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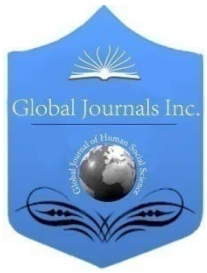

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Protest Movements against WTO's Ministerial Conferences: A Case Study of Nairobi Ministerial Conference

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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.

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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 Associtations 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 ministrial conference and particlualry the Nairobi conference.

"Globalization is a double-edged sword; a powerful vehicle that raises economic growth, spreads new technology and increases living standards in rich and poor countries alike, but also immensely controversial process that assaults national sovereignty, erodes local culture and tradition and threatens economic and social stability"------- Robert. J. Samuelson

I. Introduction

Thousands of students from various prestigious educational institutions, including JNU, DU, AMU, Jadhavpur 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 Keneya. 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 committee; a group of 64 organisations.[i]

The agitated civil society groups organised a whole day meeting at the Constitution Club on December 8, 2015; a few days before the Nairobi conference of the WTO. They received moral support for their cause from BJP leader and former Union Minister Murli Manohar Joshi and former BJP leader K.N. Govindacharya, who addressed the conference. Civil society groups and workers organizations such as Forum Against FTAs, National Working Group on Patent Laws and WTO, Madhyam, New Trade Union Initiative, National Confederation of Officers Association, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh and others participated in the national conference. Certain members from South Asian Dialogue on Ecological Democracy (SADED) Vijay Pratap, Marko Ulvila, Pawan Arora, Reeta Kumari and myself were participating the event. Marko Ulvila, a Green Socialist from Finland and Chairperson of Siemenpuu Foundation, supports the protest of students, teachers and social activists in India against WTO—General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) agreement in higher education.[ii]

a) Case study

14th December, 2015, a day before the official opening of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, global activists urged developing countries to stop expecting solutions from the WTO as negotiations face another impasse after the US, EU, Canada and Australia blocked any 'permanent solution' to reach a deal on public stockholding

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programmes for food security. Members of civil society on 15th dec held a protest outside WTO ministerial conference demanding that new issues should not be included in the agenda before concluding the development mandate. "The civil society leaders demanded that no so called 'new issues' should be put on the agenda, particularly while the development mandate has not been concluded. They called for a binding LDC (least developed countries) package and that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Declaration affirms the development mandate. They also pressed for removal of WTO obstacles to food security through the conclusion of the permanent solution for public stockholding, as well as special safeguard mechanism, and disciplines on export competition.[iii] On the opening day of the 10th Ministerial Conference in Nairobi, global activists welcomed trade ministers from over 100 countries with a protest. Some 200 activists from 12 countries joined grassroots organizations in Nairobi, Kenya to protest 20 years of the WTO's broken development promises. Simultaneous actions were held in the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and other countries spearheaded by the Asian Peasant Coalition and the International League of Peoples Struggles. Gacheke Gachihi of Bunge La Mwananchi (Parliament of the People) said, "20 years of WTO have been 20 years of opening up the world to transnational corporate plunder while billions of people languish in poverty, hunger, unemployment, and environmental catastrophes." Wali Haider from the Asian Peasant Coalition said, "The WTO is not about free trade or development. It allows wealthy industrialized countries to heavily subsidize their agribusinesses and dump their produce in other countries according Hindu Newspaper report. Small farmers in poorer countries who are unable to compete are buried in debt and often end up dispossessed of their land and livelihoods. At the same time WTO rules prevent countries from adopting measures to guarantee food security and maintain decent family farmer incomes." Antonio Tujan from IBON International, a think tank working with social movements in developing countries, explained that WTO rules put the "rights" of corporations to profit over human and labor rights. "WTO rules open up countries to foreign investment and thereby making it easier for capital to go where the labor is cheapest and most easily exploited, and where social and environmental regulations are weakest. The WTO encourages a 'race to the bottom' in wages by pitting workers against each other rather than promoting internationally recognized labor standards." Leonida Odongo of Fahamu, a network of movements for social justice in Africa, warned that, "The 10th WTO Ministerial in Nairobi is set to perpetuate the same neoliberal free trade agenda, and more! Developed countries led by the US want to include 'new issues' in negotiations that include proposals to further open up public services and procurement to foreign investors, strengthen protections for foreign investments, tighten intellectual property rights of corporations while restricting the ability of governments to regulate corporate activity for the public interest." Protesters marched in front of the Kenyatta International Conference Centre as Ministers filed in for the opening of the MC10, chanting "20 years of the WTO is enough! No to WTO Expansion, No to new issues in the WTO!" They held banners calling for "Junk WTO.[iv] The students and teachers are of the view that if the government commits the higher education to WTO during this conference, education in India will become a tradable commodity. Sadly, this is one of the proposed issues of Nairobi conference.

An India's perspective, Chamarasa Mali Patil of Karnataka Rajya Ryata Sangh (KRRS) and K. Sellamuthu, president of Thamizhaqa Vivasayigal Sangam, peasant delegates from India shared how under WTO peasants have suffered. Indian peasant communities have been destroyed as a result of cheap imports of oilseeds and rice. Over 300,000 farmers committed suicides since the inception of WTO. When India opened up its agricultural markets, corporates such as Monsanto and other agrocorporates entered too selling toxic agrochemicals and GMOs. Many peasants took loans to buy these agrotoxins but failed to pay the lenders because of low agricultural prices which significantly lowered their incomes. This resulted in many peasant suicides. They were blocked all major roads in New Delhi with tractors to force government to listen to their demands. "We are planning a big demonstration in New Delhi soon if the India government compromises in Nairobi", says Sellamuthu, president of Thamizhaqa Vivasayigal Sangam.[v]

According to Ha WonOh and Kim SoonAe, the delegates from the Korean Peasant League and Korean Women Peasants Association South Korea, because of rice imports, Korean farmers are being destroyed as imports cause low prices resulting in low incomes; the countryside is being deserted too. The youth are leaving the farms in search for better pay in urban areas. Elderly folk left on the farms. The debt owed by these farmers has doubled. Corporations such as Cargill stand to benefit as more farmers are destroyed in future. For now Korea has surplus rice. Cheap rice imports means big foreign rice producers are being sustained while local producers are being destroyed. [vi]

As the wave of big Transnational Corporations (TNCs) sweeps across the global in search of new markets and dominance, small family farmers in the developed countries are being trampled. Agricultural markets are flooded by cheap imports from other developed countries. In this US has forced thousands of family farmers change land uses or sell to the government. The government agricultural policies support large farms most of which are part of TNCs value chains. Land concentration is promoted US and

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EU through the biased farm support schemes. Farm support is tied to the size of the farmis given on perhectare or acre basis. This means large farms receive much more than small farms. According to Ben Burkett, president of National Family Farm Coalition, agricultural imports from New Zealand (lamb and powdered milk), Brazil (soy beans) and other countries are devastating the rural areas and also lower prices in US. Despite the US support to its farmers, those affected by imports have to prove their case before getting 'crop subsidy transition assistance'. Not all farmers are able to do so. Some end up selling their land to the government. This land is converted into conservation reserves The WTO, an organisation more powerful than national governments and UN institutions and a destroyer of agriculture has been promoting a globalisation for Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and big powers. Under this organisation, no farmer can be a winner. Winners are only TNCs that control world trade. For them production is not for consumption but for trade to make profits. Trade also is about exploiting the poor countries by rich countries. La Via Campesina together with other social movements have led and continue the struggle against this economic injustice. "To stop them", says Shushi Okazaki "the role of La Via Campesina is increasingly important. Japan Family Farmers movement, Nouminren, together with La Via Campesina "To stop them", says Shushi Okazaki "the role of La Via Campesina is increasingly important. Japan Family Farmers movement, Nouminren, together with La Via Campesina will build a fair and just society based on sovereignty by breaking down a trade system of multinationals: WTO, Trans Pacific Partnerships (TPP) and Free Trade Agreements (FTA)s. TPP is the worst ever treaty to completely destroy Japan's agriculture that has already suffered a lot under WTO. [vii]

b) Outcome

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

Broadly speaking, 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 World Trade Organization (WTO) regime. Heavy subsidization of developed nations' agriculture and the aggressive use of export subsidies by some developed nations to make their agricultural products more attractive on the international market are major causes of declines in the agricultural sectors of many developing nations. It is clear that only a few countries of the developed world utilize the globalization benefits and they continue to exploit developing countries. Developed countries are core members of international institutions (WTO, IMF and WB) and they have largely determined policies of these institutions till date. Hence, it appears that developing countries are the protesters and developed countries the protectors of WTO and other economic international institutions.[viii] Broadly speaking WTO as an agenda of globalization mainly focuses on expands of world market for considerations of corporate profit. Contemporary economic globalization, which is driven and regulated by WTO, has a direct impact on many civil society's activities. Such as many workers and labour unions claim that WTO agreements increase import competition and threaten their jobs, Environmentalists accuse the WTO of encouraging pollution and preventing governments from defending national environmental standards on the other hand, ant -capitalist protesters consider the WTO as a tool of big business.[ix]

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 AoA which are concern for developing countries especially on agriculture sector. 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; ike India tariffs are low. Due to this, various commodities are being dumped in India. The US is dumping five primary farm commodities in global markets in clear violation of WTO Agriculture rules. It is exporting corn, soybean,

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wheat, rice and cotton at prices far below then their production cost in an effort to wipe out global competition. The continuation of high domestic support to agriculture in developed countries is a cause of concern as they encourage overproduction in these countries leading to low levels of international prices of agricultural products. At the same time the rich industrialized countries continue to subsidize farmers by giving them direct payments which are exempt from any reductions requirement and which essentially are cash handouts contingent on making adjustments in production. These payments are neither affordable nor helpful in a developing country. The result is that the industrialized countries continue to dominate world trade in agriculture while preventing India and other developing countries from achieving self-sufficiency in food production. Civil society organizations (church groups, national liberation factions, left-wing parties, environmentalists, peasant unionists, anti-racism groups, libertarian socialists, and others) were determined to be strong advocates in the fight against WTO policies associated with neo-liberal globalization. in mid 1990s, various Movements have aligned together and have formed larger alliances to protest against state Government on the issue of various WTO policies even as they get a direct confrontation with the institution of WTO representing the global economic and political power. 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.[xi] In the streets of Seattle (1999), Doha (2001), Cancun (2003), Hong Kong (2005), Geneva (2009, 2011), Bali (2013) and Nairobi (2015) meeting are all still honouring the memory of Anti-WTO protest movement where many NGO and civil society organizations (church groups, national liberation factions, left-wing parties, environmentalists, peasant unionists, anti-racism groups, libertarian socialists, and others) were determined to be strong advocates in the fight against WTO policies associated with neo-liberal globalization. The highest decision making body of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which has Generally to meet at least every two years. The ministerial conference can take decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreement. [xii]

Based on case study of Nairobi ministerial meetings there are many critical issues such as export subsidy, food security, proverty, enviromental issue are highlighted by protester agaist WTO policy and provision. On the above backdrop, this paper has tried to find out the reasons for the protest movement against the outcomes of various ministrial conference and particlualry the Nairobi conference.

II. Conclusion

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

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

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