in a world which already produces more than enough food to meet global demands. Food grown locally is not necessarily consumed by those who have grown it, but is instead sold in order to earn a basic income.

In a cruelly ironic scenario, the income earned by selling agricultural products, however, remains wholly inadequate as a means of ensuring food security. International food prices remain volatile due to circumstances beyond Malawi's control – as is evident when considering the impact which the oil price, various natural disasters, and other elements have upon speculation surrounding international food supplies. Under a regime

which dictates trade as a path to overcoming food insecurity, Malawi remains locked in a status quo which sees to its perennial inability to access food via the market. Although many farmers grow foodstuffs, it is pertinent to note that the overwhelming majority of all agricultural output in Malawi is not edible. Tobacco alone makes up roughly 50% of the state's agricultural yield, with other cash crops such as sugar, cotton, and tea making up a larger percentage of the state's agricultural output than maize and other staple foods. Even if the state were to follow tenets of food sovereignty, a sea change in agriculture would be needed; tobacco, sugar, tea, and cotton cannot sustain life.

Malawi has a largely rural population – an unsurprising fact given that people tend to live where work is available; the agricultural sector in Malawi is the biggest employer, with 90% of all those employed working within the sector. Additionally, it should be noted that for every Malawian who is employed, two more are unemployed. This does not account for those not actively looking for work – such as the elderly and the young. In effect, more than 66% (or two thirds) of the population's food security rests upon the earning potential of the 33% of the labour pool who are employed. Agriculture, unfortunately, is a low-income sector as it falls on the low-end of the value chain. For example, a farmer growing tobacco must sell 1,75 kgs of tobacco in order to afford a pack of cigarettes containing a mere 12.5 grams of the leaf (140 times less). This trend holds for any product which needs post-harvest processing.

In light of the above, it should be no surprise that Malawi's largest exports are agricultural products. On the other side of Malawi's current accounts, however, it is important to note that the nation is a net importer of goods. Food is one of the goods which are imported – both as a processed and unprocessed product. Regardless of the level of post-harvest production, other externalities (such as transportation and logistical costs) raise the price of food. Processed goods (such as electronics) are even more expensive due to this dynamic. The relative earning potential of Malawians working in the agricultural sector is outweighed by people working in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

Foreign aid to Malawi only exacerbates this structural problem. Donors demand good economic management and development from recipient nations: a variable largely operationalised in terms of economic growth. In order to keep up flows of foreign aid,

therefore, Malawi's government has targeted growth. The substantial period of growth experienced by Malawi was driven by increased output per person in the agricultural sector, thanks in part to the subsidised fertiliser program initiated by the Malawian government. This growth, although appealing conditions set by donors, has been unstable and unsustainable. The growth has been erratic: between 2009 and 2013, growth rates ranged from 1.9% to 9.5%.

The perpetuation and promotion of Malawi's agricultural economy is a consequence of government policy and comes at the expense of a much needed long term developmental trajectory which is able to diversify the country's economic makeup. Infrastructure, for example, is drastically underfunded and poorly run, ultimately negatively impacting investment flows into the country. Investment into the booming agricultural sector will continue to outpace investment in secondary and tertiary sector initiatives.

Rapid economic growth, though lauded, does also merit a caveat: a rapidly growing country may overheat, eroding any gains in purchasing power achieved by growth in the first place. In other words, any increase in wealth may be counteracted by inflation, thus maintaining the status quo. This problem is compounded by the above mentioned trade imbalance (a trade deficit of US \$800 million in 2012): the mere imbalance in value of traded goods has caused a shortage in the state's foreign exchange reserves and has drastically depreciated the country's currency. Between July of 2010 and January of 2015, the Kwacha fell in worth from US \$0.0070 to US \$0.0020. This continues a gradual downward trend in the currency's worth over the decade. As a result, products imported are more expensive and the gains from growth have been eroded by inflation.

The perpetuation of Malawi's economic reality firmly reinforces Malawi's position as a state on the periphery of the global economy. A world systems theory approach suggests that core states create and recreate the forces which benefit themselves at the expense of the periphery and semi-periphery. With foreign aid's proposed role in promoting food insecurity via economic stagnation, the exploitative relationship signifies the entrapment of Malawi in the vicious cycle present in the global south.

With foodstuffs among the country's biggest imports, the prognosis for the country's food security remains precariously poised. Food will remain expensive relative to the purchasing power of the majority of the population who work low income jobs. The gains in purchasing power via high levels of growth will be eroded with the accompanying inflation and a weakened Kwacha. Foreign aid's role in perpetuating malnourishment rests upon its ability to perpetuate the status quo of the agricultural economy. In aiming to appease donors with high growth, governmental policy has focussed on short-term agrarian yields in lieu of long term development: retarding economic diversification and maintaining the state's agrarian identity.

Appendix

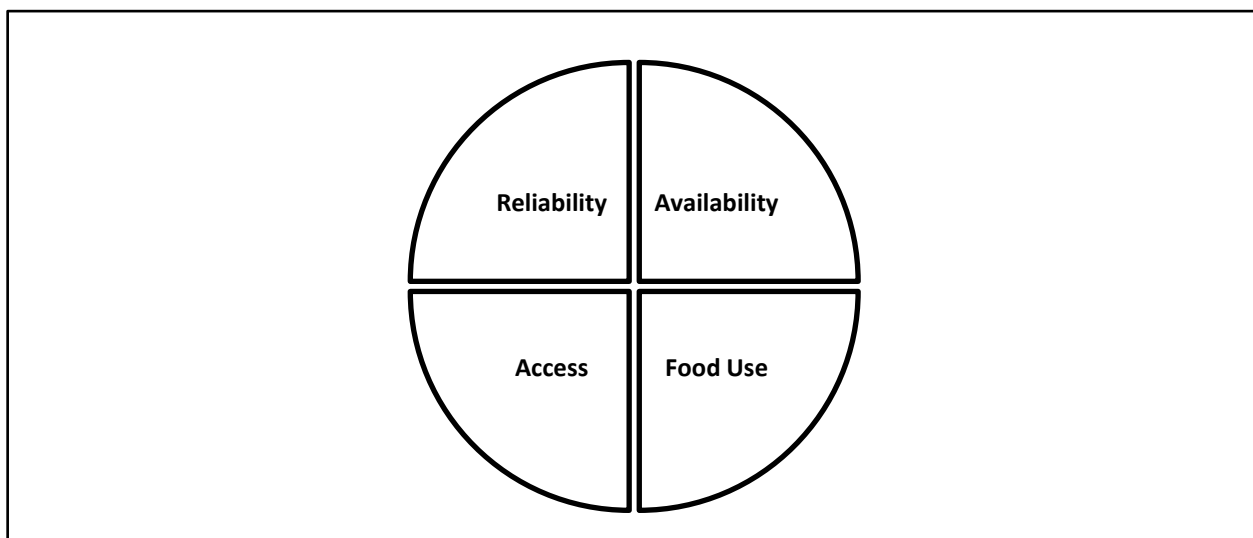


Figure 2.1 – the components of food security. If any one of these components is missing, an actor cannot be said to be food secure

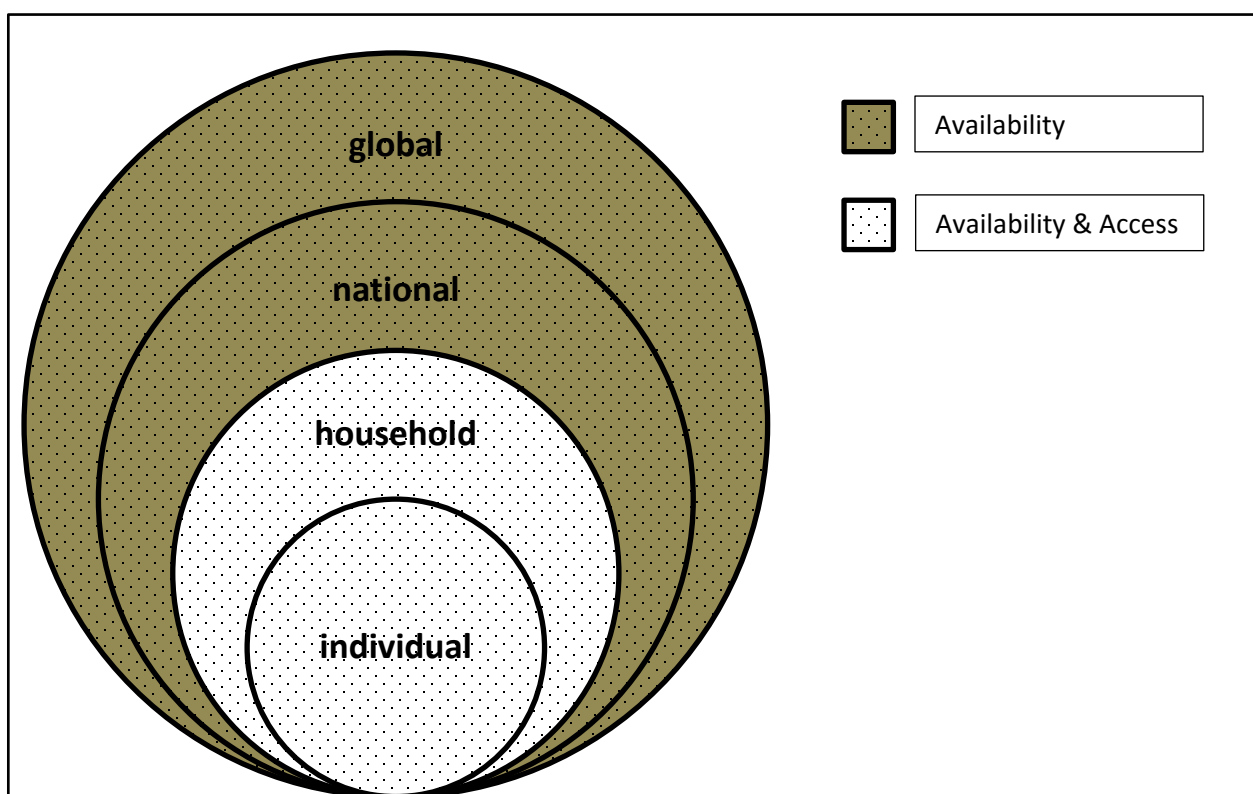


Figure 2.2 – diagram illustrating the nested nature of food security at the four different levels as they relate to availability and access

Year	GDP Growth Annual (%)	GDP (current US\$)
2000	1,6	1,743,506,286.6
2001	-5	1,716,502,069.3
2002	1,7	2,665,158,942.9
2003	5,5	2,424,656,666.1
2004	4,9	2,625,127,097.7
2005	2,8	2,754,995,876.6
2006	2,1	3,116,789,657.9
2007	9,5	3,647,817,218.6
2008	8,3	4,276,769,712.3
2009	9	5,030,639,934.4
2010	6,5	5,398,616,984.6
2011	4,3	5,627,898,036.6
2012	1,9	4,240,492,848.8
2013	5	3,705,386,789.6

Figure 4.1 - Malawi's growth rate per year, ranging from 2000 to 2013

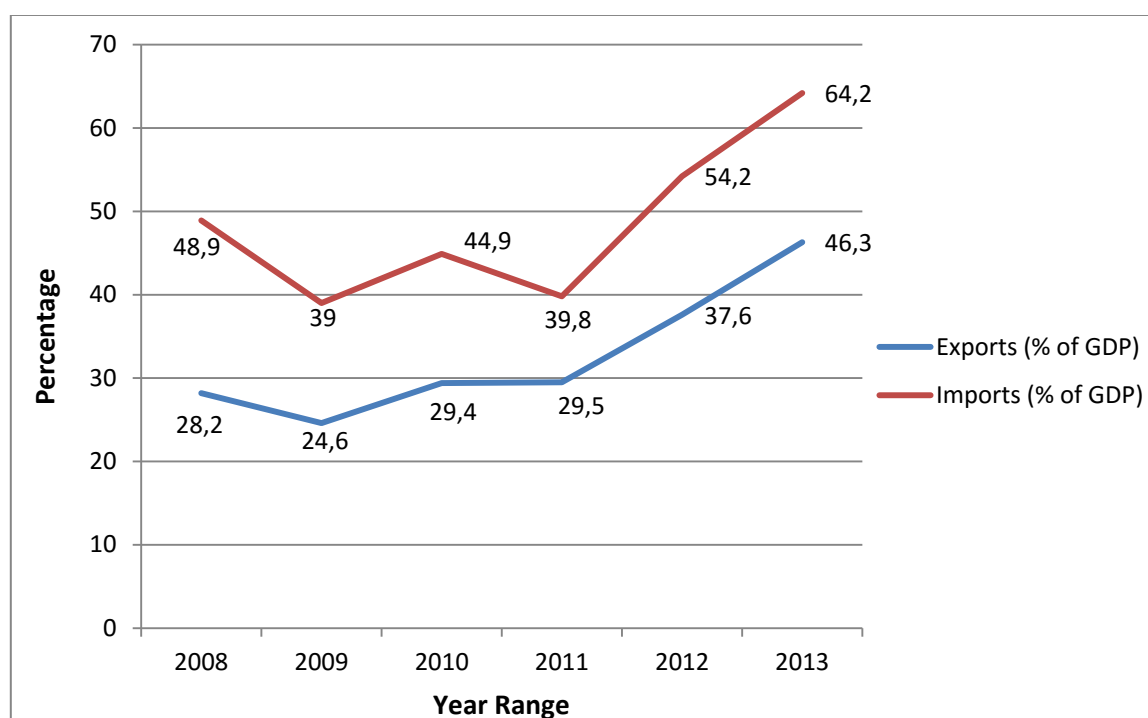


Figure 4.2 - The change in Malawi's imports and exports between 2008 and 2013, as a percentage of its GDP at the time

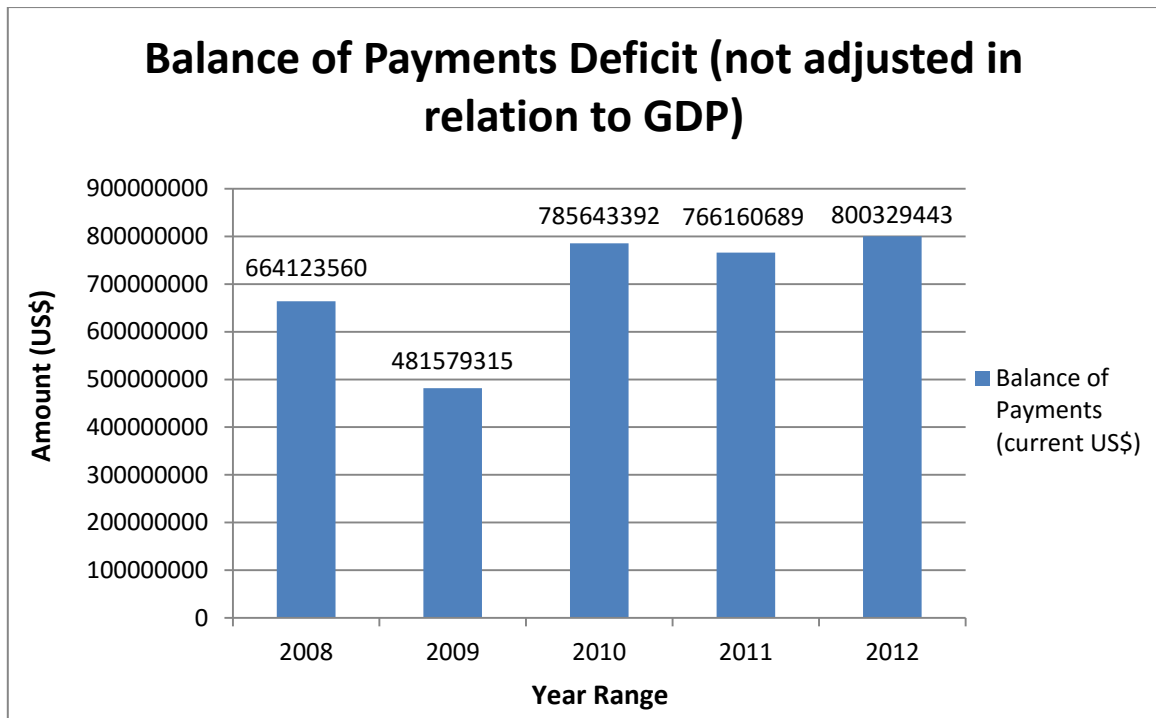


Figure 4.3 - Malawi's Trade Deficit between 2008-2012, measured in current US\$ value

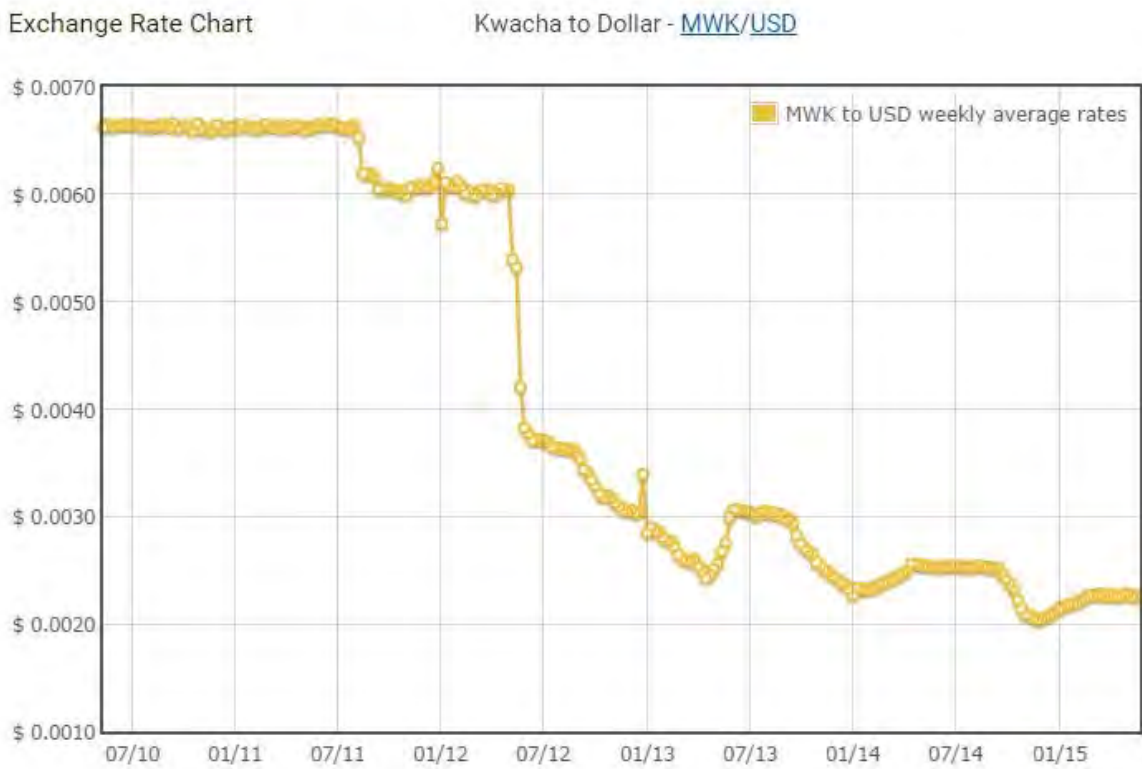


Figure 4.4 - The Kwacha's exchange rate change between August, 2010 and May, 2015

Year Range	Change
1991-1995	-25%
1995-1997	+33%
1997-2004	-20%
2004-2009	+50%
2009-2010	-22%
2010-2011	-37%

Figure 4.5 - *The change in tobacco prices, as a percentage, between 1991 and 2011*
(Masanjala, 2011)

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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