

Protest Movements against WTO's Ministerial Conferences: A Case Study of Nairobi Ministerial Conference

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Abstract

Developed countries have played a dominant role in the process of globalization. The terms of exchange and trade practices have remained skewed, with the developed states successfully rigging the rules despite the regime of open trade practices resulting from the establishment of the WTO regime. Developed countries are core members of international institutions (WTO, IMF and WB) and they have largely determined policies of these institutions till date. The provisions of the WTO are likely to produce a mixture of positive and negative consequences in the context of developing countries economy. There are some issues under the Agreement of Agriculture which are concern for developing countries. The repercussions of the WTO Agreement and the removal of Quantitative Restrictions on imports are quite alarming. The fall in the prices of agricultural goods and dumping of cheap agriculture commodities from other countries is causing harm to the welfare of developing countries farmers. Developed countries have imposed heavy tariffs to minimize imports, whereas in like India tariffs are low. The continuation of high domestic support to agriculture in developed countries is a cause of concern. At the same time the rich industrialized countries continue to subsidize farmers by giving them direct payments which are exempt from any reductions requirement.. in mid 1990s, various Associations have formed larger alliances to protest against state Government on the issue of various WTO policy. In this process of opposition to WTO these movements in Developing countries have begun to raise a new discourse on democracy and invent political practices associations. On the above backdrop, this paper has tried to find out the reasons for the protest movement against the outcomes of various ministerial conference and particularly the Nairobi conference.

Index terms— remained skewed, with the developed states successfully rigging the rules despite

1 Introduction

hundreds of students from various prestigious educational institutions, including JNU, DU, AMU, Jadavpur University and Allahabad University gathered at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi under the banner of All India Students' Association. Democratic Teachers Federation and other organisations launched a campaign to 'Save Education' in order to exert pressure on the Union Government. Their agitation would continue in New Delhi from December 7 to 14. The intellectuals are protesting against the proposed negotiations at the ministerial conference in the capital of Kenya. Yes, I am talking about the 10th ministerial WTO meeting which was held in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Well-known social activists like Medha Patkar, Yogendra Yadav, Kavita Krishnan, Tanika Sarkar, Harbans Mukhia, etc. raised voice against the proposed WTO policy. Last week retired Chief Justice (Delhi High Court) Rajinder Sachar came out in support of the movement alleging that the government is moving towards opening room for private plunder at the hands of global capital. Justice Sachar heads the organising

1 INTRODUCTION

42 committee; a group of 64 organisations. i The agitated civil society groups organised a whole day meeting at the
43 Constitution Club on December 8, 2015; a few days before the Nairobi conference of the WTO. They received
44 moral support for their cause from BJP leader and former Union Minister Murli Manohar Joshi and former BJP
45 leader K.N. Govindacharya, who addressed the conference. Civil society groups and workers organizations such
46 as Forum Against FTAs, National Working Group on Patent Laws and WTO, Madhyam, New Trade Union
47 Initiative, National Confederation of Officers Association, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and others participated in the
48 national conference. Certain members from South Asian Dialogue on Ecological Democracy (SADED) Vijay
49 Pratap, Marko Ulvila, Pawan Arora, Reeta Kumari and myself were participating the event. Marko Ulvila,
50 a Green Socialist from Finland and Chairperson of Siemenpuu Foundation, supports the protest of students,
51 teachers and social activists in India against WTO-General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) agreement
52 in higher education. ii a) Case study 14 th December, 2015, a day before the official opening of the World Trade
53 Organization's (WTO) 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, global activists urged developing countries to stop
54 expecting solutions from the WTO as negotiations face another impasse after the US, EU, Canada and Australia
55 blocked any 'permanent solution' to reach a deal on public stockholding programmes for food security. Members
56 of civil society on 15 th dec held a protest outside WTO ministerial conference demanding that new issues should
57 not be included in the agenda before concluding the development mandate. "The civil society leaders demanded
58 that no so called 'new issues' should be put on the agenda, particularly while the development mandate has not
59 been concluded. They called for a binding LDC (least developed countries) package and that the World Trade
60 Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Declaration affirms the development mandate. They also pressed for removal
61 of WTO obstacles to food security through the conclusion of the permanent solution for public stockholding, as
62 well as special safeguard mechanism, and disciplines on export competition. iii On the opening day of the 10 th
63 Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, global activists welcomed trade ministers from over 100 countries with a protest.
64 Some 200 activists from 12 countries joined grassroots organizations in Nairobi, Kenya to protest 20 years of the
65 WTO's broken development promises. Simultaneous actions were held in the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan,
66 India, Bangladesh and other countries spearheaded by the Asian Peasant Coalition and the International League
67 of Peoples Struggles. Gacheke Gachihi of Bunge La Mwananchi (Parliament of the People) said, "20 years of WTO
68 have been 20 years of opening up the world to transnational corporate plunder while billions of people languish in
69 poverty, hunger, unemployment, and environmental catastrophes." Wali Haider from the Asian Peasant Coalition
70 said, "The WTO is not about free trade or development. It allows wealthy industrialized countries to heavily
71 subsidize their agribusinesses and dump their produce in other countries according Hindu Newspaper report.
72 Small farmers in poorer countries who are unable to compete are buried in debt and often end up dispossessed of
73 their land and livelihoods. At the same time WTO rules prevent countries from adopting measures to guarantee
74 food security and maintain decent family farmer incomes." Antonio Tujan from IBON International, a think
75 tank working with social movements in developing countries, explained that WTO rules put the "rights" of
76 corporations to profit over human and labor rights. "WTO rules open up countries to foreign investment and
77 thereby making it easier for capital to go where the labor is cheapest and most easily exploited, and where social
78 and environmental regulations are weakest. The WTO encourages a 'race to the bottom' in wages by pitting
79 workers against each other rather than promoting internationally recognized labor standards." Leonida Odongo
80 of Fahamu, a network of movements for social justice in Africa, warned that, "The 10th WTO Ministerial in
81 Nairobi is set to perpetuate the same neoliberal free trade agenda, and more! Developed countries led by the
82 US want to include 'new issues' in negotiations that include proposals to further open up public services and
83 procurement to foreign investors, strengthen protections for foreign investments, tighten intellectual property
84 rights of corporations while restricting the ability of governments to regulate corporate activity for the public
85 interest." Protesters marched in front of the Kenyatta International Conference Centre as Ministers filed in for
86 the opening of the MC10, chanting "20 years of the WTO is enough! No to WTO Expansion, No to new issues
87 in the WTO!" They held banners calling for "Junk WTO. iv The students and teachers are of the view that if
88 the government commits the higher education to WTO during this conference, education in India will become a
89 tradable commodity. Sadly, this is one of the proposed issues of Nairobi conference.

90 An India's perspective, Chamarasa Mali Patil of Karnataka Rajya Ryata Sangh (KRRS) and K. Sellamuthu,
91 president of Thamizhaqa Vivasayigal Sangam, peasant delegates from India shared how under WTO peasants have
92 suffered. Indian peasant communities have been destroyed as a result of cheap imports of oilseeds and rice. Over
93 300,000 farmers committed suicides since the inception of WTO. When India opened up its agricultural markets,
94 corporates such as Monsanto and other agrocoporates entered too selling toxic agrochemicals and GMOs. Many
95 peasants took loans to buy these agrottoxins but failed to pay the lenders because of low agricultural prices which
96 significantly lowered their incomes. This resulted in many peasant suicides. They were blocked all major roads in
97 New Delhi with tractors to force government to listen to their demands. "We are planning a big demonstration
98 in New Delhi soon if the India government compromises in Nairobi", says Sellamuthu, president of Thamizhaqa
99 Vivasayigal Sangam. v According to Ha WonOh and Kim SoonAe, the delegates from the Korean Peasant
100 League and Korean Women Peasants Association South Korea, because of rice imports, Korean farmers are
101 being destroyed as imports cause low prices resulting in low incomes? the countryside is being deserted too. The
102 youth are leaving the farms in search for better pay in urban areas. Elderly folk left on the farms. The debt owed
103 by these farmers has doubled. Corporations such as Cargill stand to benefit as more farmers are destroyed in
104 future. For now Korea has surplus rice. Cheap rice imports means big foreign rice producers are being sustained

105 while local producers are being destroyed. vi As the wave of big Transnational Corporations (TNCs) sweeps
106 across the global in search of new markets and dominance, small family farmers in the developed countries are
107 being trampled. Agricultural markets are flooded by cheap imports from other developed countries. In this US
108 has forced thousands of family farmers change land uses or sell to the government. The government agricultural
109 policies support large farms most of which are part of TNCs value chains. Land concentration is promoted
110 US and EU through the biased farm support schemes. Farm support is tied to the size of the farms given on
111 hectare or acre basis. This means large farms receive much more than small farms. According to Ben Burkett,
112 president of National Family Farm Coalition, agricultural imports from New Zealand (lamb and powdered milk),
113 Brazil (soy beans) and other countries are devastating the rural areas and also lower prices in US. Despite the US
114 support to its farmers, those affected by imports have to prove their case before getting 'crop subsidy transition
115 assistance'. Not all farmers are able to do so. Some end up selling their land to the government. This land is
116 converted into conservation reserves. The WTO, an organisation more powerful than national governments and
117 UN institutions and a destroyer of agriculture has been promoting a globalisation for Transnational Corporations
118 (TNCs) and big powers. Under this organisation, no farmer can be a winner. Winners are only TNCs that control
119 world trade. For them production is not for consumption but for trade to make profits. Trade also is about
120 exploiting the poor countries by rich countries. La Via Campesina together with other social movements have led
121 and continue the struggle against this economic injustice. "To stop them", says Shushi Okazaki "the role of La
122 Via Campesina is increasingly important. Japan Family Farmers movement, Nominren, together with La Via
123 Campesina "To stop them", says Shushi Okazaki "the role of La Via Campesina is increasingly important. Japan
124 Family Farmers movement, Nominren, together with La Via Campesina will build a fair and just society based
125 on sovereignty by breaking down a trade system of multinationals: WTO, Trans Pacific Partnerships (TPP) and
126 Free Trade Agreements (FTA)s. TPP is the worst ever treaty to completely destroy Japan's agriculture that has
127 already suffered a lot under WTO. vii

128 2 b) Outcome

129 After analyzed the case study I sought to emphasize that the outcome of WTO's ministerial conference at Nairobi
130 has a mixed message. One positive note, all members agreed for the first time to a legally binding deal to a
131 promote agricultural trade by removing subsidies for farm exports. However, the final text showed that the
132 some members have given up on the Doha round agenda, a sign that recent regional trade deal have begun
133 to weaken WTO. The Nairobi ministerial provided evidence of the way trade negotiations are likely to evolve.
134 Three major stakeholder among developed countries, the US, EU, and Japan, have began to stitch together far
135 reaching regional trade deals. Consequently, their need for WTO and the extent of concessions they are willing
136 to offer is declining. This does not bode well for many developing countries such as India as WTO provides
137 a better platform to secure a fair trade deal. On the other hand, developing countries like India's stake in
138 subsequent WTO meeting remain high. For the movement, the prevailing system which supports India's PDS
139 (public Distribution system) is insulted from legal challenges by others Countries. But tough negotiations lie
140 ahead before India secures a permanent solutions. Also a safeguard mechanism to protect Indian farmers from
141 import surges or price falls needs to be fleshed out in subsequent meetings.

142 Broadly speaking, Developed countries have played a dominant role in the process of globalization. The terms
143 of exchange and trade practices have remained skewed, with the developed states successfully rigging the rules
144 despite the regime of open trade practices resulting from the establishment of the World Trade Organization
145 (WTO) regime. Heavy subsidization of developed nations' agriculture and the aggressive use of export subsidies
146 by some developed nations to make their agricultural products more attractive on the international market
147 are major causes of declines in the agricultural sectors of many developing nations. It is clear that only a
148 few countries of the developed world utilize the globalization benefits and they continue to exploit developing
149 countries. Developed countries are core members of international institutions (WTO, IMF and WB) and they
150 have largely determined policies of these institutions till date. Hence, it appears that developing countries are
151 the protesters and developed countries the protectors of WTO and other economic international institutions.
152 viii Broadly speaking WTO as an agenda of globalization mainly focuses on expands of world market for
153 considerations of corporate profit. Contemporary economic globalization, which is driven and regulated by
154 WTO, has a direct impact on many civil society's activities. Such as many workers and labour unions claim that
155 WTO agreements increase import competition and threaten their jobs, Environmentalists accuse the WTO of
156 encouraging pollution and preventing governments from defending national environmental standards on the other
157 hand, anti-capitalist protesters consider the WTO as a tool of big business. ix The provisions of the WTO are
158 likely to produce a mixture of positive and negative consequences in the context of developing countries economy.
159 There are some issues under the AoA which are concern for developing countries especially on agriculture sector.
160 The repercussions of the WTO Agreement and the removal of Quantitative Restrictions on imports are quite
161 alarming. The fall in the prices of agricultural goods and dumping of cheap agriculture commodities from
162 other countries is causing harm to the welfare of developing countries farmers. Developed countries have imposed
163 heavy tariffs to minimize imports, whereas in; like India tariffs are low. Due to this, various commodities are being
164 dumped in India. The US is dumping five primary farm commodities in global markets in clear violation of WTO
165 Agriculture rules. It is exporting corn, soybean, wheat, rice and cotton at prices far below then their production
166 cost in an effort to wipe out global competition. The continuation of high domestic support to agriculture in

167 developed countries is a cause of concern as they encourage overproduction in these countries leading to low levels
168 of international prices of agricultural products. At the same time the rich industrialized countries continue to
169 subsidize farmers by giving them direct payments which are exempt from any reductions requirement and which
170 essentially are cash handouts contingent on making adjustments in production. These payments are neither
171 affordable nor helpful in a developing country. The result is that the industrialized countries continue to dominate
172 world trade in agriculture while preventing India and other developing countries from achieving self-sufficiency
173 in food production. Civil society organizations (church groups, national liberation factions, left-wing parties,
174 environmentalists, peasant unionists, antiracism groups, libertarian socialists, and others) were determined to be
175 strong advocates in the fight against WTO policies associated with neo-liberal globalization. In mid 1990s, various
176 Movements have aligned together and have formed larger alliances to protest against state Government on the
177 issue of various WTO policies even as they get a direct confrontation with the institution of WTO representing
178 the global economic and political power. In this process of opposition to WTO these movements in Developing
179 countries have begun to raise a new discourse on democracy and invent political practices associations. xi In the
180 streets of Seattle (1999), Doha (2001), Cancun (2003), Hong Kong (2005), Geneva ??2009, ??2011), Bali (2013)
181 and Nairobi (2015) meeting are all still honouring the memory of Anti-WTO protest movement where many NGO
182 and civil society organizations (church groups, national liberation factions, left-wing parties, environmentalists,
183 peasant unionists, anti-racism groups, libertarian socialists, and others) were determined to be strong advocates
184 in the fight against WTO policies associated with neo-liberal globalization. The highest decision making body
185 of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which has Generally to meet at least every two years. The ministerial
186 conference can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreement. xii Based on case
187 study of Nairobi ministerial meetings there are many critical issues such as export subsidy, food security, poverty,
188 environmental issue are highlighted by protester against WTO policy and provision. On the above backdrop, this
189 paper has tried to find out the reasons for the protest movement against the outcomes of various ministerial
190 conference and particularly the Nairobi conference.

191 3 II.

192 4 Conclusion

193 So, we can say, it is evident that the large majority of the so called anti-globalization movement is organized
194 domestically or locally in response to global influences. The current conceptualization of the movement treats
195 the anti-globalization movement as a homogenous global entity which is certainly not the case. This is not to say
196 that the anti-WTO movement is not global but rather that the definition of global needs to be reinterpreted. In
197 my paper I have tried to show that many critical issues such as poverty, inequality, disease, the environment and
198 the abuse of human and worker's rights, and violations of labour standards are highlighted by antiglobalization
199 movements, which appear to resonate broadly and, more importantly, does so because they reflect some very
200 real, and very reasonable concerns of the population at large. It is very clear that existing institutions of global
201 governance are not meaningful to most people, as they lack political legitimacy. Our dilemma is that a large and
202 growing number of significant problems need to be dealt globally. To do so successfully will require a staggering
203 effort to resolve the perils of globalization and set up a governance structure that is responsive to a wide range
204 of needs and concerns and is consistent with the norms of effective participatory democracy.

205 This article shows that the anti-WT protest movements are not overtly violent. Threats, harassment and
206 electoral politics were also common tactics. Moreover, the same organization was found using a range of strategies-
207 propaganda, electoral politics, soliciting of external support, forcible demands for local support, etc. Based on
208 case study my paper shows that not all anti-globalization protesters oppose the WTO institutions per say; most
209 of them want the WTO regimes to evolve fair policies for all countries. It is very clear that existing institutions
210 of global Governance are not meaningful to most people, they lack political legitimacy. Our dilemma is that a
211 large and growing number of significant problems must be dealt with internationally. To do so successfully will
212 require a Herculean effort to resolve the realities of globalization with a governance structure that is responsive
213 to a wide range of needs and concerns and is consistent with the norms of effective participatory democracy.

214 5 Notes

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[Note: vii]

Figure 1:

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