34.1 Introduction

Governance is broadly defined as the exercise of power in an institutional context with the main aim of directing, controlling, and regulating activities concerned with the public interest. It includes but traverses government to denote how people govern themselves in terms of accountability, legitimacy, and transparency. On the other hand, food security denotes access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Its essential elements are the availability of food and ability to acquire it. Conversely, food insecurity is the lack of access to sufficient food and can be either chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity is a continuously inadequate diet resulting from lack of resources to produce or acquire food. Transitory food insecurity, however, is a temporary decline in a household’s access to enough food. The worst of transitory food insecurity is famine.

Therefore, governance of food security is about the exercise of power within institutional contexts, particularly crafted to direct, control, and regulate activities concerned with food security whereby these institutions are viewed by citizens as legitimate, accountable, and transparent. The ultimate objective of governance of food security is to ensure the availability and ability of the populations to acquire food for an active and healthy life.

However, neither the classic definition of governance as government immune from the scrutiny or global governance, nor the conventional definition of food security as a mere availability and ability to acquire food are sufficiently broad to encompass the requirements of food security governance during the 21st century. At least two factors militate against any non-critical adoption of such narrow definitions:

First, governance of food security during the 21st century differs markedly from that of the pre-Second World War era. Globalization has contributed to a process of increasing integration in the world’s economy and even producing a global culture of consumerism, arts, and music. There is also the integration of global markets, rapid advances of technology, information and communication technologies, highly skilled labour mobility, and flow of investments, global capital and multilaterals operating at a global scale. The globalization of production and products from consumer goods to automobiles, clothes, food, and manufacturing has contributed to an emergence of a dynamic and interdependent world interlocked with vibrant networks and transactions.

One implication of this integration is that globalized food products and production also means the existence of a global network of trade and commerce on a large variety of food products. For example, Coleman, Grant, and Josling (2004: 3) lament,

Despite its rootedness in place and its dependence on the natural rhythms of the seasons, the life cycles of animals and the climate, agriculture is changing rapidly in character as it becomes drawn into globalizing processes in the economy, the world of politics, and culture. As an economic activity, it is losing its exceptionality and becoming one sector among others contributing to economic growth. Politically, the long-standing protective mantle of the nation-state is yielding to new forces, new rules and new constraints defined at regional and global levels.

The emerging governance of food security regime is not only regionally and globally driven, it operates in conjunction with a myriad of powerful institutions, some of which transcend food to health (WHO), intellectual property rights, biodiversity (CBD), trade regime and intellectual property rights (WTO/TRIPS). The new policy space as Coleman, Grant, and Josling describe it is marred with power asymmetries, conflict ridden, and dangerously susceptible to manipulation and high passions engendered by social movements and global justice activism.

So much entangled are food and other security domains that Nestle (2003: 265) warns against the most dreaded scenario linking food safety, food security, and national security. He called “food a biologi-
cal weapon”, with a particular concern being made about the role of biotechnology in developing bioterror weapons. In his words:

The research methods used to transmit desired genes into plants could easily be adapted for nefarious purposes: creating pathogenic bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics or able to synthesize lethal toxics, or superweeds resistant to herbicides (Nestle 2003).

To be sure, despite its significance, as purported by Nestle above, no area of the current debate on governance has had such a low profile as food security governance, despite the myriad of global food problems which occupy the world’s conscience, from famine to food safety and global food-related disease scares. This omission cannot be explained because of irrelevance or lack of genuine interest in the significance of governance to food security. It certainly cannot be explained on the grounds that a ‘good governance’ regime in food security already exists. It clearly does not. This omission has been the cause of concern for all sectors of society; the economy, political actors, scientists and policy-makers alike, and in particular the impoverished sector of humankind which suffers both chronic and transitory food insecurity.

Second, a notion of food security governance within the context of industrialized, globalized, and highly commercialized food markets by necessity implies more than the mere availability of, entitlement and ability to acquire food. The global food scares which characterized the closing decades of the 20th century (BSC, SARS, Avian Bird Flu, vCJD) are clear signs that while the current level of scientific and technological developments could ensure food availability, the broader objective of food security is difficult to guarantee. The notion that Food Kills by Pennington (2003) offers one of the most succinct descriptions of the history of the most lethal outbreaks of food related diseases such as BSE and vCJD, among others. He warned that the lessons of past outbreaks were not heeded and wondered whether the lessons of recent outbreaks have been learned to prevent them happening in the future.

34.2 Illustration: Food Security as Food Safety

First, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), popularized as mad cow disease, first appeared in the UK in 1986, when cattle started to exhibit strange symptoms of nervous collapse. The disease is caused by cows eating other cow meat and bone meal via high protein feed. It caused degeneration of the brain where afflicted cows eventually became uncoordinated and difficult to handle (Wells 1987: 419). The New Scientist (29 January 1986) described the disease as belonging to the so-called “unconventional slow viruses, which includes scrapie in sheep and goats, chronic wasting disease in mule and deer and transmissible mink encephalopathy. In a sense, the disease has a wide variety of ways to be transmissible through both domesticated and wild animals, thus affecting the whole food chain.”

The disease struck in Britain again in 1996, considered one of the major outbreaks, and included many countries interlocked in livestock trade, in particular Britain, France, Germany, Canada, the USA, and Japan among others. In 1997 most European countries admitted the existence of BSE, which prompted the EU to issue measures intended to curb the spread of the disease. Import restrictions as well as other quarantine measures and slaughter of animals suspected of having acquired BSE were imposed.

The discovery that BSE is transmissible to humans, and that humans could get a different variant of the disease as 146 patients in the UK alone died of the human form of mad cow disease, known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), has aggravated an already desperate situation (Coghlan 2004). The interface between what food humans eat and the variety of diseases detectable or undetectable illustrates the increasing vulnerability to food and food-related threats and hazards that fall well within the twin paradigms of food security governance and food safety on a global-scale.

Apart from the fact that BSE and its variant CJD are menacingly dangerous diseases, they can also spread globally in countries that are not really suffering from chronic or transitory food insecurity. It conflates food security and food safety not at the national or regional level, but globally, giving credence to the view that food security in the 21st century requires a more proactive global partnership and networks that transcend government and multilateral organizations and include the currently vibrant global justice movement, activities, and NGOs.

Second, the case of Avian Influenza is well documented and its implications for global food security are horrendous. According to WHO, Avian Influenza (also known as Asian flu from the 1957 outbreak in China) is an infectious disease of birds caused by type
A strain of the influenza virus. The disease, first identified in Italy more than 100 years ago, occurs worldwide. Migratory waterfowl – most notably wild ducks – are the natural reservoir of avian influenza viruses, and these birds are also the most resistant to infection. Domestic poultry, including chickens and turkeys, are particularly susceptible to epidemics of rapidly fatal influenza. For example, during the 1983-1984 epidemics, the virus caused a mortality level in poultry approaching 90%. During the 1999-2001 epidemics in Italy, the virus mutated within 9 months to a highly pathogenic form causing the death or destruction of more than 13 million birds.

A subsequent development after so many outbreaks of Avian Flu, the first documented infection of humans with an avian influenza virus occurred in Hong Kong in 1997, when a strain caused severe respiratory disease in 18 humans, of which six died. The killing – within three days – of Hong Kong’s entire poultry population, estimated at around 1.5 million birds, reduced opportunities for further direct transmission to humans, and may have averted a pandemic. The most recent cause for alarm occurred in January 2004, when laboratory tests confirmed the presence of avian influenza virus in human cases of severe respiratory disease in the northern part of Vietnam and China.

In essence, in the 21st century (as we have already experienced during the outbreaks of BSE), with the Avian Bird Flu the old notion of food security defined in terms of food availability, access, and quality would increasingly be relegated less emphasis in the broader security debate. It has been argued that the scientific and technological developments during the last century have already mustered the capacity to produce sufficient food to feed the world. But the old regimes of entitlement and access, particularly for the unfortunate sectors of humankind, sadly still loom large.

### 34.3 Conflating Securities: Human, Food and National

Three plausible interpretations could be put forward as to why food security governance remains on the back seat of the debate, although global food governance institutions do exist. First, it can be explained in relation to two competing definitions of security: human security and national security. For most of the post-Second World War period, particularly during the Cold War, security was predominantly defined as national security. Military security was the dominant concern of national security, with its evident economic and political connotations. Cold War architects considered national security the defining element of national sovereignty. Concerns with military expenditure predominated over concerns with human security – defined as:

> A condition of existence in which basic human needs are met and human dignity, including meaningful participation in the life of community can be realized. At the most basic level, food, shelter, education, and health care are essential for the survival of human beings (Thomas/Wilken 1999: 3).

So food security is essentially part of human security and as such demands a redefinition of the concept of security. This conceptualization was absent during the Cold War, when the heightened ideological divisions between Western and Eastern blocs in many instances sacrificed human security for the sake of achieving national security objectives.

Secondly, it was expected that with the end of the Cold War the emphasis would shift from military to human security. The triumph of multilateralism has contributed to a new and emerging global governance regime, and it was expected that this would foster a new ‘humanitarian’ understanding and therefore make it possible for humankind to reap the positive outcomes of the democratic peace dividend. Sadly, this has not been the case. Indeed, in some parts of the world, particularly war-torn and famine-stricken countries, the end of the bipolar Cold War has instead produced new forms of polarization ( ethnic, religious, economic, regional etc.) that have undermined both state as well as human security (Salih 1999: 132–133).

Thirdly, food security governance should entail the accountability of the governors to the governed through binding commitments, to which most developing countries’ leaders are probably fearful of subscribing. The current global mind-set is premised on food trade and competitiveness. Thus commitments to ensure the food security of potential competitors are imperative. These could deter the largest food producing and exporting countries from making concessions in the areas of subsidies and market access to developing countries.

While large food exporting countries and regional entities supply food in complex emergencies – for famine relief and disaster prevention - they are less keen to support long-term food security, including such global visions as food-for-all and a hunger-free world. In short, there are serious food security governance issues at the national, regional, and global
levels, so we must look more closely into the linkages between these and the general debate on governance.

The new forms of polarization could be summarized in terms of food affluence-related food security driven crises – such as food related outbreaks of infectious diseases in the industrially advanced or high-tech modern food production systems – and underdeveloped low food productivity food security problems associated with developing countries.

#### 34.4 Linkages

It might seem from the polarization argument I raised earlier that the 21st century food security governance regime will be highly differentiated according to the level of technology which goes into food production, and it has been translated into food affluence versus food poverty. On the contrary, none of the elements of the conventional definition of food security commonly referred to as “access by all at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life, including availability and the ability to acquire it” has been fully obtained (Reutlinger 1987). The persistence of ‘Famine that Kills’ (de Waal 1996, 2004) and ‘When Food Kills’ (Pennington 2003) has only magnified the problem and made the joints of dualistic vision of two different governance regimes catering for different lives and different needs absurdly cruel and analytically fraudulent.

The current change in the type, patterns, and magnitude of consequences associated with leading healthy life is not just by ensuring food safety, but also by ensuring that an interface between human and non-human diseases is curtailed. This cannot be ensured by subsuming food security under economic governance and financial and market security regimes under which the global market operates – food security is a governance in its own right. Apparently, all four aspects of food security (availability, access, stability, and quality) are matters for a governance regime that underscores the centrality of food as an indispensable part of the support system for human life. In this respect food security encompasses more than the economies of food production, consumption, distribution, and marketing. As such, food security cannot be guaranteed through effective and functioning economic, science, and technology governance institutions alone. Nor can it be ensured through policy reforms dealing merely with economic regulatory frameworks and instruments with societal and political pressures to ensure that these regulations are acted upon.

In the food security domain, governance is part of a broader context, linking the physical environment health as well as the socio-economic and political aspects of society. This in turn is linked to a global governance regime that has designed policies to respond to global food insecurity. These include buffer stock systems, food price stabilization programmes, food aid, financial food facility schemes, trade policies, and food imports. These conventional food security-cum-safety issues are compounded with recent developments in global trade regimes on food and food products engendered by globalizations (Paarlberg 2002; Roberts/Orden/Josling 2004; Burch/Rickson/Lawrence 1996; Goodman/Watts 1997; Wilson 2001). These developments signalled that there are more non-food entries of food security governance in the 21st century than ever in human history.

Although national and global before food security policies are important for fostering food security, these are often influenced by other non-food policies such as marketing, trade regimes, and transport. Taken on their own they cannot solve problems associated with food entitlement. Obviously, food policies devoid of real concerns with food security have provided poor answers to urgent and critical food needs. Not only have these policies failed to solve food crises, they have miserably failed to ensure long-term food security.

One fallacy associated with the current regime of food governance is that global food security is an aggregate of national food policies designed under the assumption that food self-sufficiency would automatically ensure food security. This argument could be logically constructed, but evidently logic is not always right and here is a case in point. It is not possible to translate food self-sufficiency into food security without a proper agricultural infrastructure, without credit and extension schemes, and without public food distribution policies. The next question is what the main characteristics of food security governance are and how they could contribute to the national and global public policy governance debate.

#### 34.5 Food Security and Democracy

The governance of food security involves many stakeholders – it encompasses both government and society. The significance of multi-stakeholder governance stems from its ability to combine the efforts of all
concerned with food security. It includes government, farmers, environmentalists, the social justice lobby, human rights groups, the ‘right to food’ activists, food technology producers, and exporters.

The political dimension of food security governance is particularly important because it is only in a democracy that such a regime could be put into practice. This means that for any government to be legitimate, its authority (the legitimate exercise of power) should derive from periodic and regular free, fairly contested elections with inclusive participation. Popular sovereignty is exercised and expressed in the daily practice of political and human rights, guaranteed under constitutional and legal arrangements to restrain the holders of power and to protect those who could be subject to their whim. The holders of political power are held accountable not only to parliament and the state’s regulatory institutions but also to the people. The executive branch is also held accountable by law through an independent judiciary and other legal and regulatory frameworks.

Even by the experiences of food-related diseases which were global in nature, it was evident that old democracies (Europe, USA, and Canada) dealt with the case of BSE or mad cow disease and other epidemics more transparently than non-democratic or even new democracies (China, Vietnam, and Russia). Because democracy renders the governors responsive to the governed, old democracies were able to openly inform their populations and the world within a relatively shorter period of time to take the necessary precautions, than for instance in the case of China or Vietnam where disclosures were made only under immense international pressure. One would argue that, thanks to the new democratic dispensation the world is experiencing today, many governments the world over are more prone to push issues of national pride to the side (Pennington 2003; Rowell 2003; Ridely/Baker/Baker).

It is obvious that only in democracies are food policies freely negotiated and binding policies conceived, targets set and implemented, and reviewed in order to gauge compliance with the government’s commitments. When governance reflects public preferences it is likely that food will be at the top of the list of priorities. In a sense, governance should be about understanding political institutions’ interactions with policy domains such as food security policies and how to make them work effectively also, and largely, for the poor. Those negatively affected by food policies should be able to use the institutions of governance to hold their government responsible. It is essential that citizens are able to question the record of governments that allow food shortages and famine to ravage their country.

In common with the dominant debate on economic and political governance, food security governance is also about “institutional governance building and supporting cultures of rights and rules that make possible the agreements represented in coalition and common understandings” (March/Olsen 1995). A culture of rights and rules, common understandings and agreements, is as important for the governance of food security as for fostering a polity based on democratic cultures and values. One cannot ensure the one without the other.

So proactive food security governance can be summarized as follows:

- Exerting pressure on government and others involved in food security policies;
- Maintaining accountability and oversight to ensure compliance with commitments made;
- Making corrective measures when policy targets are not met within a specific time frame;
- Establishing an administrative regulatory framework to improve food availability, access, and quality.

A food governance regime needs to ensure the active participation of each layer in this multi-stakeholder approach, otherwise food policies cannot be put into effect. Of course, it is naive to think that there are no vested interests or power structures informing the relationship between the diverse stakeholders. But the fact that an institutional framework has been created for self-governing as well as for negotiating interests is an important step towards breaking the monopoly over critical issues such as national and global food policies.

34.6 Illustration: Food Security, Food Scarcity and Famine

Here I provide two trajectories: one deals with the case of Ethiopia and the other with Zimbabwe in the African continent in order to illustrate the linkages between authoritarianism and famine. First, the case of Ethiopia offers an illustration of the relationship between democracy usurping the contention that democracy is not just about the principles but the practice. During two distinct periods of despotic rule: a) during the 1972–1974 famine, Emperor Haile Selassie’s government was hesitant to confront the popula-
tion or declare parts of the country as disaster regions. This famine has among other things contributed to wide discontent and political agitation, which ultimately contributed to a military socialist coup in 1974. Famine struck again during 1984–1988, known in the annals of human consciousness as the “Great Ethiopian famine”, attracting worldwide attention and condemnation of the slow response of Mengistu Haile Mariam’s and his junta. As if famine is not enough, the war against several liberation fronts in Eritrea, Tigre, Afar, Somali, and Oromo populated regions intensified. Because of the authoritarian nature of government, the complete news blackout about the famine, the Ethiopians depended on foreign news sources about the famine in their own country. The forcibly implemented settlement programme as a response to the 1972–1974 famine was a complete disaster and, in fact, the new settlements because hotspots of poverty and in some cases famine.

Since the collapse of the military socialist regime in 1991, Ethiopians have begun to enjoy some democratic rights and have become more vocal in making demands on government to respond to major social problems. The government attitude towards the 2004 famine was different from that of its predecessors. An appeal for famine relief was timely made, NGO operations facilitated, and within a short period of time the situation was contained. The fact that 2005 is an election year also meant that the government will be judged by the electorate on how well it has responded to the famine situation.

I examined the charters or constitutions of the contending political parties in order to attest to whether food security, which is one of the major social problems confronting Ethiopia for millennia, was a major election issue. Unfortunately, the answer is no. Restoring peoples’ dignity by adopting food policies that would ensure food security is somehow subsumed under vague notions of ‘development’, ‘raising the standards of living’, and ‘poverty reduction strategies’. The problem is not that these issues are not important – they are important – the problem is that in authoritarian regimes none of them could be freely debate even when people are not able to attain a minimalist notion of food security, i.e. access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Second, dictatorship or lack of its dialectical other, i.e. of democracy, can turn a food secure country into food insecure country, such as the case of Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe’s inadequate economic and political policies have turned it from a regional bread-basket into a famine stricken country. Since the eviction of European Zimbabweans from their farms by the ZANO-PF militia in 2002, it was estimated that at least two million Zimbabweans are in urgent need of food relief. It is also reported that even when relief food is delivered, the government of Zimbabwe uses it as a weapon against it opponents, denying it to those citizens the ruling ZANO-PF party considers as enemies of the state.

Sen (1999) argues that no famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy, because democratic governments have to win elections and face public criticism, and have a strong incentive to undertake measures to avert famines and other catastrophes. The reverse of this argument is true in the cases of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. Whereas, the absence of democratic rule during Emperor Haile Selassie and Lt. Mengistu Haile Mariam despotic regimes produced some of the worst famines in the history of Ethiopia, the authoritarian ZANU-PF regime of President Mugabe has transformed Zimbabwe from a food exporting to a famine-stricken country. In the following section I articulate the role of social forces in engendering democratic governance for ensuring food security.

### 34.7 Harnessing Change

The globalization of food, the exponential development in food technology from biotechnology to genetic modification, and the global competition for farm animal and plant genetic resources carry with them immense risks and probably some potential opportunities. They have the potential to transform what is meant by food security for subsistence producers and indigenous peoples. At the same time it cannot and should not be left to the monopoly of individual states or corporate whim to maintain minimum standards of sustenance.

Naturally the current regime of governance for global food security addresses some of the current concerns. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Centre, the Commission for Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (GAIN), the Commission on Sustainable Development, the World Food Program (WFP), the Hunger Commission, the WTO Agreement on Trade on Intellectual Property, Food and Biodiversity. There is also a myriad of civil society organizations and NGOs, including the NGOs’ Forum on Food Secu-
rity, the Genome Resources Action International (GRAIN), Rural Advancement International (RAI), and the World Resources Institute etc. However, its direct contribution to alleviating food insecurity for the majority of the world's population is questionable. The gap in perception between global, national, and household food security governance is too great to be bridged by global conventions and treaties alone. It is also doubtful whether the current regime satisfies the requirements for global food security governance set out above.

If politicians felt that their political fortunes are dependent on ensuring food security, food policies in these countries would have acquired a sense of urgency. It is not just an issue for parliamentary committees responsible for oversight. It is more importantly a question of empowering national civil society organizations, NGOs, and pressure groups to exert added pressure on governments to act on food security as a matter of priority.

In the 21st century I contend that governance of food security could then be treated not as a separate and periodic concern, taken seriously only when famine and natural disasters strike, or when outbreaks of epidemics such as BSE and Avian Bird Flu strike, but as an integral part of the overall governance debate. Food safety is no longer a matter for national governments or global corporate power operating in the fields of food science, technology, production and distribution, but also a matter for large and complex institutions reflecting the global-local nexus in this vital arena of human security. But even this broad understanding will not be enough if non-state actors, including the global social justice movement, civil society organizations, NGOs, as well as democracy lobby and advocacy pressure groups and social movements are not able to impress their voice in how food policies are developed and implemented at a global scale. The linkages between human security and food security can never be more obvious and their implications more complex to comprehend.

The governance of global food security could, however, be hugely aided by democratic governance that is responsive to the immediate concerns of citizens. As voters they can influence policies and priorities and can commit public policy to food security targets. So the relationship between democracy and the quest for transparency, accountability, and public participation cannot be isolated from the debate about food security and its opposite, food insecurity, shortages, and famine.

34.8 Conclusion

I attempted to contribute to the conceptualization of security in the domain of globalized food production and food products, implying certain risks emanating from the intensification of food production through the use of new biotechnologies. The existence of a global food market indicates that food safety issues are no longer country-based but traverse national and regional boundaries. This understanding adds to the complexity of attaining both conventional and new conceptualizations of food security. The former deals with articulating the need for the emergence of regimes of food security governance. They are by necessity informed by the democratic dispensations which characterized the late 20th and early 21st century, whereby governance involves state and non-state actors as well as multilateral, corporate, private and global social movements, social justice networks, and NGOs. Admittedly, food governance regimes are more pro-active in old democracies than new democracies and authoritarian regimes. Reconceptualizing food security governance means giving ‘voice’ to those forces which could contribute effectively to an efficient and effective integrated governance regime duly conscious of the global-local nexus in the important sphere of human existence.