# Newspaper Portrayal of Two Bali Talks and Food Security: A Content Analysis Study of Two Newspapers

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**Abstract:** The paper looks into the content of two main newspapers- The Times of India and Hindustan, one an English daily and the other a Hindi daily. The study is done on how these newspapers covered the World Trade Organization talks held at Bali from November 15, 2013 to December 20, 2013. These talks are analyzed arounf the main themes of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), food policy of the Indian government and theoretical framework of development communication as envisaged by Wilbur Schramm, Learner and MacBride Report. Some of the major findings relate to the sources of news, themes and framing of news, critical discourse in the news. The discussion at the end of the paper indicates that food subsidies are important for the poor, conditional cash transfers and food coupons may provide a possible solution to the problem of more uniform distribution of foodgrain, Bali talks were an improvement over Doha Round of talks, reportage was one-sided with farmer bodies left out and coverage favouring the developed nations. It is argued that marginalized sections of society are still left out of the major benefits of food policies in developing countries. **Keywords:** Development communication, food procurement, food subsidy, Public Distribution System, rice,

WTO

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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The Food Security Act in India became a law in September 2013 and aims to provide subsidized foodgrains to the country (The Times of India, online). Under the provisions of the Bill, beneficiaries are to be able to purchase cereals at the following prices:

- Rice at Rs. 3 per Kg and
- Wheat at Rs.2 per Kg
- Coarse cereals at Re.1 per Kg

The intent of the Food Security Act arose out of the Right to Food programme by the Standing Committee onFood, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution where the Committee realized the need to reach out to the poor both under Article 21 of the Constitution of India which provides the Right to Life and under eradicating hunger and extreme poverty under Millenium Development Goals of the United Nations (Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, 2012). The paper addresses the following questions specifically:

- How beneficial are the food subsidies in the Indian scenario?
- Is the implementation of Food Security Law flawed in a densely populated country like India?
- Was WTO Bali really a success story in terms of Food Security?
- Is media portrayal of WTO biased towards advanced economies ?
- What should be done to realize food and nutrition security for all the citizens of India?

## Millennium Development Goals

United Nations has listed eight millennium development goals where targets are to be achieved by 2015. The eight millennium development goals of the United Nations are:

- 1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- 2. To achieve universal primary education.
- 3. To promote gender equality and empowering women.
- 4. To reduce child mortality rates.
- 5. To improve maternal health.
- 6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- 7. To ensure environmental sustainability.
- 8. To develop a global partnership for development (United Nations MDG).

According to Millennium Development Goals Report of 2013, the proportion of people living in developing regions on less than \$1.25 a day has reduced from 47 % in 1990 to 22% in 2010 (United Nations, online) while extreme poverty has been reduced where 700 million fewer people lived in poverty in 2010 than 1990. Similarly the proportion of undernourished people living in developing regions decreased from 23.2 % in 1990-92 to 14.9 % in 2010-12 (*ibid*). According to this report, target of UN to halve the percentage of people suffering from hunger will be achieved by 2015.

In a study by Pingali, Stamoulis and Stringer (2006) it is indicated that key policy lessons learnt from past successes and failures in poverty and hunger eradication show that the following factors are important in enhancing food security and reducing poverty in developing countries: agricultural growth, hunger reduction, appropriate technology, trade, public investment, and development assistance. In the Indian context, too, it has been observed that for Food Security to be a success, the Targeted Public Distribution System needs better administration by states which definitely includes improved infrastructure as the first priority.

In a study by Timmer (2004) author addresses the role of supermarkets in developing countries from a 'food policy' perspective. The author argues that entire food system is being affected by supermarkets, from supply chains impacting small farmers, through traditional marketing channels, to opportunities facing consumers. Timmer tries to outline the context for discussions around food policy focusing on what kind of analysis can best help to understand the impact of supermarkets on the food systems of developing countries. He characterizes 'old' and 'new' food policy paradigms where both focus analytical attention on country level as well as at the household level. The original food policy shown below focused analysis on the links between poverty and food security.

	Food security	Poverty
Country Focus	Market prices: level and stability	Economic growth and rising real wages
Household Focus	Access to Food	Jobs, especially through a dynamic rural
	-incomes	economy, migration and labour-intensive
	-prices	manufacturing
	-knowledge (esp. for micronutrients)	

Source: Timmer (2004)

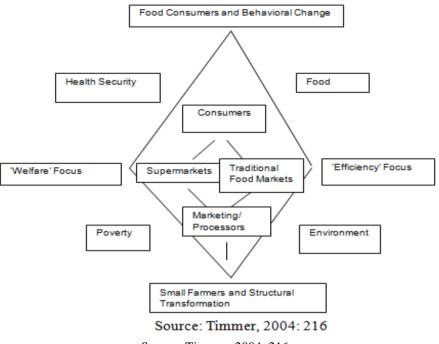
The 'new policy' below stresses the 'double burden' on societies facing substantial degrees of hunger at the same time they face rising levels of nutritional problems of affluence- obesity, heart disease, diabetes, etc. The 'development' or poverty dimension is more sharply focused on the problem of exclusion, at national and household levels. The new policy diagram fills in the cells in the paradigm.

Figure 1.2. The New Food Foncy			
	The 'Double Burden' of Hunger and Obesity	Exclusion	
Country Focus	Government costs of healthcare	"Non-globalizers"	
	and pensions	(Governance?)	
Household Focus	Lifestyle and health knowledge	Small farmers	
	(are we "hard-wired" for scarcity?)	Unskilled workers	
		Low education	

## Figure 1.2: The 'New' Food Policy

Source: Timmer, 2004

The author argues that he has more trust in competition and market forces to raise standards of living instead of unregulated corporate efforts to do good works which actually bring no guarantee that they will actually improve overall social welfare (2004:215). He devices an integrated food policy framework which shows farmers at the bottom, passing their produce up through the marketing system- divided into traditional markets and supermarkets with consumers at the top of the chain.



## Figure 1.3: An Integration of the Food Policy Paradigm

Source: Timmer, 2004: 216

However, this study is inadequate as it focuses more on supermarkets and there is little or no focus on unorganized sector or hypermarkets flourishing in the Indian scenario. I argue that a similar 'food policy' paradigm maybe adopted with small farmers and structural transformation at the bottom of the pyramid and a restructuring of the food policy so that small farmers maybe integrated into the system. Currently in India, the food security system and price policy consist of three instruments: procurement prices/minimum support prices, buffer stocks, and the public distribution system. The problem, therefore is more complex. The cost of this Bill is high, high procurement of grains will lead to demand-supply imbalance thereby leading to inflation, a large export of grains is done in India and Food Security Bill will mean a large Current Account Deficit which means more expensive imports and therefore inflation, this will also put pressure on our foreign exchange. I propose a model that should be achieved if we are to get rid of the problems in the Food Security Bill.

<b>ingure</b> international foreg			
	Food Security	Poverty	
Household Focus	Access to Food - Incomes - Prices - Knowledge (especially for micronutrients)	Jobs, especially through a dynamic rural economy, migration and labour- intensive manufacturing	
Reformation and Restructuring	Improved distribution - Food coupons - Cash or Conditional Cash Transfers encouraging indigenous organizations for the purpose	Reformation of - Small farmers - Unskilled workers - Agricultural Education	

Figure 1.4: Ideal Food Policy

National Food Security Bill still needs a permanent solution and food subsidies and its increase alone is not going to help achieve nutrition, better life and food for everyone.

In yet another study conducted by Hertel, Preckel and Cranfield (2000) on assessing impact of trade liberalization on incidence of poverty, authors argue that trade liberalization does reduce poverty in five focus countries-India, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey and Zambia. In India it is a consequence of declining unskilled wages. Poverty reduction and hunger eradication require a lot more work and a deeper analysis for better functioning of policies in India. Lot more developmental strategies need to be studied in order to achieve a

balanced growth for poor across rural and urban areas. This study revolves around the theoretical framework of development communication theory which envisages the use of communication for social development.

#### **Development Communication Theory**

Main proponents of this theory are Wilbur Scramm, Lerner and development communication began in India with Hutchins Commission and the McBride Report. It is also labeled as the Fifth Theory of the Press and Jamias says that there are three main ideas associated with development communication: purposive, value-laden and pragmatic (1975). Melcote and Steeves saw it as 'emancipation communication' aimed at removing oppression (2001) while Quebral called it "the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential" (1991).

Development communication is about policy-making, stakeholder analysis, participation, risk communication and greatest good of the greatest number through communication. FAO asserted that government policies must encourage effective planning, implementation of communication programmes (FAO, 2014). It is mentioned in the report that the environment and its relation to sustainable agricultural development and food production present an enormous challenge (*ibid*).

Cuilenberg and McQuail identify three main phases in developmental policy-making:

- Emerging Communications Industry Policy until the Second World War
- Public Service Media Policy (1945-80)
- New Communications Policy Programme (1980 to present) which revolved around technological convergence and globalization (2003)

Today when internet and computers are used extensively, development communication is relevant in greater participation and effective use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) for the promotion of development in society. In this study we see how media's portrayal of World Trade Organization talks at Bali and Food Security debate in Lok Sabha promoted the discussion of poverty and hunger eradication, food security and nutrition thereby encouraging self-reliance and self-sufficiency. The method used for the study is content analysis. A detailed discussion on the method used is done below.

#### **Content analysis**

Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text (Weber, 1990:9). Content analysis can be used for many purposes- disclose differences in communication content, compare 'levels' of communication, measure communication content against objectives, code openended questions in surveys, identify intentions of communicator, determine psychological state of persons or respondents, detect existence of propaganda, describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to messages, reflect cultural patterns of groups, institutions, societies, reveal focus of groups, individual, societal attention and understand communication trends (Berelson, 1952).

Content analysis has several advantages:

- Content analytic procedures operate directly on text or transcripts of human communication.
- Good studies use quantitative and qualitative operations on texts.
- Culture indicator from such studies produce reliable data that may span over centuries (Namenwirth & Weber, 1987).
- Culture indicators are used to assess quantitatively relationships among social, economic, political and cultural change.
- This yields unobtrusive measures in which neither sender nor receiver is aware he's being analyzed. Hence there is little danger that the act of measurement will act as a force for change that confounds the data (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrist, 1981).

There are certain problems, too, related to content analysis as a method regarding measurement, indication, representation and interpretation (Weber, 1990:13). However the investigator or researcher must be very clear on the purpose of the study and the reasons for the coding categories.

In this study one hypothesis has been taken up for detailed analysis of the research questions and objectives.

## Hypothesis

The hypothesis adopted for this study is that advanced economies dominated the WTO talks rather than Less Developed Countries (LDCs).

#### Chapter 2 Methods Research Methodology

The representative sample of news stories chosen for this study are all articles covering the WTO talks and Food Security between November 15, 2013 and December 20, 2013. The two main national dailies were selected for the purpose- The Times of India and Hindi daily Hindustan. The dates were selected for the purpose because World Trade Organization talks at Bali were held from December 3 to December 7 and the Food Security Bill was discussed in the Lok Sabha in its winter session from December 5 to December 20. Among all the pages of both newspapers only 14 articles were found which discussed this important issue of Food Security, food subsidies and trade facilitation, food stockholding, export subsidies and package for Less Developed Countries (LDCs). Content analysis was conducted on each of these articles where one article was a single unit of measurement.

## Chapter 3

## **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The data was analyzed and it was found that among all fourteen articles in the newspapers, 13 were from the English newspaper The Times of India which ranks No.1 in circulation according to Indian Readership Survey (IRS) while there was only 1 relevant article among all articles in the Hindi newspaper Hindustan, which is No.2 in circulation after Dainik Jagran, according to IRS. In studying newspaper portrayal of the WTO talks and Food Security nine out of fourteen articles were on The Times Business page while two stories on the Front Page and three were in Times Nation. The coverage of the incident in Times Business page means the story got immense prominence by the editor who decided to place it on the Business page instead of any other one. The stories were mostly reported by Times News Network's own reporter Sidhartha, Dipak Kumar Dash and Subodh Verma. The news organization sending its own reporter to cover the story even to Bali, Geneva goes on to show the issue was given importance by the editor. One story was reported by Reuters and Agencies. Twelve out of fourteen articles had their sources cited.

## Sources: Challengers marginalized

The sources used by the reporter, however, are mainly trade negotiators, trade officials and WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo. Almost ten stories had such WTO officials as sources. Some prominent sources were also Indian officials out of whom Commerce & Industry Minister Anand Sharma has been quoted the most, in almost eleven stories. WTO spokesperson Keith Rockwell was also quoted. Som other prominent sources were Michael Punke, US ambassador to WTO and scientists like Abhijit Das who heads the Centre for WTO Studies at Indian Institute of Foreign Trade. There is, however, only one story in which Indian farmer bodies' opinion was taken. The main problem here is that farmers, challengers of the WTO talks have been left out of the article. Their opinion should have been included as only a WTO official reaction makes the story completely lop-sided. Simply because the marginalized view is not included, the reader is left ignorant about what could be the downside of the 'peace clause' of WTO. Farmers believe that such a trade facilitation agreement is unfair, biased and only promotes a developed country agenda.

Stories have been reported from New Delhi and internationally from Geneva and Bali. WTO talks were crucial for Less Developed Countries as for Latin American countries, Asian countries like India, Pakistan, China, Russia, Bangladesh and Indonesia. In most of these articles United States was only mentioned in four stories while Geneva, Bali and Doha in seven and Asian countries got prominent mention in ten of the stories. This indicates that Less Developed Countries have dominated the talks more than the advanced economies of the European Union which was mentioned only in two stories.

#### Themes and framing in the news

Since the main themes were around Food Security Act and WTO food subsidies was a prominent theme discussed in ten stories- 'food security', 'G-33 alliance' and 'peace clause' are words often used to indicate discussion on these. Other themes discussed are trade facilitation agreement, food stockholding, export subsidies, package for LDCs and Public Distribution system under Food Security while Doha Round, Geneva talks and Free Trade Agreement being discussed in the news, too. One issue repeated often in these articles is that current agreement on agriculture is seen as restrictive as it limits the ability of developing countries to offer subsidies on beyond 10% of the value of produce. Developing countries have been demanding a change in this formula.

Framing of the news included the character of commentary by sources where four articles were laudatory, three were favourable, five articles had a critical tone and one even abrasive and aggressive where at one point Indian source Anand Sharma adopted an aggressive tone in rejecting the proposal in its current form. This stand by Mr. Sharma put India at an important place during the WTO talks. In this case framing of the

news was important as following this stand by the Indian Commerce Minister, the journalist took an argumentative stand talking about why India should change the way it provides subsidies and how Pakistan took a U-turn on the demand for a food security package. As journalistic dimension of commentary is discussed it was found that four articles had a crusading undertone, three articles were argumentative, other articles were critical, cynical and descriptive in style. The tone adopted by the journalist affects the way a reader frames the story and interprets it in his mind. Hence it is important to understand the journalistic style of commentary in the aerticles.

#### Critical Discourse in the news

The word 'historic WTO deal' has been used often in articles. The term has been used six times in headlines, five times in the first sentence and four times in the first paragraph, and once in upper half of a report and the text. WTO deal has been considered 'historic' and important by the reporter. In order to understand the way the discourse is done in the news it was important to understand the positive words being used in the articles. It was found that a positive language for the deal was used only in six articles. The upper half of the report and text included positive words like 'boost to the economy', 'celebrations', 'roared and thumped desks', 'big victory', 'success story'. These words made WTO deal sound like a positive achievement.

However, negative words have also been used in eleven out of fourteen articles studied here for content. As the talks progressed negative words like 'chided' 'change the way', 'face-off', 'kada rukh', 'restrictive', 'knives are out', 'no consensus' were used to describe the talks. Such words were mostly in the headline as 'khaadya suraksha par toot sakti hai baatcheet', 'India-US face-off', 'US violates subsidy norms but chides India', 'India ready to block WTO deal', 'talks stuck', 'US blames India', 'talks fail', 'post-Bali plan may be govt's worry'. Such terms have been used in first sentence, first paragraph, upper half of report, text and in a box within the article.

Discourse within the news stories help understand the way the story has been framed for the nations involved in the WTO talks. Discourse helps understand whether things are favourable for LDCs or for the developed countries.

#### Chapter 4

#### Discussion of Results and Implications of the Study

As the data has been analyzed and interpreted, it is important to discuss the results in the context of the research questions and the hypothesis. One of the questions was :

• How beneficial are the food subsidies in the Indian scenario?

The question has been answered and the food subsidies are viewed as a highly important goal to be achieved for India's poor. Currently Indian government procures grain at the Minimum Support Price and sells it at subsidized rates through public distribution system (PDS). However such support cannot exceed 10% of the value of goods and this cap is likely to rise with the increase in the expenditure. Food security issue has been discussed in all articles and WTO Bali talks have been seen as a victory for India in continuing the food security under the Right to Food programme. Developed countries like US, EU and Canada wanted India to accept a 'peace clause' which offers four years of immunity from penalties imposed for breaching the food subsidy cap of 10% under the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). Food subsidies are beneficial for the country but at the same time this should not serve as a tool for making us more dependent on the developed countries for aid and should not make the poor completely dependent on the programme.

India for a while stood alone against the G-33 countries and even China and Pakistan not supporting it on the food subsidy issue but finally got a breakthrough after India's tough stand on the food subsidy matter. The next question is:

• Is the implementation of Food Security Law flawed in a densely populated country like India?

As discussed earlier Food Security Law is implemented in India largely through PDS which is implemented by the states. Currently there is a huge population of the poor which is even left out of the food procurement programme. Yet conditional cash transfers and food coupons, as depicted in Figure 4 (Ideal Food Policy) may provide a possible solution to the problem of more uniform distribution of foodgrain. Another important research question is:

• Was WTO Bali really a success story in terms of Food Security?

The talks at Bali were seen as an improvement over Doha Round as the 1<sup>st</sup> trade deal was signed since 1995.Over the issue of Food Security India found itself isolated initially but found a breakthrough with the food subsidy being extended. However India is still looking for a permanent solution to the problem, post-Bali talks. Yet another question arises:

• Are advanced economies dominating in WTO talks rather than Less Developed Countries?

As studied in this paper, it is found that the reportage was rather one-sided with no activist being interviewed for the news stories on WTO talks. Farmer bodies were not interviewed, too. While studying discourse, too, it is found that advanced economies often wanted to have their way in subsidy norms while chiding India for their demands. Despite the fact that WTO Director-General is a Brazilian, the talks mostly favoured the developed nations. Most news stories about WTO were about negotiations where the advanced economies were difficult to approve of all requirements of developing countries, even when it comes down to the main issues of trade facilitation, export subsidies, stockholding of foodgrain.

• What should be done to realize food and nutrition security for all the citizens of India?

As regards this question, I devised a diagram whereby it has been indicated that in order for food security to become a reality for a large country like India, food subsidies is not the solution. Although PDS has been successful in Chhattisgarh it is not necessarily a universal solution. As the Food Security Act is implemented across all parts of the country, higher subsidies will mean greater dependence on developed countries. The main aim, however, should be to increase self-reliance, self-sufficiency and financial independence of the small and marginal farmer and the poor. Hence it is suggested that the household focus of the food policy should be provide access to food along with a decent income, price and knowledge to people. Poverty can be taken care of by increasing jobs, especially through a dynamic rural economy, migration and labour-intensive manufacturing. An ideal food policy will only be able to take care of food security with improved distribution which will be based on food coupons or conditional cash transfers. An effort must be made to encourage indigenous organizations for the purpose as those organizations will have a better feel of the local culture and local problems of the farmers. In order to work for the betterment of India's poor reformation and training of small farmers, unskilled workers is required so that they can demand higher wage. For rural areas, agricultural education must be promoted among farmers.

## **II. CONCLUSION**

It may be said that the hypothesis has been proved to be true that advanced countries dominated the Bali talks than the developing countries who are often chided by the developed countries like United States, European Union and Canada. Food Security Act is definitely not the permanent solution to eradicate hunger and poverty. One model for all developing countries cannot be adopted as India has a large number of small and marginal farmers. Newspaper portrayal of WTO talks, however, projects a 'positive' image of WTO trade deal, the first of its kind since 1995 which may be termed as 'unduly optimistic' and 'overly enthusiastic' about a deal which is only a tool in the hands of the developed countries to get their agenda across through developing countries- enhance trade and increase a market for their goods and services within developing countries, thereby generating unemployment for the Indians themselves. Anand Sharma, the Commerce Minister declared it a positive step but ahead of General Elections of 2014, this was a Congress ploy to appease the Indian trade community. Indonesian Trade Minister Gita Wirjawan called the ninth ministerial conference a historic trade-off, which is again yet another ploy of developed countries cloaked in the 'voices of LDCs' officials and industry' where they are only seeking to promote their self-interest by having access to the US and Europe markets. The marginalized sections of society in India are still left out and the vacuum exists.

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#### Appendices Appendix 1 Coding sheet

Benefit of WTO Talk, Food Security and its Newspaper Coverage

- v1. Story identification number:
- v2. Story day (month, date & year):
- v3. Newspaper name and circulation rank:

#### General story characteristics

v4. Story prominence: (Front Page=2; Business Page=1; Inside=0)

- v5. Story origin:
- 1=Newspaper's own reporter
- 2= Times News Network
- 3=Reuters
- 4=Agencies
- 5=Others

v6. Is a source cited: 1=Yes 2=No

v7. What are the sources in the story:
1=Trade negotiator/WTO official
2=Indian official
3=Scientists/Agricultural economists
4=Other country officials
5=Farmer body
v8. Location: 1=Domestic
2=International

v9. If international, then country code: 1=Bali 2=Geneva

3=Doha

v10. Primary country code for countries in talks:
1=Asia (India, Pakistan, China, Russia, Indonesia, Bangladesh)
2=Cuba
3=Latin America(Nicaragua, Bolivia & Venezuela)
4=United States of America
5=European Union (EU)
6=Mexico
7=Brazil
v11. Themes in the news:
Food security
1=Food subsidies
2=Trade facilitation

- 3=Food Stockholding
- 4=Export subsidies
- 5=Package for LDCs

6=PDS

7=G-33 alliance 8=Peace clause 9=Doha Round 10=Geneva talks 11=Free Trade Agreements v12. Framing of news: Character of commentary by sources Evaluative dimension of commentary:1=Lauditory 2=Favourable 3=Neutral 4=Critical 5=Abrasive 6=Other Primary journalistic/stylistic dimension of commentary: 1=Crusading 2=Argumentative 3=Descriptive 4=Summary 5=Critical 6=Cynical 7=Interrogating/Inquiring v13. Discourse Use of the word 'historic WTO' deal in : 1=Headline 2=First sentence 3=First paragraph 4=Second paragraph 5=Upper half of report 6=Text 7=Photo caption 8=Other Use of positive words like 'boost to the economy', 'celebrations', 'roared and thumped desks', 'big victory', 'success story', etc. in: 1=Headline 2=First sentence 3=First paragraph 4=Second paragraph 5=Upper half of report 6=Text 7=Photo caption 8=Other Use of negative words like 'chided', 'change the way', 'face-off', 'kada rukh' 'restrictive', 'knives are out', 'no consensus' in: 1=Headline 2=First sentence 3=First paragraph 4=Second paragraph 5=Upper half of report 6=Text 7=Photo caption 8=Other

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WTO Talks