Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann. *State Food Crimes*. Cambridge UP, 2016. xii, 274 pp. Bibliography. Index. £19.99, paper.

In the twentieth century, despite the capacity of more-advanced nations to produce and distribute worldwide vast amounts of food, large-scale famines took place, including some in which millions died. In the even more technologically advanced and affluent twenty-first century world, famines continue to occur. This was evident, for instance, in Yemen and South Sudan in 2017. Although negative environmental factors, such as the occurrence of drought in South Sudan, affected food supplies, mass malnutrition and starvation occurred primarily because of the blockage of food aid in the context of civil war and conflict. These famines, therefore, took place because of political decisions. Famines of the twentieth century also took place primarily as a consequence of political decisions and government policies or because state authorities did not take the necessary decisions to alleviate food shortages.

In this study, the author, Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann, explores primarily cases where states "actively deprive citizens of the food to which they previously had access" (14). She argues that famines are caused by "decisions taken by states, or more properly by the elites that govern them" (17). She also examines in her study the responsibilities of states for causing famines and food shortages leading to malnutrition and starvation. State policies resulting in famine should be understood, according to the Howard-Hassmann, as a "state-induced famine" (17). Such famines, the author argues, should also be regarded as "state food crimes," and a part of her study is devoted to discussing how such crimes could be prevented and perpetrators punished. Thus, a good part of the book examines international laws on government responsibilities toward populations over which they have jurisdiction related to food supplies and their distribution.

Howard-Hassmann, in her analysis of state food crimes, relies on a seminal article on international law and famines that was written by legal scholar David Marcus ("Famine Crimes in International Law"). She notes that Marcus coined the word "'faminogenesis,'" a useful term that could be applied to describe state actions that create or abet famine. Marcus, in his article, identifies four types of state famine crimes and establishes four degrees of legal responsibility, providing a useful framework for the assessment and categorization of those crimes. The four levels, from the highest to the lowest, are as follows: (a) famines caused intentionally as a means to exterminate; (b) famines caused through reckless policies and actions; (c) indifference of state authorities to the existence of famine or hunger; and (d) failure to provide effective food aid or policies because of misgovernment, typically because of incompetence or corruption. The first

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two categories suggest intentionality while the latter two do not. Marcus also recognizes that the lowest level of faminogenic behaviour is not necessarily a crime under international law. Howard-Hassmann concludes that Marcus's categories, although useful in the analysis of state-induced famines, are not always discrete, as indifference and incompetence if continued deliberately could imply recklessness or intentionality. The author also notes that in cases of state-induced famines the state had also denied civil and political rights to the population and that "starvation, malnutrition, and food shortages were always consequences of intentional policies" (17-19).

The discussion of Marcus's article, the author's definition of and views on state food crimes, an outline of the overall organization of the book, and the author's aims are contained in chapter 1 (3-21). Chapters 2 and 3, which along with chapter 1 constitute part 1 of this book, give historical cases of nineteenth- and twentieth-century famines. Chapter 2 (22-39) discusses famines that occurred under Communist governments: Ukraine (1930s), China (1958-62), and Cambodia (late 1970s). In chapter 3 (40-58), the Howard-Hassmann examines Amartya Sen's thesis that famines do not occur under democracies. Here, she chooses to look at cases where famines or malnutrition did, in fact, occur because of the actions or inactions of democratic states (in the contexts of colonialism and warfare): the Great Famine in Ireland in the 1840s; the post-World War I famine in Germany, which had been subject to a blockade (the two latter cases involved the British government); and malnutrition among Canada's Aboriginal population in the 1870s.

Part 2 of the book consists of four chapters and is entitled "Contemporary Case Studies." In chapter 4 (61-77), Howard-Hassmann explores the 1990s famine in North Korea under the leadership of Kim Jong-il, the father of North Korea's current leader, Kim Jong-un. In chapter 5 (78-95), the author looks at the food crisis that led to mass malnutrition in Zimbabwe in the first decade of the twenty-first century under the leadership of Robert Mugabe. In chapter 6 (96-113), she examines the economic mismanagement and damaging policies that led to food shortages and malnutrition in Venezuela under the regimes of Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro. In the last chapter of part 2 (that is, chapter 7 [114-31]), Howard-Hassmann assesses Israeli policies affecting food supplies in Gaza—although Gaza was not occupied after 2005, it was still subject to blockades.

In the last five chapters, which constitute part 3, entitled "Implications for the International Human Right to Food" (133-221), the author begins by examining international law that could apply to the four contemporary case studies, as well as to the historical cases. She looks at the four cases of contemporary famines in order to analyze the failures of the international

community to ameliorate or prevent mass malnutrition and famines or to alter the faminogenic behaviour of state leaders. The author also explores the connection between famines and the absence of human rights protections, and she looks at the need for improving institutional capacities to protect human rights. In the final chapter of the book (chapter 12 [214-21]), she argues for the necessity of adopting an international treaty that would protect the right to food.

This book is an ambitious venture with great scope. Unfortunately, its scale makes it virtually bound to have some shortcomings. An important one concerns the author's source base. In her treatment of the famine in Ukraine of 1932-33 (the Holodomor), the author has relied on some important English-language literature, but her source base could have been augmented.[1] In addition, the author has not referred to any historical literature written by scholars in Ukraine, even in English translation.[2] Most studies of the Holodomor have been produced in Ukraine, and important collections of documents have also been published there, as well as in Russia. Some familiarity with this body of literature and sources may have caused the author to treat differently the question of genocide in Ukraine.

In Howard-Hassmann's interpretation of whether the Holodomor was a genocide, it appears that she relies heavily on an article co-authored by R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft ("Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A Reply to Ellman") in concluding that there does not seem to be enough evidence that Stalin intended to starve Ukraine's peasants (25). Following Marcus's approach, the author writes that the actions of Soviet authorities constituted a case of "second-degree reckless faminogenesis." Shortly afterward, however, Howard-Hassmann hedges this conclusion by noting that Stalin's actions did suggest intentionality and that the "categories of reckless and intentional famine slide into one another" (27). In a later chapter, the author writes that the famines in Ukraine and Cambodia showed "elements of politicide," which could be viewed as a type of genocide (136). Leaving open the possibility of an interpretation of genocide, Howard-

[1] See Terry Martin's excellent chapter "The National Interpretation of the 1933 Famine" in his book *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (273-308). See also the interpretative article by Andrea Graziosi "The Soviet 1931-1933 Famines and the Ukrainian Holodomor: Is a New Interpretation Possible, and What Would Its Consequences Be?" Worth noting, as well, is Nicolas Werth's article "The Great Ukrainian Famine of 1932-33."

[2] See, for instance, the short interpretive article by Ukraine's foremost historian of the Holodomor, Stanislav V. Kul'chyts'kyi, "Holodomor in Ukraine 1932-1933: An Interpretation of Facts."

Hassmann nevertheless seems inclined to view the actions of the Soviet leadership in the early 1930s as an example of criminal recklessness.

In looking for the main cause of the famine in Ukraine, the author makes the assertion that the deprivation of the peasants' farmland was the most important factor in causing the starvation of Ukraine's peasants (25). While the collectivization of private landholdings is linked to the famine, it did not cause it. The confiscation of private landholdings to form collective farms did lead to peasant resistance, as well as to chaos in the agricultural sector of the economy and a severe drop in agricultural production in Ukraine. However, the crisis in agriculture did not necessarily have to result in famine. Rather, the drive to fulfill an unrealistically high grain quota imposed on Ukraine, involving the gathering and confiscation of grain following a substandard harvest, was the primary reason that mass hunger broke out, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths from late 1931 to early 1932. This was the first phase of the famine. In the second phase, which began in late 1932 and reached its greatest intensity in the first half of 1933 (causing the deaths of over three million people), the reckless policies involved in the carrying out of unrealistic grain collection targets were intensified and supplemented with punitive measures, including blockades, fines in kind, and the confiscation of other edible products. These punitive measures were enacted to strike a devastating blow against recalcitrant peasants as a social group and against those exhibiting or thought to have pro-independence aspirations. A careful search of published documents from the late-1932 to early-1933 period brings up sufficient evidence to show that the Soviet leadership was concerned about the national question in Ukraine and that in response, it adopted additional measures, including repressive measures, to counteract Ukrainian nationalism. The hunt for Ukrainian nationalists extended to other social groups, targeting especially the intelligentsia and Ukraine's cultural figures. As the national and social questions overlapped in Ukraine, Ukrainian peasants who were identified as kulaks could also be labelled as "Petliurites," that is, partisans of Ukraine's independence. Taking into account the intentionality behind the punitive measures and the factor of the national question, one could, by employing Marcus's framework, easily conclude that the policies and activities of Soviet leaders fall within the top three, and probably all four, levels of faminogenic behaviour.

Many famines occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The author chose to write on some historical famines but not on others. In the case of Communist famines, she chose to write on the 1970s famine in Cambodia but not on the 1980s famine in Ethiopia, which was ruled by a Marxist regime. While drought was a factor affecting food supplies in Ethiopia, the famine was in large part created by government policies in the context of a civil war and war for independence. Control over the distribution

of food was a part of the government's strategy to counteract separatist insurgencies in the north, where famine conditions were severe. A national question existed in Ethiopia and was a factor in the famine, just as was the case in the Soviet Union earlier. The Bengal famine during World War II was also not brought into this study.

This is an important book. Howard-Hassmann clearly shows the connection between state policies and the deprivation of food, which in some cases resulted in severe famines where millions died. The author, a scholar specializing in human rights, has properly stressed the importance of these rights in showing that state leaders have been able to cause or abet famines in those countries where citizens have been stripped of human rights (including civil, political, and economic rights). By applying the legal concepts developed by Marcus, the author has also demonstrated that Marcus's framework offers a useful way of analyzing and categorizing famines and the actions or inactions of state officials related to food policies. The author has shown that studying a wide array of famines together—both historical famines and more-contemporary or recent cases—in a comparative way, is helpful for understanding the relationship between decisions taken by state actors and food shortages, hunger, and famine.

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