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Role of Media in Shaping the Policy Process
Comparative Lessons from the Food Price Crisis in
Bangladesh, China, India, and Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT

News media not only inform the public about policy changes but also help to build public opinion with a serious potential to influence the policy-making process, especially during times of crisis or an emergency. During the global food price crisis of 2008, international and domestic press reported extensively on the crisis in the form of news reports, analyses, expert opinions, and interviews with key stakeholders. In this discussion paper, we compare media coverage by news publications in four developing countries—Bangladesh, China, India, and Viet Nam—and explore its linkages with policy responses. Our discussion focuses on the role of media in the emergency policy-making process in selected countries during the time of the global food crisis from 2008 to 2012. Through this paper, we attempt to connect the media's role with empirical evidence from daily newspapers in study countries and the timing of policy making during the ensuing years of food price crisis. We draw comparative lessons from the role media played in stabilizing food prices. Political systems in the country, it is argued, determine the extent to which media can influence policy making; identify policy problems and stakeholders during crisis; provide policy options to policy makers; and play the role of a policy evaluator. Our discussion may be useful for international and national policy-making bodies to understand media coverage during the crisis as well as inform media practitioners as to how their counterparts in different countries covered the crisis.

Keywords: global food price crisis, role of media, policy-making process, policy responses, emergency policy making, Bangladesh, India, China, Viet Nam, newspapers

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1. INTRODUCTION

The food price crisis in the past several years has brought issues of food security, malnutrition, and hunger to the top of the global development agenda. Developing countries have had to protect their populations from the adverse effects of high food prices through carefully designed policies and programs. In doing so, policy makers took several factors, both internal and external, into consideration. Media have played a critical role in informing policy makers and the public about the causes and the consequences of the food price increase and helped to shape the debate on food policies. Media have also been criticized for sensationalizing the food crisis and exacerbating it, thus encouraging the extreme policy responses taken by these countries. While media continue to play an important role in shaping food policy in developing countries, little is known about the mechanisms through which they influence the debate and dialogue in the policy-making process. Further, the impact of the news media could differ depending on the levels of freedom of the press and the political nature of the country. For instance, democracies face much more openness in allowing media to operate independently compared to authoritarian regimes. However, freedom of the press does not necessarily mean that the media are effective in addressing a crisis faced by the public. In this paper we assess the link between the media's reporting on the food price crisis and food policy making in four developing countries with an aim to inform international and national policy-making bodies about the media coverage of the crisis and how the reportage influenced emergency policy making; inform media professionals as to how their counterparts in different countries were covering the crisis; and add to the body of knowledge about the role of media in food policy making during a crisis.

During the global food price crisis that began in 2007–2008, international prices for basic agricultural commodities rose to levels unprecedented in nearly three decades. The prices of corn, wheat, and soybean rose to record highs and consequently led to a rise in the prices of essential secondary products such as edible oil (United Nations 2011). The price of rice, a staple in the diet of nearly half the world's population, almost doubled in international markets by 2008 (Bradsher and Martin 2008). Even in

2011, the United Nations reported that in many countries, the prices of most staple foods had remained volatile and were roughly 50 percent greater than the average prices in the 2000–2004 period. Many countries were confronted with major social and political crises (United Nations 2011). The World Bank estimated that the food crisis pushed 130 million to 155 million people into poverty in 2008 (Mundial 2011). Most developing countries responded to the crisis with policy packages to stabilize domestic markets, appease consumers and other stakeholders, protect the vulnerable, and occasionally, address long-term food security concerns (Bryan 2013).

There is currently a large body of literature exploring the food crisis, particularly regarding food price movements and policy responses (Abbott, Hurt, and Tyner 2009; Baltzer 2014; Martin and Anderson 2011; Abbott 2011; Timmer 2008; Bryan 2013; Babu 2014). However, little attention has been paid to the influence of media on food policy during crisis. For example, it is common knowledge that during the crisis the media often highlighted the plight of the local population in various countries. As a result, it is suggested that global and local media triggered additional and reciprocal responses between food-trading countries, which in most cases might have deepened and prolonged the effects of the food price crisis (Almánzar, Torero, and von Grebmer 2013). Yet little systematic and comparative evidence exists on the role of media in the food policy-making process, particularly during the crisis period.

In general, it is well known that mass media influence policies by informing voters and making them more responsive to policy outcomes (Prat and Strömberg 2011). Studies have also confirmed the impact of media coverage on food prices, through market mechanisms of supply and demand rather than changes in policy (Almánzar, Torero, and von Grebmer 2013). In times of crisis, media can have a profound impact such as speeding up the policy process, bypassing internal consultations and open policy dialogues, and potentially leading to reactionary solutions without any roots in evidence. The resulting policies can lead to unintended consequences or even contradict the original attempt of protecting the welfare of the vulnerable population due to poor targeting, corruption, and excessive intervention in the market (Bryan 2013). However, little is known regarding the impact of media on the policy process during the food crisis.

This paper delves into this question in the following structure. First, we develop a conceptual framework according to principles of media and policy making, which will be used for examining the role of media in the context of political systems of those countries and the extent to which they can influence policy making. Key informant interviews, group discussions at the country level, policy approaches monitoring, and a literature review provided a picture of popular theoretical models of the public policy process. Second, we discuss the methodology used to conduct cross-country analysis by elaborating the rationale behind selection of countries and selection of the type of media. Using variables such as political environment, participation of civil society, freedom of press, production self-sufficiency, and literacy levels, we select four countries under study. For selection of type of media, we rely on variables such as ease of access for research purposes, reliability of media, evidence-based information, and type of readership profile. Third, by presenting case studies from four countries—Bangladesh, China, India, and Viet Nam—we examine the role of media by defining the nature of journalism in each of these countries, providing an overview of the media coverage of the global and domestic food crisis, examining the relation between media coverage and policy makers, and finally exploring the policy process models applied to the specific country. Third, by conducting a comparative analysis of the role of media in food crisis policy making in these countries, we describe the lessons learned from our research. Last, we provide concluding remarks by piecing together evidence regarding the role of media in influencing public policies adopted in each of the countries under study and to help policy makers understand the role of media and how to respond in a speedy manner using evidence-based information.

2. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

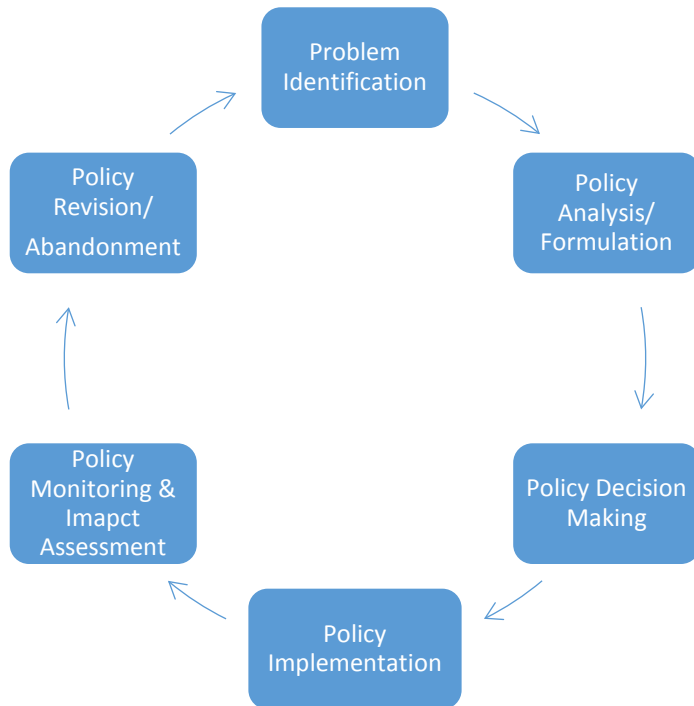
Policy making in crisis can be different from that in normal times, as it may involve overnight decisions with little consultation or transparency. But the elements of urgent decision making are also derived from the normal policy process, so it is necessary to look at the most common policy process frameworks in the field before delving into media's role in shaping policy in the context of crisis. This section consists of three parts: the first provides an overview of existing policy-making frameworks, the second discusses the relation between media and policy process, and the third elaborates on an adapted framework for studying the role of media in the policy process in developing countries.

Policy Process Analysis Frameworks

One of the first policy analysis frameworks, developed by Harold Lasswell (1956), consisted of seven activities involved in and after a public policy decision, namely, intelligence, recommendation, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal, and termination. The seven functional categories became widely adopted, and in 1970, one of the first books on policy process by Charles Jones, *An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy*, called such processes “policy cycles” to denote “a round of events or phenomena that recur regularly and in the same sequence.” After Jones, scholars continued to adapt and modify Lasswell's functional categories and descriptions of the policy process in the form of a policy cycle, endowing the framework with clearer and more intuitive conceptual terms: initiation, estimation, selection, implementation, evaluation, and termination (Weible 2014). The occurrence of a problem would initiate the cycle and eventually lead to outcomes yielding policy changes. Figure 2.1 depicts the diagrammatic representation of the simplest policy process, called the linear model. According to this model, there are six stages in policy process starting from identification of the policy problem. Another version of the same is the linear stage heuristic model, which has three components. The first stage describes agenda setting at the global level and how that influences the regional and country-level policy priorities leading to problem identification. In the second stage, generation of ideas leads to policy

research. In the final stage, the policy agenda is determined, leading to decision making and implementation.

Figure 2.1 Linear model of public policy making



Source: Adapted from Babu (2014).

However, the linear policy framework presented in Figure 2.1 has been subject to criticism since its creation. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) perceived several shortcomings of the framework, like the paucity of causal theory or testable hypotheses, descriptive inaccuracy, top-down bias, absence of multiple levels of government and intergovernmental processes, and lack of policy analysis in the process (Weible 2014). Several scholars came up with new approaches to capture the essence of policy process, proving the above policy cycle an incomplete representation of the process.

Among these efforts are the Multiple Stream Approach (MSA), evolving from the garbage can model developed by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972). MSA has been widely applied in the policy-making process analysis (Zahariadis 2014). Since its creation by Kingdon in 1984, MSA brings together three components: problem, policy, and politics. It also takes into consideration the role of policy

entrepreneurs, who create policy windows that cause future policy changes (Kingdon 1984). Court and Young (2003) developed a similar framework called the policy entrepreneurship model, which captures the dimensions that shape a policy process, namely, context (politics and institutions), evidence (credibility and communication), and links (influence and legitimacy). They explored the links between policy research and policy making and found that the application of research in policy making was determined by institutional structure and politics of the time under discussion, effectiveness of communication of policy alternatives, and the links between researchers and policy makers, or what previous literature called the “policy network.” Although the extent and ways in which these personal ties, trust, legitimacy, openness, and formality shape the process were not yet clear, this model expounds the policy process in less democratic contexts.

The importance of incorporating institutional knowledge in the policy process was emphasized by Ostrom (2011) through the rational choice framework. This framework specifies the variables within the policy problem and streamlines the process of analysis and evidence-based policy generation. It focuses on actors involved, positions that exist, actions allowed to identify policy avenues, and the prediction of potential outcomes. This can be used to design strategies and better understand responses to make rational choices in policy making (Ostrom 2011).

The models mentioned above capture all the stakeholders likely to affect policy output given specific contexts, in either a linear or nonlinear order. The policy entrepreneurship model emphasized the significance of external players like researchers by recognizing them as the generators of evidence-based policy alternatives. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) emphasized the importance of external players in advocating for policy changes and proposed a framework that attributes policy change to the formation of advocacy coalitions of actors with shared beliefs and common ground. The advocacy coalition model explains why policy change in developing countries usually takes a long time (Birner, Gupta, and Sharma 2011) and implies the importance of the role of nonpolitical and external stakeholders, like media, in generating evidence-based policy. Stone, Maxwell, and Keating (2001) believe that the participation of

these external players adds transparency and professionalism to the policy process, lends legitimacy to the researchers, and increases policy choices.

Policy learning and diffusion models are gaining increasing explanatory power when it comes to policy change at national or local levels, as the information dissemination and cross-country learning is strengthened and accelerated by domestic research institutes and think tanks or by the international or national discussions or debates in which policy makers participate (Volden, Ting, and Carpenter 2008; Babu 2014).

The policy process models described depict some salient steps of policy making, but policy process varies in different contexts. In addition, as mentioned above, the media are among many players influencing policy. Therefore, to effectively examine the media's role one should compare different policy contexts during a particular time period. In this paper lessons will be drawn by examining the links between food price crisis coverage during specific periods and the policy responses following them across four countries.

Media and Public Policy-making Process

Modern empirical research on the effects of mass media on policy began in the 1930s, partly due to Hitler's and Mussolini's seemingly effective use of media in spreading propaganda. The first large-scale study conducted by Lazarsfeld, Bernard, and Gaudet (1944) found that mass radio and print press media had relatively minor effects on how people voted and that the media's influence on voter choices was mostly a result of pervasive selection and filtering. Further, some other studies at the time found that propaganda movies failed in indoctrinating their viewers (Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield 1949). As a response to limited findings, researchers developed new theories to explain media's influence on the policy process. One such theory is agenda setting, which refers to the idea that media coverage of an issue makes people believe that an issue is important (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Another theory called priming refers to the idea that people evaluate politicians based on the issues covered in the media

(Iyengar and Kinder 1987). Both models assume that people form opinions based on accessible information and that media coverage increases accessibility (Prat and Strömberg 2011).

Further studies have found mass media to influence policy in a number of ways. First, they influence electoral competition by channeling campaign promises from politicians to the forward-looking electorate (Strömberg 1999). Second, they inform backward-looking voters about the actions taken by politicians regarding issues they might be concerned about but that are not directly observable (Strömberg 1999). Third, media can influence policy by affecting the weight voters put on various issues in their voting choices (McCombs and Shaw 1972; Besley and Burgess 2000). Finally, access to media empowers people politically and increases the benefits they receive from government programs (Strömberg and Snyder 2008).

Specifically regarding food prices, Almánzar, Torero, and Grebmer (2013) find that mass media have an impact on commodities. They find that the media coverage of commodity prices is positively correlated with price movements, with volatility higher on days when there is higher media coverage. They find the effects are caused by the market mechanisms of supply and demand. Swinnen, McCluskey, and Francken (2005) find similar results, wherein media coverage of the food safety crisis increased the perceived risk of consuming associated products and in turn affected demand for the product. They also cite a case in Belgium in which, in line with the theories we have discussed above, government ministers were forced to resign due to their inability to address a food safety crisis. Going beyond price effects, Olper and Swinnen (2013) conducted an empirical study on the effect of media on agricultural policies wherein they found that an increase in share of informed voters and media penetration led to policies that benefit the majority more. They find that in poorer countries, greater media penetration led to a reduction in agricultural taxation. Voters rely on media products such as newspapers to decide on private action. The more precisely the news predicts or analyzes future policies, the more likely it is that readers will take correct private actions. But media can also indirectly affect government policies through behavioral patterns of the voters by how they provide information to citizens. A better-informed and more active electorate incentivizes the government to be more responsive to emergencies. Evidence has been found in

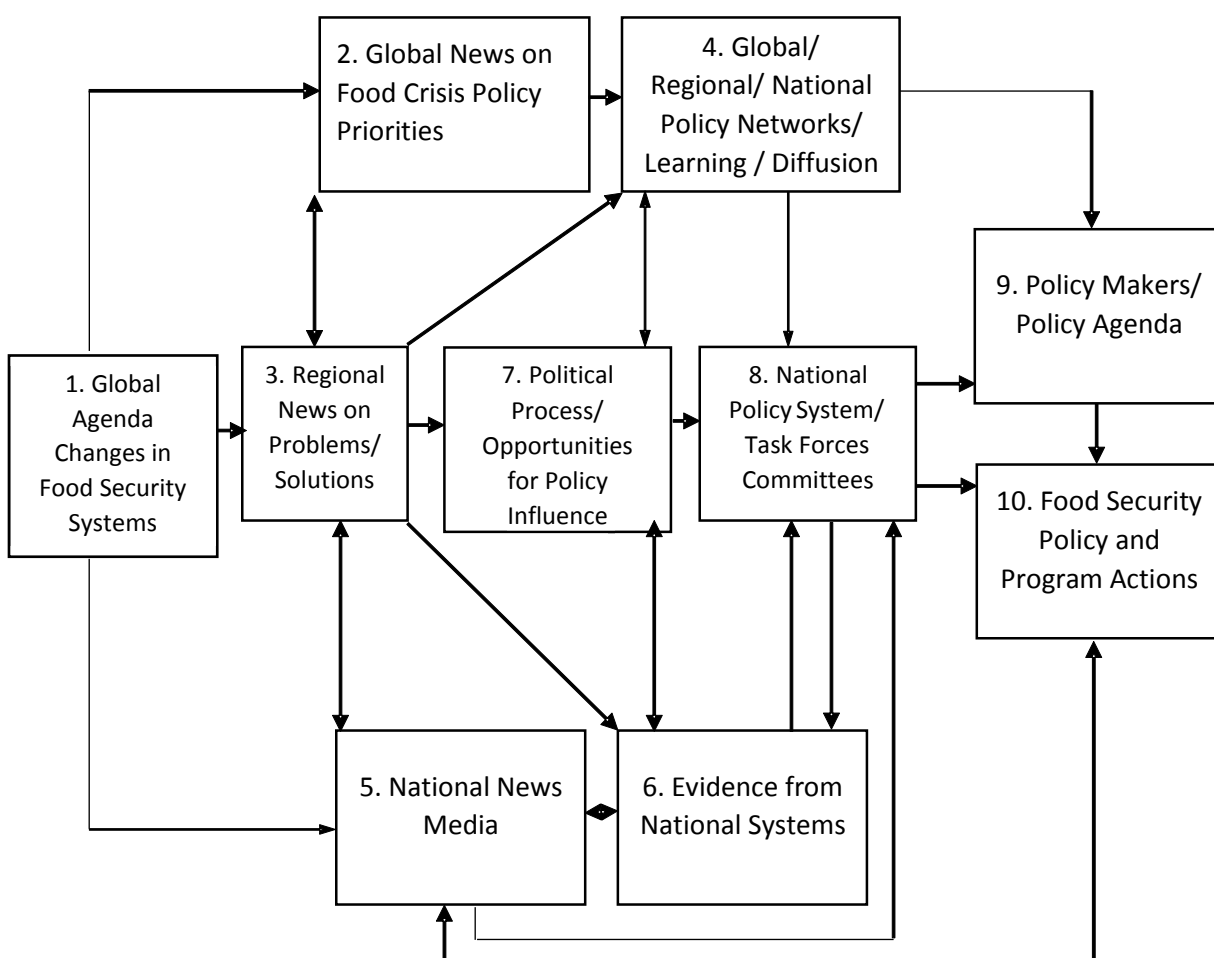
the case study by Besley and Burgess (2000), in which Indian state governments' responsiveness in the context of a fall in food production was proved to be positively correlated with the local newspapers' circulation, using government responsiveness proxies of provision of food distribution and calamity relief expenditure.

Court and Young (2003) developed a hypothesis that research is more likely to contribute to evidence-based policy that aims at poverty reduction and suffering alleviation as long as

1. the policy suggestion fits within the political and institutional limits and pressures of policy makers, and resonates with their ideological assumptions, or sufficient pressure is exerted to challenge those limits.
2. researchers and policy makers share particular kinds of networks and develop chains of legitimacy for particular policy areas;
3. outputs are based on local involvement and credible evidence and are communicated via the most appropriate communicators, channels, style, format and timing.
4. media's roles in the policy process are expressed explicitly in the first and third statements: shaping public opinion and channeling credible evidence toward evidence-based policy alternatives. They also highlight the significance of external players like researchers and civil societies in the process of generating objective, solid policies (Weaver 1989). Media are the bridge between researchers and decision makers and sometimes carry an interpretive role of policy alternatives (Weaver 2002).

Figure 2.2 shows the link between the policy-making process and the media, based on the above discussion. Figure 2.2 has been adapted from the stylized model developed in Babu (2014).

Figure 2.2 A framework for studying the role of media in the policy process in developing countries



Source: Adapted from Babu (2014).

The global food policy agenda sets the stage for regional policy making, influencing policy priorities for policy makers, when regional or local media report on global trends or the global food crisis. Leading global experts weigh in on the issues facing the sector, exerting pressure on domestic policy makers when their opinions are reported in the media. A combination of these factors leads to the creation of a policy window that could result in policy makers' resorting to *panic policy making* to allay fears and guard their electoral turf. A variation of this approach is when local issue experts or think tanks release reports, publish opinion pieces in newspapers, or—through appointment of a special-purpose task force—provide evidence-based solutions. Ultimately, these may lead to ad hoc policies to check the immediate crisis, initiation of a long-term policy framework, or the revamping of food security systems.

The role of media in the policy process of agricultural and food policy making has rarely been examined. This paper fills this gap by examining four Asian developing countries' responses during and after the global food price crisis. It draws lessons from this cross-national comparison, applying the models reviewed above to specific country contexts. The above framework provides a broad context for arriving at different pathways by which media may influence policy making in developing countries.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology used in conducting the cross-country analysis undertaken in this paper. We start by elaborating the rationale used to select countries for the study and then move on to the criteria used to select the form of media. Finally, before delving into each case we describe the methodology used.

Country Selection

The four countries that were selected for the study are Bangladesh, China, India, and Viet Nam. The analysis compares the policy responses to the food crisis from 2007 to 2010. Each of the above-mentioned countries has a different policy context. Different versions of the stylized model will be applicable to each context. For instance, China, being a centrally planned economy, has a less transparent policy process, and research and evidence behind policy become public largely after the policy has been adopted and implemented. This is unlike India and Bangladesh, which have functioning democracies. Several criteria were taken into consideration to select these countries. These criteria were selected because they affect the way in which media interact with the policy process. The countries selected differ in relative terms on each of the criteria, and this will help us understand how that affects their reactions to policy crisis.

1. Political environment: whether the policy-making environment is democratic, stable, transparent, institutionalized, and open to external influences and resources
2. Civil society: whether civil societies are allowed and encouraged to voice opinions and promote public policy or those voices are suppressed (This helps in the formation of advocacy groups that influence policy formulation and implementation. Civil society groups complement the media in highlighting problems in policy and ensuring media accountability.)
3. Freedom of press: whether the media are state controlled and whether independent analysis and coverage are allowed (As highlighted in the literature review, this keeps the electorate informed and ensures greater government accountability.)

4. Production self-sufficiency: whether the country is self-sufficient or dependent on import in food grains supplies
5. Education level of the population: whether the country has high literacy rates and what is the prevalence of education among the population

Media Coverage Selection

In this paper, we use reports from English daily newspapers for the analysis. There are limited data on accessibility of media in different countries. Below we outline the various reasons used to choose English print press for the analysis:

1. The internet access rate was quite low at the time when the crisis struck the global market. Print press was still the major channel of information dissemination in the developing world.
2. Compared to other forms of media coverage, articles and reports from the daily newspapers were easier to access and more reliable from databases like Factiva. In fact, Food Price Crisis Observatory, a World Bank project monitoring global food price fluctuations, was also dependent on Factiva to track food riots.¹
3. National daily newspapers were presumably the primary source of evidence-based information.
4. English newspapers' readership in these four countries comprises elite and well-educated classes, who naturally play a more significant role in having an impact on the political and economic life in each country. In certain cases, readership numbers for English-language newspapers may be lower than for their regional-language counterparts, but they are considered influential for having niche readership comprising political and social elites. For instance, *Daily Star*, an English-language newspaper from Bangladesh, ran successful campaigns against corruption, forcing government to acknowledge the problem after initial denials and take corrective measures. Media coverage in English-language dailies also has the potential to be picked up by international media and circulated widely outside the country, which could result in exerting international pressure on the national government. In countries like China, where major policy making occurs in a more centralized and top-down manner, policy ideas and public opinions are usually collected from major daily newspapers and compiled into official internal

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/food-price-crisis-observatory#4>.

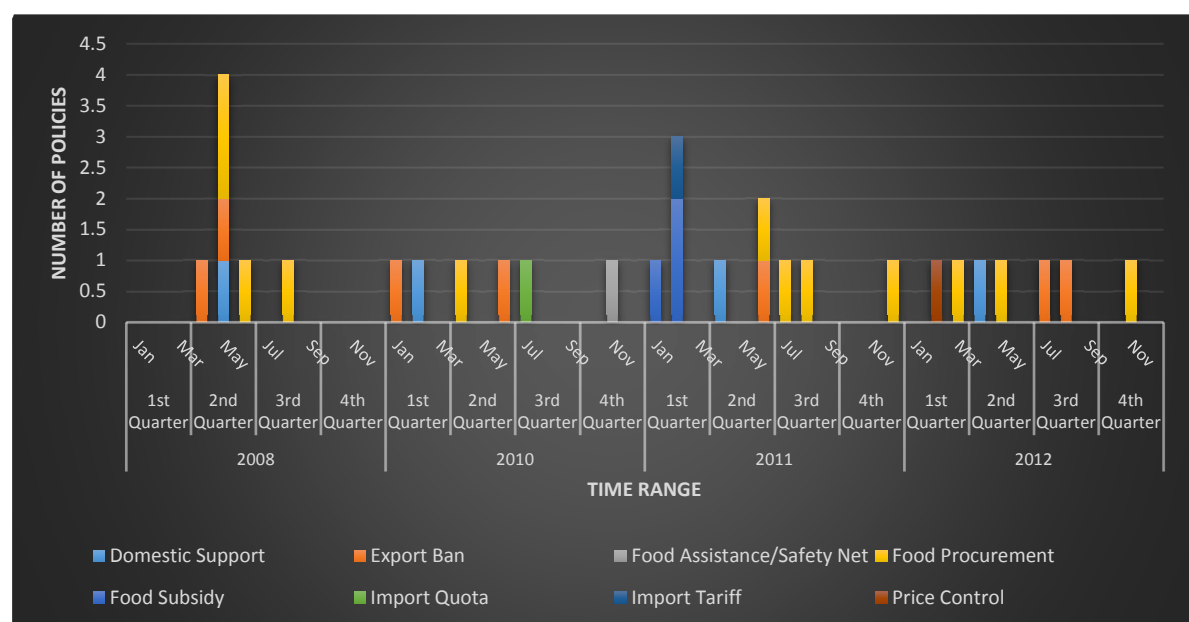
publications that are restricted to leaders above a certain level (Hu 2011). A similar case exists in Viet Nam. Therefore, newspapers are a primary source of information for policy making.

Although English is not the official language in China and Viet Nam, the two countries have English media outlets. Even in strict censorship regimes of communist countries, journalists usually face little restriction in covering agricultural economic trends. Hence English-language print press in these four countries should be representative of the reports in each country.

Methodology

The methodology uses quantitative and qualitative methods to review media coverage from the onset until after the crisis. First, we comprehensively review the nature of journalism in each country. Next, in juxtaposition to the intensity and contents of coverage during the period, we examine the relevant policy responses. Using the reports from major English daily newspapers to give a broad picture of journalism in each country, we analyze the media's relation with policy making. Using the World Bank's global food policy monitor, we present a visual representation of policy decisions taken by each of these Asian countries during the food price crisis from 2008 to 2012 and compare newspaper reporting and policy making at the time to study patterns. Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 capture eight food policy responses: domestic support in the form of minimum support price for crops; food subsidies to vulnerable sections of society; export bans to stem domestic prices and allay fears of food shortages; import quotas to protect domestic producers; safety nets to protect vulnerable sections against price increases; import tariffs to increase domestic food prices; food procurement by national governments to stabilize prices, build food security, and regulate prices; and finally price controls to protect against any price shocks and inflationary pressures.

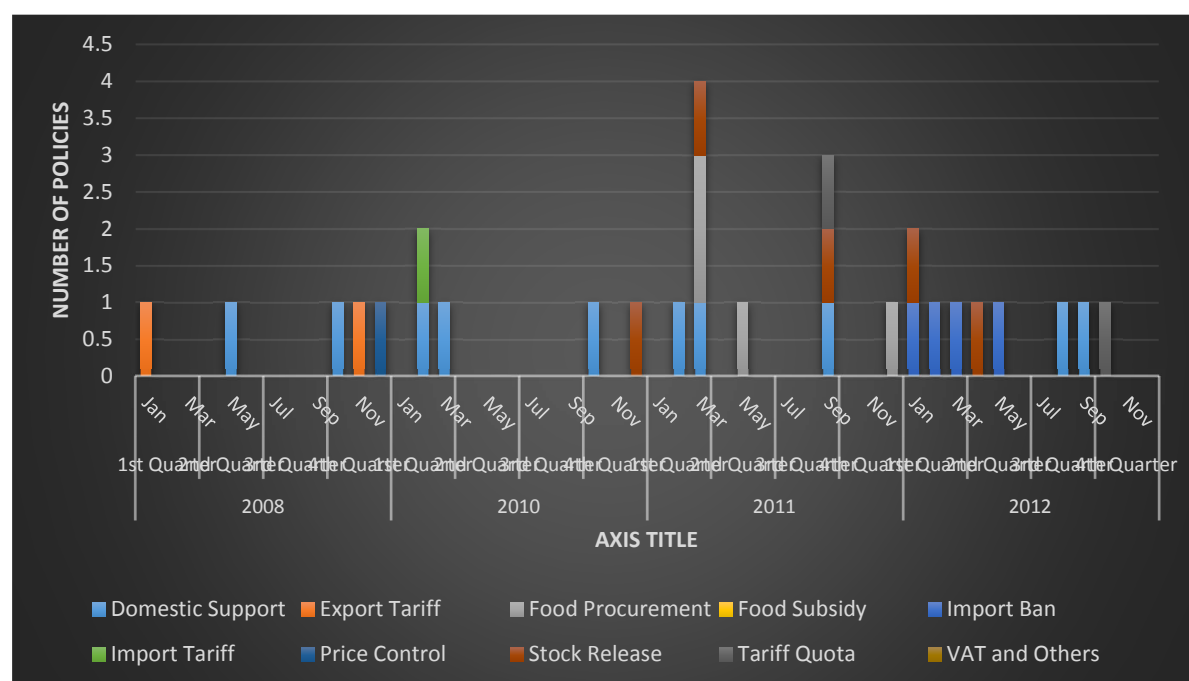
Figure 3.1 Monitoring food policies in Bangladesh during 2008–2012



Source: Global Food Policy Monitor, World Bank.

Note: Jan = January; Mar = March; Jul = July; Sep = September Nov = November.

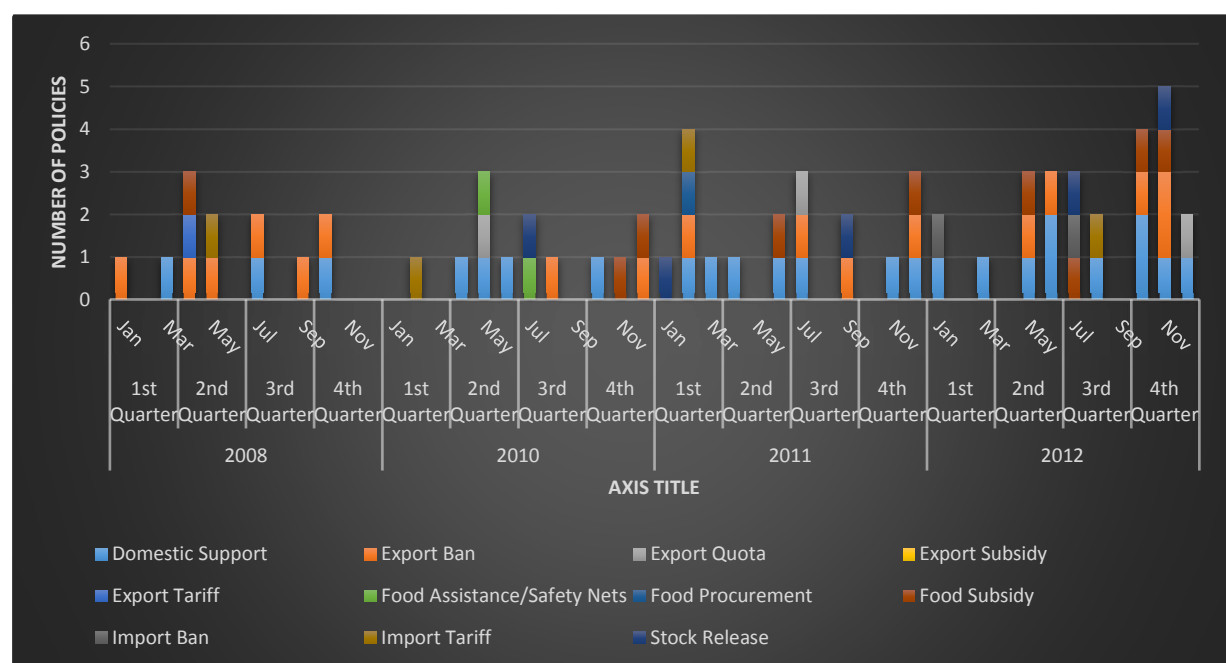
Figure 3.2 Monitoring food policies in China during 2008–2012



Source: Global Food Policy Monitor, World Bank.

Note: Jan = January; Jul = July; Mar = March; Nov = November; Sep = September; VAT = value-added tax.

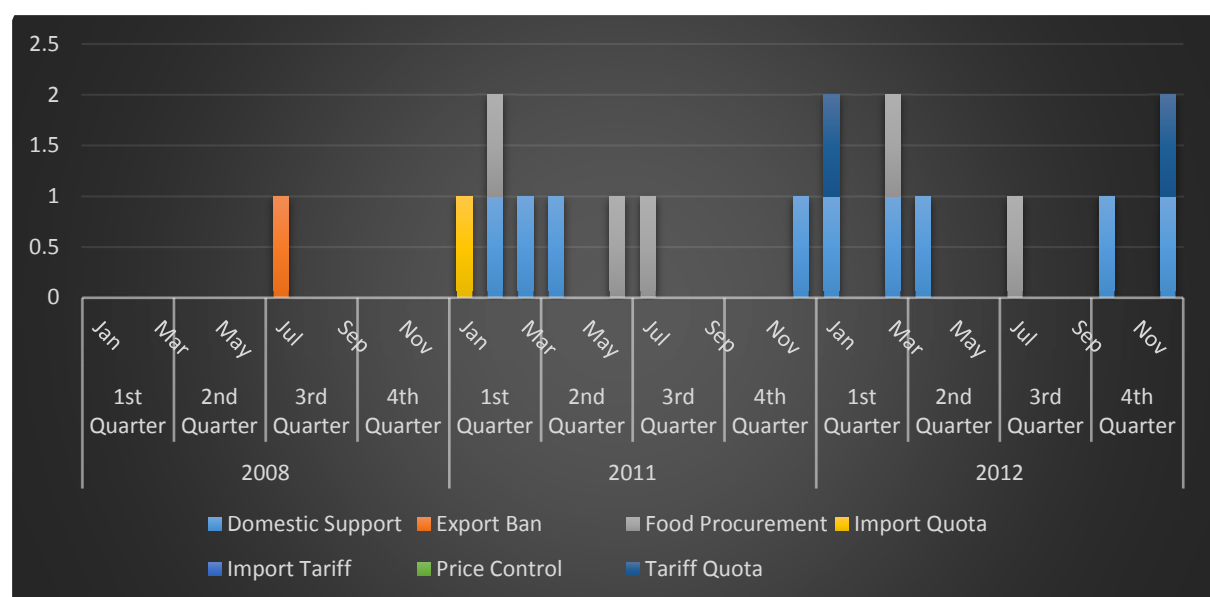
Figure 3.3 Monitoring food policies in India, 2008–2012



Source: Global Food Policy Monitor, World Bank.

Note: Jan = January; Jul = July; Mar = March; Nov = November; Sep = September.

Figure 3.4 Monitoring food policies in Viet Nam, 2008–2012



Source: Global Food Policy Monitor, World Bank.

Note: Jan = January; Jul = July; Mar = March; Nov = November; Sep = September.

At the end of the paper, we develop a set of metrics to provide a clear cross-country comparison. We examine the policy process models discussed earlier and apply them to each country to interpret the role of media during global food price hikes.

4. CASE STUDIES FROM BANGLADESH, CHINA, INDIA, AND VIET NAM

In this section, we briefly examine the political systems in each of the four countries before proceeding to delve into the nature of journalism and its role in shaping food policy, different kinds of media coverage of the food price crisis, its relation to the policy makers, and a discussion about policy-making models applicable in each country depending on the unique context. To capture the policy discussion during the period under study, we have included a food policy monitor for each of these countries.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a functioning democracy, having achieved independence relatively recently, in 1971, and having had a volatile political system ever since. Compared to other countries, Bangladesh has one of the highest population densities. Its dependence on the global food market is very high, making it a net importer of major food supplies. During the global food price crisis, Bangladesh was in an unstable political situation. The country was not successful in stabilizing food prices during the period in question. However, the role of the country's media in prompting the government to respond is worth examining (Raihan 2013; Bryan 2013).

Nature of Journalism and Role of Media in Food Policy in Bangladesh

The development of media in Bangladesh took an uneasy road. Bangladeshi media were completely nationalized in 1975 after the military took power, just 3 years into the country's independence. The strict control lasted for 16 years, until 1991, when the country eventually restored its democracy and freedom of expression was at last allowed. Media in this country have "become stronger, more vibrant and more of a voice for the people" ever since (Islam 2002).

In 2014, Freedom House assessed in its signature annual press report that the media environment in Bangladesh remains "relatively lively" but that still the "legal and regulatory framework allows for some restrictions." It is often suppressed by authorities under the name of safeguarding national security

or sovereignty. Frequent crackdowns on bloggers and blocks of foreign-based social media websites also exacerbate the situation of Bangladeshi media, especially the Internet-based ones.

Compared to television broadcasting and new media, the print press is generally allowed more leeway. All print media in Bangladesh are privately owned, and many newspapers are susceptible to partisan inclination when covering political events. Media also can be controlled by business owners or criminal gangs. Physical attacks on and coercion of journalists made them practice self-censorship. But these impediments were more common concerning politically and religiously sensitive topics; economic and agricultural coverage was less affected.

In addition to being limited by government censorship and self-censorship, the impact of print media in Bangladesh is infringed on by the country's ethnic and linguistic diversity and the low literacy rate of the population. The literacy rate was less than 60 percent when the food crisis happened but showed a steady upward trajectory. The increasing literacy rate resulted in a proliferation of newspapers and periodicals in the country. But there is a clear division between the Bengali and English readership; since English readers are usually urban dwellers of elite status (mainly the middle-class and decision makers), they are assumed to be more influential in policy making. Before the Internet was widely accessible in the country, newspapers were the primary tool for the government to disseminate policies and for the private sector to voice its demands and monitor the market. In this sense, newspapers are an indispensable actor in the whole process (Raihan 2013).

How Did the Newspapers Report the Food Price Crisis?

Food security is a priority of the country, and the media coverage of food price hikes was intense during and after the 2007–2008 crisis. The fact that Bangladesh is vulnerable to natural disasters and a net importer of staple grains set the tone for its agricultural and food policies to be a mixture of creating domestic production incentives and intensifying internal procurement on one hand and expanding importing sources on the other.

Governmental agencies like the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, National Board of Revenue, Bangladesh Bank, Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, and Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry are the prominent stakeholders that appeared in the media when critical policy steps were taken. Civil societies and international nongovernmental organizations like Oxfam also wrote frequently in newspapers by commenting, hosting events, or convening decision makers to provide policy suggestions.

International market movements and policy changes of exporting countries were also closely monitored by Bangladeshi media. For example, the export ban introduced by India on its rice varieties in October 2007 was timely caught by the Bangladeshi press, considering the implication for the internal procurement target, which would exacerbate the price spike in the domestic market in Bangladesh.

Broadly, newspaper articles about food crisis reported three aspects of the price hike:

1. **Policy announcement and dissemination.**

The Financial Express followed the Bank of Bangladesh closely to provide a whole picture of the monetary policies adopted by the central bank and the macroeconomic environment.² The establishment of the half-yearly announcement of monetary policy by Bangladesh Bank is a practice adopted by industrial country central banks to “objectively analyze [the central bank’s] view on the evolving economic outlook and the appropriateness of its policy response.” The newspapers reported on events held to communicate the monetary policies adopted by the Bangladesh government and international financial institutions. Mainstream newspapers are the platform for dissemination of this information.

2. **Highlight the direct decision makers and external stakeholders in the policy process.**

An article from *The New Nation* on July 7, 2008, reported a seminar hosted by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry themed “Price Hike and Poverty Alleviation—Budget 2008–09” in coordination with the Bangladesh Economic Association and Oxfam International. Foreign donors and international agencies contributed about 55–60 percent of development expenditure in the national budget and gave a number of policy ideas and

² The Financial Express, April 18, 2010.

recommendations to the government (Raihan 2013). Free media made the stakeholders more visible and helped in holding policy makers responsible for the crisis.

3. Analyze the crisis'/emergency's implication independently and objectively.

Reports that analyze flaws and opportunities existing in the economy were also common during the crisis. Not only did they admit blatantly existing problems such as poor governance, inadequate infrastructure, unbridled corruption, and deteriorating law and order; they also detected the impact of the global recession on domestic commodity markets. They expressed concerns about the political uncertainty during the caretaker government's tenure about taking effective measures against price inflation. They also frequently called out the government, urging it to take action.

How Did the Media Reports Influence Policy Makers?

Although the reports of the crisis in the print press vary in content, the coverage was intense throughout and made some noticeable implications on the policy process:

1. Problem identification and agenda setting

Problem identification and priming an issue on the agenda is the start of the policy cycle. Bangladesh's media captured the impact of the price hike on the most vulnerable groups. This set the mood across the country, leading to expecting government measures to curb the upward price trend and navigating decision makers' attention to urgently address the problem.

2. Policy monitoring, evaluation, and debate

Policy implementations were closely observed and intensely covered by the media. Corruption activities and the government's inability to control prices were revealed. High-ranking officials were sacked at the height of the crisis in Bangladesh under the caretaker government. A newspaper in July 2008, *The Daily Star*, revealed the dysfunction of a task force that was launched to monitor the market price two months ago. Policy effectiveness also was open to media's evaluation and debate. For example, there were questions about the effectiveness of tariff reduction or exemption on import grains in bringing down prices (Raihan 2013).

3. Information dissemination to smooth implementation

The policy-making process during the global food price crisis was divided into two periods, the first being under the caretaker government when parliament was absent and

the normal decision-making ministries were dysfunctional. Next was when the normal policy process resumed after the general election in 2009. The media in Bangladesh checked the government's accountability during the time of political instability. It also kept the policy process as transparent as possible to safeguard the welfare of the poor.

The food policy monitor above helps us understand Bangladesh's food policies during the food price crisis. Figure 3.1 captures eight food policy responses: domestic support in the form of minimum support prices for crops; food subsidies to vulnerable sections of society; export bans to stem domestic prices and allay fears of food shortages; import quotas to protect domestic producers; safety nets to protect vulnerable sections against price increases; import tariffs to increase domestic food prices; food procurement by national governments to stabilize prices, build food security, and regulate prices; and price controls to protect against any price shocks and inflationary pressures. In Bangladesh, by the second quarter of 2008, the government banned exports, initiated food procurement, and provided domestic support to rice farmers. Until the end of the crisis in 2012, it continued to procure food while imposing export bans during the period under study. In the fourth quarter of 2010, the government initiated a safety net to provide food security to the most vulnerable.

Models Applied

To observe the role that media played during the food crisis in Bangladesh, the frameworks suitable to apply are the linear stage heuristic model, multiple stream model, and institutional development and rational choice model. This is because they put an emphasis on the players (or policy entrepreneurs) in the policy process and take the institutions into consideration. In a politically unstable environment, decision-making power was a monopoly of the caretaker government and its agencies. And even though other players like civil society, trade unions, and international donors were able to exert influence, the decision-making process was controlled by the government. An open media environment exposed problems and prompted those at the helm of government to respond in a timely and responsible way, monitoring policy implementation and evaluation.

Applying the reasoning behind the linear stage heuristic model to the policy-making process in Bangladesh, the country developed a local response to the global agenda—developed by extensive reporting in the local and global media that highlighted exporting countries’ decisions to curb exports of staples—by going through various aspects of the policy-making process as outlined in this model. Similarly, the rationale behind the MSA model explains how three streams—problem, policy, and politics—fused together to create a window of opportunity for bringing about policy changes, for which motivation was preexisting and there was considerable pressure on the interim government to react and be seen as doing something. Collective action by way of protests by garment industry workers to seek hunger accountability from the then–caretaker government reflects the institutional development and rational choice model of policy making, wherein groups organized themselves without state coercion. The government, with its policy institutions and power, moved to take decisions like ramping up procurement to build food stocks.

China

China is the most populous country in the world and a large staple grain producer. It’s also a big importer of a number of essential commodities to meet its large domestic consumption demand. Food security is one of the biggest concerns of the country’s decision makers as it is the foundation of political stability. Although China has been transitioning from a planned economy to a market-oriented one after its economic reform in late 1978, agricultural market and agriculture-related issues are still under state control. China also has a centralized decision-making system and a rigidly controlled press. The role of media in the Chinese policy process is naturally presumed to be very limited, but the coexistence of state-controlled and more independent, commercialized media in China provides two styles of reporting that enable one to retrospect the crisis from both a state-controlled and a market-oriented lens.

Nature of Journalism and Role of Media in Agricultural Policy in China

Chinese media used to be part of the government monopoly and served as a mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party in the pre-reform period. This was changed in the 1980s when the government gradually stopped subsidizing media outlets and drove them to enter the market and earn revenue.

Commercialization of the media catalyzed the boom of independent and professional journalism in China, and with the prevalence of the Internet, web-based media usually set the agenda for the print press for its instant coverage and exponential scale of transmission. Although the Chinese government still tried to impose strict control over media of all forms, the cost of controlling was rising. The goal of the government was to guarantee social stability and uphold legitimacy, but business and financial news is under relatively loose regulation due to its important implication to the market and the government's overarching goal of economic development. With the rapid growth of the capital market in China, the demand for accurate and timely financial news created a boom of business media and professional journalists. Studies of the broad trends of the Chinese media industry show that it has played a significant role in leading to improved governance and changes in policy (Hu 2011; Gang and Bandurski 2011).

Media served as independent watchdogs, investigators, educators, and public opinion manipulators—they did this by constantly surveilling, investigating, revealing, and criticizing the government's malfeasance or negligence; providing a platform for discussion and debate; and cultivating critical thinking along with information dissemination. The revelation of problems like corruption, environmental pollution, social inequality, and food safety scandals enraged the public and led to changes in entrenched institutions and policies. An increase in high-profile sacking of government officials to appease the public's fury has held the unchecked government accountable. The role of media in shaping and leading public opinion also led to a more responsive and transparent government.

The Chinese media played a major role in the policy process in the country in the following ways:

- Problem identification and in-depth investigation
- Policy dissemination and advocacy
- Public education
- Market watchdog, monitor, and evaluator

How Did the Media Report the Food Price Crisis?

Most of the coverage of food price fluctuation was in the agricultural and economic pages. To observe the features of how the Chinese print press covered food prices and analyzed relevant policies, news coverage from *China Daily* and *South China Morning Post (SCMP)* were compared. These two are representatives of state-run and commercialized English print press in China.

Both *China Daily* and *SCMP* regularly covered critical economic indicators like consumer price index and followed the prices of major agricultural commodities. *SCMP*, based in Hong Kong, kept a distant and critical tone in reporting the surging price trends and the government's failure to prevent the crisis, while *China Daily* reported the changes of indicators and the measures taken by the government to offset the price hike. The tone was more soothing and affirmative when commenting on the efforts and determination the government showed in curbing inflation. Sources cited by *China Daily* included central government officials, government announcements, and governmental research wings like the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Research Center of Agricultural Policy and Agricultural Universities in China, while for *SCMP*, sources were more diverse, including business and investment banking industries experts' views.

A report from *SCMP* on May 25, 2007, "Surge in Food Prices Brings Call for Relief," cited an expert's prediction that the failure to bring down the country's wheat prices would lead to a price surge of meat and eggs, which turned out to be true during the second half of 2007. "The food price rises have prompted calls for government departments to be held accountable for failing to control the situation and almost all media outlets are carrying daily reports on the issue (South China Morning Post 2007)." Chinese media outlets were being a force of independent surveillance in 2007, which coincided with the rise of investigative journalism in China.

According to the same report, some government departments were reportedly sending inspectors to investigate price rises and considering increasing financial aid to low-income people. The Ministry of Commerce said it would use state meat reserves to curb market increases.

Both *SCMP* and *China Daily* gave positive coverage of the government's effort in stabilizing pork prices. For instance, in August 2007, the government announced a 1.15-billion-yuan contribution to low insurance payments to curb the soaring pork price. The pork price escalation was also due to the dampened enthusiasm of breeders and a plunge in supply. To stimulate breeders, the China Banking Regulatory Commission said banks and financial institutions should create a favorable environment for pork breeders. The government also paid through social welfare programs to low-income families and college students to offset the pork price shock.³ These measures were reported in other media to effectively stabilize the pork prices, injecting confidence in the market about curbing the price increases.

How Did the Media Reports Influence Policy Makers?

Reviews of the reports during the crisis presented a role transition of Chinese media from passive information disseminators of authoritative sources to proactive educators, observers, and commentators. They contributed to policy formation and discussion by evaluating previous and current policies, providing the latest market trends, and channeling expertise from more diversified sources in defense of low-income people's welfare.

This is an opening-up process for policy makers, for they no longer have a monopoly on information and need to pay attention to external voices. The government bears more accountability and is under more pressure to adopt and implement effective policies. Commercialized media also gave the government external and independent assessment of the effectiveness of its policies. With the media's focus on the impact of the price hike on the poor, government departments were correspondingly taking firmer and more intense measures to control the price shock and subsidize the poor.

In China, the national government reacted to the food price crisis by levying an export tariff at the outset, followed by higher domestic support for crops. Toward the second half of 2008, it imposed price controls to contain domestic prices and inflation. From 2011 to 2012, it increased food procurement to build reserves against any potential shortage of food grains in the domestic market.

³ August 6, 2007, *China Daily*.

Models Applied

The policy process of China does not fit well into any of the models listed above, because they have more explanatory power in advanced democracies. The traditional policy cycle and linear stage heuristic model can partly capture the policy process in China. Although the policy process in China is not transparent at the top level, some of the six functional stages of the policy cycle still can be seen in the media, such as problem identification, policy evaluation, and policy debate. They can also be seen in commercialized newspapers to a small extent. The Chinese government's policy response was swift and decisive, showing a firm hand on the market. The policy process is usually opaque, and the stakeholders responsible for policy making are rarely apparent in public platforms like the media, especially state-run media.

An independent media environment is crucial for capturing market trends and the national mood. It can help generate accurately targeted and effective countermeasures in a crisis. But in a country where press freedom is state controlled, media serve the role of assuring the public of the government's reaction, an extended wing of the government to maintain the society's stability.

India

India is the most populous democracy in the world. It is also one of the biggest net exporters of staples. India has vibrant media, which play significant roles in identifying problems and providing solutions. Media have been well integrated into the policy process in India because of the press environment and institution of the country. Therefore, India cannot be neglected when discussing media's role in crisis decision making.

The Nature of Journalism and Role of Media in Agricultural Policy in India

India is a well-functioning democracy and has the highest degree of press freedom in South Asia per the Annual Reports on Press Freedom by Freedom House. Journalism in the country is rarely infringed on by regulations, and incidents of physical intimidation against journalists happened only with coverage of controversial or politically sensitive issues. There is one autonomous body that serves as a regulatory arm against complaints of misconduct and irresponsible reporting in print media, the Press Council of India,

consisting of journalist groups, publishers, and politicians. Agriculture- and food-related issues are in the domain of economic life and are constantly monitored as important economic indicators to reflect living standards and inflation. Expert interpretation from the government, the academic sector, or investment banking are prevalent in news to add authority and professionalism to the reports.

How Did the Media Report the Food Price Crisis?

Indian print media followed the market closely and captured the global food crisis from its onset. To better observe how the Indian print press was covering the development of the crisis we select a few English newspapers popular in India. The English dailies that are the most circulated in the country are *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times*, *India Today*, *The Economic Times*, and *The Financial Express*. The business daily *The Economic Times* is the second most widely read financial daily globally with a readership of approximately 700,000.⁴ Reports about the crisis were randomly chosen from the media database Factiva with the strings “food price,” “price inflation,” and “control” throughout the study period of 2007 to 2010.

The dailies in India pay serious attention to the inflation of primary articles, especially cereals and edible oil. The government’s countermeasures against overall price inflation were intensely covered and examined by experts from inside and outside the government.⁵ For instance, the export ban on rice in the first quarter of 2008 gave rise to concerns regarding a shortfall in domestic wheat procurement for public distribution systems and safety nets targeted at households with incomes below the poverty line providing staples at highly subsidized prices. Columns from professional or academic sources were also common during the crisis to explain and analyze the ongoing trend of appeasing the national mood.⁶

Authoritative sources were often cited in reports or directly authored columns for the newspapers. Government officials from the planning commission, the chief economist from the prime minister’s economic advisory council, and senior fellows from well-recognized policy research institutes were

⁴ October 2012, *The New Yorker*.

⁵ April 16, 2008, *The Economic Times*.

⁶ April 21, 2008, *The Hindu*.

common sources of the reports, evaluating the current policies and predicting market trends to guide stakeholders from both public and private sectors. The Indian media also held the government accountable by being the battlefield for opposing parties. Moreover, the print press is open to expertise from private and nonprofit sectors. Policy learning and reviewing can be seen in the Indian print press. China and India, for example, were often examined and compared in controlling food prices.⁷

How Did the Media Reports Influence Policy Makers?

The vibrant press environment in India openly held the Indian government accountable for the price hike, forcing it to come up with more targeted policy instruments to eliminate the negative impacts on the population.

Safety net measures like increasing food stock sold at subsidized prices through the public distribution system and expanding the targeted group were widely used to fight the food price crisis. To a large extent, the opposition parties and the independent press perform similar functions of keeping checks and balances on the government in India, the biggest democracy in the world, through regular assessment of government's actions and policies in the parliament and outside. As is evident from the food policy monitor above, India's response to the food price crisis was in the form of export curbs as well as imposition of export tariffs from the outset of the crisis to almost the end of the crisis. This was coupled with higher domestic price support for crops, periodic release of food stock through the public distribution systems during later half of 2010, and the provision of food subsidies throughout the crisis. Much of the response of the national government seems to be panic policy making wherein it took conservative steps to safeguard against any potential impact on domestic farmers and consumers in a price-sensitive economy.

Models Applied

The multiple stream model, institutional development and rational choice model, and policy and policy entrepreneur model together are suitable models to use when discussing the role of media in emergency

⁷ July 18, 2010, The Financial Express.

decision making. The policy-making body is better structured and institutionalized in democracies than in other governments, and the free press environment can accommodate open discussion, debate, and criticism. Therefore, the models that examine the institution, both internal and external players, and other factors from the environment are more suitable for analyzing the case of India. The multiple streams of politics, policy alternatives, and problems need to be coupled for policy change. In the context of food price crisis, media functioned like policy entrepreneurs, coupling the problem, policy, and politics to press for policy change to control food price hikes.

Viet Nam

Viet Nam is a socialist republic, and the key policy-making bodies are the National Assembly (NA), the president, and the government led by a prime minister. Most of the higher echelons of the executive branch and bureaucracy are drawn from the NA membership, renewal of which is dependent on direct elections. NA is the highest policy-making body. Given this context, price movements and economic policy making are affected by the election cycle. In Viet Nam, civil societies prospered after NA formalized such civil society organizations' right to comment on draft legislation and the space for public discussion had increased. A more relaxed media environment led to extensive coverage of the food price crisis by both international and domestic media outlets. Media directly and publicly questioned senior officials about the policies implemented (Hai and Talbot 2014).

The Nature of Journalism and Role of Media in Agricultural Policy in Viet Nam

The media in Viet Nam are still emerging as independent and during the past two decades have created a space for public discussion, enhancing accountability of policy makers. Media have evolved to highlight the issues and challenges faced by various communities in Viet Nam, particularly agricultural policies. During the food price crisis, the local media extensively covered both local and international prices, at times even questioning the policies adopted by the establishment. The English-language media still are in their infancy and still are growing. However, local news outlets are well developed to inform the public. The market orientation of the Viet Nam economy in the past two decades has brought several changes,

leading to almost doubling the number of newspapers and magazines available in the country.

Newspapers are also a major tool of policy information dissemination relied on by the government.

How Did the Media Report the Food Price Crisis?

The food price crisis was reported by all media outlets including newspapers, television, and radio programs. The newspapers played a key role in highlighting the food price increases in the world markets. The specialized trade newspapers were particularly careful in monitoring the global situation and highlighting the policies of the Vietnamese government. Media reporting during this period kept a keen eye on the import and export numbers given that Viet Nam had recently gained entry into the World Trade Organization in early 2007.⁸ Some of the English-language newspapers in Viet Nam are state-owned *Nhan Dan*, Communist Party–owned and –run *Saigon Times*, and *Vietnam News*. The newspapers cited authoritative sources, quoting officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, key trade bodies like the Vietnam Food Association, and international bodies such as the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization to report on rice exports, export curbs, and food security measures in the wake of the food price crisis and natural disasters to predict trends in rice exports and the price rise.

Most of the coverage focused on rice export deals, predicted export earnings, rice production estimates, and regional trade deals. Later, when export curbs were implemented by the government in the wake of food production deficit projections, media held the government accountable by questioning the decision to ban exports. They termed it a wasted opportunity for the exporters and rice farmers to receive higher prices given the rise in prices internationally.⁹ Policy learning can be seen in the Vietnamese media, especially as they compared policies followed by Viet Nam’s regional neighbors, Indonesia and India.

⁸ May 16, 2007, *Vietnam News*.

⁹ July 31, 2008, *Vietnam News*.

How Did the Media Reports Influence Policy Makers?

Vietnamese media consistently reported on the rising prices in the international market and trends predicted by international institutions like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and local trade bodies. They put pressure on the government to lift restrictions on exporters and address concerns of rice producers. Ultimately, the Vietnamese government moved toward establishing a price stabilization fund to guarantee a minimum profit threshold for producers in addition to providing safeguards for exporters.

In Figure 3.4, we see the Vietnamese government responding to the food price crisis by imposing an export ban at the outset, followed by periodic domestic support to farmers in the form of enhanced minimum support prices for crops. The national government also kept increasing the food procurement targets throughout the crisis to build food grain stocks.

Model Applied

The linear heuristic model is the most appropriate model to explain emergency policy making in Viet Nam during the crisis of 2008. The government reacted to the global agenda and set in motion a series of steps curbing exports and providing subsidized cereals for public distribution to avoid any crisis arising out of food shortages.

Table 3.1 presents several comparative characteristics of the policy process during the food price crisis in the four countries analyzed and presents a summary of the above discussion for easy comparison.

Table 3.1 Comparative lessons from country case studies

Characteristic	Bangladesh	China	India	Viet Nam
Domestic political stability	Instable and violent	Stable	Stable	Stable
Key decision-making actors and available sources in media reports	<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Finance • Ministry of Commerce • Ministry of Food and Disaster Management • National Board of Revenue <p>Nonpolitical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry • Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry • Media <p>International</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank • International Monetary Fund • United Nations • Asian Development Bank 	<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communist Party of China • State Council • Leading Group of Finance and Economy • National Development and Reform Commission • Ministry of Agriculture • Ministry of Commerce • Ministry of Finance 	<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament • Prime Minister • Ministry of Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution • Ministry of Agriculture • Ministry of Finance • Reserve Bank of India • Planning Commission • National Advisory Council • Opposition Parties <p>Nonpolitical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confederation of Indian Industry • Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry • Media <p>International</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank • International Monetary Fund • United Nations • Asian Development Bank 	<p>Political</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Assembly • Ministerial agencies • Communist Party of Viet Nam • State president <p>Nonpolitical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Institute for Economic Management • Legal civil society • Media <p>International</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Bank • United Nations • AusAid
Media openness	State controlled (2006–2009) Free (after 2009)	State controlled	Free	State controlled
Daily newspapers sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Daily Star</i> • <i>The New Nation</i> • <i>The Financial Express</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>People's Daily</i> • <i>China Daily</i> • <i>Shanghai Daily</i> • <i>South China Morning Post</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Times of India</i> • <i>The Economic Times</i> • <i>The Hindu</i> • <i>Hindustan Times</i> • <i>The Financial Express</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vietnam News</i> • <i>Saigon Times</i>
Price stabilizing effectiveness	Not effective	Effective	Effective	Not effective
Models applied	Linear heuristic model Institutional development and rational choice model Policy entrepreneur model Multiple stream model	Linear heuristic model	Linear heuristic model Policy entrepreneur model Advocacy coalition model Multiple stream model	Linear heuristic model

4. LESSONS FROM COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN FOOD CRISIS POLICY MAKING

From the case studies presented above and comparisons across the four countries, several lessons can be drawn about media's roles in policy making in crisis.

Different countries present different coverage styles because of different domestic political environments and press freedom. Comparing media reports from two types of countries—democratic countries with free press and countries with centrally controlled press—two coverage styles are observed from the sampled reports from the four countries. Bangladesh's and India's dailies mainly reported what the government had done, the crisis' impact on people's daily lives, the market's reaction, and predictions, while in China and Viet Nam, governments reported the countermeasures of the crisis or announced their plans to control prices through state-controlled media. Such measures attempt to keep the public assured of food security and the government's intervention.

Media are a source of identifying problems and stakeholders during a time of crisis. A common finding in the analysis of media reports and their relation with policy makers is that the media are usually the first to detect any problems and break them to the public. Governments would be under pressure to make statements and come up with responses to control the situation. The cases of Bangladesh, China, India, and Viet Nam all proved this by detecting the crisis almost as soon as it came into awareness.

During the crisis, various important stakeholders such as government, politicians, political parties, policy research institutes, and international organizations participated through the media. The differences among the sources of authorities can be seen in the media. Bangladesh, India, and Viet Nam all have policy makers from multiple sources, namely, political, nonpolitical, and international. China has only one source of authoritative information in media coverage, and that is the government. The countries' media reports indicate that decision-making authority allocation status is different for the four countries.

Media coverage may trigger extreme policy responses. Media coverage of a crisis may lead to panic policy making as policy makers try to be seen as doing something to avoid any adverse fallout for the government. In the case of India and Viet Nam, media coverage of the escalating global food price led to panic policy making wherein the governments decided to ban exports. This in turn exacerbated the global food price crisis as decisions of these countries influence other key layers in the international food grain markets.

Media can be a source contributing to the policy options for policy makers in democratic countries with press freedom. Media can be sources suggesting viable policy alternatives in countries with press freedom. Coverage of crisis includes commentary and opinions from a diverse range of national and international stakeholders as well as experts providing solutions and policy roadmaps for the governments. After the crisis occurred, countries with free press would have rigorous discussions and debates about the situation and had a broader range of ideas and opinions emerge to contribute to the pool of policy options. Media can be information centers to disseminate policies and pave the way for better implementation and policy take-ins.

Media can be evaluators of policy measures in countries with complete and restricted press freedom alike. Media are also timely policy evaluators after policies are implemented and watchdogs for the government's conduct. In Bangladesh, the government held trade unions and rice traders accountable for the failure of its attempt to reduce prices because of the formation of cartels by rice traders and their widely prevalent hoarding practices. Newspapers were the platform for stakeholders from different sectors to communicate freely in Bangladesh and the battlefield between stakeholders from different sectors to evaluate the policy implementation and point out the drawbacks.

The effectiveness of policies is ultimately determined by state capacity to control and implement the policy instead of the policy response frequencies and pressure from the media. The comparison of Bangladesh and India, and China and Viet Nam, produces a lesson that the ultimate determinant of policy effectiveness is the state's ability to control its agricultural and economic sectors. In the case of China and Viet Nam, both countries make policies at the central level, and the media of China and Viet Nam are under strict control. Viet Nam is small in size but an exporter of rice, and China is vast

in area, largely self-sufficient in rice, and an importer of other food commodities such as maize, corn, soybeans, and beef. Both countries were successful in coming up with firm regulations to combat price fluctuation, but China was regarded as more successful.

Chinese decision making was faster and massive at the top-central level, the State Council, and could be implemented without major resistance from the public and other stakeholders (Huang, Yang, and Rozelle 2013). China responded with clear-cut policy instruments to maintain domestic grain price stability by releasing its stockpiles against natural disasters and seasonal fluctuations, expanding external grain and meat sources to replenish the national reserves, and dampening export incentives for major grains and fertilizers. This enhanced the social protection system for low-income groups and designed China's biofuel policies and agricultural policies to avoid future price spikes.

Viet Nam also launched a series of responses to price inflation. According to Hai and Talbot (2014), the instruments used were disincentives for rice exporters and led to an increase in procurement. The failure was a result of the inconsistency and mismatch of policies and the authority mandated to different departments that served the interests of different constituencies (Hai and Talbot 2014).

In the case of exporting and self-sufficient countries like Viet Nam and China, a set of unified decision makers at the central level guaranteed the generation of consistent countermeasures to overcome crisis and the development of long-term strategies to safeguard national food security.

The policy process analysis models applied were dependent on the openness and capacity of the decision-making body. In analyzing the role of media in crisis policy making, multiple models are applied at the same time to help one understand the policy process and a specific player's role. The linear stage heuristic model is the most widely applied model, as it captures the policy change elements in a sequential order. The multiple stream model, policy entrepreneur model, and institutional development and rational choice models are applicable to functioning democracies, as the policy process is more structured and transparent. For countries that do not have clear fragmentation of decision-making power and transparent public opinion expression channels, fewer models can be applied, and mainly the simplest-form linear stage heuristic model captures the contours of the policy processes that are observable from reports in the media.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Little work has been done to see how media affect policy processes during crisis in developing countries. The media could expose problems and start policy process cycles by increasing the public's awareness and accelerating policy debates and dialogues by setting the policy agenda. However, in time of crisis, the effectiveness and efficiency of policy also depend on factors such as available policy instruments, political stability, and the capacity of the government of the country in question. In countries with broader press freedom, media can fuse the opinions and demands of different stakeholders, monitor implementation, and provide objective reports and reasonable suggestions. However, the research also shows in certain cases that lack of timely information led to panic policy making, further exacerbating the crisis. In countries where the press is strictly controlled, media mainly disseminate information for the government and educate the public about market trends, having little impact on the policy-making process. Thus, while the role of media in addressing the emerging food crisis could be context specific, the need for strengthening the media's roles in informing the public and affecting the policy-making process cannot be overemphasized. Further research on the roles of broadcast or television media in emergency policy-making processes during crisis would greatly inform the current debate on the roles of media.

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