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Three Meals Away:
Crisis and Violence in the Global Food System

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Three Meals Away:
Crisis and Violence in the Global Food system

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

Three Meals Away:
Crisis and Violence in the Global Food system

By Alison Heslin

The globalized nature of the modern day system of food production, coupled with societal shifts that have moved people away from the land, has created new opportunities and new vulnerabilities for the growing world population. While this interconnected system has allowed for greater variety and availability of food products throughout the world, linking local populations to global supply chains, it has also made these populations vulnerable to price and supply fluctuations throughout the world. This project investigates the mechanisms by which global shocks are felt and reacted to at the local level, using a comparative case study of food riots that occurred in South Asia in 2007 and 2008. Specifically, I focus on the local level political, economic, and social dynamics that interacted with global price increases to create or mollify violent protests. To illuminate these local factors, I draw on a variety of data, including extensive interviews collected throughout 2014 with residents of West Bengal, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh. Through a comparison of local characteristics and detailed explanations of riots from areas with and without riots, I test hypotheses on food riot occurrence developed by drawing on studies of historical and contemporary food riots as well as theories of social movements. This study finds support for moral economy theory and additional proposed factors in mobilizing the riots in West Bengal and Dhaka. In comparing riots in India to those in Bangladesh, this study complicates the depiction of food riots as a unique form of collective action, and instead demonstrates their resemblance to other forms of collective action, brought on by food insecurity.

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“Any society is only three meals away from a revolution

1 Introduction

With increasing demands on natural resources due to climate change, industrial development, and population growth, understanding how scarce or inaccessible resources, such as food, relate to conflict is critical for security and stability throughout the world. While processes such as climate change, development, and population growth are global in reach, the consequences of these processes and the capacity of individuals and communities to adapt to them are not evenly distributed throughout the world (Adger and Kelly 1999; Tol et al. 2004). Differences in which groups are affected by issues such as food scarcity and climate change and how they react to corresponding hardships, such as forced migration, salinization of arable land, or increased natural disasters, can have lasting effects on political stability, social inequality, and development (Adger 2000; Barnett and Adger 2007). Corresponding hardships can be experienced directly through weather events, such as droughts and floods, but also indirectly through stresses on natural resources and increased poverty rates (particularly for those dependent on natural resources). In addition, populations are often found at the intersection of multiple forms of vulnerability, including those vulnerable to the effects of climate change, who are often also exposed to negative consequences of economic globalization (O'Brien and Leichenko 2000). For example, urban poor populations, who are economically disadvantaged, often inhabit unstable housing in precarious areas of cities. Their residential patterns make them vulnerable not only to changes in wages or prices, but also to natural disasters. Understanding the intersection of resource availability, poverty, and

conflict is critical in order to identify which populations are least able to command resources when critical resources are stressed, how those populations react under conditions of scarce necessary resources, and when scarce resources undermine stability and development (Adger and Kelly 1999; Sen 1981). This study addresses this intersection by focusing on which populations are vulnerable to food insecurity, how this restricted food access relates social conflict, and what the consequences of food-related social conflict are.

Previous studies have quantitatively addressed the connection between conflict and climate change. In these studies, climate change has been shown to increase conflict by affecting amounts of rainfall, increasing conflict at either extreme- high or low (Hendrix and Salehyan 2012; Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004), by limiting access to or decreasing quantities of needed natural resources (Barnett and Adger 2007; Percival and Homer-Dixon 1998, Raleigh and Urdal 2007), and by decreasing crop yields, which in turn lowers the opportunity costs of rebelling, increases recruitment potential, and exacerbates existing inequality (Wischnath and Buhaug 2014). Other studies identify potential outcomes of climate change causing conflict rather than strictly ecological factors- for example, increasing poverty rates or population density, which then increase conflict (Do and Iyer 2010; Theisen 2008). While studies of climate and conflict all agree on the importance of understanding the connection between climate change and conflict, they vary on the variables found to be significant and the mechanisms by which those changes translate into a violent outcome. Identifying the causal mechanisms by which scarce or inaccessible resources either do or do not result in conflict is critical for predicting locations of future conflict and for truly understanding the motivations of those

involved in such events. In addition, gaining knowledge of which areas and populations are likely to engage in violence is of serious consequence, as conflict has a feedback effect, in that it can further limit access to resources such as food and employment, issues that may have sparked violence from the beginning (Alinovi, Hemrich, and Russo 2008; Maxwell 2013). The current study uses in-depth qualitative data analysis to build upon quantitative analyses of resource access and conflict, systematically comparing instances of conflict, as well as comparing areas that did and did not experience conflicts during the same time periods. While restricted resources and climatic hardships can take many forms, this study focuses on those protest events relating on some level to access to food. Understanding food as a driver of conflict is important for many reasons, including its vulnerability to scarcity from future increases in population and climate changes, as well as the increasing artificially induced scarcity that occurs through price increases due to changes in trade and agricultural policy.

Food access has drawn attention to the connection between weather changes, resource access, and conflict, becoming particularly a salient concern at the start of the 21st century, when violent protests regarding access to food occurred in numerous countries (World Development Report 2010). This phenomenon gained world attention from 2007 to 2008, when the world experienced a dramatic increase in the price of food. Rather than quietly starve, as has been the case with many food shortages and famines throughout history, in 2008 people reacted. In over twenty-five countries, concentrated in the developing world, people took to the streets to protest against the sudden change in their access to food (Schneider 2008). Particularly affected were groups within countries

dependent on imports of globally traded food commodities, groups that were unable to cope with the sudden drastic spike in staple food costs (Lybbert and Morgan 2013).

To illustrate, wheat, for example, is a major staple crop heavily traded internationally. In May 2007, the global price of wheat was $195.72 per metric ton; by March 2008, that number had increased to $439.72/MT (The World Bank 2013). Similarly, over that same year, the prize of maize increased 130% and the price of rice 75% (Patel and McMichael 2009). This global price jump translated to extreme and abrupt food insecurity throughout the world.

While the price volatility of staple foods (rice, wheat, etc.) in recent years has alarmed many throughout the world, it is the continuation and escalation of a process of deregulating food trade that has occurred through since the 1970s, and that has marked a change in the international system of agricultural trade and food distribution (Winders et al. 2016). This is a turn from the previous historical period following World War II, in which prices and supply in major commodities remained steady (Friedmann 1982). Over the latter half of the 20th century, changes in US food policies and international trade regulations destabilized prices, affecting the livelihoods and food security of people throughout the world (Winders et al. 2016). The negative consequences of these changes sparked reactions in numerous forms, with the particularly prominent reaction in recent years being the food riot. And yet, protests and riots, although widespread, (1) did not occur uniformly across all countries that experienced sharp increases in food prices; (2) varied in scale where they did occur; and (3) engendered drastically different reactions from governments.

The international media has explained recent food riots as reactions to hunger caused by high prices, attributing these price increases to land use for biofuels, speculation in international markets, decreased supply, or population growth (Lagi, Yavni Bar-Yam, et al. 2011; Sneyd, A. Legwegoh, and Fraser 2013). At the most basic level, this implies a shortage of supply, but within today's world of wage labor and market economies, restricted access is often caused by an increase in price rather than an absolute shortage. That is to say, food is available, but not accessible to all populations. It is during these time periods of high food prices that outbreaks of riots have occurred in various countries (Berazneva and Lee 2013; Lagi, Bertrand, and Yaneer Bar-Yam 2011; Lagi, Yavni Bar-Yam, et al. 2011). However, price alone is not sufficient in explaining variation in riot occurrence throughout the world or throughout different areas in affected countries. World food prices do fluctuate drastically, causing periods of restricted food access to particular populations, but not all of these populations react with riots. There are innumerable examples throughout history of individuals and communities starving from restricted food access but not reacting with violent protest. A restriction to food access (by price, supply, or both) seems to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for explaining food riots.

Understanding how and why people react to food-insecure situations is crucial for many reasons. For governments, simultaneously addressing high commodity prices and public unrest can mean revolutions for fragile states, as high food prices often drain state resources by driving up expenses for providing safety nets used to ameliorate the conditions of a negatively affected population (Berazneva and Lee 2013; N. Hossain et al. 2014). Identifying points in time and locations where unrest begins can facilitate such

crisis intervention as the allocation of aid by identifying vulnerable populations. Further, studying unrest and its causes in-depth allows for identification of the targets of blame and crowd violence. It sheds light on the sources of abuses at the local level and identifies instances in which the poor and food insecure serve as an easily mobilized group with little to lose, capable of being rallied by groups with strictly self-serving motives. And, finally, as we will see in this work, studying contemporary food riots allows for a more nuanced understanding of these events, not only as a distinct and coherent categories of events, but also as instances of various types of collective action and class conflict, often motivated by food access due to the current climate of volatile food prices and wage-dependent working classes.

The combination of climate change threatening access to resources and neoliberal economic policies increasing instability in food prices and decreasing access to food assistance suggests that food-motivated conflict is not likely to decrease in the coming years. The goal of this project is to explain the variation in occurrences of unrest and to identify the processes that motivate, mobilize, and escalate food-related political and social instability. Specifically, I seek to answer two questions: (1) why do food riots happen in certain locations and not others? and (2) to what extent are food riots throughout the world instances of the same phenomenon?

To address this puzzle, I first outline the literature on historical and contemporary food riots, using studies of food riots to develop hypotheses for within-country variation in riot occurrence. I then situate these events within the broader literature of collective action to develop theories of variation in forms and outcomes riots that occur in different contexts. To address these two sets of theories, those of food riots and those of collective

action generally, I carry out a comparative case study with two levels of comparison. First, I compare cases and trace social processes within countries to explain variation in protest occurrence, and second, to situate contemporary food riots within the broader literature of collective action, I compare instances of food riots between countries, highlighting the ways that they resemble different forms of collective action outside of strictly food-related protests and riots. The cases used to carry out these comparisons are West Bengal, India in 2007 and Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2008. The cases are investigated by applying theories of food riots to places with and without riots inside each country and applying theories of collective action to compare riots in India to those in Bangladesh.

Recent literature on food riots has utilizes both quantitative and qualitative analysis to explain the occurrence of food riots. These studies, outlined in chapter 2, find country level variables, which explain country level variation in incidents of riots. Country level variables, such as food price and levels of urbanization are linked to higher likelihoods of riots occurring within those countries. While identifying country-level causal variables may explain some percentage of cross-national variation, the process of mobilization is left out of the analysis. Some studies look closer at the chronology of events within particular countries during the time frame of the riots to attempt to fill in the process by which these instances of collective violence escalated. These studies fail to prove, however, that the identified variables which covary with riot occurrences are, in fact, the factors which caused people to act. While logical to assume that riots at times of high food prices are motivated by a discontent with the food structure, one should not rule out the possibility that high food prices increase the propensities, opportunities, and mobilization for the pursuit of collective action to redress existing grievances. In this

work, I argue against the framework used in contemporary studies of food riots, which treats the seemingly sudden occurrence of food riots as a reaction to sudden increases in food-related hardships around which populations directly mobilize. (This conventional view follows traditional approaches to analyzing collective action and social movements, which view collective action as a result of "sudden increases in individual grievances generated by the 'structural strains' of rapid social change" (Jenkins 1983:528)). Instead, I follow resource mobilization theory and propose that food riots are instances of collective action motivated by various forms of long standing contention that vary with location. Their occurrence at times of high food prices does not indicate that the grievances of the population suddenly developed, but rather that a population with existing grievances might, as a result of some combination of intensified grievances, enhanced opportunities, and increased capabilities, be able to more forcefully address the contention. In short, this study draws extensively on theories of collective action to expand the understanding of food riots as a form of contentious politics.

Data collection took place in West Bengal, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh over an eleven-month period in 2014. The data for each of the cases come from primarily from newspaper accounts and in-depth interviews. During my stay in South Asia, I studied intensive Bengali in Dhaka and Kolkata to be able to read newspapers and translate interview questions into Bengali. With sufficient contextual information from newspapers and linguistic competency from language courses, I began conducting interviews in West Bengal, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh with the assistance of a local research assistant in each country. We collected hundreds of local newspaper articles relating to food access and conflict and used those articles to locate areas of conflict from 2007 and 2008.

During the final three months of fieldwork, I travelled with a research assistant to locations in three districts in West Bengal and three major slum areas surrounding Dhaka and conducted 84 in-depth interviews with residents of the selected areas regarding their resource access and experiences violent conflict in the area. In addition to the information collected from interviews with villagers and factory workers, I met with local government officials, foreign aid workers, police, garment buyers, labor organizers, and academics to gain as holistic a picture as possible of the events that took place in both countries. These data were then supplemented by quantitative data on food prices, as well as historical information on food policy and collective action. Using this information, I seek to identify and understand (1) the existing contention which motivated conflict, (2) the process by which food worked to mobilize the population, and (3) the causes of the form that these incidents of social conflict took.

2 Understanding Variation in Protest Occurrences

With the recent attention to food riots throughout the world, a wave of studies of food riots has emerged. Though these current studies are, by no means, the first collection of literature addressing food riots. A developed body of literature exists focused on the food riots of 18th century Europe, upon which many contemporary studies build their theoretical framework. This study seeks to utilize theories developed regarding 18th century food riots to test and expand upon the emerging literature of contemporary riots, aiming to understand the specific processes by which food plays a role in the mobilization of riots.

What is a food riot?

To begin understanding the existing literature on food riots and to systematically analyze the processes by which riots mobilize and spread, we must first determine what events fall under the classification of food riot and if and why those events differ meaningfully from other forms of collective action. The latter topic is discussed in detail in chapter 3. While not entirely uniform in definition across various studies, the definition used in studies of contemporary food riots typically resembles the World Bank definition, which is drawn from several academic studies of this phenomenon, defining a riot as:

> "A violent, collective unrest leading to a loss of control, bodily harm or damage to property, essentially motivated by a lack of food availability, accessibility or affordability, as reported by the international media, and which may have other underlying causes of discontent" (Barbet-Gros and Cuesta 2014).

The World Bank definition provides a context with which to understand the existing literature on food riots outlined in this chapter, however, through the course of this study, the utility of this definition will be challenged in its application to contemporary riots.

Evolution of the Food Riot

The term 'food riot' has been applied in numerous contexts throughout history, to an enormous number of events. The phenomenon of crowds rioting over food access is recorded back to ancient Rome (Africa 1971). Incidents of riots occurred when imports of grain were delayed in reaching the large urban population, including in A.D 51 when "an angry crowd surrounded Claudius in the Forum and pelted him with stale crusts of bread until soldiers rescued the emperor" (Africa 1971:13). Though collective action over food has existed over thousands of years, perhaps the best documented and theorized instances of historical food riots are those that occurred in 18th century Europe, with particular attention in the literature paid to those in France and England during industrialization and state centralization.

Often referred to as 'bread riots' for the central role of bread or flour in the protests, food riots were common in Europe during 18th century industrialization, war-making, and state centralization. During this time period, England and France experienced drastic changes in the structure of and relationship between society, the market, and the state, with the riots described by E.P. Thompson as a "last desperate effort by the people to reimpose the older moral economy as against the economy of the free market" (1963:79). England in the late 1700s experienced hundreds of food riots, taking the form of price lowering by force in rural areas, intercepting shipments of grain

to cities, and chaotic looting of urban markets. These riots resulted in food relief or serious repression and retaliation (Bohstedt 2014; Booth 1977; Stern 1964). Termed the "Flour War", in 1775, over 300 food riots occurred in France in response to the abolition of paternalist policies, resulting in soaring wheat prices (Bouton 1993). These riots occurred throughout the major towns of France, requiring 25,000 troops to quell the unrest.

Though food riots were very common in late 18th century France and Britain, they were, by no means, isolated to these two countries. They occurred elsewhere in Europe during the same time frame including numerous occurring in Germany in the early 1800s (Gailus 1994). Outside of 18th century Europe, food riots have occurred on all continents with various motivations, including numerous during large scale conflict, such as food riots during the revolutionary war and civil war in the United States (Chesson 1984; B. C. Smith 1994), in Russia and New York City during World War I (Engel 1997; Frieburger 1984), and in Iran during World War II (McFarland 1985). These instances emphasize both the continuation of food riots over time and the risk of a feedback effect, in which conflicts cause food insecurity, which in turn causes further conflict.

While there are many historical incidents of food rioting, the riots of 18th century Europe have been heavily studied, with many theories of collective action developed based upon these events. The studies identify and debate common patterns of behavior which many of the 18th century food riots followed, focusing on the political economy factors that created the hardships against which people protested and the moral economy of the crowd which prompted action. Tilly et al. (1975) describes these food riots as a reactive form of protest in which the people protested against some perceived

infringement on their rights (as opposed to proactive collective action, in which people demand rights not previously held). E. P. Thompson further clarifies that food riots are not random, chaotic events, rather the crowd was "informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs" (1971:78). The major extent of innovation and debate regarding characteristics and causes of food riots has occurred in describing these European riots, and while the context of these events differs from that of contemporary food riots, they are important to understand as many studies of contemporary food riots draw upon the theories of mobilization developed to describe the bread riots of industrializing Europe. The literature on political and moral economy provides a sound basis for developing hypotheses of within country variation in riots today because it was written and developed studying highly similar events occurring in one or very few countries, much like the design of the current study. Literature of contemporary riots often finds causal factors at the country-level, comparing events across vastly diverse countries and political structures, which took different forms, and garnered different reactions from authorities. For this reason, these contemporary studies provide a useful framework for macro level predictors of riot occurrences, meaning under what global conditions we should expect increases in the number of food riots occurring, but lack the specificity and analytic power needed to understand the mobilization and form of riots on the local level. For this level of theoretical specificity, I rely on theories of 18th century riots, supplemented with broader contemporary context from recent studies.

Theories of 18th Century Food Riots

In this study, I draw upon the political economy and moral economy theories and descriptions of historical food riots, advanced by Tilly (1975 and 2008, for example),

Bohstedt (1983; 2010), Thompson (1971), and others and apply them to today's world of globalized food markets and advanced agricultural technology.

Political Economy

In the context of explaining 18th century riots, theories of political economy focused on the shift from paternalistic to *laissez-faire* policies and the formation of a national market (L. Tilly 1971). These two major changes in the structure of society had major effects on all aspects of people's lives, including how people obtained food. Specifically, in France and England, the centralization of the state and the expansion of the market included the "repeal of laws regulating the grain market and the abdication of public responsibility for ensuring an adequate food supply at fair prices" (Walton and Seddon 1994:34). In this new market system, consumers were vulnerable to price fluctuations caused by real and artificial scarcity of grain and lacked the previous safety nets available in the paternalistic society. These new vulnerabilities were furthered by a more centralized market, which the state regulated to ensure grain was available for armies, vastly growing urban areas, and state workers. This decreased the level of grain available for small, local markets, where food trade had previously been centered. Also, production for sale/purchase on a national level led to a move away from subsistence farming and commons and towards larger scale, private agriculture in which the national government played a role regulating and taxing. Although the current food regime differs from this account on many particulars, the basic processes can be seen in the developing world today.

This literature explains that the removal of social protections, the centralization of the market and its regulation, and the production of cash crops versus subsistence

agriculture increase the likelihood of food insecurity. The addition and removal of social protections has occurred over time and in different countries since the time period discussed by Tilly. This action, described by Polanyi (2001) as the 'double movement', is an important process in political economy, but also sets the stage for discussions of moral economy. The double movement is the process in which governments move between the two ends of the regulation spectrum: creating a less regulated market, then, in response to the negative social consequences of unbridled capitalism, move to greater degrees of regulation and social protection. The move from social protection to laissez-faire capitalism has negative consequences on the population and is typically met with resistance. In the recent past, we have witnessed the deregulation of the market in the form of neoliberal economy policy throughout many developing countries.

Moral Economy

Following the political economy processes that create food insecure positions for certain populations, moral economy helps to explain why under these similar circumstances only certain populations react with violent protest. Thompson (1971) acknowledges that riots required high prices or hunger, but argues that they also required the crowd have an understanding that their situation was unjust. He explains that crowds felt their cause was legitimate and were "informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and … were supported by the wider consensus of the community" (1971:78). This understanding of injustice stemmed from community norms and their expectations of rights and entitlements, known as the 'moral economy of the poor'. This closely relates to the double movement described in political economy. People become accustomed to government policies, and shape their actions around the

existence of these programs. When policies change and expose people to market-related risks that they were previously buffered from, people's expectations of the role of the government are violated. When people's ability to obtain food is blocked by practices that violated the established moral economy, the people react with protest. Therefore, according to this theory, it is not strictly the concrete situation alone that leads people to riot, rather the situation coupled with the understanding that its existence is unjust and caused by a violation of the community's norms and values.

Moral economy theory has been criticized by scholars questioning the argument that rural communities had established, anti-market consensus regarding their community structure and rebelled in defense of those communal norms. Popkin (1979), in his study of Vietnamese peasants, argues that the idealistic portrayal of the peasant society as more moral prior to the introduction of capitalist relations is an inaccurate reading of history. Rather than acting on behalf of the preservation on communal ways of organizing society, villagers were often individualistic and rational in their choice to participate in collective action. Macfarlane (1979) focuses on rural communities in England to argue that they, too, do not fit the romantic notion of peasant communities as described in moral economy literature. While the populations described in studies of 13th to 19th century England are primarily agricultural and rural dwelling, Macfarlane argues that labeling societies as 'peasant' implies a specific economic and social organization that was not present throughout this entire time period in England. While many studies applying moral economy to food riots have used England in the 18th century as an example of peasant protest, their use of peasant communities is typically used to describe agrarian communities rather than peasant societies as defined by Macfarlane.

Despite these debates in moral economy's applicability to explaining social change in peasant communities, this study finds utility in its application to present day social movements. My use of moral economy in its application to contemporary contentious politics is restricted to the interpretation of a change in a population's access to food as unfair or unjust in the opinion of those affected. This aspect of moral economy can help to explain variance in protest occurrence outside of peasant communities. This study does not presume that the population is reacting in defense of a prior communal order in which the community was insulated from market forces rather that the population is interpreting a change in food access as unjust and mobilizing against that change.

In addition to recognizing the reasons and ways that a population can interpret policy, price, and distribution changes as unjust, moral economy can help explain local level of mobilization, including which areas may mobilize and how riots can escalate and spread. Moral economy requires a community consensus that the circumstances are unjust; therefore, understanding the mobilization process requires an understanding of communities. According to works focusing on the community level, riots draw their strength from traditional communities that feel their way of life is threatened by an outside force, arguing that riots are "quintessentially local politics" (Bohstedt 1983:3). This requires knowledge of the history, politics, and locations of particular communities in order to understand their propensity to riot. In its application to 18th century riots, community centered studies explain variation in rioting as a response to the threat of industrial, capitalist society altering the traditional status structure and decentralized

community politics. These communities were able to mobilize members through a sense of solidarity in combating a threat to their way of life (Calhoun 1982).

Empirical research on present day race riots identifies communities as important actors in riots occurrence, identifying large, ghetto populations as an important factor in predicting which cities are likely to experience race related riots (Spilerman 1970) .The spatial proximity and community networks within these populations, as well as physical and social boundaries separating them from other areas of the city, can create a community with internal status and organizational structures able to rally members against external threats. Food riots can operate similarly, being facilitated by a cohesive community that feels under attack by changes in food price and distribution.

A riot, however, must not necessarily consist of a single community protesting, rather multiple communities can feel their food security is threatened and each mobilize against this hostility. As explained in Tilly (2003):

> Units of claim-making actors often consist not of living, breathing individuals but of groups, organizations and neighborhoods. Actors consist of networks deploying partially shared histories, culture, and collective connections with other actors (32).

We can, therefore, expect riots' participants to consist of multiple, smaller social groups or communities each able to mobilize members and each voicing similar grievances. We see this in the contemporary case of Argentina's food riots in 2001, where "'the crowd' was, in fact, composed of small *groups* that would arrive *together* at the looting site" (Auyero 2007:94). The community perspective of food riots, therefore, requires an external threat to a community, which mobilizes preexisting networks of people. The threat needs be immediate and concrete, in order to create tangible goals and

demands from many networks of people who end up protesting side by side (Taylor 1996).

The location and occupations of people in a given community plays a large role in the occurrence and kind of reaction, as well. For example, Tilly (1971) breaks down food riot into two distinct forms: the market riot and the *entrave.*

> "The market riot, an urban version, was usually aimed at bakers whose prices were too high or whose loaves were too few, at city residents who were suspected of hoarding supplies of grain in their houses, and at government officials who failed to act swiftly to ease a food shortage.
>
> The *entrave* was the rural form of grain riot, in which wagons or barges loaded with grain were forcibly prevented from leaving a locality. In isolated examples, at least, it can be traced to the early seventeenth century. The market riot and the *entrave* were polar opposites. The market riot was a sign that not enough grain was available in a local urban marketplace. The entrave tried to restrict the local grain supply to local consumption, and at reasonable prices"(L. Tilly 1971:23) .

These two types of food riot are an example of different subtypes of food riots based on where they occur, who acts, and how they act. A similar breakdown is useful when looking at contemporary food riots because one still expects different characteristics in urban riots versus farmers' riots, distinguished by their causes, actors, and targets.

In addition to spatially determined communities within cities, technology has allowed experiences to be shared across distance, enabling communities to form outside of geographically determined areas. In Spilerman's analysis of race riots in the United States, he found that race riots occurred in larger numbers following key, well-publicized events, like the assassination of Martin Luther King and the riots in Newark in 1967. In modern social movements, such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street, social medial played a crucial role in creating collective identities across distances through content sharing and communication (W. L. Bennett and Segerberg 2012). This non-

traditional understanding of community, spanning geographic distance and connecting people with shared experiences and identities, can help to explain upsurges in riots during particular time periods that cannot be understood exclusively through the included independent variables. It also helps to explain the diffusion of riots throughout multiple cities within the same country. People learn from other protests they witness and may, then react similarly when faced with a similar situation.

The community aspect of moral economy complicates the already multifaceted picture of food riots, by adding the multiple local level factors that affect riots and by providing a potential method by which riots spread through multiple cities and countries over a short period of time. Understanding how these processes operate requires knowledge of the local environment and the motivations of individuals joining in protest.

Contemporary Riots

While food riots have occurred since those in industrializing Europe, they did not rival the frequency and extent of involved nations until the current spike of food riots. The recent events occurred in countries located primarily, though not exclusively, in the developing world including countries in Asia, South America, and 14 different countries in Africa (Berazneva and Lee 2013; Patel and Philip McMichael 2009; Sneyd et al. 2013). The current increase in riots has sparked a wave of new studies aimed at understanding the timing and location of riots internationally. These studies of contemporary riots draw upon politics and moral economies when explaining the occurrence of food riots, utilizing quantitative and qualitative methods to explain food riot occurrences, focusing on the role of the price of food, levels of poverty, regime type,

and community characteristics. The studies focus on different regions and countries, but with a strong emphasis on Africa, using slightly varying definitions of food riots, usually drawn from newspaper accounts of riots, and find overlapping, but not completely agreeing, explanations for food riots. I draw from theories of European bread riots to systematically test the claims of causality made in quantitative studies and build upon the qualitative studies of food riots.

While the contemporary literature addresses multiple aspects of food riots, studies often agree in refuting the popularly ascribed causes of the recent food crises, as being short-term consequences of natural disasters, droughts, biofuels, etc. Instead, they situate this crisis within the larger food system, highlighting the inequality and vulnerability inherent in the current world capitalist system vis-à-vis agriculture and food access. McMichael (2000) stresses the importance of food as a force, the crisis of which has the capacity to call into question the development project and paradigm. The current food crisis has engendered numerous responses ranging from increased use of biotechnology to alternative food movements to food riots. McMichael's analysis of food riots is situated within this broader discussion of development and the industrialization of agriculture. Bartolovich (2010) attributes food riots and the food crisis to the application of neoliberal economics to concrete global resources like food. Therefore, food riots, and hunger more generally, result not from a lack of food, but rather from market-based agriculture that makes food unattainable for particular populations. She goes on to outline the particular factors of the current world system that create vulnerability and hunger in many populations, including "pervasive metropolitan elite attitudes toward 'development' [which] put an emphasis on cash crops, commercial seed and fertiliser,

'efficiency' and privileging debt repayment in the South" (Bartolovich 2010:44). Bush (2010) also addresses the connection between capitalism and food insecurity, arguing that one should expect to see food insecurity and hunger when food is treated and traded as a commodity without regard for the necessity of its procurement by every person in the world.

Quantitative studies

While the specific, on the ground causes of food riots are debated amongst scholars, the majority of riots in question occurred during two distinct time periods, both characterized by unusually high prices of staple foods. Studies have found significant relationships between food prices and social unrest (Bellemare 2014). Lagi et al (2011) find a particular price threshold above which unrest becomes more likely and identify causes of the recent spikes in food, most notably investor speculation in commodity markets (Lagi, Yavni Bar-Yam, et al. 2011). While the relationship between food price and unrest is quite apparent and highly stressed in media accounts, studies find other important variables at the country level. Even between international and national media accounts, the role of price as a predicting factor differs in emphasis with international newspapers more likely to stress the role of prices and hunger whereas domestic accounts indicate a more complex set of causes, including citizen dissatisfaction and mobilization capacity (Sneyd et al. 2013). Quantitative studies push further to identify what the role of these country-level factors is to explain why increases in price cause protests in particular locations at particular times. Although there were many food riots during the 2008 and 2011 spikes in international food prices, they did not, of course, occur in every village, town, city or every country engaged in international food trade. Barnett (2013) attributes

the relative infrequency of food riots to country-level factors, including the extent to which international price changes actually translate to the local level, the presence of social protection policies that prevent hunger, the absence of organizing groups to mobilize the population, and the threat of repression from the state. He continues that food prices may be a proximate rather than root cause of riots, as they bring to the forefront additional grievances behind which populations mobilize. Looking more closely at these additional country-level factors, Berazneva and Lee (2013) find in their analysis of the first wave of African food riots, that the likelihood of a country experiencing a riot increases with higher levels of poverty, urbanization, coastal location, oppressive regimes, and restricted access to food. The variables are measured at the country level, comparing food riots events internationally to identify predictors of countries likely to have food riots.

Case studies

Adding to quantitative analyses, some scholars have focused in-depth on particular country cases, finding the sequence of events that led food riot to occur. In Cameroon in 2008, this took the form of unions organizing protests, which are more likely to occur in urban centers among people with lower incomes(Amin 2012; A. F. Legwegoh et al. 2015). Bush (2010) analyzes riots in North and West Africa, assessing the ways food riot participants recognized this bigger picture and demanded changes that extend beyond temporary reductions in the price of food, finding that riots often include "demands to reduce political repression, promote political reform and curtail the influence of international firms" (Bush 2010:122). Because this study relies exclusively on secondary sources from North and West Africa, it provides both an opportunity to

identify the extent to which South Asian cases follow similar patterns of demanding changes beyond the immediate circumstances, as well as the extent to which reported opinions in newspapers match sentiments on the ground. Outside of Africa, Auyero and Moran (2007) conduct an analysis of individual riot sites within Argentina during riots that occurred there in 2001, focusing on the dynamics at each particular site, assessing ways the type of food market targeted, the presence of police, and the presence of political party members interacted to shape the outcomes of each event.

This study adds to the existing work on food riots by seeking to explain multiple aspects of food riots, specifically: the underlying motivation for the collective action, as explained by those involved; the role the food insecurity played in mobilizing populations to address these motivating factors; and the reasoning behind the form that riots took in each country. To address the structural causes of the population's discontent and the form that protests and riots took, I draw upon literature of collective action. To address the role of food security in mobilizing populations, this study draws upon the theories in existing food riot literature, outlined in this chapter. This study strengthens that existing work on riot mobilization in multiple ways. First, by conducting a case study of riot sites within countries, comparing locations with riots to those without, I systematically identify the combination of factors that lead grievances to mobilize into collective action. The inclusion of negative cases expands upon qualitative studies of mobilization processes by identifying necessary and sufficient factors for mobilization. By locating the level of comparison within country, this study ensures that the dependent variable of interest – food riots - is truly capturing instances of the same phenomenon.

A Theory of Contemporary Riots

Political Economy in the Modern Era

From the literature on historical and contemporary riots, one can develop hypotheses, which test within country variation in protest mobilization. The centralization of the market today is no longer on the national level as it was in the 18th century rather trade and regulation are increasingly becoming international affairs. International organizations are given charge of monitoring and regulating international trade and have the ability to influence domestic policy, especially in developing countries with limited bargaining power. With a shift in opinion regarding development strategies to one of decreased protection, increased international trade and specialization, and decreased government spending, developing countries soon adopted consistent policies. In terms of food, reducing barriers to international trade led to an increase in international agricultural trade, which in turn led countries to more specialized agricultural production focused on crops that sell competitively at the international level. This shift had two major effects on countries: (1) increased dependence on imports for sustaining the population and (2) transformation of the domestic social structure. These led to food insecurity in the population because as the people move away from subsistence agriculture and into wage labor, they must rely on minimal wages to purchase food. The poor in developing countries spend a large proportion of their income on food and are vulnerable to increases in food prices, which are now dictated by the global agricultural market. While this explanation is related to market prices, it complicates the simplistic - price → riot - understanding.

Figure 1 diagrams this argument, illustrating the multipronged influence of neoliberalism on policy – decreasing barriers to trade, domestic subsidies, and welfare policies. Decrease in food subsidies and welfare provisions act as direct influences on the population's food security and propensity to riot by limiting the capacity of vulnerable groups to purchase food or acquire it through state-sponsored safety nets. The decrease in trade barriers and corresponding increase in international trade works through intermediary mechanisms discussed above. The increase in international trade encourages countries to import commodities in which they are not competitive and to focus on producing specifically those products in which they have an advantage in the international market. This shift to cash crop production and food imports results in more and more of the population needing to purchase their food, thereby becoming vulnerable to price volatility now characteristic of the global agricultural system.

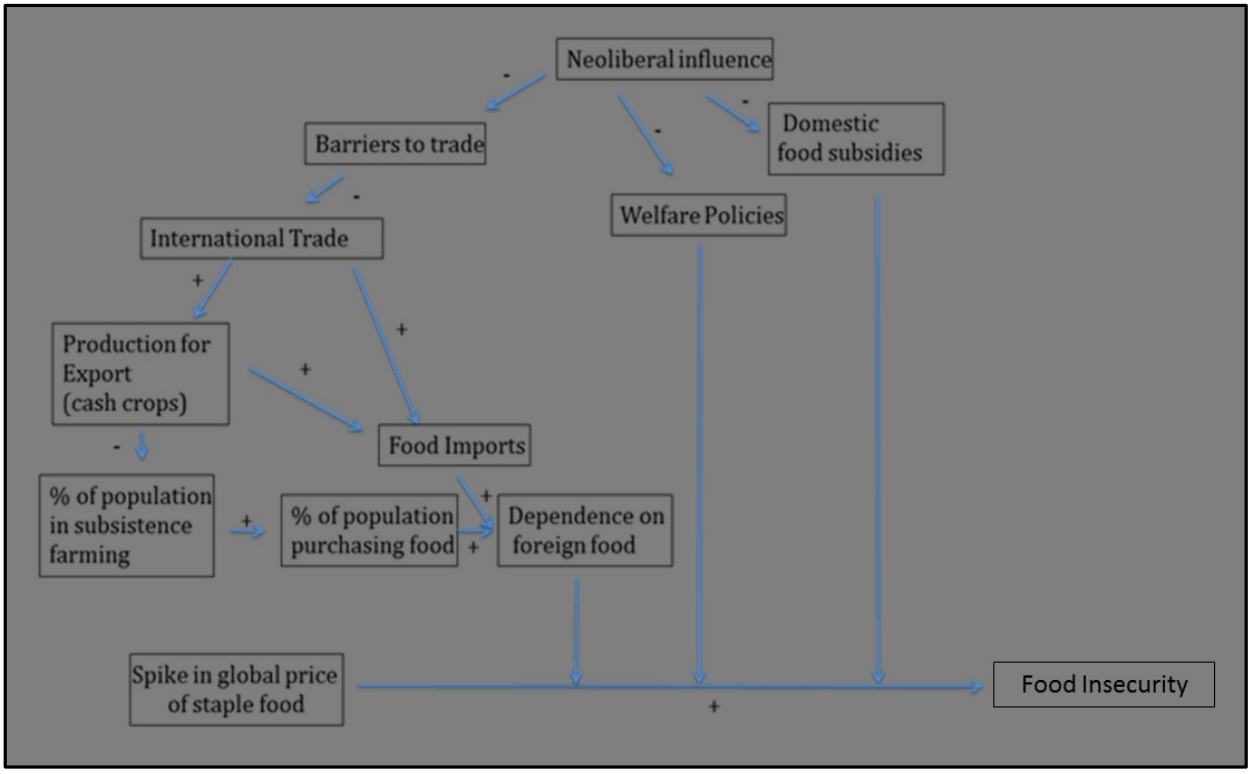

Figure 1: Effects of Neoliberal Reforms on Food Security

In addition to effect that a decline in subsistence farmers has on their food security, this decline involves large-scale social change and increases the population's capacity to organize. Paige (1978) explains that shifts to export agriculture and wage labor create new circumstances for social change in the developing world. Specifically, there is a greater capacity to organize among those who draw their income from wages rather than land. Those who earn wages are not in direct competition with one another, are spatially closer together, and are likely to mobilize around income distribution issues. This understanding of wage laborers' capacity is only half the story, however, as the capacity of the ruling class to appease or suppress opposition determines the form and success of oppositional organization. This will be elaborated further in the role of the power holding group in riots, discussed in Chapter 3.

When wage-earning populations are highly dependent on the market to earn income and purchase food and at the same time are not protected from price and supply fluctuations through price controls or subsidies, they can be considered 'food insecure'. To what extent they are likely to face restricted food access depends in part on how large a percentage of their income they spend on food. If a population spends a large proportion of their income on food, they are more likely to end up lacking access to food through even slight changes in staple food prices. This situation is well described by Tawney, as a man "standing up to his neck in water, so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him" (1966:77). Alternatively, for rural populations, distribution may play a larger role than price in people's food insecurity. In this case a change in the distribution of food could lead to a shortage in supply for certain areas. In either case, food access is

restricted, either due to price or distribution. If this occurs, we depend on moral economy to determine whether or not the population will respond by rioting.

Moral Economy in the Modern Era

Moral economy sheds light on the varying occurrence of contemporary riots. An example of the moral economy of the poor in a contemporary context can be seen in Latin America. Latin American countries experienced significant development in the immediate post war period, and they developed social protection policies for the newly urban-dwelling, industrial working class (A. Barrientos 2004). The state provided subsidies on food, transportation, and housing that made life possible for the urban residents despite low-wages (Cardosa and Faletto 1979). These policies created a pact between the state and the urban poor in which "public assistance was provided in exchange for political loyalty" (Walton and Seddon 1994:48) When economic growth slowed in the 1980s, Argentina, heavily dependent on international loans, needed to restructure its economic policies in accordance with IMF recommendations. This restructuring required significant retrenchment of social and economic policies, which not only exacerbated material scarcity for many urban residents, but also constituted a breach of the social pact between the urban poor and the state. In addition, later on the state instituted restrictions on cash availability, limiting on the amount of cash that could be withdrawn from banks in a given week and withholding pension payments. Residents felt entitled to these because they had worked to earn the savings and pensions that were being withheld. By removing what residents considered necessary and just policies and entitlements or withholding people's income, the state violated norms of the community (Auyero 2007). In 2001, Argentina experienced riots throughout the country as people

protested the actions of the government. Mobilization around an entitlement to food access has occurred in many other South American countries, influencing food policy and social assistance (Wolford and Nehring 2013). The logic of the moral economy can also be seen in a study of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya, and Zambia, in which residents expressed dissatisfaction with the injustice of commodity speculation in times of scarcity (N. Hossain and Kalita 2014; N. Hossain et al. 2014).

Using political economy, we can understand the food-insecure circumstances in which the populations of many developing countries are situated. Moral economy adds a crucial component, explaining why food becomes a mobilizing force in certain circumstances. The following chapter situates food riots within the larger scholarship on collective action and social movements, proposing that political and moral economy theories are useful to understand when protests mobilize, but do not necessarily explain the grievances being expressed by the participating population and the form that food riots take.

3 Food Riots as Contentious Politics: Explaining variation in food riots

While media and academic accounts have classified many contemporary protests and riots as 'food riots', an in-depth reading of these events complicates this representation of a food riot as a distinct form of collective action akin to the bread riots of 18th century Europe. Unlike the riots of the 18th century, food riots of today are quite varied in motivation, targets, and outcomes, resembling multiple forms of collective action from labor strikes, to political protests, to targeted attacks on individuals. Demarest (2015) highlights this shortcoming in literature of contemporary riots, highlighting the lack of precision in the term 'food riot' and the dependence on media accounts to identify their occurrence. The dependence on the news media to identify events of interest is problematic given the inconsistencies in international and national media labeling events and their motives as relating to food (Sneyd et al. 2013). In addition, because contemporary food riots are often associated with state failure, newspapers will report on food riots internationally, but not label events within their own country as food riots (N. Hossain et al. 2014). In this case, the term 'food riot' serves more as an accusation than a clear concept. I address this shortcoming of classification in two ways, first by comparing within country variation during a single time period to ensure that events are of the same nature and form and second, through a cross national comparison of two sets of events, both labeled as food riots by the international media, which I compare in the context of collective action and social movement theories to assess if they are, in fact, both incidents of a distinct form of collective action around food.

In addition to the shortcomings of including dissimilar events in the same analysis, existing analysis of food riots often distinguish between violent and nonviolent protests. By excluding non-violent protests from analysis, the researcher may be dividing theoretically similar events into distinct categories. In his study of contemporary riots in the US, Europe, and Tunisia, Klein (2012) finds that the outbreak of violence is less a characteristic of the crowd and mobilization, but rather a direct response to the policing practices used. In these cases, if the mobilization of collective action is the phenomenon of interest, dividing protests and riots into separate categories would result in the exclusion of relevant cases as the mobilization and actors may be the same in both cases. In collecting qualitative data in the locations of unrest, I account for this by allowing information about violent and non-violent manifestations of contention to enter into the study.

In order to adequately understand variation in characteristics of contemporary riots, it is helpful to contextualize them in the broader literature of collective action and conflict. Seeing these events not as food riots, but rather as instances of collective action and class conflict can help to explain the scale of the participation in the event, differences in demands made by participants, and the variations in reactions they receive in different countries. It is plausible that many different forms of contemporary class conflict use food as a mobilizing factor given the contemporary environment of volatile food prices and wage dependent lower classes while falling into different categories of collective action from one another. This is evidenced by the fact that a global increase in food price increases protests and riots of any kind, not those specifically relating to food (Lagi, Bertrand, et al. 2011). In addition, those events with food as a motivating factor

typically contain additional grievances toward the government or employers. In this chapter, I draw upon collective action literature to outline informal hypotheses regarding the grievances, mobilization, and form of contentious events relating to food.

Contentious Politics

Contentious politics falls at the intersection of contention, politics, and collective action (C. Tilly and Tarrow 2015). Food riots satisfy these three characteristics, generally and can further be divided into different forms of contentious politics. They involve contention in that one party is making a claim on another; in this case a group of people making a claim for food on whichever party is deemed responsible for its inaccessibility. Food riots are political in that they typically involve demands made on the state or involve military or police intervention to quell protests. And lastly, food riots constitute collective action because they involve a coordinated action of a group of people in pursuit of a common interest (C. Tilly 1978). A crucial component of contentious politics, specifically the collective action aspect of it, is mobilization, which will be discussed in-depth in this chapter and throughout. Mobilization can be defined as "an increase of the resources available to a political actor for collective making of claims" (C. Tilly and Tarrow 2015:120; Etzioni 1968). The process of mobilization typically involves an upward scale shift, which occurs when the contention expands to new or larger groups of people. The process by which contentious politics demobilizes is also of interest for this study be it through government repression, disillusionment, or concessions made toward the demands.

While the definition of contentious events is relatively uniform, there are many explanations for why it occurs and what form it takes. In studies of food riots, the violence involved is often used as a part of the definition of the concept, distinguishing food riots from protests. Riots, by those definitions including damage to property or persons, fall under not only collective action, but also collective violence. As discussed above, the categorization of food riots as collective violence is useful in understanding the means by which contentious politics becomes violent, but does not add to a study of the processes of mobilization. Tilly (1978) explains that:

> most collective violence – in the sense of interactions which produce direct damage to persons and objects – grows out of actions which are not intrinsically violent, and which are basically similar to a much large number of collective actions occurring without violence in the same periods and settings (177).

The violence which occurs in collective violence events, such as food riots, is often due to protesters breaking rules, resulting in repressive forces, such as the police, using violence to dispel the protesters (Klein 2012). In this instance, rather than describe the event as a 'protest', we assign the word 'riot' and "thereby obscure its connection with non-violent events" (C. Tilly 1978:177). This study includes all forms of contentious politics as they relate to food in the two settings of interest to investigate the process of mobilization, while also investigating the process of violence occurring or not.

Resource Mobilization

Though appearing random, the outbreak of contentious politics in the form of protests or riots typically stems from long standing grievances. Resource mobilization theorists argue against the notion that the apparent suddenness of collective action occurs due to a sudden increase in grievances from rapid social change. Rather, there have been

grievances in existence and what has changed is the resources available to the group contesting (Jenkins 1983). One can consider the long-standing, negative conditions to be a necessary but not sufficient cause for collective action - the conditions are explosive material, but require a spark for social conflict to occur (Franzosi 1995; Hobsbawm 1964). From this perspective, food prices are the spark, which ignites preexisting discontent into action. The discontent, which people are mobilizing against, is not high food prices, but rather inaccessibility of food allows for the mobilization of groups around an existing contention.

Oberschall (1978) outlines three main tasks for those endeavoring to explain social conflict. A theory of social conflict must explain the structural sources of conflict, the formation and mobilization of a group challenging that structure, and the dynamics of the conflict (Oberschall 1978:292). The aim of explaining how contentious politics, specifically food riots, mobilize, then, requires an understanding of three critical questions. First, what claim is one group making on another? In other words, what is the content of the contention or what is the structural source of the conflict? The second question is 'what occurred to increase the resources of the actors at these times in these particular places'. And finally, what form did these events take and why. Over the following chapter, I argue that the upsurge in food riots over the past decade are being misunderstood in the current literature as a sudden increase in grievances, which create collective action. Instead, following resource mobilization theory, I understand the recent food price crisis to be a means by which groups are able to mobilize resources to contest an existing structural source of contention. Food serves as a mobilizing factor, but not the structure source of the conflict itself. If the source of grievance is not food, as has been

previously hypothesized, the task is to answer what that grievance is. To address this question, I use theories of social and class conflict to hypothesize the source and form of protests and riots. Secondly, if food is, in fact, a mobilizing factor rather than the actual grievance, we still must answer why food has become such a mobilizing force all over the world since 2007. To address this question, we must understand the modern day food system and the changes that have occurred over the past few decades to create a circumstance in which people are able to draw on high food prices as a means to mobilize resources for collective action.

Class Conflict

If food prices are not the primary grievance, but rather the means for an increase in resources for the expression of previously held grievances, then we must seek to understand what grievances are actually behind food riots. Theorists in the social sciences attribute the occurrence of contentious politics to various sources and, dependent on those sources, predict varying forms of collective action. When describing collective action, Marx identifies it as a manifestation of class conflict (Marx 1978). In which case, the injustice being fought through collective action would relate to class relations and the participants would belong to the same class in their struggle for power against a different one. Following Marxist theory, these classes are defined by the people's relationship to the means of production. If food riots are class conflict, we should expect to see the participants of protests and riots aware of their class position, acting on behalf of their class interests, and targeting another social class (C. Tilly 1978).

Marx's class-based framework for studying social conflict has been applied to many settings. Paige (1978) investigates rural class conflict to explain the different forms that conflicts take based on characteristics about the classes involved. While this was developed to explain rural conflict, it can be applied to contemporary conflict both in rural and urban settings. As with Marx, Paige identifies rural conflict as class-based, occurring between the cultivators (rural lower class) and non-cultivators (upper class). Class conflict takes on different forms based on the characteristics of each group. When the lower class draws its income from wages rather than land, we are more likely to see political organization among that class. When this class comes into conflict with the upper class, the form of conflict depends on the characteristics of the upper class:

> "A noncultivating class drawing its income from the land is usually dependent on servile or semiservile labor and cannot therefore permit the extension of political or economic rights to cultivators. As a result labor conflicts tend to be politicized. A noncultivating class drawing its income from industrial or commercial capital is usually dependent on free labor and can therefore more easily tolerate political and economic rights for cultivators. As a result labor conflicts tend to be economic rather than political." (Paige 1978:21)

While this work was related to specifically rural conflicts, it can inform the analysis of protests and riots taking place in urban centers, as well. In both cases, discussed in chapters 5 and 6, the lower class draw their income from wages, whereas the upper class in Dhaka draw their income from industrial and commercial capital and the upper class in West Bengal, India draw their income from land. In such a situation, if Paige is in fact applicable in an urban setting, we should expect labor reform in Bangladesh. Despite a largely uniform, densely populated, industrial working class, demands made in conflicts will be neither radical nor political. This is because "a radical, well-organized, class conscious work force confronts an economically powerful upper class willing and able to

bargain and make concessions" (Paige 1978:49). Alternatively, in rural India, the upper class confronts the same work force, but is unable to grant concessions due to their wealth in land rather than capital. The conflicts in this situation are highly political and result in either violent repression or a political revolution. The cases of India and Bangladesh allow for a test of the applicability of theories of class conflict to contemporary food riots. Interviews with rural citizens in India can test Paige's assertion that landed workers and wageworkers have different capacities for protest not strictly based upon their food security. In India, the large number of farmer suicides has drawn international attention over the past few years, numbering approximately 17,000 in 2012 alone (Anon 2013; Sainath 2013). This highly isolated act of desperation and protest may relate to the lack of solidarity amongst the land-dependent working class, as explained by Paige. This assertion requires research to identify the extent to which farmers partake in collective action. This research will test the hypothesis that wage dependent workers are more likely to mobilize politically than those who are land dependent.

Why Now?

Theories of contentious politics and class conflict provide an understanding of the different forms that conflict can take and how food riots can be classified into those categories. However, if food riots are manifestations of class conflict in the modern era with non-food related grievances, these theories do not yet explain why so many riots, which at least on the surface relate to food, have begun to occur since 2007. Why did this form of all but disappear through much of the 19th and 20th centuries? To understand why the form of conflict has begun to revolve around food, one must examine the changes in the food system that occurred over the 20th century.

Understanding the changes in the relationship between people and food is critical to understanding the timing of riots today. In an era of unprecedented agricultural production and international trade, hunger often presents itself as a function of distribution and purchasing power rather than availability (Sen 1981). The current system of food production and trade marks a change in the international system developed after World War II, and from the 1970s to present has been characterized by highly volatile staple food prices (Friedmann 1982). This shift has impacted people throughout the world, especially affecting the livelihoods and food security of populations in developing countries. McMichael (2000) describes food riots as a critique of this current food system. This literature on changes in the international food regime provides a framework for explaining the macro level changes that influence local experiences and behaviors. My explanation of food riots exists within the context of this food crisis described by scholars of international food regimes who stress the structural barriers to food access throughout the world, and the breakdown of the previous order (Friedmann 1982; McMichael 2000; Sen 1981).

International Food Regime and the Global Food Crisis

Following World War II, United States' agricultural policies shaped international agricultural agreements, controlled the global price of staple commodities, and altered the internal social structure of numerous developing countries. These policies began during the Great Depression in an effort to protect American farmers from the drastic decrease in agricultural commodity prices. When the depression began to hit, prices and exports of agricultural goods fell dramatically. In this situation, it was individually rational for

farmers to sell more, in an attempt to increase their incomes. This individual effort furthered the problem, however, as the flood of goods onto the market further lowered their prices. From 1926 to 1933, farmers' wages fell by 47%, creating a serious need for some form of government intervention to control either production or prices to protect farmers who were defaulting on mortgages and falling deeper into poverty and hunger (Winders 2009). In 1933, as part of the New Deal, the US passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), which was based on the principles of production controls and price supports. This legislation aimed to control production levels to avoid surpluses and subsequent price decreases like those seen during the depression. It accomplished this through limiting the acres farmers could cultivate and by establishing the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). The CCC allowed farmers to take out loans against their future crop at 60-70% of the market price. At harvest, if the prices for that crop rose, the farmers could sell the crop at the market value, pay back the loan, and keep the profit. If the market values fell for that crop, farmers could turn over their crop to the CCC, and their loan would be forgiven (Kenney et al. 1991). This worked to keep surplus crops off the market when prices were low and thereby prevent them from falling even lower. In addition to these loans, the AAA limited production through provisions, which paid farmers to leave land idle and granted subsidies contingent upon acreage allotments. This policy had significant consequences on the form of production within the US (as not all agricultural commodities qualified for these subsidies and loans) and on international relations (as the US government needed to find markets for their accumulating surpluses).

The AAA policy of supply management and price parity remained in effect until 1996. It was altered throughout WWII, increasing the percent parity on price controls and

including more commodities (Winders 2009:69). This policy was highly effective at increasing the income of farmers producing the included commodities, but highly ineffective at decreasing overproduction because it provided higher subsidies for more productive farms and any production limits applied only to acres not to output. As the government bought crops in an effort to control the supply and prices, it accumulated surpluses of particular crops. The need for grain abroad during the war originally provided a use for the accumulating surplus, however, "the wheat surpluses engendered by New Deal policies had become an overwhelming burden by the end of the war" (Friedmann 1982:S260).

Initially following World War II, the US dealt with these surpluses by providing food aid to war-torn European countries and to troops in the Korean War. While Europe provided a convenient market for these surpluses, the United States' conflict with the Soviet Union was a more crucial issue. The US began investing in European reconstruction in agriculture and other sectors for the sake of capitalist allies in the Cold War. The US "sacrificed [the] historic import demand for American wheat to larger strategies for strengthening the European economies on a capitalist basis and incorporating them within the American alliance" (Friedmann 1982:S261). This ended the dumping of surplus to Europe. Without this agricultural market, the US needed new markets for its surpluses that were still accumulating under supply management policies. This need led to the passing of Public Law 480 in 1954, which allowed the US to sell surplus agricultural goods for foreign currency and to donate them as humanitarian assistance. This was needed in order to sell grain to developing countries that lacked foreign exchange. PL 480 served dual purposes for the United States, domestic and

international. First, it provided a large market for agricultural surpluses in the form of 'food aid' to developing countries, establishing long-term markets for agricultural goods. Secondly, it allowed for the US to trade with these developing countries, thereby incorporating them into the 'free world', offering artificially cheap agricultural products to aid in their *capitalist* development. This marks an example of the United States' use of development as a Cold War strategy, in which food and agricultural production played a crucial role (Cullather 2010).

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's, the US government dealt with its surpluses through subsidizing exports to expand markets internationally, artificially lowering and stabilizing the global price and creating a dependence on food aid in many developing countries (Winders 2009). Adding to the role of subsidized US exports, international prices were also controlled through international agreements that set floor and ceiling prices for many internationally traded agricultural goods. This regulation of agricultural products was consistent with the post-war economic paradigm of regulated economic growth and the development project (McMichael 2012). The artificially low price of American imports, particularly of wheat, drove out agricultural producers in many less developed countries because domestic farmers were unable to compete with these prices. This caused many formerly self-sufficient countries to become dependent on cheap imports of wheat and not develop their agricultural capacity in staple commodities. This was not, however, a completely one-sided action. Developing countries often welcomed this cheap source of food as a means to subsidize their own industrial development (Friedmann 1982).

In this situation, many farmers shifted from subsistence farming or farming crops that could not compete with imports to producing crops they could sell on the international market. Shifting from diverse, subsistence farming to cash crop production encourages efficiency, which is often achieved through increasing farm size (i.e. economies of scale). This increase in farm size consolidated land previously farmed by multiple small farmers, transforming subsistence and small, for-market farm owners into agricultural wage laborers. Unlike subsistence farmers and agricultural small holders who frequently engage in a degree of subsistence farming, wage laborers must purchase all of their food, leaving them especially vulnerable to price fluctuations. In addition, many rural dwellers, through either the push of farm consolidation or the pull of industrial development in cities, moved to urban areas and became entirely dependent on wages to acquire food.

This system existed, providing cheap, stable prices on many agricultural staples, for nearly three decades following WWII. During the 1970s, this system based on surplus, supply management, international regulation, and the development project (McMichael 2012; Winders 2009) started to be dismantled, marking the beginning the ongoing contemporary of food crisis. The food regime that existed following WWII was primarily shaped by the US agricultural system, which occupied the hegemonic position within the world system. The US system of regulating agriculture shaped international agreements to protect US interests and influenced the domestic policies of other countries for them to be competitive with highly subsidized US production, creating an international system of state intervention in the agricultural market (Winders 2009). The

crisis of food, like other crises began when the existing international regime was unable to sustain itself and began breaking down (Wallerstein 1982).

During the 1970s, many changes occurred that fundamentally altered the structure of international agriculture. On the broadest, ideological level, there was a shift away from regulation toward free-market policies. This shift, described by Polanyi (2001) as the double movement, occurs throughout history shifting back and forth between regulated and unfettered capitalism. Many international agreements regulating agricultural prices and purchasing were watered down or dismantled during this time, such as the International Wheat Agreement and the International Coffee Agreement (Fridell 2007; McCreary 2011). To compound instability resulting from this decrease in regulation, the US' grain surplus, on which the global order was highly dependent, was depleted in the 1970s. In 1972, the US-Soviet grain deal opened the long-standing trade restriction between the US and the Soviet Union, and in the 1972-1973 crop year, the Soviet Union purchased 30 million metric tons of grain from the US (Friedmann 1993:40). This new trade with the Soviet Union simultaneously alleviated the US surplus 'issue' in grains and soybeans, created through supply management and significantly increased world grain prices. This increase in demand resulted state encouragement for farmers to abandon practices that reduced acreage, which led farmers to invest more in land and other inputs, causing a threefold increase in farm debt (Friedmann 1993:40). Throughout the 1970's and 1980's US political relations with the Soviet Union continued to impact US agricultural production and surpluses, mostly characterized by an export boom in the 1970s, and a subsequent decrease in prices and demand through the 1980s, making it difficult for farmers to pay back the debts they had accumulated during the

1970s expansion. Figure 2 shows the global price of wheat in dollars per metric ton, the introduction of extreme instability into the market is clearly evident as the surpluses disappeared and the price controls were dismantled in the early 1970s.

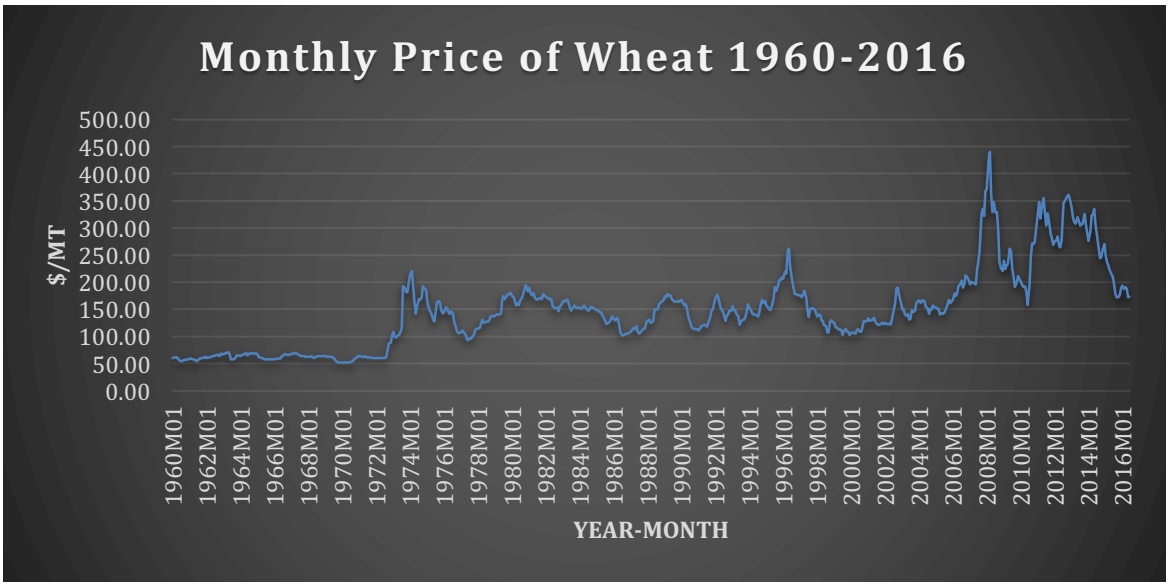

Figure 2: Global Monthly Price of Wheat 1960 - 2016
Source: World Bank (2016)

The reduction of state intervention into the global agricultural market has created a crisis marked by increasingly volatile food prices throughout the world, affecting both producers and consumers depending on the swing in prices. Figure 2 illustrates the abrupt shift to this more volatile system, which has continued to present. Newly urban populations, whose resettlement was subsidized through the cheap source of American agricultural products, most acutely felt the volatility of prices. These wage laborers could afford food at low wages because of the constant influx of cheap wheat, but this was possible only as long as food prices remained low. Following the US-Soviet grain deal and the later retrenchment of supply management policy, the stability of prices became a thing of the past, leaving these populations in a highly vulnerable and food-insecure

position. As poor urban residents typically spend a large proportion of their income on food, these populations are particularly affected by the sharp increases in food prices over the past few decades. The past two decades' volatility in agricultural prices created a subsequent increase in the number of food related protests throughout the developing world. These protests have occurred in urban and rural areas throughout Latin America, Asia, and Africa and can be related back to the role of US agricultural policy beginning with the New Deal. The reliance of these particular populations on cheap food, as well as the reliance of the country as a whole on agricultural imports, is in large part, a consequence of US New Deal agricultural policy. The reactions of the populations in these countries unable to afford food can be understood through the history of these policies.

Hypotheses

An in-depth study of two areas that experienced food riots is necessary to test whether the constructed theory of riots based previous studies combined with political economy, moral economy, and collective action literature is in fact accurately describing the processes occurring at the local level. Going back to the requirements of theories of social conflict outlined in Oberschall (1978), this study of food riots in Bangladesh and India attempts to explain (1) the structural basis for conflict (2) the mobilization process and (3) the form of conflict. In order to address these three aspects of social conflict, I conduct a comparative case study of Bangladesh and India and propose the following informal hypotheses to test the utility of theories of food riots, contentious politics, and class conflict in explaining contemporary food riots.

(1) Structural Basis for Conflict

Hypothesis 1.1: *The reasons given for a conflict event are not food prices, rather a longer standing injustice faced by the community.*

Hypothesis 1.2: *Participants of protests and riots are aware of their class position, acting on behalf of their class interests, and targeting another social class.*

(2) Mobilization Process

Hypothesis 2.1 *A decrease in food access is necessary, but not sufficient, for a food riot to occur.*

Hypothesis 2.2*: A decrease in food access coupled with a violation in the moral economy is necessary for a riot or protest to occur.*

While I expect the mobilizing factor in protests and riots contesting class-related injustice to be food insecurity, this may take different forms based on the location. In urban areas, people are likely to lack access to food due to price, as cities are seldom cut off completely from imports of food products, either from rural region within the country or from abroad. In rural areas where people are involved in farming activities, restricted access to food may occur either due to price or issues regarding food distribution. However, even in these different situations, we should only see riots if the restricted food access constitutes a violation of the moral economy. Violations may include, but are not limited to, removals of subsidies or price controls, changes in distribution structure, decreases in wages, sudden price increases beyond anticipated levels, or a lack of governmental response to citizens' demands regarding food. These changes in themselves

are not violations of the moral economy, rather people's descriptions of them as 'unjust', 'unfair', 'not right', etc. make them so. In addition, there are other factors which increase the resources available for a group to organize to voice contention, these are listed below.

Hypotheses 2.3: *The actors' resources for mobilizing contentious politics may be increased by the following factors:*

greater population density,

stronger existing community ties,

a stronger perceived external threat,

repressive force from police or other powerful groups,

a mobilizing group, including a political party or union, or

a recent, highly publicized food riot with successful outcomes.

These factors need not all be present in the same place. For example, in Dhaka, one would expect the densely populated, highly impoverished population to spur mobilization, whereas in eastern India, stronger, rural community ties may have been key in mobilizing the population. They serve as potential means of mobilization, rather than necessary causal variables. It is important to note that the contention will likely be present in many locations without riots occurring. The riot locations will depend upon groups' capacity to mobilize resources available to the group in order to have a contentious political event, like riots and protests, take place. It is this component of the process that these numerous factors are seeking to explain.

Lastly, the form that these conflicts may take will be assessed in each country and between India and Bangladesh to understand which variables cause differences in the

form that contentious politics takes. Hypotheses 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 test the applicability of Paige's (1978) theory of agrarian contention and the organizational capacity of the cultivating class outlined earlier in this chapter.

(3) Form of Conflict

Hypothesis 3.1: *Protests and riots will be disproportionately composed of wage-earning laborers.*

Hypothesis 3.2: *Protests and riots against land-wealthy upper class will be political in nature.*

Hypothesis 3.3: *Protests and riots against a capital-wealthy upper class will be economic in nature.*

In addition to these expectations based specifically on the theories, there are less formally developed questions explored through this study. These include the extent to which international newspaper accounts, local newspaper accounts, government officials, and local citizens present a consistent picture of the problem and conflict event. This helps to test the utility of prior studies, which relied on newspaper accounts to identify food riots locations for further analysis. It also allows for a test of Sneyd et al's (2013) assertion that the term 'food riot' is applied inconsistently in newspapers depending on the country in which it occurs. From the interview accounts, I will also gain further understanding of the role of police presence and repression on violence, the influence of additional actors on mobilization, the patterns in targets of crowd aggression, and deterrents to collective action as explained by those experiencing hardships. Understanding the role of these additional variables is important for future government

action during times of high global food prices. The comparison of locations with and without riots in 2007-8 will contribute to theory development regarding the timing and extent of government intervention to address existing contention without the destructive nature of food riots.

4 Methods

Study Design

To test and expand upon the theories of riot mobilization, this work utilizes controlled case comparisons of cases of unrest from the 2007-2008 price boom. This time period experienced a sharp rise in food prices from late 2007 into 2008, which triggered riots throughout the developing world, attracting extensive media attention to food riots as a contemporary event. Figure 3 shows the food price index since 2000. The spikes in 2008 and 2011 are attributed with causing food riots throughout the world (Lagi, Bertrand, et al. 2011). In this study, I examine two countries that experienced rioting during the 2007-2008 price increase. Focusing on the same time period is important to investigate the events within the same context, while looking at the initial spike of food prices and protests, rather than 2011, helps to control for changes in protest methods and government adaptation from the first to the second spike global food prices. Looking at two cases at the start of the contemporary manifestation of this phenomenon allows for an investigation into the ground level mechanisms that motivated collective violence, but also the larger scale factors that allowed for these types of protests to emerge on the world stage.

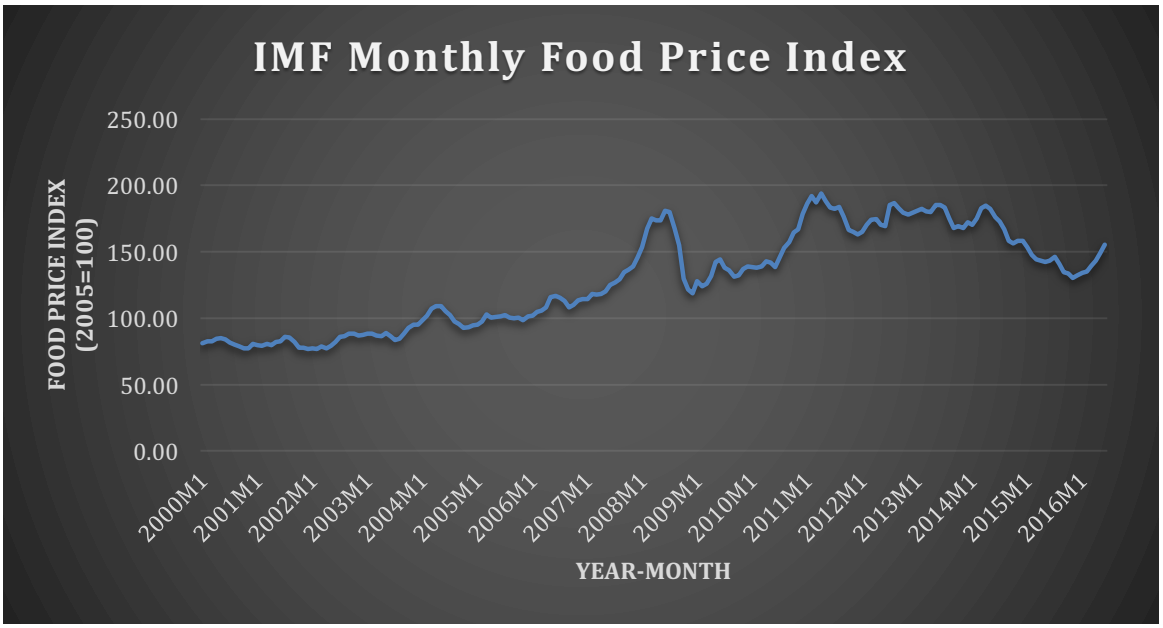

Figure 3: Commodity Food Price Index 2000-2016
Source: IMF Primary Commodity Price Data, Food Price Index (2016)

While these events in 2007 and 2008 were widespread, they did not occur in all countries or in all locations within those countries. In order to test why food riots occurred in particular places and not others, this study utilizes case studies. Case studies are particularly well suited for this study because the aim is to identify why and how contemporary food riots have occurred (Ragin 1987). For this type of event, case studies are preferred over other methods such as surveys or experiments because "the investigator has little control over events, and … the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with some real-life context" (Yin 2003:1). For this study's focus in particular, an in-depth study allows for identifying new variables unaccounted for in quantitative work and examining the process operating in the cases. These advantages are well described in George and Bennet's (2005) work on case studies:

> "When a case study researcher asks a participant 'were you thinking X when you did Y,' and gets the answer 'No, I was thinking Z,' then if the researcher had not thought of Z as a casually relevant variable, she may have a new variable demanding to be heard." (20)

Given the very recent upsurge in food riot occurrences, studies of riot causes and mobilization forms can gain from this in-depth analysis to identify which variables are relevant in contemporary riots and which processes of mobilization are at play in this particular form of collective action.

The cases of riots selected for this study are West Bengal, India in 2007 and Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2008. Using these locations, the comparisons for this study take place at two levels illustrated in Figure 4, for two important methodological purposes: first I compare locations with and without riots within Dhaka and within West Bengal to identify variables that contribute to riots occurrences, and second I compare riots in West Bengal are compared to riots in Dhaka to understand patterns of mobilization and riot characteristics. The qualitative data collected allow for cross- and within-country comparisons: cross-case comparisons by comparing interview responses regarding riots in Bangladesh to those in India and within-case comparisons by comparing responses in communities with and without riots in West Bengal and areas with and without riots in Bangladesh.

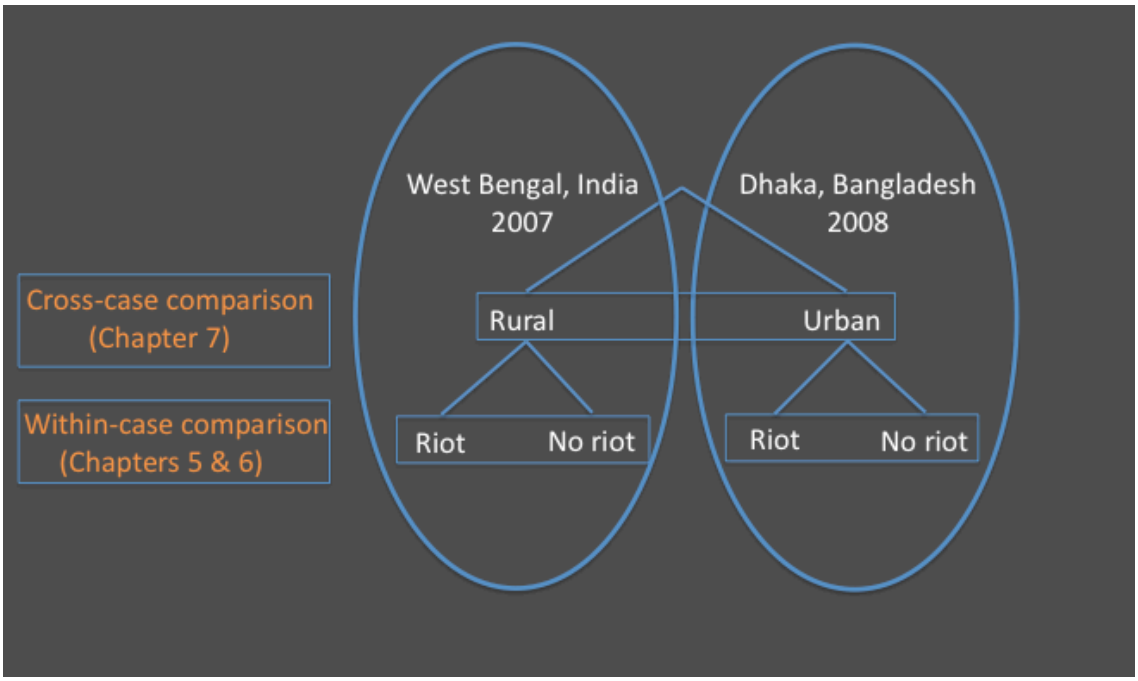

Figure 4: Case Comparisons of West Bengal and Dhaka

Within-Case Comparison

To identify potentially influential variables in the mobilization of riots, this study looks within each country, comparing interview responses in locations with and without riots regarding food access, collective action, and general grievances. This comparison is based upon Mill's (1843) "method of difference" and Przeworski and Teune's (1970) "Most Similar Systems Design". The method of difference is explained by Mill as the following:

> If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance save one in common, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon. (1843:455)

Otherwise explained as comparing seemingly identical cases to "identify independent variables associated with different outcomes" (George and A. Bennett 2005:153). This method requires matching two cases that have a different value of an outcome variable but are very similar otherwise. In picking similar cases, you limit the number of possible explanations for difference in the outcome. Preworski and Teune (1970) describe "Most Similar Systems" design, in which the selection of highly similar cases limits the number of intersystem differences that may explain the difference in outcome variable. The purpose of the comparison is then to study the systems to identify where they differ and how that may affect the outcome variable. Selecting similar systems limits the possible explanations for differences in the dependent variable. In this study, the most similar system comparison is applied within each selected country, comparing villages in West Bengal that experienced riots to those that did not experience riots and areas of Dhaka that experienced riots to those that did not. By selecting villages that share many characteristics, the number of variables necessary to investigate in determining the causes of riots is limited, as characteristics that are shared between villages with riots and without can be ruled out as sufficient causes of riots. Were they the cause, the riot would have occurred in both locations. This within-case comparison allows for the identification of variables that differ between very similar locations in each country to identify possible causes for differences in the outcome (Lijphart 1971). In the case of this study, we look areas facing similar restrictions to food access with similar population and location characteristics, and then investigate those locations to find differences that may explain why a riot occurred or did not occur. The logic underlying the most similar is simply that "a condition present in both cases cannot account for the difference in case outcomes"

(George and A. Bennett 2005:156). Therefore, villages were selected in West Bengal and neighborhoods were selected in Dhaka that highly resembled one another though some experienced riots and some did not. In-depth study could then help to identify which variables were not the primary causes of the riots (those present in both places) and which variables may have contributed to the riot occurrence (those only present in the riot locales). This level of analysis, looking at similar systems allows for understanding of the mobilization process, ruling out as necessary causes of mobilization those variables present in both places, but allowing for an understanding of structural bases for conflict that may be present in all areas.

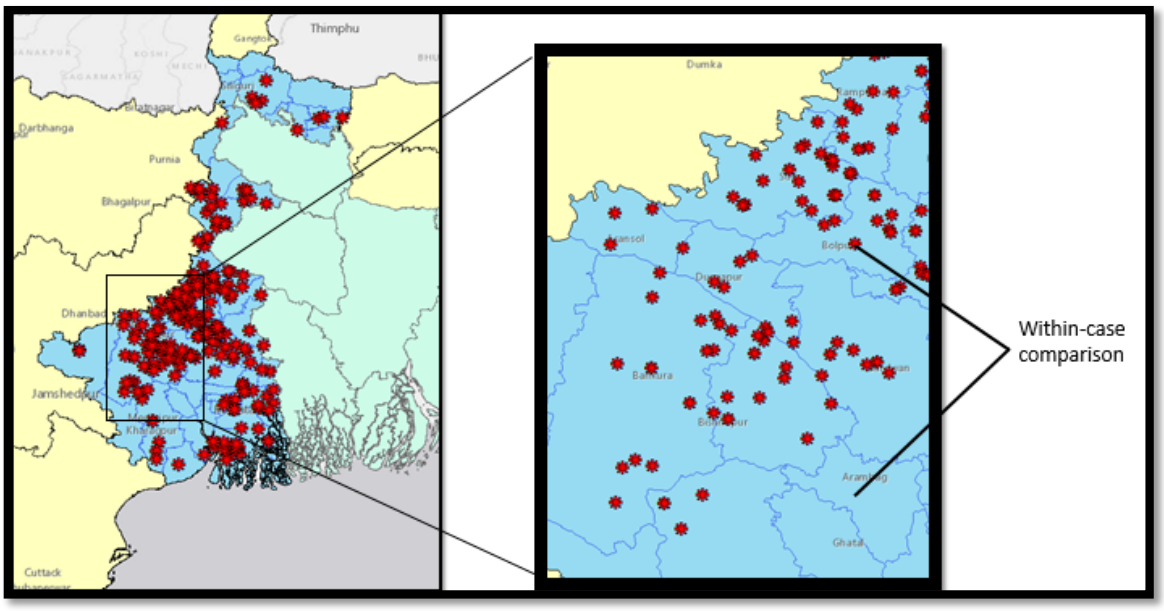

Figure 5: Within-Case comparison: Most Similar

Cross-case Comparison

Adding to the most similar systems design utilized in within case analysis of India (Chapter 5) and Bangladesh (Chapter 6), comparison could be made across countries. This study's comparison of India and Bangladesh builds on the most similar findings to then compare those between systems that have less in common. This method of

comparison is based on Mill's "method of agreement" and Przeworski & Teune's "most difference systems" design. These require identifying cases with varying independent variables, but similar outcomes to then rule out as a necessary condition, those factors not present in both systems and to identify common factors present in both that may cause the outcome. In this way, most different methods of comparison further restrict the possible causes to those present in two very different systems. The logic behind this method of comparison is to "exclude as a candidate cause (independent variable) for the common outcome (dependent variable) in two of more cases those conditions that are not present in both cases" (George and A. Bennett 2005:155).

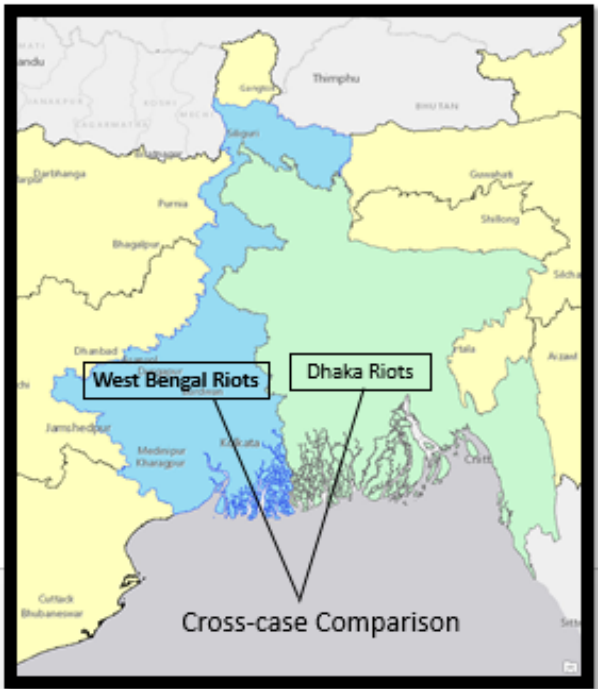

Figure 5: Between-Case Comparison: Most different

In the case of this study, the method of agreement is applied to compare riots in urban Bangladesh to those in rural India in order to identify a more general explanation of food riots, ruling out as causes, those independent variables not present in both of

these seemingly different contexts (Figure 6). Because West Bengal, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh vary in terms of rural versus urban location and attributed motivations of protesters (distribution versus price), they can be compared to identify what common requirements, if any, need to be in place in order for a food riot to occur (Figure 6).

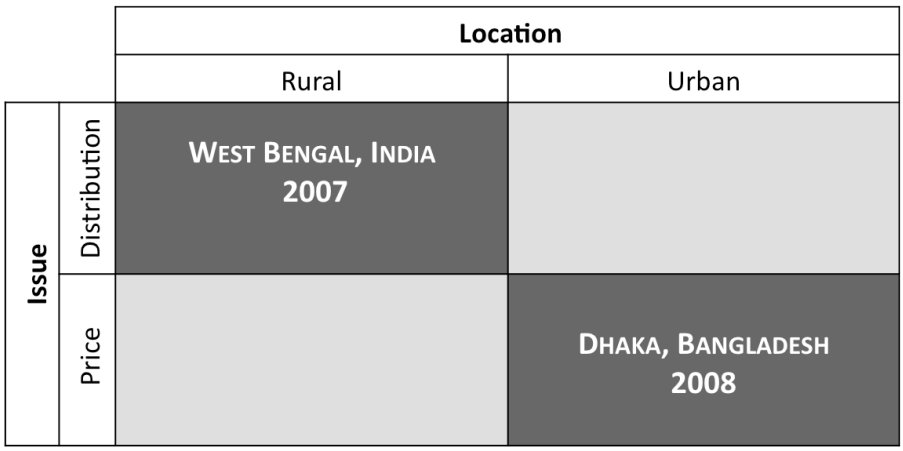

Figure 6: Classical Subtypes of Food Riots – A Descriptive Typology

Specifically, variables not discussed in interviews regarding both Indian and Bangladeshi riots can then be excluded as necessary causes for food riots. This comparison builds upon the most similar systems design used within each country to further identify patterns in food riot mobilization on a more general level. From the within-case analysis of similar system, we identify variables that may cause food riots due to their presence in the locations with riots and absence in locations without riots. The analysis then zooms out to compare the mobilization factors found in India to those found in Bangladesh. In addition, the comparison of possible causal mechanisms between two countries allows for an assessment of food riots as a concept. This comparison can help answer the proposed question in Chapter 3, of whether 'food riot' is a distinct category of collective action with different causal processes than other forms of conflict. Comparing India and

Bangladesh can both confirm the patterns found in the individual countries while expanding them to situate food riots within broader patterns of contentious politics. The between-country, most-different analysis is discussed in Chapter 7.

Process Tracing

In addition to the information gained through these two levels of comparison, the study also utilizes process tracing as a means for understanding the phenomenon in question. Process tracing allows for a further understand the causal mechanisms described in prior quantitative studies of food riots and also to test the claims advanced by the case comparisons in the current qualitative study (A. Bennett and George 1997). Rather than look exclusively at the collections of variables present prior to a riot, process tracing focuses on how events unfold over time within cases. More specifically, Collier defines process tracing as "analytical tool for drawing descriptive and causal inference from diagnostic pieces of evidence - often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomenon" (2011:824). In order to analyze how a temporal sequence of events occurs, one must have in-depth description of circumstances at each step of a phenomenon occurring. This addition of temporality is crucial for testing the causal claims of prior studies of riots to ensure that the posited significant independent variables occurred prior to the outcome of interest and that the mechanisms by which those variables translated into the outcome occurred the order and manner hypothesized. This information can be gained only through careful description of the sequence of events that led to the occurrence of the outcome, in this case of a riot occurring (Collier 2011; Mahoney 2010).

Case Selection

This study applies these analytical strategies to riots that occurred within two countries– India and Bangladesh, using methods of comparison and process tracing to fully understand the motives and grievances of the communities involved, how those translated into collective action, and the reactions by powerful actors. These two cases allow for the two levels of comparison: between countries and between locations with and without riots in each country. The countries selected for qualitative comparison are ideal for the method of agreement because the locations differ on potential causal variables including the political structure, rural versus urban location, social safety net programs, and form of employment. Also these differences may help explain the forms that the conflicts took and the reactions by the government. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, urban factory workers rioted attacking garments factories in response to high prices and stagnate wages (AFP 2008). Less than 250 miles away, in West Bengal, India, villagers attacked shops and homes of ration distributers accused of corruption in public distribution of food (Majumdar 2007). In Bangladesh, rioters were met with opposition, whereas in India the government launched an investigation into the food distribution system (Ramesh 2008; Sethi 2007). In addition, these cases allow for the method of difference, because within each country there are negative cases - villages and communities which match rioting communities' characteristics, yet experienced no unrest. This within-case comparison allows for understanding of why, under seemingly similar conditions, the populations did not riot.

In order to carry out these comparisons and process tracing, extensive data is required. In all, data for this project come from four major sources: international and

local newspaper accounts, interviews with local citizens, interviews with involved governmental and non-governmental authorities, and geographic data of riot locations and their diffusion. Each source contributes to an overall understanding of the circumstances and processes involved in food-related unrest. First, newspaper accounts were used to identify events to study, to pinpoint their exact locations, and to create an overall timeline of events in each country. International newspapers provided a description of the larger, violent events, whereas the local newspapers provided detailed information on the buildup of those events and also smaller protests, which occurred in temporal or geographic proximity to those gaining international headlines.

Interviews with local actors comprise the bulk of the data and provide crucial insight into the concrete situation of individuals in 2007 and 2008, the mobilization of events, the extent to which there was consensus among actors as to their motivation, and other critical details to explaining riot occurrences. The interviews illuminate the sequence by which macro-level changes in food policy, prices, and supply were translated into local consequences by allowing the people themselves to explain their actions and motivations and describe the response to those actions. Interviews with government officials, police, and NGOs contribute understanding of the macro –level policy, price, and supply changes that created the food-insecure circumstances for members of the population, as well as the long-term consequences of the riots in each country. Lastly, geographic mapping of the riot diffusion tests the theories developed from the in-depth interviews regarding why riots occur in particular places and not others. In addition, mapping of protest events allowed for both the identification of study sites and informed the questions asked in interviews regarding the distribution of events

throughout the areas of interest. To understand the food crisis as a whole, in which the Indian and Bangladeshi protests and riots are situated, I draw upon data of domestic and international food prices and supply.

Data Collection

Newspapers

To collect international newspaper accounts of the protests in India and Bangladesh, I searched Google News for any articles relating to food riots in those countries that were published in 2007 and 2008. Google News compiles newspaper articles from over 4,500 new sites, and returned articles regarding the riots from international newspapers including BBC, Al Jazeera, and The Guardian (Agarwal 2011). These articles were then used to identify a more specific date range to then use for searching local newspapers from West Bengal, India and Bangladesh. Local newspapers were selected for each case based on circulation. For West Bengal, India the newspapers selected were The Telegraph and Anandabazar Patrika. The Telegraph is the largest Kolkata-based, English language newspaper, which extensively covers issues relating to West Bengal, India. Ananadabazar Patrika is the largest Bengali-language newspaper in India, circulated primarily in West Bengal, as well. Knowing the basic timeline of events from international and India-wise newspaper allowed for a selection of dates going back one month prior to the first documented collective violence event. Both newspapers, The Telegraph and Anandabazar Patrika, were then read for each day leading up to and including the riots and every article relating to food production, prices, distribution, and related unrest were saved. This totaled 143 articles, dating from September 1, 2007 to November 15, 2007, 73 from Anandabazar Pratika and 70 from The Telegraph.

From Bangladesh, newspaper articles were collected from The Daily Star, the most circulated newspaper in Dhaka during 2008. From The Daily Star, 169 articles were located relating to food production, prices, distribution, and unrest all printed during April 2008. From these local newspaper articles, I could then create a comprehensive picture of the events in their local context, noting the location and form of any collective action regarding food and the actors involved and consequences of that action, as related by the newspaper. The locations were then mapped to identify the locations for field visits.

West Bengal Interviews

Local newspaper articles described 259 events relating to the widespread food protests in West Bengal in 2007. These locations were then mapped by date, which showed that the riots began and were primarily located in three districts of West Bengal: Bankura, Birbhum, and Burdwan (shown in Figure 8). These districts are primarily rural and agricultural, located approximately 100- 200 km northwest of Kolkata. Interviews were conducted in multiple villages and towns within each district to capture variance in terms of occupation, religion, income level, population density, and political party representation.

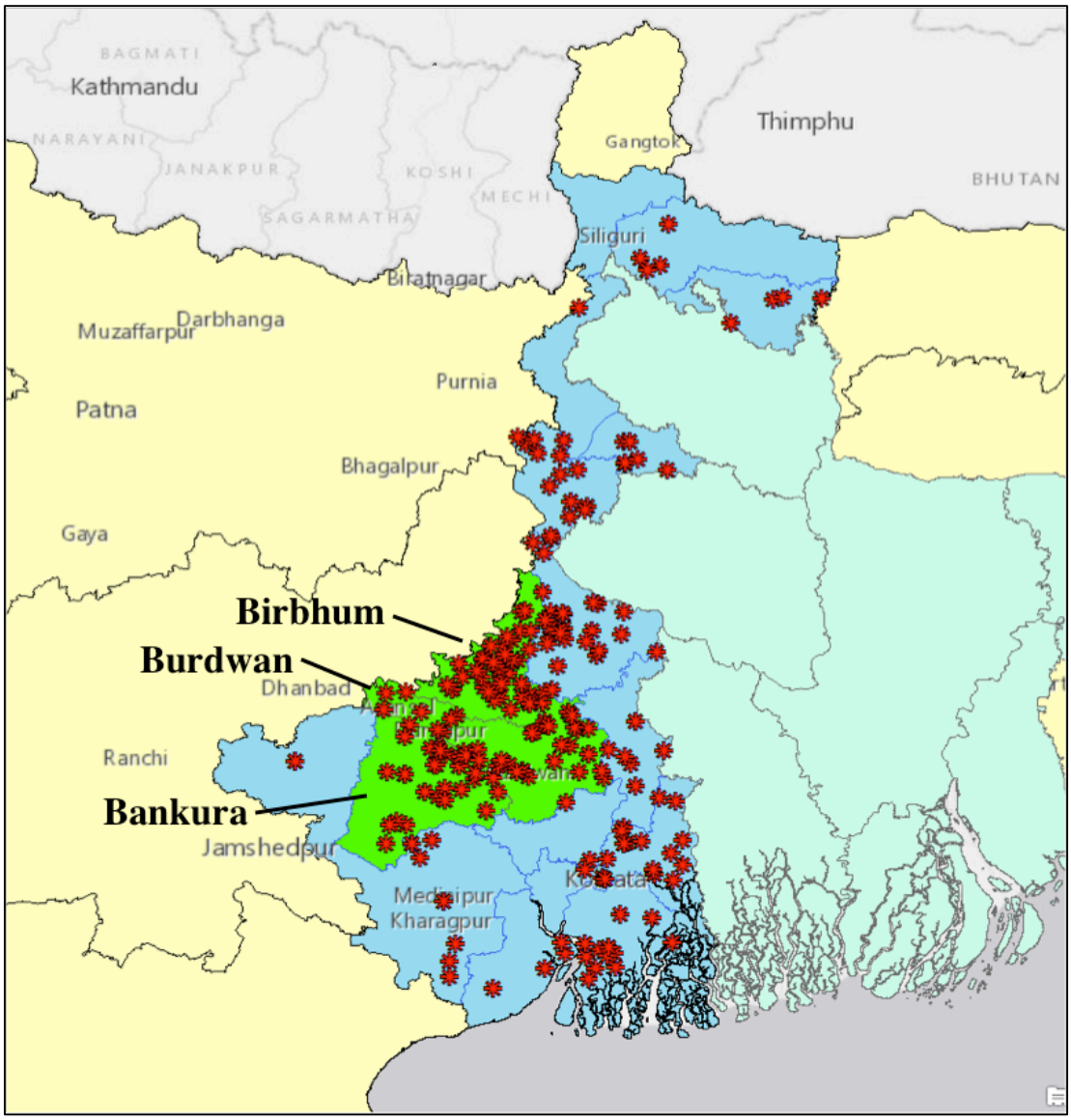

Figure 7: Protest locations within West Bengal, interview site areas highlighted in green

Within these three districts, 18 sites were selected for interviews. Residents were interviewed in Birbhum in seven locations that experienced riots and four that did not, in Burdwan in four locations that experienced riots and one that did not, and in Bankura in one location that experienced a riot and one that did not. At each site, 2-4 interviews were conducted and houses were selected for interviewing that varied in terms of socioeconomic status and religion. Respondents were all adults who were old enough to

comment on events that occurred seven years prior and consisted of farmers, shop owners, local government officials, and laborers. In total, 28 people were interviewed in locations that experienced riots and 13 people were interviewed in locations that did not experience riots for a total of 41 interviews in West Bengal, India. Locations with riots were oversampled to provide sufficient information on protest mobilization for process tracing.

District	**Riot** # Villages (# Interviews)	**No Riot** # Villages (# Interviews)
Bankura, West Bengal	1 (4)	1 (2)
Birbhum, West Bengal	7 (14)	4 (9)
Burdwan, West Bengal	4 (10)	1 (2)
Total	12 (28)	6 (13)

Table 1: Study Site Distribution in West Bengal, India

In addition to interviews conducted with villagers in rural West Bengal, I also met with academics and economists in Kolkata to understand the political context in which these events took place. These key informants were able to provide information on changes that occurred at the state government level before and after the riots.

Bangladesh Interviews

In Bangladesh, riots took place within the city of Dhaka, and newspapers reported that the participants were primarily garments workers. For this reason, the three major areas of Dhaka selected as study sites are areas with a large concentration of garments factories and employees. The three areas selected were Ashulia, located in the north of the city, Fatulla, located on the southern extreme of the city, and Savar, located to the northwest.

Figure 8: Study site locations within Dhaka, Bangladesh

These areas of Dhaka are large and contain many smaller neighborhoods and slum communities within them. Interviews were conducted at 14 sites total, four in Ashulia, six in Fatulla, and four in Savar. Between these three regions, I conducted a total of 43 interviews: eleven in Ashulia, nineteen interviews in Fatulla, and thirteen in Savar. A

total of 25 respondents were able to comment on the riot occurrence, and 18 respondents indicated that the large riot had not occurred in their area of the city. The breakdown by site location is indicated in Table 2.

Area Name	**Riot** # Sites (# Interviews)	**No Riot** # Sites (# Interviews)
Ashulia	2 (4)	2 (7)
Fatulla	4 (14)	2 (5)
Savar	2 (7)	2 (6)
Total	8 (25)	6 (18)

Table 2: Study Site Distribution in Dhaka, Bangladesh

To supplement the data collected in the interviews with residents of Ashulia, Fatulla, and Savar I contacted various people working in food security and labor rights in Dhaka. These respondents contributed important context regarding food aid, local level price fluctuation, and labor organizing that were unavailable in newspapers and unknown to individuals affected. In addition, in both Dhaka and West Bengal, I recorded extensive field notes regarding characteristics of the communities in which I conducted interviews and reflections on the information gained each day in interviews.

Analysis

The interviews from those 84 respondents in rural villages in West Bengal and garments factory communities in Dhaka were conducted with the aid of a local translator and recorded on an audio recording device. Upon completion of the interview, the audio recording of each interview was transcribed in English based on the translation given during the interview and then checked by a native Bengali speaker for accuracy to the respondents' answers. I then coded these transcripts in qualitative analysis software to

identify themes among areas with riots and identify dissimilarities between areas with and without riots. Each transcription was coded to test the hypotheses for the basis of conflict, the mobilization process, and the form of conflict outlined in chapter 3.

Coding

The code was developed based on the hypotheses and by reading field notes recorded after each day of interviews. From the field notes, I could identify themes which were commonly discussed in interviews to then systematically measure their appearance in interviews based on location and information about the respondent. From these codes, I identified patterns in riot mobilization, key differences between areas with and without riots, and differences in the form riots took in India and in Bangladesh. Transcripts were coded to address each of the three sets of hypotheses: the structural basis for conflict, the mobilization process, and form of conflict. Those codes are outlined below.

(1) Structural Basis for Conflict

To test hypotheses 1.1, that the reasons given for conflict are not food prices, but rather an injustice faced by the community, each interview was coded for the reasons stated for what caused area residents to protest. Given the relative ubiquity of protests in both West Bengal and Dhaka, interviewees in non-protest field sites were also asked about hardships faced in their communities, what deterred them from acting, and their understanding of why protests erupted in neighboring villages but not theirs. Hypothesis 1.2, that participants of protests and riots are aware of their class position, acting on behalf of their class interests against another social class. The presence of this awareness was gauged in multiple ways. First, coding interview responses for who comprised the rioters or protesters and who were the targets of their contention. This sheds light on

whether the protesters were a homogenous class group, and whether the targets were another. Second, answers were coded to assess the extent to which participants saw themselves as acting on behalf of class interests in opposition to another social class. For this, all interviews were coded for descriptions of the participants' community members and cohesion, as well as their awareness of themselves as belonging to a socioeconomic class in distinct opposition to other groups, gauged through negative comments regarding other groups in society and assigning blame for their hardship to a separate group of social class.

(2) Mobilization Process

To understand the processes of riot mobilization, interviews sought to understand the circumstances of the population at the time of the riots. Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2 propose that food riots require a decrease in food access (2.1), but that riots will not occur strictly due to restricted access, rather there must be a violation of the moral economy associated with food access in order for riots to occur (2.2). Interview transcripts were classified as riot or no riot, allowing for a comparison of food insecurity and moral economy in the two groups of cases to test whether food insecurity alone was sufficient to motivate and mobilize protests or if food insecurity and a violation of the moral economy was sufficient to mobilize protests. Coding for food security entailed highlighting any mention of hardship at the time of the protests, including high food prices, difficulty affording food, or coping mechanisms such as buying less or different types of foods than normal. To code moral economy violations,

In addition to food security and moral economy, there are other factors, which may increase resources to populations with preexisting grievances, thereby mobilizing

contentious politics. The proposed factors (hypothesis 2.3) that may aid in resource mobilization include population density, strong community ties or cohesion, police intervention, a strong perceived external threat, a highly publicized food riot in a different location, and a mobilizing group, which can take the form of political parties, labor unions, or other groups. These mobilizing groups may or may not act on behalf of the participants when inciting contentious politics. Population density was determined at the interview site and recorded in field notes as rural village, small town, or urban, mainly varying between India and Bangladesh, with some variation within. Community cohesion was assessed through a serious of questions regarding community composition and activities. The interviews were coded for community cohesion when the participant discussed how long most members of the community had lived there, what activities they participated in together, whether the area was segregated by religion, caste, income, etc., and any mention of concern, loyalty, or animosity among members of the community.

(3) Form of Conflict

The proposed factors influencing the form of riots relate to the employment and wealth of the involved parties. In the interviews, respondents were asked how their families supported themselves, if they were paid in wages or crops, whether they owned their own land, and, if so, if that was their primary source of wealth. This helped to identify whether those with grievances were primarily wage earners (Hypothesis 3.1). In addition, in the few instances where those interviewed were the targets of the protest, it identified their capacity to address protester grievances with available wealth. Because these instances of interviewing the targets of the contention were relatively rare, I rely on accounts of the riots from the participants to identify who the targets of the contention

were, what form of wealth or power they held, and what their reaction was to the protests. By classifying the upper class as land-wealthy or capital-wealthy, I could address hypotheses 3.2 and 3.3, which predict that contentious politics against a land-wealthy upper class will be political in nature (3.2) and those against a capital-wealthy upper class will be economic in nature. The other half of these hypotheses, the nature of the protest, requires identifying whether the protests and riots were economic or political. This was measured in the respondents' descriptions of the events and their consequences. I coded interviews for the grievances, demands, targets, and outcomes of the collective violence in order to identify whether the protest was economic or political in nature. If respondents described the participants demanding money and the outcome leading to an increase in wages from the upper class, the protest was considered economic in nature. Whereas, if the participants rallied against politicians and the protest resulted in governmental change, the protest was labeled as political. These distinctions were made with the understanding that the accounts of protests have some degree of both economic and political characteristics, and were labeled according to the most salient attributes of the protest.

Once every interview transcript was coded for these characteristics they could be compared within each country and between to identify patterns in the descriptions given by respondents in each location. The transcripts were characterized as 'India-Riot', 'India-No Riot', 'Bangladesh-Riot', and 'Bangladesh-No Riot'. The categories were then compared using the method of agreement, the method of difference, and process tracing to identify the structural bases for conflict, the mobilization process, and the forms of contentious politics. To identify the structural bases for conflict, all four categories were

coded for Hypotheses 1.1, as those respondents in areas without riots may have had similar grievances to those in areas with riots. For Hypothesis 1.2, as well as for identifying the factors which mobilized resources for those grievances held by the population, I used the method of difference, comparing the codes from the categories 'India-Riot' to 'India-No Riot' and 'Bangladesh-Riot' to 'Bangladesh-No Riot'. Comparing the results of Hypotheses 1.2-2.3 between these categories identified what factors distinguished locations with riots from those without and which variables aided in the mobilization process. The distinctions between riot and no riot categories and the mobilization processes were then compared between India and Bangladesh using the method of agreement to identify common causal variables across different countries. Lastly, to understand the form of conflict, the results to coding for Hypotheses 3.1-3.3 were compared between India-Riot and Bangladesh-Riot.

Process Tracing

In addition to assessing the necessity of individual causal factors through comparisons of events, the interviews allow for an analysis of the escalation and de-escalation of the events over time. By treating them as processes rather than static events, the study was able to test whether the combination of necessary variables requires a particular order. Each description of riot events was coded for the participants, motivation, mobilization, spread of information, target, demands, ending, and consequences. Process tracing allows for an understanding of the ways the events unfolded overtime and which variables needed to precede which actions. A second key aspect of the process tracing portion of the analysis entailed identifying deterrents to action or factors that limited the mobilization of resources for groups of people to act on

their grievances. Many respondents mentioned grievances, but they were outweighed by reasons for not wanting to participate in contentious politics. Process tracing of in-depth interviews allows for identifying under what circumstances and at which point in the process of mobilization, these deterrents could be overcome, and under which circumstances they were powerful enough to deter participation in collective action.

5 Hunger as Corruption and Political Opportunity: The Case of West Bengal, India

The Case of West Bengal: 2007

On Sunday, September 16, 2007, the ruling political party in West Bengal - The Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPM) - held an 'anti-imperialism' meeting in Radhamohanpur, Bankura. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the 123 Agreement, a nuclear deal between the United States and India, which was under negotiations in the national government at the time. Many local villagers, however, attended the meeting with the intention of discussing food distribution from ration shops. When CPM leaders began discussing the nuclear deal, the villagers shouted at them for focusing on international politics while villagers were going hungry. One villager climbed onto to the podium attacking the party official who was speaking, saying "we don't understand the nuclear deal, give us food" (The Telegraph 9/17/2007a, The Telegraph 9/18/2007b). As the dispute between the meeting attendees and party leaders intensified, additional villagers joined, setting party banners on fire and beating CPM leaders. Police arrived on the scene to dispel the crowd but were driven away. They returned with larger numbers and the Rapid Action Force, a branch of the police force designed to deal with riots, crowd control, and unrest, and dispersed the crowd with batons and by firing guns at the villagers, resulting in striking two villagers with bullets. Hours after it began, when the police and RAF finally quelled the unrest, eleven villagers were hospitalized, and news of the event and its motivation began to spread throughout neighboring villages.

The charge brought by the villagers upon the ration distribution system and its local representative, fair price shops and ration dealers, was one of pervasive corruption. At a time when market prices for food were increasing, these villagers challenged the ration distribution system, on which many rely heavily. In Radhamohanpur, where the initial conflict event occurred, villagers cited the non-availability of rice and wheat at ration shops as the reason for their anger (The Telegraph, 9/19/2007c). Villagers accused ration dealers of hoarding the supplies of food distributed to them at subsidized rates in order to sell it illegally on the black market for a profit. While government inspectors are tasked to ensure that food rations are properly distributed, villagers alleged that ration dealers who supported the ruling party, CPM, were allowed to continue with corrupt practices unsanctioned (Ghosh 2007). CPM officials insisted that corrupt ration dealers were not affiliated with the party and attributed the violent protest to the increase in food prices on the open market (The Telegraph, 9/19/2007d).

Despite politicians' and ration dealers' efforts to convince the population of their innocence, news of the protest against corruption spread through neighboring villages resulting in similar clashes between villagers and ration dealers or local government officials. Over the following two months, villagers questioned, threatened, and attacked ration dealers and government offices in nearly 300 villages in West Bengal with accusations of corruption in food distribution. These conflicts destroyed property, injured numerous people, required police and RAF intervention, and resulted in state-wide investigation of the ration distribution system. In addition, this scandal is partially credited for the large-scale shift in political power from CPM to the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) occurring from the 2006 to the 2011 state elections. In 2006, CPM won

212 of the 294 seats in the West Bengal legislative assembly, while AITC won only 30 (Election Commission of India 2006). Following the ration scandal and a separate anti-government set of protests occurring in Nadigram in the same year, CPM lost majority control in West Bengal for the first time in 34 years, winning only 40 seats compared to AITC winning 184 in the 2011 legislative assembly election (Election Commission of India 2011).

This widespread unrest that occurred from September to November of 2007 offers an opportunity to test the proposed hypotheses regarding the basis of the conflict, the processes of mobilization, and the form of conflict. In this chapter, I use process tracing and the method of difference to identify key variables and sequences explaining the occurrence of riots by comparing highly similar villages with and without riots. The within country comparison is designed to test the first two categories of hypotheses: the structural basis for conflict and the processes of mobilization. The form of conflict is addressed using a comparison of India and Bangladesh, addressed in Chapter 7.

Structural Basis of Conflict

This study posits that food riots are, in fact, motivated by existing grievances held by a community. Because they occur during times of high food prices, they appear to develop from a sudden increase in grievances and are attributed entirely to high food prices when, in fact, the prices may be serving to change the meaning, severity, or hierarchy of other grievances already in existence among the population. In interviews with residents of villages where riots occurred, each respondent was asked to explain the reasoning behind the protests that took place in their village. This question addressed

hypothesis 1.1, which states that the reasons given for food riots will include grievances other than the sudden price increase.

When initially asking villagers to explain the reasoning behind the protests, we asked using the term for the food riots used in newspapers. At first the question was met with confusion, villagers responded that no such food related protests had occurred in their village. Knowing from newspaper accounts that widespread protests had occurred in the area, we continued asking, using additional Bengali words for protest. Suddenly, the first respondent knew what we were asking about, "the ration scam?", she asked. Not only did she not attribute the event to food prices, she did not even know what we were referring to when we asked about the food protests. This pattern held true in subsequent interviews: respondents were confused upon hearing of food protests, but knew immediately what we were referring to when we could clarify with the new terminology of 'ration scam'. As indicated by the name given to the event, the reasons given for protests were much more about the ration system than the price of food.

Asking about the causes of the scam exposed patterns in the attribution of blame. In the villages with riots, respondents explained that the riots occurred as a result of corruption in the ration distribution system, placing blame for wrongdoing on the ration dealer or the government more generally. While the newspaper accounts indicated that the price of food on the open market was unusually high during this time period, no respondents attributed the protests to the price of food. This is not to say that price had no effect on the protest, but rather highlights the primary grievance, which the population was acting against was corruption or wrongdoing in the ration system, not the price of food in the market. As illustrated in the short interview excerpts listed in Table 3,

respondents presented a relatively uniform understanding of the wrongdoing against which they were acting - the withholding of ration products to which they were entitled.

ID	Explanation of Riot Cause
I-9	"The government set an allotment for the ration dealers, but the ration dealers were not selling the same amount of items to the general people."
I-10	"We were told that we were not getting as much as we were allocated to have."
I-11	"We heard they were not selling the amount of items we were allotted but less, so the people got really angry."
I-18	"The reason behind such kind of unrest is that we were unaware that the APL[1] gets wheat from the ration shop."
I-21	"For 26 years the APL didn't receive wheat which they were allotted."
I-23	"We got to know we weren't given what was allotted for us from the government"
I-26	"The public didn't use to get all that they were allotted. In my area the biggest issue was about rice. They stopped selling rice to APL and BPL entirely."
I-30	"The people who get rations, they were not getting ration at the right amount."
I-36	"Because most ration dealers are corrupt. They take out some amount of items that they were supposed to sell to the people, and they sell off the products at a high rate to the market. And this trend went on for years."
I-38	"The dealer didn't used to sell us rice and wheat for many months and when we got to know about it"
I-41	"The reason behind it was, people were losing their share of government allotted products" I-41

Table 3**:** Explanations for West Bengal Riots

The reasons given for the riots in West Bengal never explicitly mention the rise in food prices. Is it, then, coincidental that these riots happened concurrently with other riots deemed food-related throughout the world? No,

[1] APL refers to people 'Above the Poverty Line'. Citizens of West Bengal are divided into three categories – above the poverty line (APL), below the poverty line (BPL), and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), which refers to the poorest of the poor, including disabled, terminally ill, widows without social support, etc. Each group is allotted different foods and prices from the ration distribution shops. (cite - http://dfpd.nic.in/public-distribution.htm)

rather, the rise in food prices has the potential to change the meaning and significance of a different grievance, in this case corruption in ration distribution. The grouping of food riots into one category of unrest that occurs in tandem with high food prices overlooks the grievances, which actually motivate action on the ground and the mechanisms by which high food prices are able to mobilize contentious politics around other issues. In the case of West Bengal, India, the newspaper accounts posit that because the food prices on the open market had risen so severely, the population relied upon the ration stores for as much subsidized food as they were allotted. While possible, most respondents indicated that the quantity and variety of products allocated to them at the ration shops was always utilized, but never the primary means for providing food. Rather, most families purchased nearly all food on the open market, while getting a small portion of kerosene oil and flour from the ration shop once per week, as that was all that was allotted to them.

Why, then, did riots occur at this time rather than any other? I argue that high food prices were able to alter the meaning and severity of allegations of corruption in food distribution. Under conditions of lower food prices, implications that they were not receiving their full share of subsidized food may not have been so grievous an offence. In fact, many respondents indicated knowledge that this corruption was pervasive in the state government hierarchy and had gone on for many years. In 2007, however, many families were struggling to cope with the increase in food prices. Many indicated borrowing money, cutting out expensive foods, such as meat and fish, buying lower quality

items, or eating fewer meals per day. At a time like this, the idea of being denied food carried a much more serious meaning and prompted a drastic reaction, one that may not have seemed worth the time and risk in times of lower prices and less food-related hardship. It is in this way that food prices were able to mobilize action against preexisting grievances, by changing the meaning and seriousness of the offense, not by creating a new set of grievances all together. This interaction between corruption-related grievances and increased food prices is explained further under the mobilization hypotheses, which focus on the ways corruption allegations surfaced and the processes by which those allegations motivated in certain locations over others.

Hypothesis 1.2 extends the discussion of motivation to test whether the participants felt they were acting on behalf of class interests in their protest against ration dealers. In describing the circumstances of the India unrest, the distinction was often made between the government or ration dealer and the people who utilize the service. While there is an implied class distinction between those who hold government office and those who depend upon public food distribution, respondents only occasionally explicitly referenced class distinctions in describing who was suffering and at the hands of whom. Those references to class distinctions were present in villages that experienced unrest during the 2007 time period and included distinctions in who was affected, including “the rich people were able to afford food and the poor suffered” I-17, “the privileged people get everything and the middle class people like us, we have to work very hard” I-17, and “the rich don’t care about what is happening at the ration shops” I-36, as well as attribution of blame, including “if we are not poor who is going to do the

rich people's work" I-14. In describing the participants in the protests, most respondents referred to them as 'common people' and 'mostly men', though most indicated that it was not exclusively APL or BPL participating. The class distinctions in attributing blame occurred much less frequently than political distinctions, which were often brought in to explain who was fighting against whom. While not an explicitly political position, the ration dealers were described to be primarily supporters of the ruling political party, often being appointed by the local government members. The alleged corruption, therefore, represented a corruption not just in ration distribution, but in the ruling political party, CPM, and was often strongly protested by members of the opposition party, AITC. In this way, the protests took on additional meaning beyond the behavior of the ration dealers, focusing on corruption in the ruling political party and their supporters. From the responses, political distinctions on this level were more salient than class distinctions. This may reflect the relative homogeneity among rural dwellers in terms of occupation and lifestyle. When respondents did indicate some form outgroup negativity, it was typically along political and, sometimes, religious distinctions. Religious distinctions took the form of negativity toward the Muslim minority, and political distinctions were between the CPM and AITC, but varied in direction based on the allegiances of the respondent. Additionally, the targets of the protests were almost entirely ration shops, ration dealers' homes, and government buildings. These represent government and political targets, not explicitly different social classes.

Mobilization

With corruption identified as the existing contention motivating the conflict in West Bengal, we must next address formation and mobilization of the groups involved in

the conflict. To use an earlier metaphor, we know the explosive material and now we must understand the spark. This understanding is three-fold. First, what was the state of the population's food security at the time of the riots? This is addressed in hypothesis 2.1, which posits that a decrease in food security in necessary but not sufficient for a riot to occur. Second, did corruption in the ration distribution system, or any other factors related to food-access represent a violation of the moral economy? Hypothesis 2.2 addresses this aspect, stating that a violation of the moral economy is necessary for a food riot to occur. Lastly, we look at the factors, which aided in the mobilization of communities and the process by which information spread and groups formed. This last point is critical for understanding the riot occurrences, as some respondents indicated prior knowledge of corruption, but others explained that they learned of the corrupt practices of ration dealers at the time that protests began occurring. Villagers were certainly aware that they received small amounts when purchasing food at the ration shop but lacked certainty that this was deliberately carried out by the ration dealer for his benefit at the expense of the people. The spread of that piece of information throughout the state was crucial in the mobilization of protests, giving legitimacy to people's concerns about the availability of food from the ration stores. These three pieces of the mobilization process are discussed below.

Hypothesis 2.1 states that a decrease in food access is necessary, but not sufficient, for a food riot to occur. This hypothesis is supported by the presence of villages throughout West Bengal that did not experience riots or protests during the same time period as those villages which did. During 2007, the price of food increased throughout the world, including in rural India. Figure 10 shows the constant increase in

consumer food prices for agricultural laborers in India over the 2001-2010 period, with a sharp increase in mid-2007.

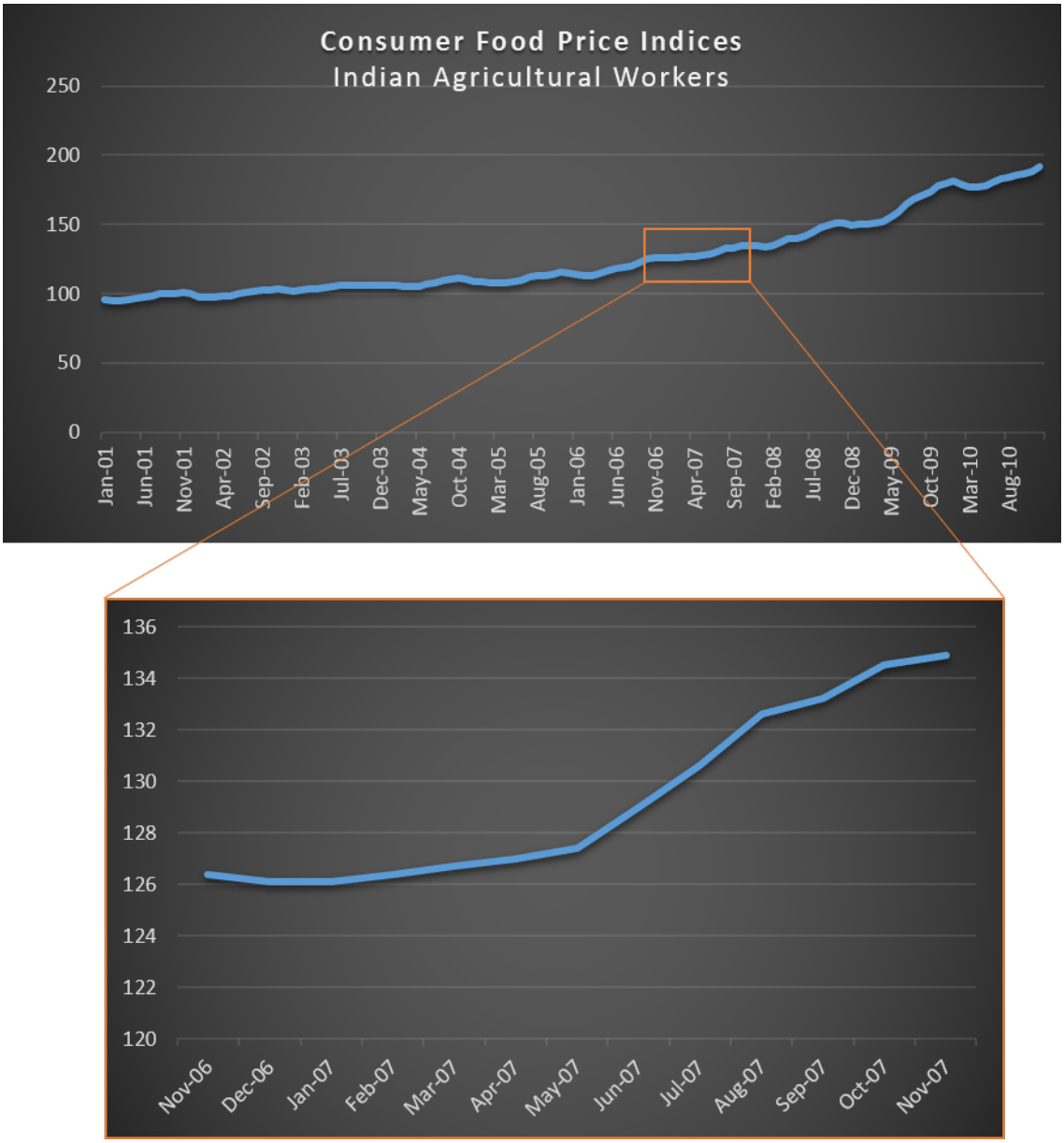

Figure 9: Consumer Price Food Indices for Agricultural Workers in India, 2001-2010
Source: FAO stat consumer price index for agricultural laborers, 2000 price =100 (2014b)

During increases in food prices, respondents indicated utilizing numerous coping mechanisms in order to continue providing food for their families – coping mechanisms

that they use during any time of increased food prices, not strictly in 2007. Respondents in villages without riots indicated similar levels of food related hardships and coping mechanisms as those in villages with riots. Seven out of 13 respondents in villages without riots used coping mechanisms for decreased food access, including buying food on credit from the shop keepers, purchasing and consuming less food, and borrowing money from employers. In 16 of 28 interviews with residents in villages that experienced riots, respondents indicated that they purchased less food, took loans, or altered food types to cope with high prices. Nearly all respondents from all villages commented on increased food prices and indicated spending over 50% of their income on food. These results support hypothesis 2.1. While not every respondent indicated food insecurity, at least one from each village with a riot indicated the increase of food prices or difficulty affording food items. No villages in the sample had riots in the absence of reported food insecurity. However, covariance of food security and protests does not indicate that food security is a sufficient cause of protest events, as respondents in villages without protests indicated struggling to afford food and allocating large proportions of their incomes to food in similar numbers as those in villages with protests. Therefore, food insecurity is not a sufficient explanation for the variation in food riot events. Prices increased throughout the world, affecting people in all of the villages included in this study, yet not all of the villages experienced unrest. For this further understanding, we must identify characteristics which differ between villages with and without protest events.

Rather than a reaction strictly to hardship, many theorists argue that protests occur in response to an injustice that is seen as a break from the established norms and expectations. This concept of breaching moral economy is tested in hypothesis 2.2, which

posits that food insecurity is insufficient and must be coupled with a breach in the moral economy in order to spur unrest. To test the moral economy argument, respondents were asked about their food-related hardships, the perceived reasoning behind those hardships, the ration distribution system, their opinions on the functioning of the system, and the reasons behind the 2007 protests. Questions about the protest could be asked in villages without protest events, as nearly all residents in central West Bengal were aware of the ration-related protests, whether they took place in their particular village or not. These responses were then compared between villages with protests and those without. The responses were coded for any mentions of unfairness, injustice, a feeling of being cheated, or an explanation of a change from what was normal or expected. These codes appeared substantially more frequently in those villages with riots than those without. In the 13 interviews with residents in villages without riots, these types of opinions were mentioned only 3 times, whereas in villages with riots, answers relating to injustice, unfairness, etc. were given 36 times in 28 total interviews. The descriptions given of the ration system in those 28 interviews in riot-villages involved frequent mentions of stealing and cheating by the dealers, often explaining that dealers profited by withholding the food allocated by the government for the people. For example, one respondent explained that "All the dealers are *cheaters*. They used to *steal* the supply and sell off to other people and not giving us *fair* amounts" (India-13), echoed by another "they *steal* from people and enjoy the profits, distribute the money among everyone involved" (India-26). Another respondent pushed further, explaining the motivation behind the actions of the ration dealers, implicating the political parties in the corruption: "The people experienced *cheating* by the ration dealer so they were really angry. The political

parties take money from the retailers under the table and in order to pay all these fees the sellers cheat people" (I-41). The common use of the words cheat and steal indicates that the respondents believed something that belonged to them, which they were entitled to, was being wrongly taken from them by the ration dealers or local government. Others explained it in terms of being denied what was allocated to them from the government, such as the 23rd respondent, who explained that "we weren't given what was allotted for us from the government" (India-23). This type of assessment of the situation was almost entirely absent from those villages, which did not experience riots.

	Riot Location	Non-riot Location
Mention of Injustice	36	3
Total Interviews	28	13

Table 4: Moral Economy Hypothesis Results: # of mentions of injustice by villages type

The distinction between matched villages with and without riots offers a possible explanation for the varying occurrence of riots, offering support for the hypothesis that a breach in the moral economy is necessary for a riot to occur. The moral economy explanation can then be pushed further to understand how that information was disseminated throughout a community and why particular communities reached this consensus regarding the unfairness and cheating in the ration distribution system while others knew of the riots and motivations but did not hold the same opinions. Hypothesis 2.3 aims to uncover potential differences between villages that led to these different outcomes, addressing if there were differences between the villages that leant certain communities to developing a consensus regarding the moral economy breach and helped

mobilize protest or, if it was merely that certain villages had corrupt ration dealers while others did not.

Hypothesis 2.3 outlines multiple potential factors theorized to contribute to the mobilization of protests including: population density, community ties, an external threat, a repressive force from police or other powerful groups, a mobilizing group, or a recent, highly publicized food riot with successful outcomes. The villages in India ranged from rural villages to small towns, but did not sufficiently vary across the region studied to indicate that density of population played a role in the mobilization of protests. The respondent descriptions of the events mentioned that protests often occurred when people were gathered together for meetings or waiting in line for rations, which allowed people to share ideas regarding food access and the ration shops. For example, "I think there were 50-60 people standing at the ration store trying to buy things but they were told there is none. So the people started protesting." (I-10). While this may have contributed, it does not differentiate villages with riots and without, as people wait in line for ration distribution and hold gatherings and meetings in all villages. In villages without riots, respondents described similar situations, stating "sometimes they would sell less amounts than what we are allotted claiming they don't have any at stock. We don't protest. We just get however much they want to sell to us and come back home" (I-06) or "If the dealer says we were allotted a certain amount, we will only get that amount. Also the wholesaler increases prices of ration items. If they increase price of items that I buy, the ration dealer will reduce amount so he can sell less for the same amount of money that I'll pay" (I-01). The respondents' views of their food insecurity and the role of the ration distributors clearly differ between the villages with riots and without. Those respondents

in villages with riots express outrage at the ration system and distributors, while in those without, the respondents express resignation. How did particular villages become outraged at the corruption in the ration system while others did not? To answer this, we address a portion of hypothesis 2.3, the role of mobilizing groups.

In trying to understand the distinction between villages, which had a collective event and described a breach in the moral economy and those that did not, a theme that occurred over and over was the role of political parties as a mobilizing group. It is this aspect of the conflict events in West Bengal that can help explain their varying occurrences. Presumably there were members of the population throughout all villages who were dissatisfied with local politics or the ration distribution system, but only in certain villages did this mobilize into collective action. Recall the definition of mobilization from Chapter 3 as "an increase of the resources available to a political actor for collective making of claims" (C. Tilly and Tarrow 2015:120; Etzioni 1968), which involves an upward scale shift, occurring when the contention expands to new or larger groups of people. Local political parties played a major role in the mobilization of events by spreading information and grievances regarding the ration distribution system and the ruling political party to new and larger groups of people sympathetic to their rhetoric due to the elevated food prices. The increase in food prices increased the resources available to the political parties for expanding their appeal.

The role of political parties is highlighted in interviews both in the attribution of blame and the explanations for mobilization. Beginning with blame, many accounts given of corruption within the distribution system point not only to the ration dealers, but to the ruling political party. For example, one respondent explained, "It was a political issue,

the state government has a list of how much people is getting or should be getting. The state could have stopped it, but they let the people assume and destroy things" (I-19), and another echoes "the government's control over the dealers were poor. The food department was involved with this and allowed this to happen for a long time" (I-36). This notion that the problem was not individual ration dealers and their behavior, but rather the state government, points to a larger grievance that local level corruption. How this information regarding corruption spread amongst the villagers was often attributed to the main opposition political party, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC). Respondents indicated that the AITC spread information to villagers to encourage them to protest. One respondent explains that, "the political leaders that are on the opposition tried to get the locals to protest against the government. The opposition party provoked the general public. They lied and said we are supposed to have more than what I am given now. So the general public protested against the dealers." (I-09). Many respondents echoed the role of the opposition political party in spreading information regarding the ration scam, saying that, "the congress party encouraged people to hold rallies" (I-21), "the people who didn't like the dealer for political reasons, they provoked the common people so they protest harder" (I-29), "the people who support the opposition party even went to the Panchayat Pradhan's[2] place" (I-2), and "Some men were told to join in, not all of us. People who were involved in politics joined in" (I-16). In addition to spreading information about corruption, the political parties played a role in the organizing of the protest events. This took the form of telling certain residents to join in protests as described in Interview 16, but also announcing the day of the protest. The

[2] The Panchayat Pradhan is the head of the Panchayat, an elected village-level governing body. (West Bengal Panchayati Raj Act, 1973:9)

organization was variously described by respondent, including: "[the] village leader sends people to houses and lets them know that a rally's going to happen" (I-15), "they get a microphone and a speaker, and they go around announcing about the rally, the supporters then go to the location" (I-17), and "They organize rally's by first having a meeting in their party office, then the supporters go to houses in the villages to urge them to join rally's" (I-18).

Many villagers initially hesitated to talk of the protests and the political involvement in them, questioning my motives and involvement before answering questions. I spoke with a shop owner in a small town that experienced serious unrest involving arson, explosives, and violent attacks on the local government building, which resulted in the Rapid Action Force being sent to quell the protests and set a curfew. Despite this level of activity, residents interviewed initially denied having ever heard of a ration-related protest. Thinking perhaps I had arrived at the wrong town, different than the one described in local newspapers covering the event, I met a shopkeeper gave the following account:

> It was a huge thing. A quota is fixed for APL and BPL, the government used to give the allotment straight to the dealer, then the dealer would show the listing to Panchayat. The dealers never used to show the allotment for APL, they would say no allotment for the APL for certain products, and they would sell off the rice and get money. Everybody was involved in this scam starting from the politicians and the dealers.
> The rude dealers were beaten by the people who were very rude to the public before. It was a huge unrest so the RAF force came here and arrested a lot of people. There was a curfew. So the RAF literally beat around everyone they found, arrested them and released them after a month, but they didn't do anything. The political party that was involved with this scam would drop small explosives to increase tension. The RAF shot at people trying to scare them away. [It lasted] 2 days, but we were in fear for 5 days. We closed the shop. At first [the political party] exploded a car, and later they dropped small explosives to get the protest heated. (I-08)

Despite being very open and eager to discuss his opinions and experiences, the shopkeeper whispered when describing political party involvement in the protests to avoid being heard by those in the shop or passing on the street. An elderly woman overheard talk of politics and violence and stopped to ask why I needed to ask such questions, recommending I read the news if I needed information on the events. I asked the shopkeeper why the residents reacted so strongly to talk of local politics, to which he simply responded that they are afraid. In a different area, a CPM supporter whispered of the aftermath of the riots and subsequent state election, when the recently elected AITC party members travelled around the village, beating up those known to be involved with the previously ruling party, CPM. These accounts of the political party involved in the protests help to explain ways the opposition party was able to involve villagers in the protests: by spreading information of corruption and blame to a struggling population, by intimidating the residents to participate or support their party, and by beginning and escalating the protests.

The influence of the opposition political party on creating a narrative, spreading that information, and encouraging action adds crucial detail to the process by which food insecurity led to widespread grievances with the ration distributor system and, eventually, to large-scale collective violence against the ration dealers and local government. One question still remains: why did an increase in food prices increase the resources available to the opposition political party in some villages and not in others? After gradually uncovering information about the political party involvement, I could ask more detailed questions regarding variation in riot occurrences throughout different areas. To these questions, villagers indicated that the relative power of the two parties factored into a

villages propensity to riot. One respondent explained that "areas where CPM was in power or more people were supporters of CPM didn't protest too much because CPM was involved in the scam" (I-18), and others spoke of the relationship between ration dealers and the political party as preventing riots from occurring: "the dealer paid the political parties and the party members helped suppress the whole issue" (I-27) and "in some places the dealer is powerful, armed with the political party's support" (I-38). While the strength of the dealer could deter action through fear or through direct concessions made to the local community in the form of money or food, they were not always successful. The power of the ration dealer in this context was linked to his ties to a strong ruling political party, which was able to deter action with the combination of the strength of the ruling party to oppress action and the relative weakness of the opposition party to mobilize larger numbers in protest. In places where the opposition party was strong, the ruling party's attempt at repression and the ration dealer's attempts to deter protest with money or food would not be as effective.

The respondents who spoke of the political party involvement varied in whether they believed the information spread by the political party to be true or strictly for the sake of political gains "When one party feels like the other parties are gaining more supporters, they get their men out for a rally trying to steal some supporters back." (I-17). Another respondent claimed that villagers were offered compensation to participate in the protests. This aspect of the protests, the role of organizing groups, has important broader implications in understanding food insecurity and unrest. Groups with political interests can, potentially, utilize periods of food insecurity to incite violence toward their own political gains. The outcomes of the West Bengal protests highlight this potential -

respondents indicated little change in the ration distribution system following the riots, while changes in political representation were profound.

Role of the Media

In addition to studying the local riot events independently, it is important to recognize that they formed an interconnected series of events. This issue, which is often described as Galton's problem, refers to the difficulty of determining causality in a situation where diffusion between cases may be a cause of the outcome (Ross and Homer 1976). This possibility is addressed in studies of protest diffusion, which seek to understand the extent to which knowledge of other protests may have influenced the occurrence of protests in a particular area. For example, in analyzing race riots in the 1960s United States, studies draw attention to the importance of media coverage in transmitting information about events from city to city, highlighting the interaction between media coverage and city or community characteristics in understanding the variation in riot occurrence. Myers (2000) found that cities in the U.S. had properties that affected their individual propensity to riot and also that affected their responsiveness to diffusion from other riots. In West Bengal, the villages had individual characteristics that influenced whether they experienced conflict events, but they were also influenced by the events in surrounding areas. The media covered the ration-related protests on television news and publishing articles in state newspapers. Attention must be given to the role of this knowledge in analyzing protests that occurred after the initial event. While in many locations the political parties factored heavily into the spreading information and mobilization of protests within villages, once protests began happening, the media

coverage played a key role in disseminating information throughout the region. The riots that occurred throughout West Bengal cannot be analyzed strictly as independent events as these news sources helped inform villagers of the conflicts occurring in neighboring villages. When asked how they heard about the riots, villagers responded that "it was in the papers that all the ration dealers sold less amounts for more money" (I-12), "we saw it on TV and also learned more from neighbor" (I-25), "we saw on TV that it has happened everywhere, so we mobilized" (I-39), and "people already knew about it from Media or through other public. and the feeling escalated, eventually they protested as well" (I-26).

The local newspapers may have contributed to the political nature of the protests as they spread by focusing on the role of CPM rather than highlighting hunger, malnutrition, and broader structural issues with the PDS (Sinha et al. 2014). This focus on the political nature of the protests is situated in the context of other large-scale political protests in West Bengal in 2007. While the ration protests could have been covered by media in a more nuanced fashion, they came on the heels of political protests regarding government land acquisition in West Bengal and fed the same anti-CPM narrative. CPM contributed to the political understanding of the riots by denying the existence of the riots rather than effectively distancing themselves from them. A party spokesperson issued a statement, reported in *The Hindu,* stating "There are no food riots in West Bengal although some elements, who want a 'mahajot,'[3] are doing everything possible to incite violence on the issue of ration distribution so as to disrupt the entire system" (Special Correspondent 2007). While the immediate responses by local government were aimed at dispersing crowds and denying corruption, following the riots,

[3] Mahajot refers to a political coalition in West Bengal aimed at removing the CPM from power through a multi-party alliance.

a Supreme Court-appointed special commission was tasked with investigating the Public Distribution System in West Bengal. Their report confirmed the rioters claims of large-scale corruption in the PDS(Commissioners of the Supreme Court 2007; Saxena and Mander 2007; Talwar 2007). During and following the riots, many ration dealers turned in their licenses or had them revoked, and in the following state election, CPM lost their majority by an enormous margin - from holding 212 seats to only 40. Given the focus of both the protesters and the media coverage, it is unsurprising that the effects of the riots were on the ration distributors and political party, rather than on the structure of the distribution system itself (Sinha et al. 2014).

Because these events were contained within West Bengal, national and international newspapers covered them with much less frequency and detail than those based in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal. The Telegraph, based in Kolkata, covered the events in great detail, indicating which villages and ration dealers were involved in each event, with up to six articles about the riots in one day's newspaper. Country-wide newspapers, such as *The Times of India* and *The Hindu* ran short articles on the events in West Bengal after they had gone on for many weeks, as well as foreign news sources including *The Guardian* and *Reuters.* While the national and international coverage lacks the specificity of the local newspapers, the overall message did not substantively differ, running headlines including, "Food riots expose how corruption hurts India's poor" and "Panel blames corrupt PDS for Bengal food riots" (Majumdar 2007; Sethi 2007). In their analysis of food riots in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Mozambique, Hossain et al (2014) highlight the differing terms used to describe food-related conflict in domestic versus foreign newspapers, explaining that the term 'food riot' is not used to describe

local events. This finding does not hold true in my study of the West Bengal food riots, as local newspapers differed from national and foreign newspapers primarily in terms of the volume of content related to events and the specificity of each article.

Conclusion

The 2007 riots in West Bengal, provide a clear instance of contentious politics regarding food, satisfying the three facets of contentious politics: contention, politics, and collective action. They involve contention because the villagers were making a claim on another group; they are political in that those claims were directed at government employees, government programs, and political party members; and lastly, they are collective action because they involve a coordinated action of a group of people in pursuit of a common interest. This chapter addressed the first two questions in understanding contentious politics, (1) what is the existing contention, which motivates conflict? and (2) what is the process by which food works to mobilize the populations? The third question addresses the form that the conflict takes and will be discussed in final chapter.

Through in-depth analysis of these protests, we have support for the argument against food riot explanations that assume a sudden increase in grievances due to an increase in prices. Rather, the structural basis for conflict, reported by those interviewed as opposition to the ruling political party and corruption in ration distribution, was not caused by the increase in food prices on the open market. The increase in prices on the open market functioned to change the meaning of those existing grievances and to increase the resources available to the opposition political party, who could gain from collective action against the ruling party. In this way, we can begin to understand why

riots may spike during times of high food prices without them explicitly addressing the price of food.

6 Hunger as Exploitation: The Case of Bangladesh

In contrast to India, where protests occurred throughout rural areas of West Bengal with a relatively uniform set of grievances aimed at the government, Bangladesh experienced in 2008, and continues to experience, protests in urban areas of Dhaka with grievances aimed at private companies or individuals. These areas are predominately comprised of workers in the garments industry, living in areas of housing surrounding the garments factories. In order to understand the protests that occurred in Dhaka, it is crucial to understand a brief background of the Bangladeshi garments industry and the corresponding rapid social changes that have occurred in Bangladesh over the past decade.

Bangladesh's Ready Made Garment Industry

Bangladesh's role in the production and export of textiles began very small, soon after Bangladesh's independence in the 1970s. Spurred by the Multifiber Agreement of 1974, the industry grew dramatically, totaling $21.5 billion in exports in 2012-13 and accounting for 80% of the country's total exports (Majority Staff 2013) to become the world's second largest garment exporter to China (Bradsher 2013). The number of factories in Bangladesh increased in tandem, with a significant increase over the past three decades, from less than 50 in the mid-1980s to more than 3,400 in the early 2000s (D. Bhattacharya, Mustafizur Rahman, and Raihan 2002). This increase in production facilities drastically changed the landscape of Bangladeshi cities, particularly Dhaka, and spurred rapid urbanization as the rural poor migrated to Dhaka for jobs in garments

factories. The ready-made garment industry (RMG) now directly employs 4 million people and indirectly employs another 8 million through tertiary jobs, together comprising over 10% of the Bangladeshi population over the age of 15 (Majority Staff 2013). This workforce is overwhelming female, with up to 80% of the factory workers being women (Yunus and Yamagata 2012). With many women entering the workforce for the first time (Figure 11), there is an increase in overall household income, a new degree of independence and empowerment for women regarding financial matters, and increased investment into the household and children's education (F. Z. Ahmed, Greenleaf, and Sacks 2014; J. Hossain, M. Ahmed, and Akter 2010; Kabeer, Mahmud, and Tasneem 2011; Kabeer 2001; Khosla 2013; M. Rahman, D. Bhattacharya, and Moazzem 2008; Schuler et al. 2013; Zohir 2001). These gains come despite women making lower wages than their male counterparts (D. Bhattacharya et al. 2002; Ratnam and Naidu 1999; Yunus and Yamagata 2012). In looking at percentages of women in the labor force, it is important to note the dramatic population growth, which occurred in Bangladesh over the time period outlined. With the population increasing from 81.3 million in 1980 to 151.6 million in 2010, even small increases in percentages of the population in the workforce amount to extreme increases in the number of people working (World DataBank 2016).

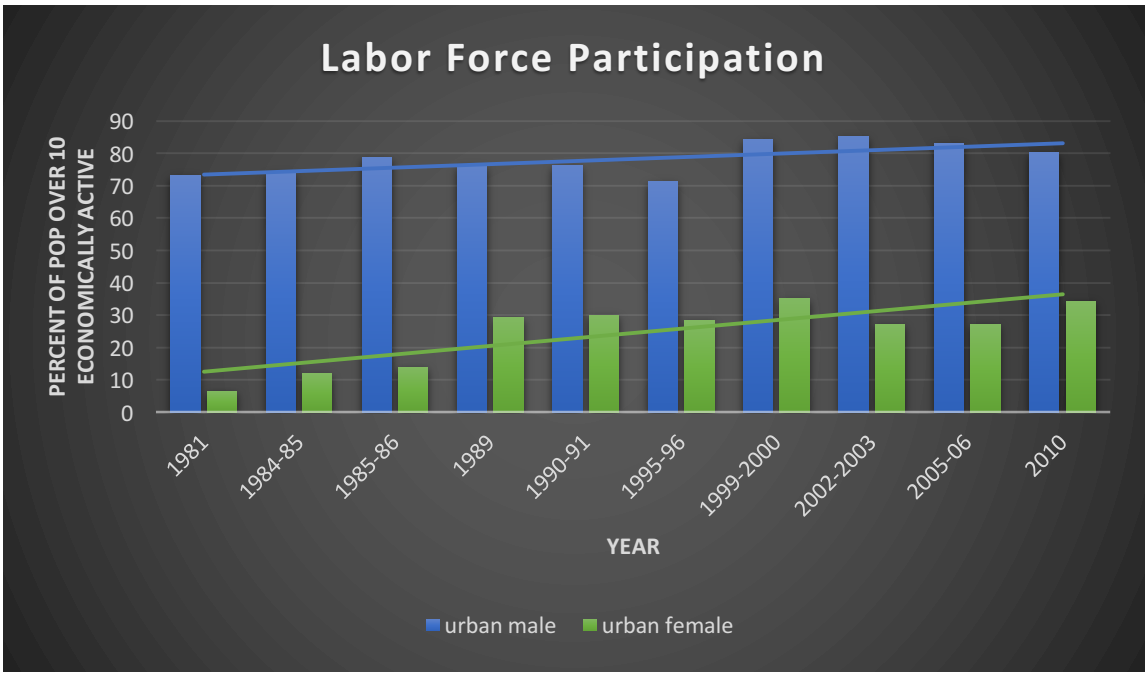

Figure 10: Labor Force Participation by Sex, 1981-2010
Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2013

Over the time period of growth in the garments sector in Bangladesh, the poverty rate in Bangladesh has dropped from 70% to 31.5% and the average person per capita income (in current USD) rose from $138.2 to $1211.7 between 1970 and 2015 illustrated in Figure 12, below (The World Bank 2016; USAID 2014).

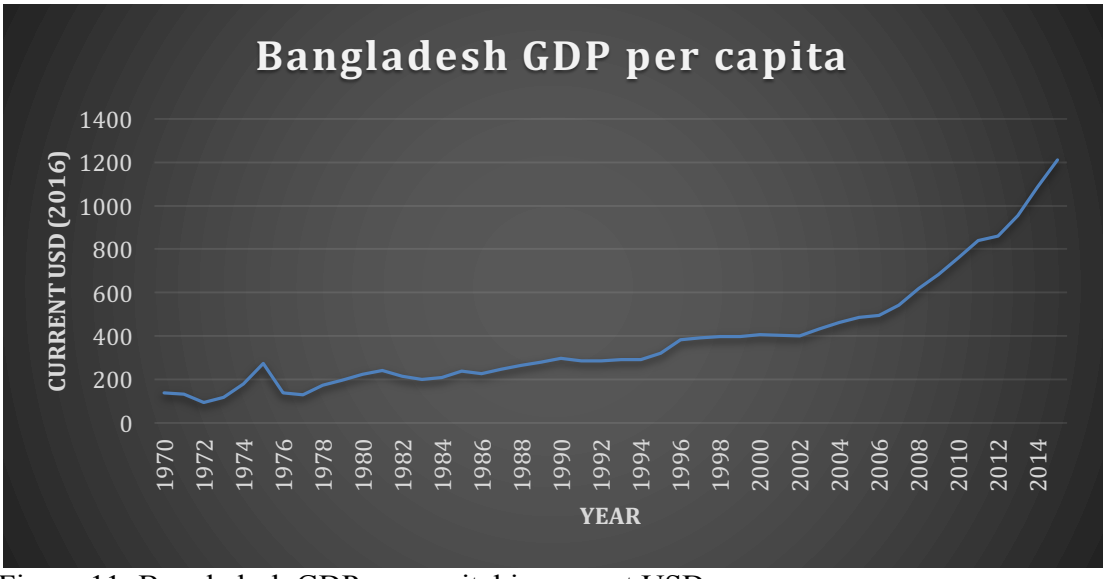

Figure 11: Bangladesh GDP per capital in current USD
Source: The World Bank National Accounts Data (2016)

While the garments industry has had tremendous positive impacts on Bangladesh's economy and population, it is also marred by issues of low wages, unsafe working conditions, and suppression of organized labor, which "can easily be compared with the condition of working class in England at the outset of Industrial revolution" (Yunus and Yamagata 2012:9). The garments industry has increased employment levels and income, especially for women, but the positions are often precarious, reflecting the current structure of the garments industry and 'fast fashion'. 'Fast fashion' is embodied in retailers such as H&M and Zara, which sell low cost clothing, constantly replacing styles carried in store through low costs and fast speed to market (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst 2010). The shift to fast fashion means that consumers are purchasing less expensive clothing more frequently, requiring companies to find low cost production with fast turnarounds (Taplin 2014). This new market, "designed to meet 'just in time' delivery (premised on flexibility and fast turnaround), combined with the lowering of unit costs, are significantly contributing to the use of exploitative employment practices by suppliers" (Dhanarajan 2005:531). Bangladesh has seen dramatic growth in its textile industry by catering to the needs of the fast fashion market. A primary appeal of producing clothing in Bangladesh is the incredibly low costs, made possible, in part, by low wages paid to the workers (Ferdous et al. 2014). The minimum wage set for garments workers was Tk. 3000 per month from 2010 until 2013 (approximately 38 USD at current exchange), in 2013 it was increased to Tk. 5300 per month (approximately $68), still below the suggested Tk. 6500/month wage necessary to meet basic living expenses (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 2013; International Labour Organization 2013).

In addition to low wages, one study found over 75% of garments workers interviewed worked between 11 and 16 hours daily, and 35% considered their work places to be unsafe or insecure (Uddin 2013). Bangladeshi factory safety drew international media attention in late 2012 and early 2013, following two tragic factory accidents: a fire at Tazreen Fashion factory in Ashulia on November 24, 2012, which killed over a hundred people and injured 200 more (F. Ahmed 2012) and the collapse of Rana Plaza in Savar on April 24, 2013, which killed over 1,000 people and injured over 2,000 more (Manik and Najar 2015). These two incidents attracted global outcry over the working conditions in Bangladesh, but are, by no means, isolated incidents of workplace accidents in garments' factories. Improvements to the working conditions for factory workers on a policy level are impeded by the close connection between factory owners and the political elite. Nearly every member of the Bangladeshi Parliament either owns garments factories or has close ties to factory owners (F. Z. Ahmed et al. 2014; Majority Staff 2013). This close connection, combined with the limited organizational and political power of the factory employees, results in minimal legal gains for the workers and little enforcement of those labor standards that are passed. The Bangladesh Labour Act, passed in 2006, affords significant rights to workers in Bangladesh, including mandatory 30-day notice of job termination[4], paid maternity leave for eight weeks before and after delivery, 45 days' wages and Tk. 100,000 given to the worker's family in the event of death while working, maximum overtime of two hours per day with mandatory overtime pay, and others (Ferdous et al. 2014; J. Hossain et al. 2010). Despite the presence of these labor protections, however, workers are often unaware of their rights, and even where they are

[4] One month's notice is mandatory if the worker is not convicted of an offense and has worked at the company for one year. The conviction of an offense requires a guilty verdict by a committee of equal parts representatives of workers and owners.

aware, lack access to legal representation and face serious backlogs and corruption in the labor courts. Following the passage of the Bangladesh Labour Act, surveys showed 66% of factories did not grant maternity leave (Ferdous et al. 2014), all garments workers worked longer than 8 hours per day and few knew the official overtime rate (Hossain, M. Ahmed, and Akter 2010), and workers are dismissed by the owners without reason at any time (Yunus and Yamagata 2012). In the event that cases are brought to labor court, workers face yet another set of obstacles including an enormous backlog of cases, numbering over 10,000 cases relating to labor laws (Alamgir 2016; Judicial Strengthening Project 2013). A survey of households by the UNDP and the Supreme Court of Bangladesh found that of those able to bring cases to court nearly 70%[5] were dissatisfied with the outcome with respondents attributing their dissatisfaction to the lengthy process, waiting over three years on average (43.5%), to the verdict being influenced by influential/political considerations (25.2%), and to having to pay a bribe or experiencing harassment for not paying a bribe (17.5%) (Judicial Strengthening Project 2013).

In an age of global commodity chains, public governance is restricted: national governance structures in industrialized countries cannot regulate production in developing countries; developing countries are bound by the need to attract investment, often through low wages and limited regulation; and international public regulations have little sanctioning power (Mayer and Gereffi 2010). Following the Tazreen Fashion and Rana Plaza tragedies in 2012 and 2013, *social* pressure on companies mounted to reform and enforce labor standards in Bangladesh. With pressure from international non-

[5] This survey of households referred to all cases in the formal justice system, not strictly labor-related cases.

governmental organizations and the threat of losing international clients, who sought to distance themselves from the now widely known labor practices in Bangladesh, the government updated labor standards again. In 2013, Bangladesh Labour Act was amended to include explicit rules on workplace safety and insurance, and the national minimum wage was increased from 3000 Taka/month to 5300 Taka/month (Bangladesh Parliament 2013; International Labour Organization 2013). Even with these strong national labor regulations and international social pressure, the experiences of workers on the ground remain largely unregulated from a lack of state capacity and politicians' conflicts of interest. In Evans' schema of developmental states, Bangladesh represents an intermediary state, in which the state is embedded through politicians ownership or close connection to owners of garments factories, but lacks sufficient autonomy from industrial elites to carry out policy in the national interest (1995). While, according to this schema, one may expect the level of embeddedness and clientelism which exists in the Bangladeshi state to affect not only enforcement of labor law, but also its economic performance and attractiveness to foreign investment, the predictability and consistency of corruption and weak governance over time regardless of the political party in power makes Bangladesh a relatively safe business environment with companies factoring bribes into their business plans (F. Z. Ahmed et al. 2014).

The dearth of public monitoring or enforcement of labor standards leaves the private interests in Bangladesh and abroad responsible for adhering to safety and wage regulations in the form of voluntary corporate social responsibility initiatives. Domestically, private owners are restricted in their capacity and likelihood of enforcing labor laws by the location of their factories within the global supply chain. The structure

of the fast fashion market requires that producers in Bangladesh meet low production costs and fast turnarounds, leaving little investment aside for safety inspections and updates and leading factory owners to subcontract spillover production needs from large orders to even lesser regulated factories. Since Rana Plaza, this inability of local private interests to comply with labor laws has been, in part, addressed by international organizations, foreign apparel companies, and foreign aid, providing expertise and funding for safety inspections, training on workplace safety, and low-interest loans for addressing factory safety concerns (Majority Staff 2013). While this has the potential to address safety and wage concerns, it applies primarily to the factories with which particular foreign companies do business. The success of this form of private governance requires "global buyers and their suppliers … establish long term, mutually beneficial relations and … various public (authoritative rule-making) institutions help to both support these mutually beneficial buyer-supplier relations and resolve a set of collective action problems that private actors cannot overcome on their own" (Locke 2013: 17). Because Bangladesh lacks sufficient government capacity to support these forms of relationships, they can only occur with the voluntary participation of foreign companies, leading to discrepancies between factories in terms of safety, wages, and protections. The discrepancies between the private governance initiatives of foreign companies and the challenges of governmental regulation leads to varying experiences by workers depending on the actions of their factory and the foreign buyers placing orders with that factory.

Unions and Collective Bargaining

Private governance can serve to increase health and safety regulation within the workplace, and small improvements have been made in that area, however, private regulation does little to increase freedom of association (S. Barrientos and S. Smith 2007; Locke 2013). With many factory workers continuing to experience poor working conditions while lacking formal channels to confront their employers in the legal system, labor related unrest is a common occurrence on Dhaka's streets (Yunus and Yamagata 2012). The lack of effective collective bargaining organizations furthers this propensity toward violent protest as labor unions face many obstacles to representing garments workers. In a system of exploitative labor conditions and limited opportunity for individuals to confront the injustices faced, unions can serve to bargain on behalf of groups of workers with more bargaining power than individuals. In Bangladesh, while unions exist in large numbers, they are often ineffective in promoting workers' rights. To understand the role and challenges of union representation in Bangladesh, we must look at laws governing trade union development, the historical relationship between political parties and unions, and the gendered nature of garment production in Bangladesh.

As with wages and safety protections, Bangladesh has laws on the books, which allow for and formalize the procedure of union formation and representation. The history of unionization in the short time period since Bangladesh's independence in 1971 is varying, consisting of periods of strong, politically affiliated unions, union bans, union centralization, and, currently, weak, fragmented unions. Under the Bangladesh Labor Act of 2006, workers are legally protected from dismissal or threats of dismissal on account of joining of organizing a union, unions are allowed to call strikes, and employers cannot

hire new employees during a strike (J. Hossain et al. 2010). In addition, Bangladesh has ratified ILO conventions of freedom of association and collective bargaining (Human Rights Watch 2015). Along with these protections, however, there are laws and procedures, which pose obstacles to labor union formation including requiring unions to have 30% of workers from a factory join (Human Rights Watch 2016). Unions struggle to have 30% of workers agree to join a union because workers fear repercussions from factory owners for union involvement, unions are viewed as corrupt and ineffectual due to their history of political ties, and the majority of factory workers, rural women, join unions at very low rates. In fact, it is estimated that less than 5% of all garments workers belong to unions (F. Z. Ahmed et al. 2014).

Intimidation and Retaliation

Despite legal protections for trade unions, organizers and members experience significant deterrents to creating or joining unions. One the governmental side, when unions attempt to register, the relationships between politicians and factory owners allow for the government employee to contact the factory owner and inform him of the employees involved (Z. Rahman and Langford 2012). In 2015, labor authorities rejected 71% of applications (Human Rights Watch 2016). In 2010, the government issues arrest warrants for the leaders of the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity, cancelled its registration, and froze the organizations bank account (International Trade Union Confederation 2010). In addition, on the factory level, owners are known to fire workers involved in unions or hire ‘mastans’ (thugs, gangsters) to assault or intimidate employees who try to organize unions.

Political Affiliation

Following Bangladesh's independence, the main political party, Awami League, had the support of a strong labor union and nationalized 90% of industry (Z. Rahman and Langford 2012; Ratnam and Naidu 1999). In the 1970s, labor unions were made into a single organization within the government, which led to corruption and clientelism (Z. Rahman and Langford 2012). When the Awami League was overthrown in 1975, the coup leader, General Zia, banned trade union activity under martial law and privatized most state industry. The ban on trade unions was later lifted and followed by the system currently in existence, in which unions are required to register. In order to register, unions needed a minimum of 30% of the employees in a factory to join and registration needed to be obtained from a political party. This close dependence on political parties led to large-scale corruption and ineffectiveness in the national trade unions (Z. Rahman and Langford 2012). Though many grassroots labor unions have developed since, the legacy of the close connection between government and labor unions (in a way not benefiting labor) remains in terms of corruption and worker expectations of union effectiveness.

One may expect Bangladesh's shift to political competition after years of military rule to incentivize political parties to mobilize the support of the working class. Teitelbaum (2011) finds authoritarian and newly democratic regimes to repress organized labor and face backlash from the workers whereas a competitive democratic state can better manage industrial conflict and requires the votes of the workers. In the schema, Bangladesh more closely resembles the authoritarian regime despite having competitive elections for the past two decades. The two main political parties in Bangladesh, Awami League and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, distinguish themselves on the basis of

religion and nationalism rather than economic ideology, and therefore, need not use labor as a means of mobilizing a winning coalition (F. Z. Ahmed et al. 2014). With two centrist-right wing parties with similar levels of corruption and economic plans, little advancement in labor rights is made (Mosley 2008).

Workforce composition

A third reason why labor struggles to organize in the form of unions with meaningful bargaining power is the particular groups of people who are hired into garments factories. The vast majority of garments workers in Bangladesh are women from rural areas of the country and, importantly for factory owners, are unlikely to unionize or protest low wages (Afsar 2001; F. Z. Ahmed et al. 2014). Bangladesh, being an extremely hierarchical, patriarchal society, means that work environments and organizations are typically run by wealthy men and it is socially unacceptable for poorer women to publicly challenge them (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004). Women's entry into the garments industry increased their financial independence, but they face entirely male, wealthy managers and remain physically separated from male workers in the factories. With men traditionally involved in trade unions, women make up a small proportion of union members. Only 18.2% of union members are women and 15.9% of union members are under 30 (Dasgupta 2002), despite young women being the majority of garments workers. In addition to being predominantly female, garment factory workers tend to be short terms. Hossain et al. (2010) found that 40% of workers in the garments industry had less than one year of experience. The employment of young, female, rural migrant, short-term employees limits the likelihood of labor organization against the factory workers.

In the absence of de facto labor protections, access to courts, and effective collective bargaining, workers in Bangladesh frequently take their demands to the streets, engaging in violent clashes with owners and police (Yunus and Yamagata 2012). These events, which appear to be random outbursts of frustration against the factory owners, require both organization and brave dedication to a cause, as any form of organization against factory owners – union related or otherwise - is dangerous and often retaliated against.

The Case of Bangladesh: 2008

In the spring of 2008, the price of staple crops throughout the world including wheat, corn, and rice, climbing rapidly. The sharp increase in the global prices of food, shown in Figure 13, affected populations of developing countries, where large people spend large proportions of their income on food. As populations throughout the world dealt with increases in food costs, the world saw a concurrent increase in riots and protests (World Development Report 2010). Dhaka was no exception to this trend. In April 2008, during the sharp increase in the price of food, garments workers took to the streets in large numbers to protest.

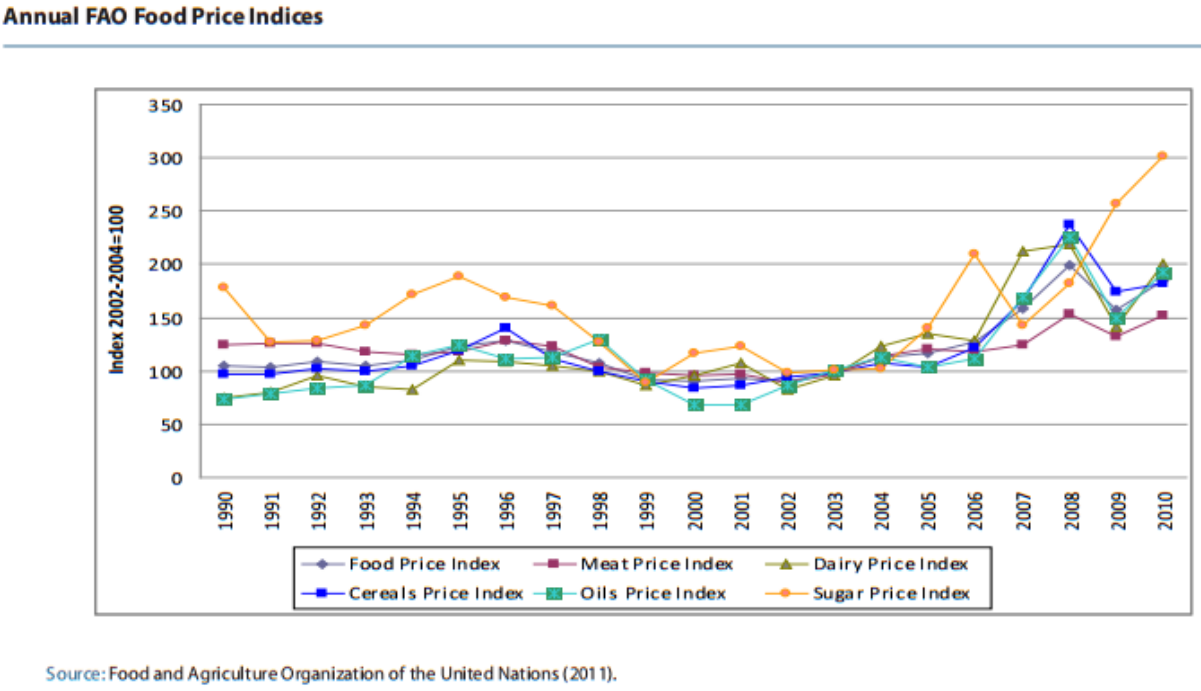

Figure 12: Annual FAO Food Price Indices
Source: UN Global Social Crisis: Report on the World Social Situation (2011)

Media coverage of the Dhaka riots, like many other riots around the world, describe garment workers rioting in response to this increase in food price. The BBC described the situation in Dhaka as a "food crisis" (Dummett 2008), and Al Jazeera headlined "Bangladesh hit by food price riots" (AlJazeera 2008). The Guardian and AFP indicated who is involved in the unrest, with The Guardian writing "Bangladeshi garment workers strike over food prices" (Ramesh 2008) and AFP, "Workers riot over soaring food prices"(AFP 2008). While looking at Bangladesh food prices in Figure 14 does not show as marked an increase in food prices as the global prices, the increase in the price of rice is extreme and highly significant for the population of Bangladesh, shown in Figure 15.

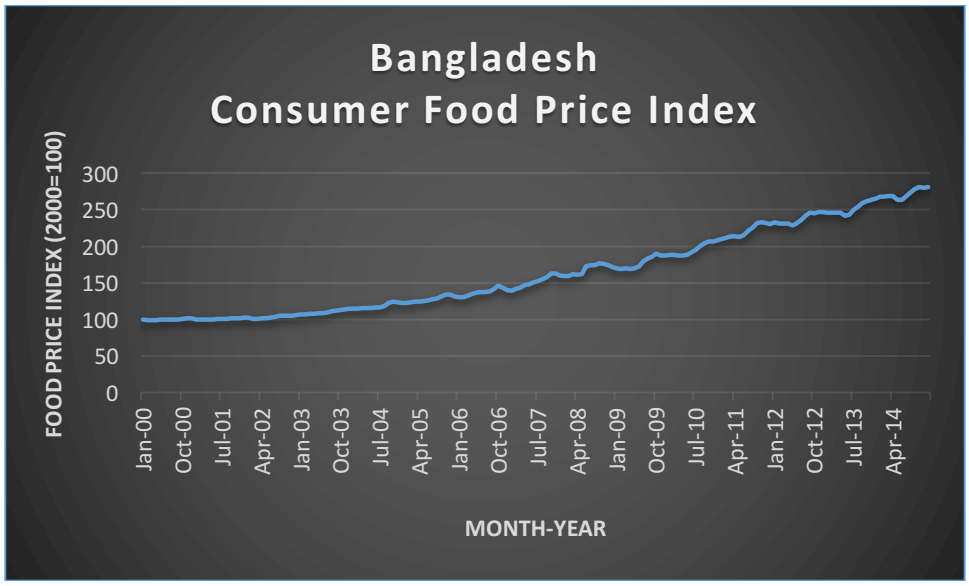

Figure 13: Consumer Food Price Index Bangladesh: 2000-2014
Source: FAOSTAT 2014a

As a major staple of the diet in Bangladesh, increases in the price of rice affect the population immensely. On average, 71% of a Bangladeshi's calories are from rice, closer to 78% in the poorer income quintile (IFPRI 2013), amounting to 439.6 grams of rice per person per day, or just over 2 kg per family per day at the average 4.85-person household size (Food and Agriculture Organization 2014). At the 3000 Tk/month minimum wage for garments workers in 2007, workers had 100 Tk/day ($1.28 at current exchange) to cover the cost of housing, food, and other essentials (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics 2010). The increase of the price of rice over the year preceding April 2007, meant the average garment worker making minimum wage went from spending 40% of their income on rice for their family to 64% of their income only on rice, not accounting for any other food product or cooking gas.

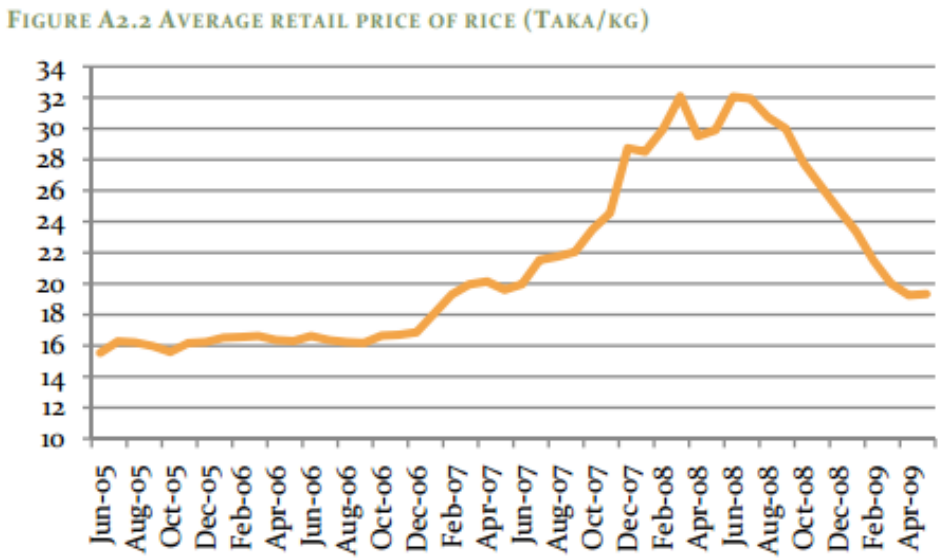

Figure 14: Average Retail Price of Rice in Bangladesh, 2005-2009
Source: The World Bank: *Food Price Increases In South Asia: National Responses and Regional Dimension* (2010)

With families forced to reduce meals consumed, buy lower quality foods, and purchase food on credit to survive, the difficulty of this situation on the population is indisputable. Questions do remain, however, regarding how this difficult situation mobilized the population to collective action despite all of the barriers and risks involved in protesting as a garments worker. The remainder of this chapter addresses the first two main questions addressed in studying riots: what was the existing contention which motivated conflict and what was the process by which food worked to mobilize the populations?

Structural Basis of Conflict

As with the within case analysis of food riots in West Bengal, I argue against the version of food riots often presented in the media, in which the apparent suddenness of riots results from a sudden increase in grievances. Rather, groups with preexisting grievances were able to mobilize additional resources during the time period in question.

In the case of food riots, the increase in the price of food can change the meaning of preexisting grievances for larger populations, such that when the price of food increases, greater groups of people mobilize around an existing set of issues. I test this theory beginning with hypothesis 1.1, which posits that the reasons given for protest will include grievances other than the increase in food prices.

In Bangladesh, interviews were conducted in neighborhoods on the outskirts of Dhaka rather than villages, as they were in West Bengal. In areas of the city where respondents experienced unrest, they described the reasoning for it almost entirely relating to workplace issues in factories regarding wage amounts and schedules of payments, with some offering additional information on the common occurrence in Dhaka of protests relating to political parties and elections. Table 4 provides short interview excerpts of the reasons respondents gave for the protests.

ID	Explanation of Riot Cause
B-5	"Around 50% of people that work here work in factories, and people protest when the wages have been delayed by the factories"
B-9	"People are either not paid at all or not paid on time, people tend to protest."
B-10	"Because some of the factories were not paying the salary on time or not pay at all, the workers lost their patience. The factory owners give lower rates for over time, and if a worker is late or absent for a day, they would remove some amount for that. So the workers sometimes protest"
B-14	"It happened for wages, they were not paid enough."
B-16	"All garments here have protests. Because they don't pay on time or they ask for more wages."
B-18	"It was for wages, some people weren't paid for a long time, so they protested and asked for more money also."
B-21	"Some factories don't pay the full amount, then the workers get upset and start to break the window glasses."
B-32	"Delay of salaries or asking for more money."
B-40	"Some factories here pay on time, some delay. When they delay workers protest."

Table 5: Sample of explanations for Dhaka Riots

Some respondents explicitly indicated that the population only protests over wages, “never about food prices” (B-10) and that there are “No protest about food prices. Prices can increase all they want, no one protests” (B-9). While other respondents made a connection between the cost of living and the protests that occur against the garments factories, explaining that “Sometimes when the rent and the food prices increase and people don't get their wages on time. They protest.” (B-2) and “When the landlords increase rent, which happens every year, but the factories don't increase the salaries even though they promise they would, so people protest for their increments which was promised.” (B-36). This does not show, however, that food price had no effect of the mobilization of protests, but shows the primary grievances motivating the populations involved were regarding the payment of wages. If this set of grievances regarding wages and payment schedules exists at other times, how to we understand the particular times at which riots mobilize and escalate? While wages are always low, they can be tolerated so long as the cost of living remains lower than those wages and so long as they are delivered at the expected time. When food prices increased, these low wages became intolerable because the population could no longer buy food for their families. This level of desperation, uniformly felt by the workers in the factories who are making the same wages, could help to overcome the risks of challenging the factory owner, either for higher wages or for the payment of wages owed.

Unlike in West Bengal, the protests in Bangladesh have an explicit class dimension. Hypothesis 1.2 states that participants of protests and riots are aware of their class position, acting on behalf of their class interests, and targeting another social class. Simply because the workers and factory owners occupy different economic class

positions, does not necessarily support the hypothesis that they are acting because of that distinction targeting the owners are members of an upper class. In analyzing the interviews for mentions of class distinctions and class related motivations, many respondents spoke in terms of poor and rich. In discussing the basic salary for a garment worker, one Bangladeshi expressed that "The rich are getting richer and the poor are being crushed under their feet" (B-14). Another, describing the factory owner practices of withholding income stated "if the owner keeps 1,000,000 taka in his bank account for 1 more day he is going to have interest off of that cash for a day, but here the worker would be dying because he has no money" (B-32). In explaining the food security situation for her family, a woman explained that, "we haven't been able to afford a lot of meat or fish this year. People who have businesses have more money, they eat well" (B-10). These respondents spoke in terms of economic distinctions within their community, and all of whom were in communities that experienced riots. The stark difference in income and lifestyle between the factory workers, living in vast slums and often earning below minimum wage, and the factory owners, part of the Dhaka elite, make it logical that the workers would think in class terms. As one person described, "people who have money they live lavish and people who are poor they try to make do with what they have" (B-28).

In addition to this awareness, the descriptions of the protests indicated that the participants were factory workers and the targets were the owners of the factories, those responsible for the allocation of wages. Unlike in West Bengal, where protests were divided along political lines rather than class lines, political party affiliation came up very infrequently in Bangladeshi interviews. Despite the highly volatile political situation in

Bangladesh, most respondents spoke in terms of workers versus owners. While the clashes between workers and owners may seem unsurprising given the extent of exploitation and hardship faced by the laborers, there are many obstacles and deterrents for the workers to mobilize against the factory owners. The factory workers lack the freedom to organize in unions and also face the risk of dismissal from work and physical harm when protesting against the factory owners. So despite the obvious source of conflict between workers and owners, more analysis is required to understand how those obstacles are overcome.

Mobilization

With wages identified as the existing contention motivating conflict in Bangladesh, we move on to identifying the mobilization of the conflict events. Hypothesis 2.1 posits that a decrease in food security is necessary but not sufficient for a food riot to occur. As outlined earlier, the food price situation in Bangladesh was dire in the spring of 2007, when the average worker's expenditures on rice from their household increased from 40% of their income to 64% of their income. In addition to the data on prices, the interviews with individuals living in those circumstances allowed for deeper understanding of the effects that food price increases have on their lives. Respondents indicated various coping mechanisms used not only during the 2007 price increase, but in subsequent spikes in food prices. These include, "I collect a type of leafy vegetable from an abandoned jungle and I borrow onion and other spices from neighbors" (B-1), "if we were supposed to have 1kg we buy 1/2kg or less" (B-6), "sometimes we just have daal[lentils], sometimes we buy less" (B-23), and "for food we spend … more than our

income, we take loans" (B-6). Those who live amongst the garments factories on the outskirts of Dhaka use these types of coping mechanisms to manage feeding their households when the price of food increases. These coping mechanisms were described by residents of areas that had riots and also those that did not experience riots. This is not unexpected though, as the respondents indicated in their descriptions of the protests that the increase in the price of food was not the reasoning behind the protests. In addition, the protests did not occur across Dhaka, rather in particular pockets with garments factories and only with workers from particular factories. Dhaka has a very large informal employment sector with many impoverished residents living in slum communities. These communities were also facing the same high food prices at the time, but the protests only occurred in areas with garments factories. This supports the hypothesis that food insecurity alone is not sufficient to mobilize food riots.

Hypothesis 2.2 extends the causal factors to include that the decrease in food security either represents or is accompanied by a breach in the moral economy in order for a riot to occur. This violation of the moral economy in Bangladesh was often described by respondents in terms of factory owners withholding that which the workers were entitled to or expected to receive. Many respondents explained that workers protest, in 2007 and periodically up until present, because their wages were withheld by the factory. Typically, the workers described having a scheduled, once per month payment from the factory owed to them at the beginning of the month. Certain months, however, the factories delayed beyond this date, waiting weeks or a full month before paying owed wages. In one extreme instance many respondents brought up, a factory withheld wages for three to four months and then closed without paying the owed amount. In these

circumstances, the workers gather and protest against the factory owner in demand of payment for the hours worked. One worker explained a possible reasoning for the factory owners withholding of pay, as:

> "One thing you have to understand is, if the owner keeps 1,000,000 taka in his bank account for 1 more day he is going to have interest off of that cash for a day, but here the workers would be dying because he has no money." (B-32)

While factory owners may delay payment for the sake of collecting interest, they are also subject by payment from the foreign buyer for whom they are producing the product. Regardless of the intent, the respondent clearly communicates his theory of wrongdoing on the account of the owner at the expense of the workers. The delay in payment for work already completed was a breach of contract between the employer and the employees at the factory. One explained simply, "If I work for 5 hours and I am to be paid 200 taka for it, and if after I did the work and they pay me 100 taka, wouldn't I be frustrated and angry?" (B-10).

In addition to descriptions of withheld pay, other respondents described the workers protesting against employers who did not adhere to the minimum wage set by the government. In this instance as well, we see the workers protesting for something they believe themselves rightfully entitled to, explaining "I work at a factory, but they don't even pay what the government has allocated for us to be paid" (B-27) and "whatever the government promises, the owners never pay the same rate. The local small factories always pay much less and they have to shut down constantly" (B-18). These two short give quotes exemplify the feeling of the factory owners breaking promises and retaining wages that were allocated to them. In neither instance, wage withholding nor minimum wage violations, are the respondents describing a proactive protest, in which they demand

more rights or entitlements than they already have been allotted. They are both examples of reactive protests, reacting against a breach in the moral economy, where the participants already felt (and were, legally) entitled to what they were demanding. In the areas of the city that did not experience protests, respondents talked of their poverty and food insecurity, but not that they had been withheld pay. Respondents that had not experienced the violent protests in their area had sometimes heard of protests happening in other areas, attributing them often to wage disputes or politically motivated conflict.

The final mobilization-related hypothesis is multipart, listing multiple factors that may contribute to the mobilization of these contentious political events. These factors include: population density, community ties, an external threat, a repressive force from police or other powerful groups, a mobilizing group, or a recent, highly publicized food riot with successful outcomes. The absence of unions as a meaningful bargaining force removes the clear organizing group like was present in West Bengal. However, there are small unions and labor organizations, which lack the bargaining capacity of a large-scale, politically powerful union, but can still help to organize strikes against factory owners. Some respondents spoke of the role of unions, though the majority indicated not belonging to or knowing of a union that represented them. One resident explained that "for workers too, they have a union and a leader, and the leader suggests that people start to protest. The leader tries to negotiate first, but if the demand gets met they don't protest" (B-10), and another "those of us who work at garment factories go to an office to file complaints when we are not paid on time, and they encourage us to protest" (B-2).

In addition to the role played by external organizations, workers themselves are often the driving force in organizing protests. Protests were often described as involving

the employees as a group from one factory or the employees from one factory join the protest of those from a different factory. The unit described was often factory-level rather than individuals. The close proximity of individuals with similar challenges and grievances may aid in mobilizing groups to protest. Many of those interviewed spoke of a solidarity among the garment workers, including: “it doesn't really require a union to arrange anything. The workers protest themselves. For Bengali's, if one person starts, we all join” (B-32); and “people who work, they are workers, and they help and save themselves. These things are only understood by people who are involved in the industry” (B-27). While the community ties of a rural village may be lacking in areas of the city predominately composed of tenants with homes in villages throughout the country, the shared hardships, common opponent, and population density can aid in mobilizing collective action on behalf of the group interests. Unlike in West Bengal, the local newspapers in Dhaka did not cover the events in detail. The spread of information happened primarily by word of mouth, likely aided by the close proximity of workers and long working hours spend surrounded by the same group of colleagues.

Employers’ Countermovement Repertoire

While these protests received most international attention during times of particularly high food prices globally, they occur regularly in Dhaka as garments workers are nearly always food insecure. Because the population surrounding the factories works in predominantly the same jobs for approximately the same pay, the businesses in the area can adjust their prices as garments workers receive pay increases. Even with advances in minimum wages in 2013 following the Rana Plaza disaster, workers feel little substantive increases in their purchasing power. Primarily, respondents shared that

"when they get increased salary the home owners increase rent… the news of increased wage brings the price of everything up" (B-43) and "If the factories increase salary the rents would go high as well" (B-23). This was further explained by other respondents who described the effects of an increased salary on both rent prices and food prices, explaining that food sellers will increase their prices when factory wages increase as they know the purchasing power of their costumers, but also because their rent will increase as well living in the area of the factories. In this way, when the price of housing increases, all other expenses increase also, explained by others as: "if a company's salary increases, they [food sellers] increase all food prices, so there is no benefit from increased wages" (B-33) and "because of high wages, rent would go up, prices of food would go up" (B-39).

Whereas in West Bengal, one particular period of high prices brought together multiple groups from the population who were struggling and able to be motivated, the communities surrounding the garments factories in Dhaka find themselves consistently in that precariously food insecure situation. Even victories in labor rights lead to losses in workers' housing. This situation is shared amongst the majority of a community due to the population earning equally low wages, lacking land ownership, and having similar sized households. The community is to some extent constantly mobilized, with any small shock to the system, be it a delay in pay or marginally less pay then expected, has the capacity to set off violent protest. With factory owners constantly pressured to find ways to reduce costs, these shocks to the workers are a common occurrence, resulting in frequent protests against the garments factories. Because these protests occur so

commonly, factory owners have developed counter repertoires to avoid protests without making large concessions.

In attempting to quell worker unrest, factory owners have adapted by hiring shorter term employees, hiring predominately young women, and severely repressing protests and attempts at labor organizing. Hossain et al (2010) found in their survey of garments workers that 40% of the workers had less than one year of experience. The abundant labor source in Bangladesh and the low-skill nature of garments production allows for employers to replace workers rather that make concessions to them. In addition, employers are legally required to provide severance pay of at least one month for employees who have worked over at a company for over six months. While not followed in practice even if employees have worked for beyond six months, maintaining a temporary work force removes the legal obligation to pay employees upon discharge. Lastly, given the findings of worker solidarity amongst the garments workers in the same factories, a constantly changing workforce serves to decrease the likelihood of workers forming organizations and collectively making demands on the employer.

An additional strategy used by garments factory owners to deter collective action is preferentially hiring young women, under the assumption that they are less likely to protest against low wages or long hours. Respondents in interviews frequently described this process, stating that "they only like young girls to hire for work" (B-1), and "we notice that if people are standing at the gates, they will pick the women first. Because the women wont protest." (B-34). This was further explained by another respondent:

> "The factories also only prefer women these days, so it's terrible...Men protest, women don't. The managers can pay the women less and make them work overtime without pay. They will make women work overtime for 80 or more hours a week, but they don't get paid for all hours … the

> factories claim that men argue or complain about salary. It started after the government increased basic pay." (B-36)

The preference for hiring young women was reported by many of the respondents. Men who had moved to Dhaka to work and previously held jobs in the garments factories were now struggling to be hired. They explained this occurring because the employers were not adhering to the minimum wage set by the government and did not want their work force to strike or riot in response to that. This was not always successful, however, as men still worked in some factories and women took a part in some protests and labor organizing. One respondent informed me that, "the women would stand around too, they do work in the factories." (B-25). A group of women also spoke to me about their working conditions and how they imagine one day approaching the foreign buyers who tour the factories to tell them of the labor violations that go on there. One woman informed me, "we sometimes plan when the foreign buyers come, we would go to the buyers and tell them our bodies can not take the pressure anymore. But our managers don't let us talk to anyone" (B-34). While historically, women were removed from collective action due to their location in the household, their presence outside the home is allowing a greater degree of engagement with one another. In the event that workers do attempt to organize, the initial reaction is to repress that organization by punishing those taking leadership roles. This topic is discussed further in the next chapter, which more closely compares the reactions by the government and private stakeholders to the actions of the protesters.

Conclusion

The protests of garments workers in Dhaka, in 2007 and since, provide an example of contentious politics regarding food set in an urban, industrial context. Like

the West Bengal riots, those in Dhaka were labeled food riots by international media and satisfy the criteria for contentious politics relating to food. They involve contention in that the garments workers were making a claim on the factory owners; they are political in that those claims were based on expectations of legal rights, but also often repressed by the state acting on behalf of the owners; and lastly, they are collective action because they involve a coordinated action of a group of people in pursuit of a common interest, in this case the garments workers coordinating action on behalf of their rights to wages.

Through the analysis of protests in Bangladesh, we find support for both hypotheses of the structural basis of conflict: that (1) the reasons given for the conflict event were not food prices, rather a longer standing injustice faced by the community, and (2) participants of the protests and riots were aware of their class position, acting on behalf of their class interests, and targeting another social class. Hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2 regarding the mobilization process were also largely supported by the Bangladesh case. First, 2.1 states that a decrease in food security is necessary for a riot to occur. This happened in 2007 with both an increase in the price of food and a decrease or lapse in wages paid. Respondents gave further examples of protests happening in the years following 2007, in which the population also faced food insecurity due to their wages, even in times with the global price of food was not necessarily spiking. Hypothesis 2.2 adds to the requirement of food insecurity by including the moral economy argument, that food insecurity must represent a breach in the moral economy in order for it to mobilize protest. This breach in the moral economy is measured by the residents describing their situation as unjust. In Bangladesh, the workers were not struggling to access food because of a natural disaster or personal failure, rather they were unable to

purchase food because their employers were withholding pay that the workers knew they had rightfully earned. As with West Bengal, the combination of food security with the existing grievances of the population constituted a violation in the moral economy able to motivate collective action. Lastly, the mobilization of the protest was aided by additional community level factors. Although the workers lacked an organizing group, a history of community ties, or access to media coverage of successful protests, they did have high population density, community solidarity by factory, and a common external target for their hardships. These factors assisted factory workers in mounting protests against the perceived injustice committed by the factory owners.

The lack of an overarching mobilizing group may account for the lack of protest diffusion as seen in the India riots, as protests in Dhaka were often contained to a particular factory and participants did not indicate any particular protests in the vicinity that influenced their mobilization. Rather, protests took place due to a specific set of circumstances at their factory, and, in the absence of these factors, the workers did not protest even if surrounding factories had protests. Though, this does not mean that garment workers were entirely independent and unaffected by witnessing or hearing of protests in surrounding areas, as all residents of garment factory communities knew of protests and strikes that occurred. However, the immediate causes of protests can be assessed by factory, as the long history of labor unrest in Bangladesh makes it unlikely that any factory worker was unfamiliar with protests against factory owners and the protests that did occur happened at separated points in time from each other. Unlike India, there was not a sudden and unprecedented increase in riots that consciously influenced villagers to question their perceived oppressor. In Bangladesh, workers

reacted to exploitation by the owners of their factory without reference to the actions of surrounding factory workers at other points in time.

7 Food Riots as Modern Class Conflict: India vs Bangladesh

The analysis thus far has compared areas within India and Bangladesh, following the most similar systems method by comparing the responses of participants in very similar locations that experienced different outcomes. The within-country level of analysis allowed for an understanding of the structural basis of the conflicts in each country and the process that mobilization took in those locations, as well as some of the deterrents individuals face to collective action and how they were overcome. From that analysis, we could rule out particular independent variables as causing food riots because they were present in areas with and without riots, such as food insecurity or community characteristics. This chapter focuses on the between-country portion of analysis, further excluding variables as necessary which do not occur in both India and Bangladesh, and primarily, addressing differences in the form of and responses to the contentious politics, which occurred in India and Bangladesh.

In comparing the processes of riot occurrence in India and Bangladesh, we can identify commonalities in the structural bases for conflict and mobilization processes in both places. In both West Bengal and Dhaka, the population responded that they were reacting against a grievance unrelated to food. In addition, respondents described their grievances in moral economic terms, referring to being cheated, being denied what was rightfully theirs, etc. Beyond these similarities, the differences between West Bengal and Dhaka also contribute insight into required conditions for food riots to occur. Many studies of food riots focus heavily on large cities, describing riots as an urban phenomenon. From a “most different” comparison of West Bengal and Dhaka, we find

that food riots are not necessarily urban. The existence of widespread rioting in rural West Bengal indicates that food riots can develop in both urban and rural settings. Additionally, many newspaper accounts and quantitative studies indicate food prices as a causal factor in mobilizing food riots. While the capacity to afford food was relevant in Bangladesh, where workers were denied wages, the relationship between the protests and food in India related to its public distribution rather than its price on the open market. As detailed in chapter 5, the price of food was not irrelevant for protests mobilizing at that time in West Bengal, but it was not mentioned in participant accounts as a motivating factor. Lastly, mobilizing factors played a role in generating action against an injustice. In the case of Bangladesh, the injustice was economic exploitation, aided in mobilization by the proximity of workers and comparable living and working conditions of the population. In India, villagers protested against corruption, mobilized by the opposition political party. While these places share basic patterns of existing grievances in the population, a violation of the moral economy, and additional mobilizing aids, they also differ in the outcomes of the riots. The remainder of this chapter addresses the ways that food riot forms can be explained in terms of existing theory on collective conflict.

The hypotheses for portion three regard the form the protests took based on the composition of the conflicting parties. First, hypothesis 3.1 predicts that protests and riots will be composed primarily of wage earning laborers. Next, hypotheses 3.2 and 3.3 posit that if the upper class is land-wealthy, the protests will be political in nature, and if the upper class is capital-wealthy, the protests will be economic in nature.

These hypotheses heavily draw from Paige's theory on agrarian class conflict, which posits different forms of conflict and outcome based on the composition of the

cultivating class and the non-cultivating class. While Paige developed this theory to explain class conflict in agrarian societies, the general outline of relationships between the two groups in conflict is helpful to apply to the events of interest in this study. To give a very simple breakdown of the theoretical framework presented by Paige, one must identify the type of income source for the cultivators and the non-cultivators, or, in a non-agrarian context, the working class and the upper class, to understand the relationship between the two groups. The cultivating, lower class can be dependent for income on either wages or land, and the non-cultivating upper class can be dependent for their wealth on either capital or land. The combinations of upper and lower class wealth sources, then, result in four different scenarios, capital-wages, capital-land, land-wages, and land-land, where the first is the source of wealth for the non-cultivating upper class and the second is the livelihood course for the cultivating lower class. In these four scenarios, the outcome of class conflict differs. Paige uses the terms cultivating and non-cultivating as a means to distinguish rural social classes based on their relationship to the means of production. In applying these theories to the urban, non-agricultural populations in Dhaka, I use the terms working class and upper class to mean those who sell their labor versus those who own the means of production. This maintains the relation to the means of production definition of class used by Paige, while translating it into a non-agricultural context. Beginning with the working class, their means of income dictates their likelihood to engage in radical political activity. Their dependence on land makes the working class more risk averse and internally competitive whereas those dependent on wages means less internal economic competition and a greater incentive for political organization. For the non-cultivating, an upper class wealthy in land is economically weak depended on the

price of crops, making them incapable of offering economic concessions to the lower class, whereas a capital-wealthy upper class is able to make concessions to their workers by increasing profits through advancements in efficiency. The four possible combinations, therefore, results in differing forms of class conflict between the upper and lower classes. The primary significance for this study is the capacity of the upper class to make concessions and their general reaction to class conflict. Paige argues that conflicts with landed upper classes will be political in nature whereas conflicts with capital-wealthy upper classes will be economic in nature. By outlining the composition of two conflicting parties, the study can test the applicability of this theory to contemporary riots, offering a possible theoretical explanation for the differing form that conflict took in India versus in Bangladesh.

Participants and Targets

The first task in understanding the type of conflict, which occurred in the two countries, is to identify important characteristics of the groups involved, namely, who were the protesters and what were their targets? Understanding who was acting is critical in understanding their motivations and mobilization process as addressed in Chapters 5 and 6, but also in understanding the reactions of the more powerful group and the outcomes of the protests. Based on Paige's theory of class conflict, this study expects that the participants in collective action will be wage dependent rather than land-dependent, such as sharecroppers. The case of Bangladesh clearly supports this hypothesis in that those protesting were factory workers in Dhaka, paid entirely in wages. In addition, there is a very clear-cut distinction between the upper class, factory owners and the lower class, factory workers. In India, the distinction between the upper and lower classes is less

clear-cut. Those involved in the protests worked in a mixture of agricultural and non-agricultural work, though those who were agricultural workers were typically paid in wages. Very few respondents indicated that part of their pay was in crops harvested, and no respondents indicated that their income was entirely based on the production from the land. As discussed in chapter 5, in West Bengal, the distinction between the two groups in conflict was based heavily on political power rather than a sharp economic distinction like that in Bangladesh.

Identifying the targets of the protesters is also important, as it identifies whom the grievances were against. In Bangladesh, protesters gathered outside of garments factories and any damage caused during the unrest was directed at the factory – breaking windows, damaging machinery, and in one instance, setting fire to the building. The targeting of factory buildings indicates the object of the workers' contention was their employer. The employers in Bangladesh held most of their wealth in capital. They owned factories worth of machinery, utilized to increase the efficiency of their production. They were not dependent on the land for their income, instead their income was made from their investments in productive technology. In India, protesters attacked ration distribution shops, the homes of ration dealers, ration dealers themselves, and local government buildings. The target of the Indian rioters' violence was not their employer as in Bangladesh, rather the local representations of government in the form of actual government buildings or the government system of ration distribution. Because the protests took place in a rural area of India, one may consider the elite as a landed elite. Which is accurate, but less relevant for this study than it was in Paige's work on agrarian revolutions. Instead, what is relevant, and will be discussed in the following section, is

the upper class's capacity to make concessions to the population when challenged without directly turning over aspects of their wealth. In other words, is the conflict zero-sum, where one's gain is the other's loss, or is it non-zero sum, where the upper class is able to make concessions to the working class without turning over their income making capacity. In this way, the political elite who were challenged in West Bengal fall under the model of land-wealthy upper class, not strictly because they were large land owners. The political power of the ruling party in villages throughout West Bengal was a main source of the upper classes income and control. The political positions were zero-sum in that a successful challenge to the power held in those positions resulted in the loss of power and the consequent wealth associated with that political power.

Mobilization and Demands

The mobilization process and demands made by the working class in India and Bangladesh begin to address hypotheses 3.2 and 3.3 regarding the nature of the protests as either political of economic. After identifying the primary goals of the protests and the capacities of the upper class, we can then move into understanding the outcomes of the protests. With both India and Bangladesh having wage-dependent working classes, we are left to identify what form of class conflict will result from the combination of wage-dependent workers with a landed ruling class in India or a capital-wealthy ruling class in Bangladesh. Knowing that the wage-dependent working class is more likely to organize radically from being in closer physical proximity than sharecroppers, being less in competition with one another for land, and being less at risk of losing all access to income as a result of protesting, it is unsurprising that, under the conditions, these groups were able to mobilize against a repressive force. An exception to this expectation of

solidarity is when the lower class is divided along religious and ethnic lines, making them less likely to mobilize together, despite being wage earners. In Bangladesh, the wage-earning workers were almost entirely of the same religious and ethnic backgrounds, thereby eliminating this possibility. In India, however, villages were comprised of residents from different religions, mainly Hindu and Muslim, and from different castes. The structure of these villages reinforces the religious and caste divides in that the villages are often divided along caste and religious lines, keeping people in close proximity with those whom they identify. The close physical proximity of people identifying with one another could overcome the challenges presented when the villages are all wage earners but divided along different social lines.

We then shift to the relationship between the working class and the ruling class to begin to unpack the form that the protests took in both countries. Beginning with India, we identified that the ruling class falls under Paige's understanding of a land dependent non-cultivating class. In the event that a landed upper class engages in class conflict, we expect that conflict to be zero-sum as the upper class does not have the economic capacity to make concessions to the opposing class. As such, these forms of conflict are often political in nature. When the ruling class, who were unable to make political or economic concessions to the population, is met with a radical wage-earning working class, the resultant conflict attacks the power system as a whole. As Paige explains:

> "the typical form of social movement in systems dependent on landed property and wage labor is revolutionary. Such movements involve not only violent conflict over landed property and direct attack on the rural stratification system, but also a coherent political effort to seize control of the state by force"

The events in India support hypotheses 3.2 in that the upper class was unable to make concessions to the population and the reaction was severe, long-term political unrest. This unrest challenged the ruling political ideology, which had existed in West Bengal for over 30 years and resulted in large-scale political change, though the political structure remained the same. From reading Marx, one may expect this form of conflict to occur in cities like Dhaka, where very large, densely populated communities of workers experience similar levels of exploitation and class consciousness, we instead see short-lived protests quickly dispersed with concessions from the factory owners. In Bangladesh, the class distinctions are very clearly defined, with workers occupying roles exactly as one would picture of the proletariat from a reading of Marx. In this scenario, however, the protests are shorter lived and less radical in their consequences. The upper class in Bangladesh is wealthy in capital, making the conflict between workers and owners non-zero sum. Paige describes this dynamic in the following way:

> "A radical, well-organized, class-conscious work force confronts an economically powerful upper class willing and able to bargain and make concessions. The most likely outcome of such conflict is a reformist social movement focused on limited economic questions…. Leads to the apparent paradox of a radical class-conscious proletariat engaging in moderate labor union activities" (Paige 1978:49)

In respondent accounts of the Bangladeshi protests, the workers were reported to have demanded pay, which they were already promised or wages to which they were legally entitled. Despite the close proximity in factories of a wage-dependent, class-conscious working class, the demands were not radical or even progressive. The workers strictly demanded what they had already been allotted. Paige anticipates this dynamic in a conflict between a working class and a capital-wealthy upper class, as the upper class is

able to make economic concessions to the workers without any challenge to their class position. With these small and attainable victories, the workers, rather than seeking a radical overthrow of the class system, instead seek small-scale labor reforms regarding wages and work conditions. Riots in India could not be appeased like the riots in Bangladesh that were short lived, because the upper class could buy them into submission with small payments of wages.

		Upper Class	
		Capital Economic Conflict	**Land** Political Conflict
Working Class	**Wages**	**Reform** Dhaka, Bangladesh	**Revolution** West Bengal, India
	Land	**Reform**	**Revolt**

Table 6: Food Riot Cases in Paige's Class Conflict Typology

Reactions and Outcomes

Based on these distinctions in the upper class income sources, we can understand partially why the riots in India and Bangladesh turned out very differently despite both being classified as food riots by international media and relating in part to the high prices of food in both places at the time. The riots in India lasted weeks and spread throughout West Bengal, eliciting military intervention and resulting in a drastic change in political

power despite occurring in rural areas with low population density, where one may expect smaller scale protests and difficulty in spreading information. Because the powerful lacked liquid economic resources, the challenges by the population could not be halted with economic incentives. The only strategy available to the powerful in these scenarios is repression, which was attempted in West Bengal, but failed due to the spread of the protests over huge sections of land and growing size of the opposition political party, undermining the legitimacy of the system. Because these protests took place in a democratic system, the political elite could not widely disperse the military to quell the protests without guaranteeing their loss in the following election. Comparing this situation with that in Bangladesh, where riots took place in areas of Dhaka with huge populations of workers with the exact same jobs, living together in slums, we do not see this massive spread of rioting. Rather, there were small events that stopped quickly after starting. In Bangladesh the upper class being wealthy in capital led to the potentially counterintuitive (to the Marxist) outcome in which the workers were easily appeased with small economic gains, but the overall structure remained the same. This very class conscious, radical working class mobilizing against the wealthy upper class resulted in the rather easy process of buying out the workers to continue the status quo. As one Bangladeshi described, “at the beginning of each year the workers are supposed to have increments, and the protest to make sure that happens, but instead of a big amount, the management increases 100-200 taka to shut them up” (B-15).

While the upper class in Bangladesh was willing and able to make concessions to the workers when they were challenged, does not, however, imply that there were not consequences for the organizing of these protests. The upper class has the capacity to

appease the workers with small wages in order to continue production, but they do not encourage this type of behavior. Many reports indicate the factory owners initially calling the police to disperse protesters, including "the workers actually start the protest, but the police and MD's and others try to stop it" (B-24) and "the people start to protest, and the factories call on the police" (B-27). These reactions seem quite small in comparison to the consequences for the organizers of the protests. Numerous accounts in Bangladesh described the hired killings of union leaders or protest organizers. The excerpts listed below give examples of this process of offering concessions to the workers, but removing the organizers.

> "people get fired from job if they ask for more money. We have heard of stories that happened at Savar where the police came and beaten and bruised the workers pretty badly when they protested asking for more salary." (B-15)
>
> "He gets fired for standing up for 10 people" (B-10)
>
> "If anyone tries to be the leader of things, he gets fired." (B-12)
>
> "They were let go after they protested. A lot of factories just let go of workers when they ask for wages." (B-1)
>
> "If you protest you get shot at. When we fight for our rights, we get killed" (B-38)
>
> "[The protesters] were paid for 3 months and fired, and they put a red mark on their work paper, so they would never get a job anywhere." (B-19)
>
> "There was a protest where the factory owners actually killed a few troublemaking workers and when the other workers protested harder the police were involved, shots were fired." (B-27)
>
> "At Narayanganj, 7 people were killed. They caught the people who did it, but gave them 10 to 12 days' remand, and that's it. They let them go, no punishment no nothing." (B-38)

> "In the factories, if 10 people start talking about organizing anything, and if the managers get to know about it, they would fire the 10 employees to teach the other employees a lesson." (B-12)

These types of reports were common throughout interviews in Bangladesh, often told in a whisper after having checked outside for anyone listening. The respondents were intimately aware of the risks associated with discussing labor organizing within their communities.

The repression or organized labor can result from the upper class choosing to use part of its economic power to prevent future protests by buying the influence of the police and local government rather than give in to continual protester demands. The severe consequences for organizing protests do not change the scale of demands made on the factory owners or the outcome of individual protests, but rather decrease the frequency of the protest events altogether. A Bangladeshi garments worker explained this strategy in this way:

> "There are some people who work for the factories as hired contractors. They find the people who are causing the protests, and they threaten to kill them or sometimes have them killed. The factories do this because instead of spending 100,000 or 200,000 taka for all employees, they can just pay off one person and the protests stop." (B-18)

In looking at these two examples of food riots, it is worth considering whether these can be grouped into one category of collective action, which experiences uniform causal processes. Because they both occurred at times of high food prices and often involve food, newspapers and academic studies place them into one category of action motivated by food. Though, as seen in the prior chapters, the reasons given in each location related to corruption and economic exploitation rather than food prices and, as

this chapter indicates, viewing them as discrete forms of class conflict is theoretically useful in understanding the demands of the protesters and the outcomes of the events.

8 Conclusion

The 2008 and 2011 spikes in food prices and corresponding increase in riots throughout the world brought international attention to the important relationship between food and conflict. The volatility in food prices characteristic of an era of decreased regulation and increased international trade and dependence will continue to cause periodic food crises. These fluctuations in prices are only projected to increase with an ever growing world population and strains on agricultural production from the consequences of global warming. Understanding how decreased access to food affects conflict will continue to be relevant and can shape intervention strategies and food aid to prevent conflict creating more extreme food insecurity for the affected population.

This study looked at two cases of food riots, as identified by international news sources, to gain an in-depth understanding of the basis of conflict, the mobilization processes, and the form of the conflict in both places. The two cases, West Bengal, India in 2007 and Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2008, offered valuable comparison for this analysis. They differ on important characteristics of riots, including the location of riots in rural, agricultural areas of West Bengal versus urban, industrial centers in Dhaka, and were attributed to different food security concerns, primarily food distribution in India versus food prices in Bangladesh. In addition, within each country, there were actually multiple events that took place within a short time period rather than one large event. The multitude of events within the two countries allowed for comparisons within country as well as between the two countries. Comparing sites with and without riots in each country offered an understanding of the underlying issues motivating conflict and allowed for identification of the critical variables, which mobilized conflict events in

each country. Comparing between country, then, looking at the very different situations of protests in India and Bangladesh, offered insight into understanding food riots as instances of contentious politics. This perspective helps to explain the different forms of and reactions to food-related collective action.

Acknowledging the differences in circumstances leading to the collective violence in each location required moving beyond the scope of existing studies of food riots to those of broader collective action. Looking at the events as instances of contentious politics rather than food riots allowed for a broader theoretical background and interpretation of protester motivations. Applying theories from political economy, moral economy, and social movements adds valuable insight into a category of action predominately viewed in literature in terms of food prices and agriculture productivity. While international media has often treated the food riots throughout the world as incidents of the same phenomenon with the same root causes, just these two cases vary greatly in their motivating grievances and resultant conflicts. In West Bengal, citizens mobilized against corruption in the state government and protested against the local representatives of the ruling party. The riots taking place in West Bengal were highly political in nature, mobilized by political parties against the current party in power. The riots continued for months and resulted in large-scale political change. The riots in Bangladesh on the other hand, were composed of urban factory workers mobilized against their economic situation and protesting against the owners of garments factories. The grievances expressed in Bangladesh were primarily regarding economic exploitation on the part of the factory owners. These two examples of 'food riots' expose the problematic nature of grouping all conflict events during times of high food prices

together in quantitative analysis. Studies often find significant results of the effect of food price on conflict, but may be capturing a correlation and missing the complex relationship between food prices and existing grievances held by the population. The existing grievances vary by location and interact with food prices to create violent conflict at times of high prices, thereby giving support to the idea that food prices directly cause conflict. In-depth analysis of two such conflict events from the perspective of social movements provides detail into the processes by which food access is able to mobilize resources for existing grievances. The food insecurity experienced during the 2007-8 spike in prices changed the meaning of existing grievances against corruption in the government, in the case of India, and against exploitation by employers, in the case of Bangladesh. Corruption and exploitation now meant potential starvation for segments of the population. These two examples provide a detailed understanding of the process by which food activated populations to protest against an existing injustice. In this way, we can understand why an increase in food prices globally can result in various forms of conflict throughout the world, even conflicts not explicitly related to food.

Understanding the risks of food insecurity and conflict requires an in-depth look into the other challenges faced by populations. The existing grievances or hardships, such as government accountability in India and labor rights in Bangladesh, interacted with food access to create situations conducive to violence. In order to understand the variation in food-related violence internationally, one must certainly look at a population's vulnerability to price or supply fluctuations, but also engage with the existing tensions between groups in the population. In Bangladesh, these tensions exist between the factory owners and those who work in the factories, whereas in India, the

tensions were between the political party affiliates and the population they were meant to be representing, often led by the opposing political party. A quantitative study of food riots, which included these two countries' experiences as a single instance of a common event would not yield meaningful results as the dependent variable, food riot, would, in actuality, be a labor strike in one instance and a political protest in the other. In-depth research on additional cases could further confirm these findings of the existing grievances interacting with food insecurity to constitute a violation in the moral economy. This disparity between the motivations of the people and the grievances ascribed to them is not uncommon and can be understood through the emic and etic approaches to culture. The emic approach is to understand the insider view of a culture or situation, whereas the etic views the system externally. Combining these two perspectives allows for additional understanding of the internal viewpoint of the population while understanding how that is situated within the broader economic and political context that may not be visible to the insider (Morris et al. 1999). This study, like many others, was able to view the events within the context of the food price crisis (etic), but also adds the crucial component of the views and intentions from the insider perspective (emic) through in-depth interviews with the population. The combination of these two perspectives allows for a more holistic understanding of food-related riots by identifying how macro-level factors like food prices interact with local factors to translate into collective action.

In addition, the case of India provides an example of the potential for food insecurity to allow an external group to mobilize a population for their own gains. In West Bengal, the opposition political party was central in the mobilization process for the

riots, effectively delegitimizing the ruling party. Following their election into power, however, the system of food distribution or food prices did not undergo any substantive changes for the benefit of the population. This process, while relatively benign in India, has the potential to fuel more detrimental conflict elsewhere in the world. If food insecure populations are easier to mobilize around existing issues in society, more dangerous opposition political or rebel groups can take advantage of these situations to recruit supporters. In addition, for low-income states, government efforts to address violence, either by the population or a rival political group, takes away important resources for safety nets needed by the population during these times. It is important to note, however, that while these incidences of unrest can cause damage to people and property, they also serve to expose abuses the population is facing consistently, not only when the food prices are high. For this reason, it is important to give more detailed attention to protests rather than strictly assuming food as the primary grievance, as the populations are protesting against larger systemic issues that will be only temporarily ameliorated by lower food costs. In this way, volatile food prices serve as the tipping point, which offers an opportunity for uncovering social problems facing populations that were unable to mobilize sufficient resources for collective action prior to the food price increase.

The contemporary surge in food riots has offered both an opportunity for understanding of the relationship between food price and conflict and also a window into the numerous addition social problems faced by food insecure populations. As food prices continue on an upward and highly volatile trend, it is the world's poor populations, those that spend significant proportions of their income on food, that will feel the most pronounced effects. Addressing food prices is, therefore, critical in addressing poverty,

development, and conflict as even short instances of high food prices can deplete families' saving, cause malnutrition in growing children, and spark cycles of unrest.

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