

Social Movements and the Politics of Right to Food Campaigns: The case of India

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Paradox of global hunger

- There is enough food to feed everyone on Earth
- Right to food is well codified (UDHR; ICESCR; 3 decades of soft law)
- Yet 925 million of the world's 6.7 billion people are malnourished
- Hunger contributes to half of all global deaths

Paradox of hunger *in India*

- Food insecurity is typically associated with non-democracies or politically unstable countries
- India is the world's largest democracy
- Has been democratic for half a century
- Has experienced high economic growth for a decade
- Has strong constitutional protections for economic rights

Paradox of hunger *in India*

- Yet one-third of ALL malnourished children in the world are Indian
- 42% of all Indian children are underweight
- India has more hungry people than 26 of the poorest African states

SERF scores (Fukuda-Parr 2012)

State performance in fulfilling economic and social rights – SERF Index (scores for 99 countries)

Rank	Country	Composite	Food	Health	Education	Housing	Work	Income (PPP 2008)
13	Brazil	87.4	91.1	90.1	94.8	75.8	83.6	9,559
40	China	79.7	90.4	94.8	83.6	65.8	64	5,712
38	Ghana	72	85.6	60.0	78.7	52.3	82.2	1,351
67	South Africa	61.5	61.7	57.6	71.4	70.2	46.6	9,604
87	India	56.1	32.7	74.7	82.8	62.6	27.9	2,796
96	Nigeria	42.5	47.7	33.4	66.7	43.3	21.5	1,939

Research Design

- Goal: to “map” the prevalence of hunger in India and social responses to it
- Analyze variation in response
- Focus: 3 types of protest:
 - 1) Public interest law
 - 2) Street Protest
 - 3) Farmer suicides

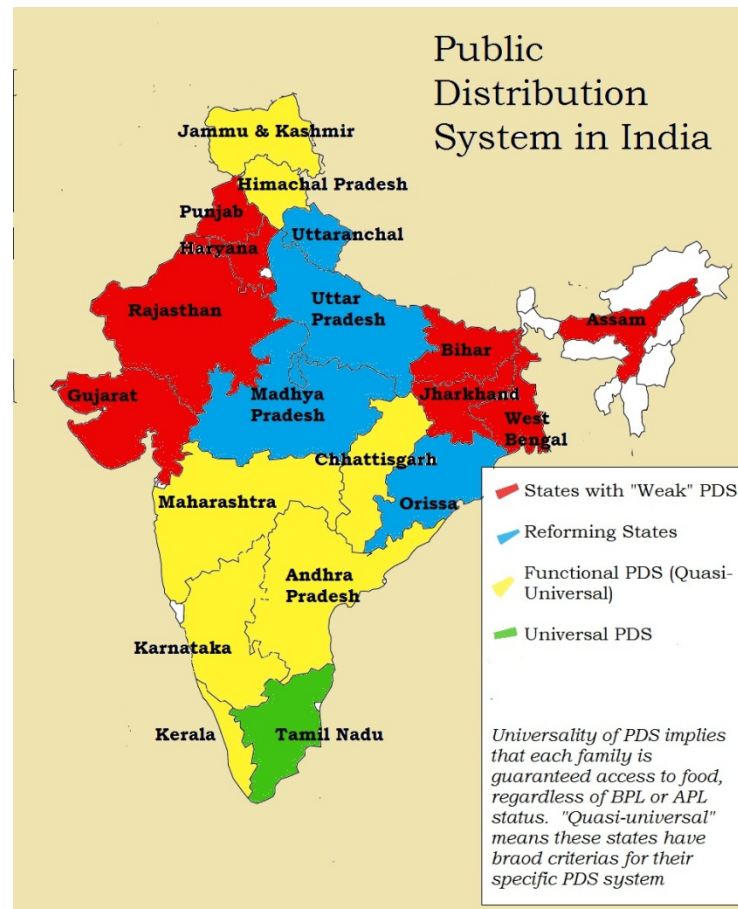
Indian Food Policy Context

Food Corporation of India (FCI) Manages food stocks	Public Distribution System (PDS). Channels the food grains, sugar, kerosene from FCI.	Department of Food and Public Distribution Covers import/export, storage, movement and distribution of food grains; oversees grain price support system.
Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) Food for "poorest of poor."	Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) Lunchtime meals for school children.	National Old Age Pension Scheme Food support is available to all poor persons aged 65 years or older through this program.
Annapurna Scheme Benefits elderly.	Integrated Child Development Scheme Health care, nutrition and pre-school education of children up to age 6; also covers nursing mothers.	National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NNBS) Support for pregnant and nursing mothers
National Family Benefit Scheme Payment upon death of primary breadwinner.	Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana Food for Work program, including distribution of FCI grains.	

Problems:

- ***Corruption***: 70% of the \$12 in govt funds billion budgeted for food is loss to waste and corruption
- ***Program effectiveness varies widely***: see marked state-level variation in effectiveness of Public Distribution System (PDS) and other food programs

PDS system: state-level variation



Research data

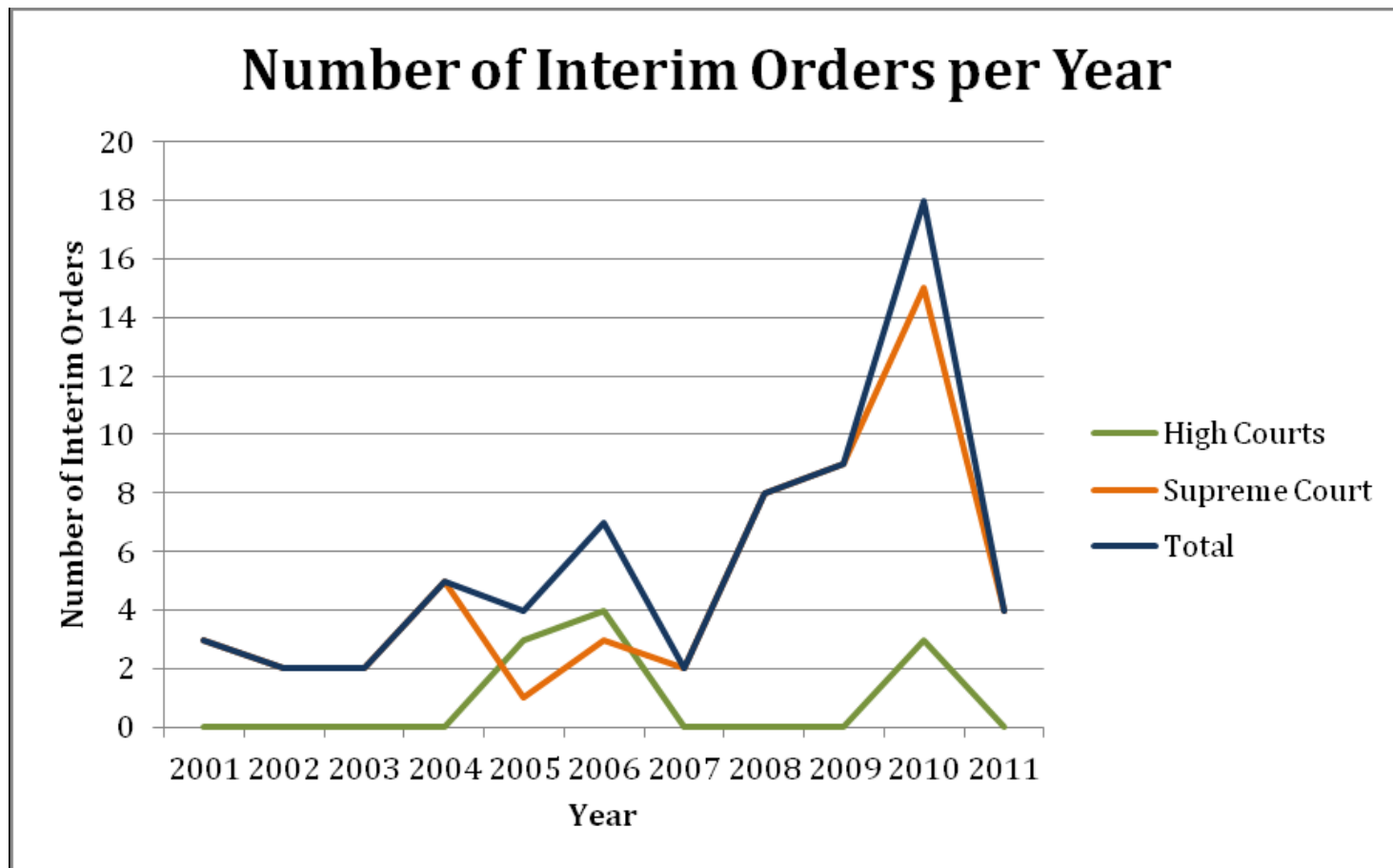
- 2 original datasets:
- a) ***PIL dataset*** (i.e., 64 major cases out of over 150 filed)
- b) ***News events dataset*** (i.e., have coded 3 major English-language newspapers from 1990-2010)
- In progress: adding 2 local language papers and one additional English paper from 2010-present
- c) ***Field-based study*** (January & June 2012)

Social Movement Response: *In the COURTS*

- 2001 “Peoples’ Union for Civil Liberties” (PUCL) case & corresponding Supreme Court orders
- 2002 & 2003: Supreme Court creates positions of 2 “Commissioners” to monitor ongoing implementation of interim orders
- Names a dozen NGOs to act as eyes and ears for Commissioners; research/report at the state-level nationwide
- “Right to Food Campaign” spearheads ongoing research & advocacy
- Key NGO: HR Law Network (200 staff attorneys; 28 offices nation-wide)

PUBLIC INTEREST LAW

Supreme Court orders on “right to food”



Social Movement Response: *In the STREETS*

- We culled 1,339 relevant articles on right to food protests from over 30,600 published (1990-2012)
- *Times of India, Hindustan Times, Press Trust of India (1990-2012); Deccan Herald (2010-2012)*
- Only 31 focused specifically on **street protests**
- 311 focused on farmer suicides
- 476 addressed general food-related policy topics
- Little media coverage of hunger until 2010; our findings are similar to Dreze (2004)

Protest activity

- ***Based on 1990-2010 media coding of Times of India, Press Trust of India, Hindustan Times:***
- ***LOCATIONS:*** New Delhi (15); Assam (1); Uttar Pradesh (1); Chhattisgarh (1); Jharkhand (1); Andhra Pradesh (1); Punjab (1)
- ***ACTIVITY TYPE:*** procession; dharna (fast); rally; petition; caravan; sit-in; hartal (strike); protest; convention; human chain; march; fast
- ***ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED:*** Bharatiya Janata Party; Sahyog; People's Union for Civil Liberties; Right to Food Campaign; Communist Party of India-Marxist; Assam State Committee of Communist Party of India; the Sangathan; VP Singh and National Action Committee
- ***CHARACTER:*** Mostly non-violent

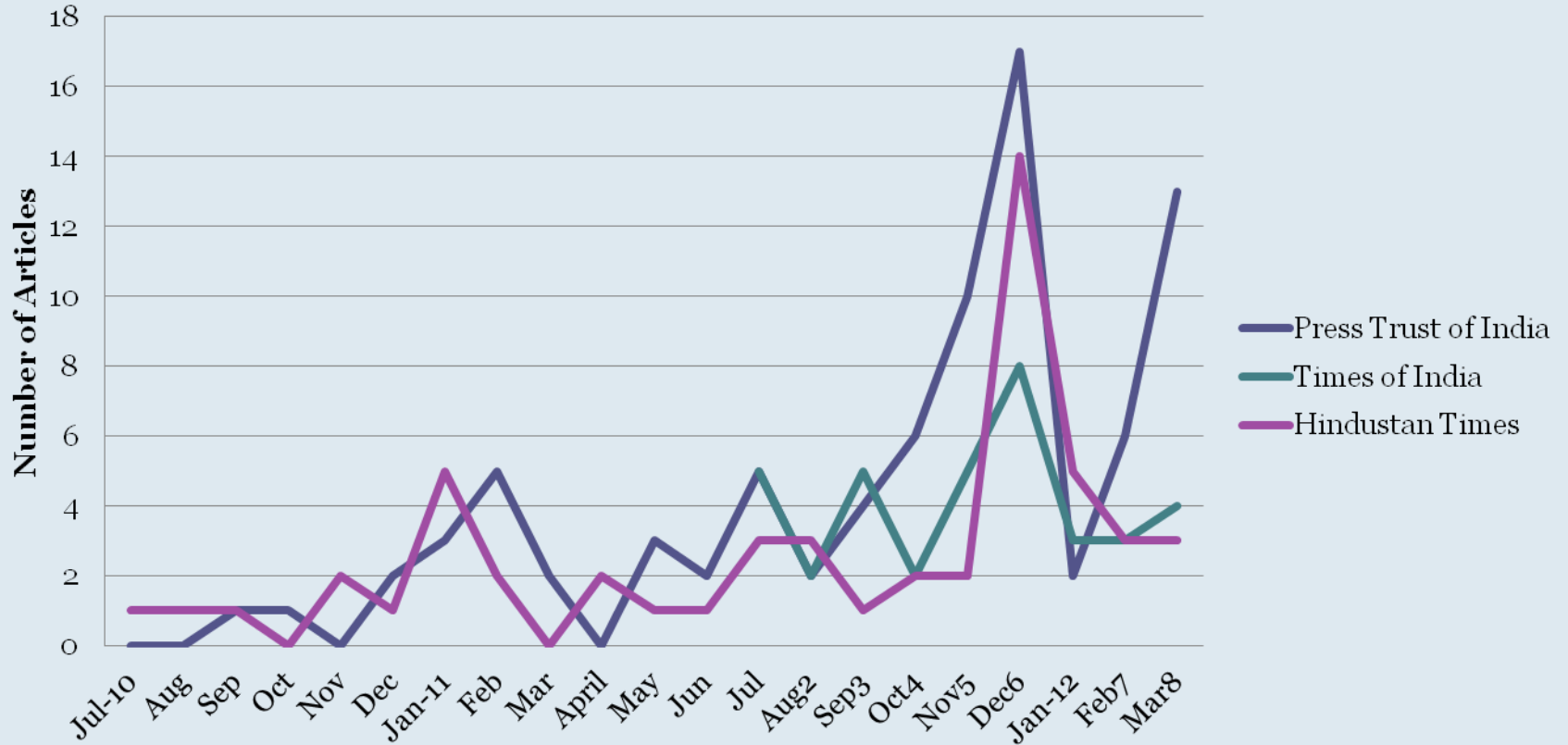
Social Movement Response: Engagement in *Party Politics*

- United Progressive Alliance (UPA) – headed by Sonia Gandhi
- Has led governing coalition since 2004
- Incorporates hunger as part of its “everyman” (“aam admi”) platform focus
- Key members of “Right to Food” campaign are active in UPA and the government’s “National Advisory Council”
- National Food Security bill emerged in 2010; currently being debated (introduced in Dec. 2011)

Social Movement Response: Engagement with *Political Parties*

- Key debates:
- 1) Should NFSA have universal coverage?
- 2) Content? (adequacy/
appropriateness)
- 3) Cash transfers or foodstuffs only?

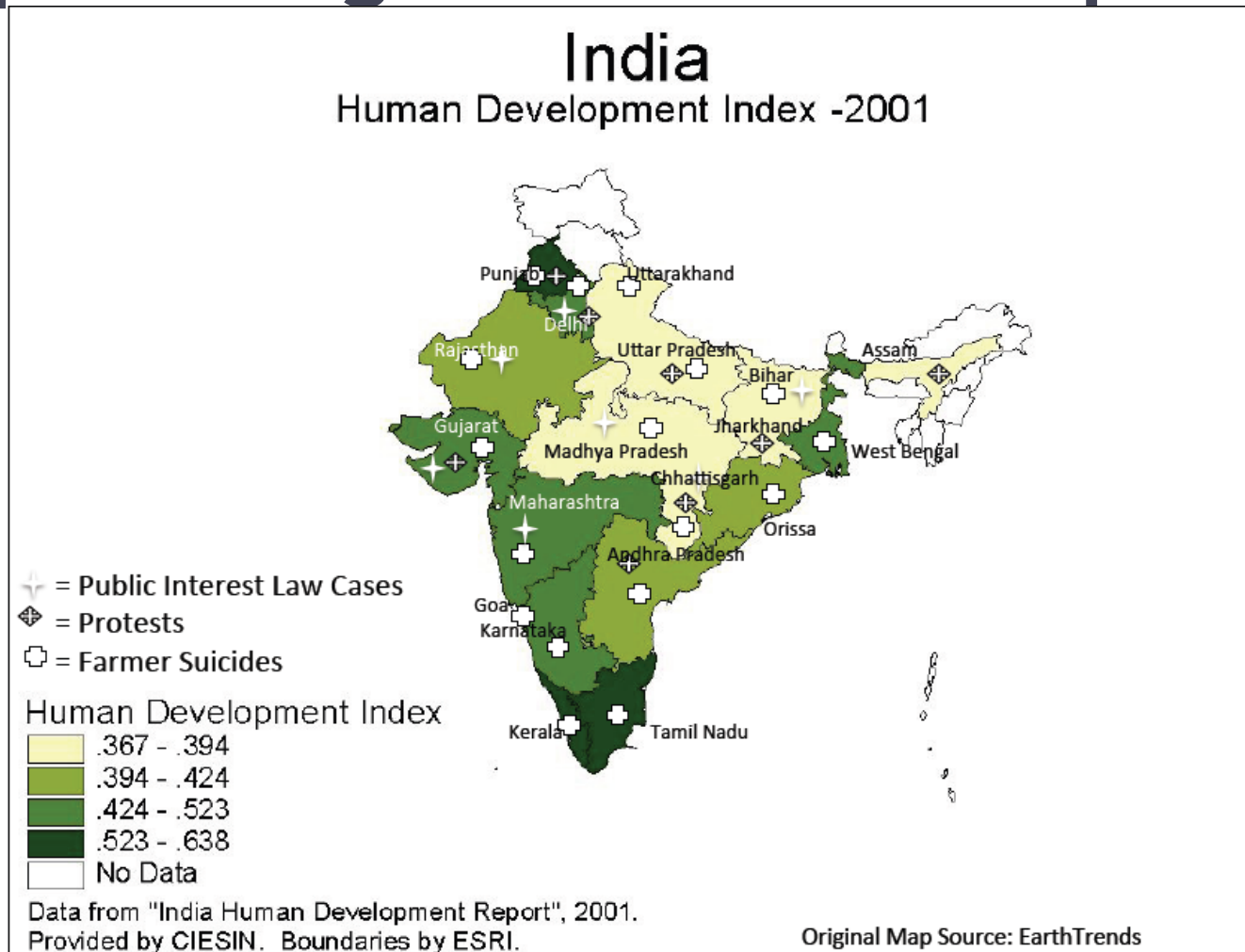
Media Coverage using “National Food Security Bill” as Coding Term



Overarching findings

- Hunger and protest do not necessarily coincide in expected ways
- Indian “Right to Food” social movement has shifted its arena of struggle: from the courts, to the streets, to political parties
- The shift to party politics (i.e., since 2010) challenges dominant interpretations of “interest-based” Indian social movements (Katzenstein, Kothari and Mehta 2001)

Map of hunger and social responses



INDIAN STATES - Variation in SERF

STATE	SERF – Food (2005-06 data)	STATE	SERF – Food (2005-06 data)
Kerala	77.38	Karnataka	40.81
Tamil Nadu	65.18	Uttarakhand	40.35
Goa	63.70	West Bengal	39.70
Jammu and Kashmir	62.65	Assam	38.50
Manipur	61.14	Delhi	37.04
Tripura	58.19	Haryana	34.09
Nagaland	53.48	Maharashtra	33.29
Sikkim	52.05	Madhya Pradesh	32.17
Punjab	51.44	Jharkhand	31.05
Mizoram	50.04	Chhattisgarh	23.95
Himachal Pradesh	48.72	Gujarat	23.54
Rajasthan	45.11	Bihar	23.43
Andhra Pradesh	43.21	Meghalaya	18.53
Arunachal Pradesh	42.94	Uttar Pradesh	17.28
Orissa	42.13		

Next steps

- Unpack links between protest and party politics
- Explain sub-regional variation in protest
- Field study: ongoing