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# STATES AND SOCIAL POLICIES

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## *Abstract*

Comparative social scientists have developed various arguments about the determinants of social policies, especially those connected with twentieth-century "welfare states." Structure-functionalists argue that the social policies of modern nations necessarily converge due to an underlying logic of industrialism, while neo-Marxists treat such policies as state responses to the social reproduction requirements of advanced capitalism. Yet most students of social policies are more attuned to history and politics. Concentrating on two dozen or fewer industrial capitalist democracies, many scholars have explored the alternative ways in which democratic political processes have helped to create programs and expand social expenditures. For a fuller range of nations past and present, scholars have also asked how ties to the world-economy, patterns of geopolitical competition, and processes of transnational cultural modelling have influenced social policies. Finally, there is now considerable interest in the independent impact of states on social policymaking. States may be sites of autonomous official initiatives, and their institutional structures may help to shape the political processes from which social policies emerge. In turn, social policies, once enacted and implemented, themselves transform politics. Consequently, the study over time of "policy feedbacks" has become one of the most fruitful current areas of research on states and social policies.

## INTRODUCTION

States are organizations that extract resources through taxation and attempt to extend coercive control and political authority over particular territories and the people residing within them. "Policies" are lines of action pursued through states. Of necessity, all states have military and economic policies, for their territories must be defended and their revenues depend on the fortunes of

production and trade. If social policies are defined in the broadest possible terms as “state activities affecting the social status and life chances of groups, families, and individuals,” then states have always had social policies as well. Military and economic measures in turn affect the status and life chances of individuals, and state-enforced property rules and judicial decisions help to define families and the rights of their members. More directly, the behavior of the poor or the socioeconomically dislocated has worried state authorities enough to inspire policies aimed at social control or amelioration. England’s Poor Law from Tudor times was an example; so were the efforts of European monarchical authorities, or of Chinese Imperial officials, to control food supplies and prices in times of dearth.

Nevertheless, we rightly think of social policies as coming into prominence in the modern national states of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. State organized or regulated mass education grew from the early nineteenth century, as did efforts to regulate industrial working conditions and environmental influences on people’s health. Between the 1880s and 1920s, social insurance and pension programs were launched in Europe, the Americas, and Australasia to buffer workers in market economies against income losses due to disability, old age, ill health, unemployment, or loss of a family breadwinner (Flora & Alber 1981, Malloy 1979, Rimlinger 1971). After their inception, such programs spread to many additional countries and expanded in benefits and in coverage of the population. In the wake of World War II, moreover, most of the leading industrial-capitalist democracies became self-proclaimed “welfare states” (Flora & Heidenheimer 1981). By the mid-1970s, public expenditures for social-welfare purposes had burgeoned to an average of 20.7% of GDP in 13 European nations, and even in the United States such expenditures had increased from 10.3% to 15.7% of GDP between the early 1960s and the mid-1970s (Castles 1982b:51).

Sociologists and other social scientists have developed diverse arguments about the origins, expansion, and effects of social policies. Here we shall focus primarily on the policies associated with modern welfare states, with only occasional reference to other state activities that might be considered under the broad rubric of “social policy” as we have defined it. We shall survey the explanatory perspectives that have figured in recent cross-national research, with occasional glances at arguments about the United States alone. The discussion will be largely restricted to the *determinants* of social policies; we will not deal as fully with the much less clear-cut debates and findings about the redistributive *effects* that policies may—or may not—have had. Overall, our purpose is not only to indicate the current empirical standing of various arguments about policy determinants, but also to show the shifting orientations and methods of research of the last 10 to 15 years. In the social sciences, changing questions and ways of seeking answers are just as important as accumulations of research findings.

## INDUSTRIALISM AND SOCIAL POLICY

Not long ago the view predominated among comparative social scientists that "economic growth is the ultimate cause of welfare state development" (Wilensky 1975:24, echoing Wilensky & Lebeaux 1958:230). All nations were thought to be caught up in a universal and evolutionist "logic of industrialism" through which technological imperatives would produce increasing convergence in social structures and basic policies as nations moved from traditional-agrarian to modern-industrial (Kerr et al 1964). Regardless of the forms of regimes or the dominant political ideologies, industrializing nations would institute similar sequences of social insurance or educational policies (Cutright 1965, Mishra 1973) and expand population-coverage and overall expenditures in tandem with economic development (Pryor 1968, Wilensky 1975). Industrialization and urbanization, it was argued, inherently require human capital development and make it difficult for families to care for the disabled, ill, elderly, or unemployed. An aging population accompanies economic development, creating especially strong needs and demands for public social spending (Wilensky 1975). At the same time, new resources become available for public authorities to respond to social needs and technological requisites. Attempting to put this argument on the strongest logical and empirical ground, some proponents (Coughlin 1979, Jackman 1975, Mishra 1973, Wilensky 1975, Williamson & Fleming 1977) have argued that convergence of social policies in industrializing nations may occur only up to a point, beyond which sociocultural variations persist among very rich countries.

Empirically, the logic-of-industrialism perspective fared well in cross-national studies based on data for the 1940s, 1950s, or 1960s, especially when large numbers of countries at all levels of economic development were included in cross-sectional designs and when the dependent variables were highly aggregated measures of "program experience" (Cutright 1965) or broad categories of social expenditure (Wilensky 1975). But once research became more longitudinal or sensitive to earlier or later time periods, and once the specific features of social policies were more closely examined, this perspective was undermined as a sufficient guide to causal processes.

For the origins of modern welfare state programs, Flora & Alber (1981) demonstrate that levels of industrialization fail to predict the timing of the adoption of a social insurance program by twelve European nations between the 1880s and 1920s; Orloff & Skocpol (1984) show that in the same period policy developments in Britain and Massachusetts cannot be differentiated according to logic-of-industrialism variables; and Collier & Messick (1975) find that neither levels nor significant thresholds of industrialization explain the timing of social insurance program adoptions in 59 nations between the 1880s and the 1960s. Examining the expansion of various categories of social public expenditures in 18 democratic capitalist nations during the 1960s and 1970s,

Castles (1982b:61–70) reinforces the conclusion of OECD (1978) that these nations have recently diverged rather than converged and that neither economic level nor economic growth can account for recent expenditure changes. Furthermore, both Stephens (1979, Ch. 4) and Myles (1984:94–97) adduce evidence against Wilensky's (1975) pivotal argument that national social welfare efforts are determined by the proportions of aged in the population.

Finally, Minkoff & Turgeon (1977) and Szelenyi (1983) both provide findings relevant to the crucial logic-of-industrialism proposition that capitalist and state-socialist nations converge during economic development toward similar social policies. Although this may be true if highly aggregated expenditure measures are used (Pryor 1968), a detailed look at programmatic profiles and particular policy provisions reveals that state-socialist authorities in centrally planned economies closely tailor social insurance and housing policies to the exigencies of labor discipline and control of migration. Moreover, while unemployment insurance is an important program in most developed capitalist nations, the state-socialist industrial societies do not have this kind of income-protection for the temporarily unemployed, not because they have no such people, but because these regimes officially guarantee (and require) employment for all workers.

## CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

Logic-of-industrialism theorists have not been the only ones to use functionalist reasoning to predict converging patterns of social policy. Neo-Marxist theorists of "the capitalist state" have theorized in a similar manner, deriving understandings of what social policy does from their understandings of the overall logic of capitalist development. Neo-Marxist interest centers not on the transition from agrarianism to industrialism but on the transition within the capitalist mode of production from early "competitive" capitalism to advanced "monopoly" capitalism. As this transition occurs, the functional demands on capitalist states change and intensify, neo-Marxists agree. Yet those functional demands always remain contradictory—requiring the state both to promote capital accumulation and to retain democratic legitimacy—because capitalism is based on the wage relationship through which capital and labor both cooperate and conflict with one another.

Social policies tend to be specifically categorized by neo-Marxists as responses by states to the "social reproduction" needs of advanced capitalism (see discussions in Gough 1975, 1979: Ch. 3; O'Connor 1973; Offe 1984: Ch. 3, Marklund 1982:11–20; Mishra 1984: Ch. 3). These have both accumulation-promoting and legitimating aspects, for "social reproduction" includes the need to prepare appropriately motivated and skilled wage workers, the need to allow employees and their families to consume adequate goods and services for daily

and generational renewal, and the need to preserve economic and political order in the face of possible discontent from (or about) the fate of the displaced, injured, sick, or elderly people who necessarily appear in market economies and who cannot be cared for by families alone. Despite different terminologies, there is considerable overlap between logic-of-industrialism and neo-Marxist understandings of the societal needs to which social policies putatively respond. The crucial difference lies in the greater stress placed by neo-Marxists on requisites of labor control.

Although all neo-Marxists treat social policies as responses to the contradictory functional requisites of advanced capitalism, there are a range of ways to develop this perspective. Some theorists rather exclusively stress the requirements of capital accumulation (e.g. the German "state derivationists" as discussed in Holloway & Picciotto 1978); others stress both the economic and the political systemic requirements of advanced capitalism (e.g. O'Connor 1973, Offe 1984); and still others stress systemic political requirements along with shifting conflicts and compromises within the capitalist class and between capital and labor [e.g. Poulantzas (1973), and the skillful "Poulantzian" case study of Weimar Germany by Abraham (1981)]. Despite such variations, however, all neo-Marxists agree that both initial expansions and eventual "crises" of welfare-state interventions should follow the rhythms of capital accumulation and related transformations in class relations.

How does one go from any variant of such an overarching theoretical perspective to empirically testable predictions about temporal and cross-national variations in concrete patterns of social policy? So far, neo-Marxist grand theorists have largely rested content with abstract conceptual elaborations tied to illustrative case materials for one nation at a time [e.g. the United States for O'Connor (1973), the United Kingdom for Gough (1979), and West Germany for Offe (1984)]. A very few attempts have been made to specify and test neo-Marxist hypotheses in cross-national research, and these have produced mixed results. On the tentatively positive side, Goran Therborn and others (Therborn et al 1978, Marklund 1982) are in the midst of research on Sweden in cross-national perspective, before and during the period of Social Democratic parliamentary ascendancy from 1932 onward. They take issue with some of the ideas we attribute below to "the Social Democratic model" of policy development and try to show that more fundamental and long-term patterns of economic transformation and class structure are associated with characteristics of public policies and social redistribution in Sweden and in other capitalist democracies. On the negative side of the ledger, Myles (1984:93-95) probes for causal effects attributable to capital centralization/concentration or to the size of the "surplus" population, but he finds neither of these variables, frequently invoked by neo-Marxists, to be effective in accounting for national variations in pension quality.

Neo-Marxist theorists face challenges not only in explaining national variations within advanced capitalism, but also in identifying the political actors that initiate and shape public policies. Some neo-Marxists treat working class organizations as key actors (e.g. Gough 1979, Marklund 1982), with the result that their arguments and findings shade over into those of proponents of the Social Democratic model. More often, neo-Marxists assert or imply that “monopoly capitalists” are key political actors and that “capitalist states” act as class-conscious directorates for the system as a whole. However, little systematic evidence has been produced for these formulations, and for the case of the twentieth-century United States in particular, proponents of a “corporate liberal” approach (Berkowitz & McQuaid 1980, Quadagno 1984, Weinstein 1968), which might be considered complementary to neo-Marxist theories, have come up against strong criticisms from scholars who regard both the state and democratic political forces as more causally significant than monopoly capitalists or state managers acting as executors for capitalists (see Block 1977a,b; Skocpol 1980; Skocpol & Amenta 1985).

Finally, neo-Marxists also need to pinpoint which functional requisites arise from wage-relations and market processes specific to capitalism as such. Aren’t many of them requisites faced by all industrial societies (Pryor 1968, Wilensky 1975) or experienced in parallel ways by the state managers of centrally planned economies (Minkoff & Turgeon 1977)? To properly address this issue, we need comparisons of policies in capitalist and state-socialist industrial nations, pursued along the various lines that scholars such as Burawoy (1980), Lindblom (1977), Manchin & Szelenyi (forthcoming), Parkin (1972), Szelenyi (1978), and Therborn (1978) have only begun to map out. Yet as such comparisons across “modes of production” are made, it will be difficult to control for the effects of democracy on social policies, for there are as yet no socialist nations that are also democratic.

## HOW DOES DEMOCRATIC POLITICS MATTER?

Both logic-of-industrialism theorists and neo-Marxist functionalists have downplayed the significance of political struggles in industrial or capitalist democracies. But other clusters of scholars have argued that—especially within the ranks of advanced capitalist democracies as such—politics outweighs economic variables in determining national social policies. All researchers who take democratic politics seriously share the basic assumption of Key (1949), Lenski (1966), Marshall (1963), and Schumpeter (1942) that distributive outcomes in industrial/capitalist societies can be profoundly affected by governments, so that it matters whether there are representative-democratic structures, mass enfranchisement, competitive elections, or other less institutionalized means through which the populace can influence what its gov-

ernment does. For all theorists who argue that democracy matters, the social policies of modern welfare states are presumed to have at least some redistributive effects for the mass of people in their capacity as citizens. (In fact, it is never easy to sort out socioeconomic effects determined by state actions from those brought about by economic conditions or conjunctures. See the useful discussions in Keman & Braun 1984, Korpi 1980, Schmidt 1982, and Therborn et al 1978).

### *Representative Structures and Electoral Processes*

Some scholars have left aside the issue of class divisions in the capitalist democracies and have explored whether formal democratic structures, mass electoral participation, or competitive elections seem related to the origins or growth of social policies across nations. As Hewitt (1977) and Myles (1984) have appropriately suggested, such hypotheses can be labelled "simple democratic" because they make no statements about either the class basis or the substantive ideological commitments of the political forces that bring about social policies. The idea is that something about Western-style liberal democracy as a set of institutions or processes is in itself sufficient to encourage the earlier or more extensive enactment of social policies.

The evidence about such simple democratic hypotheses is mixed, however. Although he primarily stresses the causal role of economic development, Cutright (1965) finds that, with economic development controlled, politically "representative" institutions led to earlier introductions of social insurance programs across 76 nations between 1934 and 1960. But looking at dependent variables having to do with government social expenditures, Jackman (1975) and Wilensky (1975) find no significant effects of representative institutions for similarly large and heterogeneous cross-national samples. Working with a smaller set of 17 "non-communist industrial countries" and using a historically sensitive measure of "democratic experience" (i.e. number of years of full democracy up to 1965, with universal suffrage, secret ballot, and elected executives all required for "full democracy"), Hewitt (1977) also fails to find positive effects of representative structures on "redistributive government spending." And Myles (1984:87–88) similarly finds that democratic political rights as such are not important predictors of pension quality across 15 capitalist democracies in 1975.

The picture for simple democratic arguments becomes a bit brighter when the participatory and electoral processes of such polities are probed more precisely. Through investigations into the relative timing of the adoption of several major types of social insurance policies, Flora & Alber (1981) find that the extension of the suffrage between 1880 and 1920 encouraged program adoptions in European parliamentary democracies (but not in bureaucratic monarchies). Schneider (1982) finds that "conventional political participation," measured as



the number of votes cast in national elections on a per capita basis, strongly encouraged earlier adoptions of all types of programs in 18 Western nations between 1919 and 1975. In his aforementioned study of 15 capitalist democracies, Myles (1984:83, 86–89) finds that, even with working class power controlled for, relative approximations to perfectly competitive elections between 1945 and 1974 significantly affect pensions in 1975: “Faced with a high level of competition at the polls, it would appear that parties do indeed bid up the quality of pension entitlements in the pursuit of votes.” This echoes cross-nationally the classic argument that V. O. Key (1949) made for social policymaking across states within the United States.

Finally, an “electoral-economic cycle” argument is a further kind of simple democratic hypothesis, one that links the *exact timing* of social benefit increases to the concerns of elected politicians competing for office. This approach has been applied to the United States, uncovering evidence of election-year timing of New Deal spending under Franklin Roosevelt (Wright 1974) and the election-year and precise monthly targeting of 9 out of 13 legislated Social Security increases between 1950 and 1976 (Tufte 1978: Ch. 2). For the US case, Tufte also reveals the administrative creation of gaps between pre-election benefit increases and post-election tax increases, and he offers models and a bit of suggestive evidence that could extend propositions about “electoral-economic cycles” to other nations with parliamentary governments (Tufte 1978:12, 100–101). Frey & Schneider (1978, 1982) slightly modify Tufte’s argument by arguing that governments must be in a “popularity deficit” before they will manipulate social policies prior to elections; otherwise governing parties will act on their established ideological principles. These researchers find evidence in favor of such ideas in a study of the timing of transfer payments in West Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, but their results for the United Kingdom are countered by Alt & Chrystal (1983). Tufte’s propositions also remain controversial for the US case itself (see the negative findings in Golden & Poterba 1980 and Griffin et al 1983).

### *The Effects of Popular Protest*

Perhaps formal representative structures and conventional elections are not the only or the primary routes through which popular aspirations influence social policymaking in capitalist democracies. Two well-known students of American social policy, Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, have argued (1971, 1977) that new or increased welfare benefits (and other measures such as rules favoring union organization) have occurred as concessions by elites to protests by the poor and workers. Improved social policies have been conceded, say Piven & Cloward, only when economic and political crises render elites in a formal democracy unable simply to repress “disruptive” riots or strikes or demonstrations. The resulting social policies may truly benefit nonelites, Piven

& Cloward argue, but once popular disruptions cease, some benefits may be retracted and new bureaucratic controls will accompany any enhanced benefits that remain in force. Obviously, similar arguments might link programmatic innovations or increases in public social expenditure in many capitalist democratic nations to measures of industrial strike militancy and other kinds of “extra-institutional” popular action outside of orthodox economic or political routines. This mass disruption approach is certainly much more skeptical of the redistributive possibilities of capitalist democracy than are the simple democratic approaches, but it still posits possibilities for policy responses to popular demands.

Empirical evidence on “the Piven and Cloward thesis” and analogous arguments is at best weakly supportive for circumscribed applications. For the US case in particular, Achenbaum (1983), Massad (1980), Skocpol (1980), and Skocpol & Ikenberry (1983) all question the validity of Piven & Cloward’s arguments for the 1930s. For the 1960s Albritton (1979) uses county-level AFDC data to reject Piven & Cloward’s thesis. Others who have studied trends specifically in postwar US welfare transfer payments (Griffin et al 1983, Isaac & Kelley 1981, Jennings 1983) or welfare caseloads (Hicks & Swank 1983) have found greater empirical support for Piven & Cloward, especially for their arguments about the impact of racial insurgencies in the 1960s. Yet other causal variables downplayed by Piven & Cloward, such as unemployment rates and legal changes, have also been found to affect extensions of US welfare benefits.

Cross-nationally, Myles (1984) finds that civil protest from 1960 to 1970 had no significant magnitude of effect on the relative quality of public old-age pensions in 1975, but he finds that levels of strike activity by industrial workers had a small positive effect, when he controlled for the effects of working class political power exercised through institutional channels. Similarly, for the postwar United States, Griffin et al (1983) find that strikes had a slight impact on welfare outlays—but not on social insurance benefits, which have been expanded through regular institutional channels. Overall, we can tentatively conclude that mass disruption arguments are most applicable to times and places where working classes and other organized democratic forces lack access to regular institutional channels for affecting social policies. Even so, the effects of disruption may be slight and not in line with the demands posed, and analysts must probe for possible “backlash” effects against those who protest.

### *The Social Democratic Model of Welfare State Development*

While authors of simple democratic arguments treat capitalist democracies as if they were classless, and advocates of the mass disruption thesis think in terms of dominant elites and occasionally protesting nonelites, a third group of analysts shares with neo-Marxists the view that the class division between

capitalists and wage workers is the fundamental axis of power and of political struggles in industrialized capitalist democracies. Democracy matters for these proponents of the social democratic model of welfare state development, not because representative structures and electoral processes alone are thought to be very consequential, but because these arrangements make it *possible* for wage workers who become highly organized to displace class struggles from the industrial arena into the political arena and to use the democratic state as a nonmarket instrument for redistributing income and services away from the economically privileged (for basic discussions, see Hewitt 1977; Hollingsworth & Hanneman 1982; Korpi 1978: Chs. 1–2, 1980; Stephens 1979: Chs. 1–3). What is more, according to the logic of this social democratic model, when working class-based organizations gain direct control within the state, disruptive protests, including industrial strikes, become relatively unimportant means for workers to influence policy outcomes (and the volume of strike activity in capitalist democracies is, indeed, inversely correlated with measures of working class control of the state; see Hibbs 1978, Korpi & Shalev 1980).

The pure social democratic model of welfare state development entails an interlocked set of propositions that derive a comprehensive pattern of social and economic policies from prolonged working class control of the democratic capitalist state. The ideal-typical process works as follows: A high proportion of wage and, eventually, salaried workers become organized into centralized unions, and those unions financially nourish a social democratic or labor party supported by the same workers in their capacities as voters. Given such working class organizational strength in both the market and political arenas, the supposition is that the taxing, spending, and administrative powers of the state can be expanded, shifting class struggles into the political arena, where workers are favored in a democracy by their numbers. The model posits that the earlier and more fully the workers become organized into centralized unions and a social democratic party, and the more consistently over time the social democratic party controls the state, the earlier and more “completely” a modern welfare state develops.

What kinds of policies are considered to make up a comprehensive welfare state as envisaged in the social democratic model? According to the social democratic model, traditionally designated social policies—such as social insurance programs, welfare transfers, public housing, education, and health services—are to be closely coordinated with such economic policies as industrial regulations enforcing minimum wages, unionization, and workplace safety, and also coordinated with Keynesian-style macroeconomic management aimed at ensuring a full employment economy favorable to labor’s bargaining power. Thus, Korpi (1980:297, 303) *defines* social policy to include “in principle, all of the ways in which the state enters into the distributive processes of the capitalist democracies,” whether before or after the market

allocates income, and he points to an ideal-typical array of policy characteristics that constitute an “institutional” pattern characteristic of full-fledged social democracy. This policy pattern includes an important role for programs designed to prevent social ills (such as unemployment or poverty or lack of skills) from arising in the first place; a predominance of universal and progressively tax-financed social benefits, rather than selective, contributory, or regressively financed benefits; programs offering better than minimal benefits to citizens; and a high degree of social provision directly through the state rather than through private organizations, yet without bureaucratic controls over individual conduct.

Clearly, Korpi’s “institutional” policy pattern presumes that virtually all types of welfare state interventions should vary together (and that “all good things” can happen together!). Except where preventive policies (e.g. active labor market policies) can reduce the need for ameliorative policies (e.g. unemployment insurance), Korpi’s conception does not seem to envisage the possibility of such systematic *trade-offs* between policies as, for example, Heidenheimer (1981) delineates in his contrast of the US emphasis on public education versus the European emphasis on social insurance, or as Schneider (1982) suggests in her contrast of countries emphasizing “social security” programs to those emphasizing “social equality” programs.

During the last 10 years (as Shalev 1983a,b elaborates), the social democratic model has dominated cross-national research on social policies and expenditures in the industrially most developed capitalist democracies. In many studies involving from 1 to 22 such nations, a great deal of empirical evidence has been amassed in support of the causal connections posited by the model (see Bjorn 1979; Cameron 1978; Castles 1978, 1982b; Esping-Andersen 1985; Furniss & Tilton 1977; Headey 1970, 1978; Hewitt 1977; Hibbs 1977; Kammerman & Kahn 1978; Korpi 1978, 1980, 1983; Korpi & Shalev 1980; Leibfried 1978; Martin 1973; Myles 1984, Ruggie 1984; Stephens 1979; Stephens & Stephens 1982; and Tufte 1978: Ch. 4).

A number of these studies examine particular kinds of social policies and compare from 1 to 14 other countries to Sweden—which is always taken as the social democratic prototype, because of the very high proportion of its labor force organized into centralized unions and because of the virtually continuous rule of the Swedish social democratic party after 1932. Thus Headey (1978) contrasts the greater achievement of redistributive “housing equity” under Sweden’s social democratic policies with the failure to do as well of British Labor and US Democratic governments. Similarly, Kamerman & Kahn (1978) describe policies to help families in 14 nations, arrayed on a continuum from Sweden’s “explicit and comprehensive” policies to the “implicit and reluctant” policies of the United States. Again with Sweden on the extreme social democratic end, Myles (1984: Ch. 4) finds “working class power”—

operationalized as union membership and centralization, and according to the number of years in the postwar period during which labor/social-democratic parties controlled the cabinet—to be the strongest predictor of the relative generosity, universality, and redistributiveness of old-age pensions across 15 nations in 1975. Ruggie (1984) argues that measures to help working women are better developed in Sweden as part of comprehensive pro-working-class policies than they are in Britain, where certain social policies have supposedly been more directly targeted at women's needs. Still further singing the praises of Swedish social democracy, Stephens & Stephens (1982) compare policies favoring workers' participation in industry in West Germany, France, Sweden and other large European countries; they find that such policies are best developed and work best where overall union and social-democratic party strength is greatest.

In addition, cross-national quantitative studies (including Bjorn 1979, Cameron 1978, Hewitt 1977) have focused on explaining postwar expansions of government social expenditures and have reached conclusions favorable to the social democratic model. Most notably, in a cross-sectional regression analysis of 17 capitalist democracies, Stephens (1979: Ch. 4) finds that the percentage of national income devoted to nonmilitary public spending in 1976 is significantly related to the number of years of social democratic rule and the degree of economy-wide bargaining by unions. And in a more disaggregated correlation analysis of the postwar expenditures of 18 capitalist democracies, Castles (1982b) finds that, from the early 1960s through the mid-1970s, cabinet seats held by Social Democratic parties had a stronger effect than competing variables on the share of public health expenditure in GDP in 1962, and on the share of general government expenditure minus total welfare.

Yet for all of the favorable evidence, the pure social democratic model has not been established beyond question as a sufficient guide to when, how, and why industrialized capitalist democracies create and expand social policies. Flora & Alber (1981) and Alber (1981) have shown that this model does not apply to the origins of European social insurance programs. Not unions and social democrats, but conservative monarchs or liberal politicians, were the agents of early European social insurance innovations. Moreover, for the 1930s watershed in which Scandinavian Social Democrats first assumed power, Castles (1978), Esping-Andersen (1985), and Weir & Skocpol (1985) all offer political analyses that underline the importance of social democratic-agrarian *coalitions* rather just the organizational strength of unions and social democratic parties themselves. Clearly, the social democratic model applies best to the relative expansion after World War II of national social expenditures. Yet on this safer postwar terrain, only Sweden really seems to fit the model unequivocally, and even such a close fit has not prevented scholars (such as Cameron 1978, Castles 1982b, Kelman 1981, Therborn et al 1978, and Weir &

Skocpol 1985) from respecifying the causal processes at work in that case. What is more, other countries such as the Netherlands have turned up as puzzling exceptions to the social democratic model, and efforts to handle anomalous cases have prompted scholars to formulate alternatives to the pure social democratic approach.

### *Party Systems and Party Organization*

Among the alternatives have been perspectives that undertake further inquiry into the roles of political parties. Perhaps political parties other than social democratic parties have an impact upon social policies and expenditures. And perhaps the characteristics of entire systems of parties are more decisive than the orientations of particular types of parties studied in isolation from their competitors. These possibilities are at the heart of the latest research into "how politics has mattered" for the development of social policies in the capitalist democracies.

In a study of 19 nations during periods of democratic rule, Wilensky (1981) finds that "Catholic party power" from 1919 to 1976 positively affected social security efforts in 1965, in large part because such party power was associated with "corporatist" bargaining and with "invisible" taxes. Perhaps more important, Wilensky argues that the alternation in rule of Catholic and left-wing parties boosts social security effort. As a general explanation of social policy development, however, the Wilensky approach suffers from its heavy reliance on the cases of Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Austria, and Germany. Like the Social Democratic model with its orientation to the Scandinavian cases, Wilensky's "Catholic party power" approach is most useful if it is taken as an analysis of one among alternative routes to recent welfare-state expansion.

The work of Castles (starting with Borg & Castles 1981) attempts to achieve greater generality by focusing on right-wing political parties as obstacles to welfare-state development. In a correlational analysis of many social spending programs in 18 OECD countries in the 1960s and 1970s, Castles (1982b) finds that the parliamentary and cabinet representation of right-wing parties discourages spending more than social-democratic representation promotes it. Castles also focuses on the precise *types* of spending promoted or tolerated by various sorts of parties. He argues (1982b:74–75) that "education is related to right-wing strength, health spending to social democratic strength and class politics, and public income maintenance seems unaffected by political considerations." Right-wing and center parties, Castles suggests, are least antagonistic to social transfer payments, because these are often based on insurance principles and interfere little with the operations of the market.

Like the social democratic model, a focus on right-wing or Catholic political parties assumes that parties will put into effect programs favored by their constituent groups. Other researchers, however, have begun to look into

whether certain political parties are, instead, oriented toward patronage—the granting of “divisible,” “distributive” benefits to particular business and popular constituencies (Shefter 1977). Thus, recent historical and comparative studies suggest that the patronage basis of US politics has had many consequences for the timing and contents of American social policies, in contrast to European policies (Katznelson 1985, Orloff & Skocpol 1984, Orloff 1985). Moreover, in a comparative study of five US states, Amenta et al (1984) find that the more patronage-oriented and factionalized a state’s Democratic party, the longer it took to pass unemployment insurance in the 1930s, and the greater the concessions to business interests in the legislation that finally passed.

## TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXTS AND SOCIAL POLICIES

Ironically, the narrowing of much recent cross-national research to less than two dozen advanced capitalist democracies has simultaneously opened new possibilities to take a more world-historical perspective for investigators of social policies in these and other nations. Scholars have begun to consider the ways in which changing transnational contexts—especially the world economy, geopolitics, and international cultural modelling—may have helped to shape national social policies before as well as during the twentieth century.

### *National Strategies in the World Economy*

Students of “First World” industrial democracies and of Latin American “Third World” nations have all argued that social policies must be analyzed in relationship to overall government strategies for managing links to the international economy. Yet the economic strategies with which social policies are thought to be coordinated are not the same for the two sorts of countries.

In a pathbreaking examination of 18 developed capitalist countries, Cameron (1978) argues that the expansion of the “public economy” (defined as the increase of government revenues as a percent of GDP from 1960 to 1975) was best accounted for by exports plus imports of goods and services as a percent of GDP. Thus measured, “openness to the international economy” was even a better predictor than social democratic power (which Cameron believes is enhanced by openness). Because they need to adjust constantly to shifts in international markets, Cameron argues (1978:1260), “governments in small open economies have tended to provide a variety of income supplements in the form of social security schemes, health insurance, unemployment benefits, employment subsidies to firms and even job training.” Katzenstein (1985) fleshes out this thesis, demonstrating that seven small trade-dependent European democracies use “democratic corporatist” bargains among unions, business, and government to coordinate economic and social policies. Labor movement involvement in the corporatist arrangements varies, however, and

some national differences in social spending can be traced to that fact (Katzenstein 1985: Ch. 3).

Other scholars have skeptically reexamined Cameron's quantitative findings (see Castles 1981, 1982b; Schmidt 1982). According to Castles (1978: Ch. 3; 1982b:77–83), the historical effects of trade patterns are more important than economic openness after World War II. Castles looks to the original formation of political party systems with or without unified right-wing parties as the crucial arbiter of later welfare state expansion. He argues that various modes of national involvement in international trade in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were pivotal for determining whether conflicts within dominant classes would undermine the capacity of right-wing political forces to shape national politics in the democratic era.

For Latin American nations, meanwhile, scholarship on the development of social policies has largely ignored international trade as such and has suggested instead that social policies have been instituted or reshaped as explicit parts of state strategies to promote the economic development of nations situated in dependent positions in the world capitalist system. For example, Spalding (1980) links the launching of Mexican social security in the 1940s to the state's industrialization strategy. New social security taxes were to be used to help finance state investments, she argues, and key groups of workers had to be politically managed. Analogously, the use of social policies for the bureaucratic cooptation and control of strategic sectors of the working and middle classes during state-led development has also been highlighted in Stepan's (1978) work on Peru and in Malloy's (1979) study of Brazil as it compares to many other Latin American nations. Building on the same perspective, Malloy & Borzutzky (1982) explore the distributional and demographic consequences of Latin American social security policies.

### *Geopolitics and Social Policies*

Modern national states have always been enmeshed in a world economy, but at the same time they have also been participants in a system of warring or potentially warring states. Several clusters of studies treat social policymaking as an adjunct of state-managed resource mobilization for international competition.

First, some research suggests that states have instituted social policies as part of their own organizational and territorial consolidation. Comparing England, France, Spain, and Brandenburg-Prussia, Tilly (1975) analyzes how the efforts of early modern European "statemakers" to extract revenues and build armies became variously intertwined with policies to stimulate the production of food and regulate its availability to officials and potentially rebellious peasants. Similarly, comparing nations in nineteenth-century Europe, Ramirez & Boli (1985) argue that state-sponsored mass schooling was instituted at moments of



defeat and crisis as part of efforts by authorities to improve the competitive potential of their nations in the inter-state system.

A second cluster of studies takes note of the coincidence since the nineteenth century of modern “total warfare” with the growth of modern social insurance and welfare policies. According to a number of writers (Andreski 1968; Janowitz 1976: Ch. 3; and Titmuss 1958), mass citizen mobilization for modern warfare has encouraged more generous, universalistic, and egalitarian public social provision, especially when the line between soldiers and civilians becomes blurred, as it did in World-War-II Britain. Democratic politicians appealing for popular support in wartime can be seen as the agents of this welfare-warfare linkage, although systematic cross-national evidence is lacking. Another intervening mechanism has been suggested by Peacock & Wiseman (1961): Major wars, they suggest, require and allow governments to expand their fiscal base; after the war, much of the state’s enhanced fiscal capacity remains, and new or expanded social expenditures may be instituted more easily than usual. Peacock & Wiseman document their thesis only for Britain, and efforts to extend the argument cross-nationally seem certain to reveal that state structures and domestic balances of political power mediate the impact of war on social policymaking in complex ways.

Finally, a third set of studies has explored whether modern social policies, once established, may be fiscally stunted by the need to compete with large or growing military establishments. In a cross-national look at 22 rich countries, Wilensky (1975: Ch. 4) finds support for his view that “little” wars and high military spending from 1950 to 1952 retarded, but did not halt, increases in national social spending. Other relevant time-series research on the US case alone has produced different results depending on the years covered. For 1939 to 1968, Russett (1970) found significant trade-offs between military spending and spending for education and health, but Russett (1982) and Griffin et al (1983) found no significant military versus social spending trade-offs for the periods 1947–1979 and 1949–1977, respectively. No doubt, short-term domestic political processes interact with fiscal constraints to determine whether state-provided “guns and butter” will be traded off or not.

### *International Cultural Modeling*

The impacts of international contexts on national social policies need not be conceptualized solely in world-economic or geopolitical terms. According to John Meyer and others of what might be called the “cultural school” of world system analysis (see Bergesen 1980: Chs. 5–7; Meyer & Hannan 1979; and Thomas & Meyer 1984:475–78), the spread of a competitive state system from Europe to the entire globe has been accompanied and facilitated by the shared adherence of statemakers to world-wide cultural frames, including models of the types of institutional features thought to be necessary for any “modern”

nation-state (or, for that matter, necessary even in their colonial dependencies; see Meyer et al 1979:51–53). According to this perspective, apparently similar *forms* of social policies—perhaps encouraged by internationally mobile professionals or by world organizations such as the United Nations or the International Labor Organization—may spread relatively quickly across nations, despite their varying world-economic situations or domestic characteristics. This offers an alternative to the logic of industrialism interpretation of the apparent convergence of many nations toward the same basic categories of social insurance, educational and health programs.

Most of the empirical work done so far by Meyer and his collaborators has not directly tested the notion that similar *forms* of social policies can be related to the international diffusion of common ideals or models. Yet Collier & Messick (1975) have been cited (by Thomas & Meyer 1984:476) in support of this perspective. This study shows that, after 1920, standard categories of social insurance programs spread rapidly from the early adopters in Europe and the Americas to many nations at all levels of development. Before 1920, however, Collier & Messick did not find diffusion from more to less developed European nations, and their notion that the opposite kind of diffusion might have occurred is called into question by Kuhnle's (1981) detailed demonstration that pioneering German social insurance policies of the 1880s did *not* straightforwardly serve as models for subsequent Scandinavian innovations. Moreover, sometimes nations avoid rather than imitate international models; thus Skocpol & Ikenberry (1983) show that European social insurance policies were positive models for US reformers before World War I, but became negative models afterwards. Future research on international modeling and diffusion needs to probe carefully the precise mechanisms of transmission from polity to polity, to consider different processes across time periods of world history, and to allow for negative as well as positive international modelling. Highly aggregated quantitative studies are unlikely to be sufficient to pin down these processes.

## THE IMPACT OF STATES ON SOCIAL POLICYMAKING

Until recently, most work on the determinants of social policies has emphasized their socioeconomic roots and has treated states as if they were merely arenas of political conflict or passive administrative tools to be turned to the purposes of any social group that gains governmental power. Currently, however, scholars are exploring ways in which social policymaking may be shaped by the organizational structures and capacities of states and by the political effects of previously enacted policies. In short, states are being reconceptualized as partially autonomous actors and as consequential structures and sets of policies (see Skocpol 1985). "State-centered" work on social policy formation is at an early stage, however, so the emphasis in this final section is on emerging ideas rather than cumulations of research findings.

### *States as Actors and Structures*

Not surprisingly, social policies have most often been traced to the autonomous initiatives of state authorities for capitalist nations in “lagging” or “dependent” international positions. (When the state-socialist nations are discussed, the ruling party authorities and technocrats are always treated as the initiators of social policies.) Many of the studies surveyed in the preceding section treat state authorities as the key actors. Moreover, the executive leaders of bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes have been identified as the ones most likely to initiate new social policies. Such authorities, the reasoning goes, already have strong administrative capacities at hand, and they have an interest in using social policies to facilitate economic development while deflecting popular discontent. This argument is to be found in Flora & Alber’s explanation (1981) for the pioneering social insurance initiatives of “constitutional-dualist monarchies” in Bismarckian Germany and Hapsburg Austria, and in Malloy’s (1979) parallel analysis for “patrimonial-bureaucratic” Brazil.

For liberal-democratic polities, autonomous state inputs into social policymaking have usually been conceptualized in terms of the contributions of civil bureaucrats to the creation or reworking of social policies (Heclo 1974a), or in terms of the putatively inherent tendency of strong state bureaucracies to expand social expenditures (see the reasoning and equivocal findings of DeViney 1983). A few scholars are beginning to analyze state capacities to formulate and implement policies in more differentiated ways. Some have surveyed in general terms the alternative modes of intervention states can use to cope with either economic or social problems, ranging from direct state ownership or provision of services, through public expenditures, to the use of regulations or tax incentives to modify the actions of firms, families, and voluntary groups (e.g. Curtis 1983, Kramer 1981, Lowi 1972, Rainwater & Rein 1983:117–18). Others have focused much more specifically on the organizational and intellectual resources through which particular states have dealt—or failed to deal—with given kinds of problems (e.g. Davidson & Lowe 1981, Fainstein & Fainstein 1978, Headey 1978, Leman 1980: Ch. 6, Weir & Skocpol 1985).

Centralization of the state has also been examined, as well as bureaucratization. A number of studies provide some support for the hypothesis that administratively or fiscally centralized states are more conducive than decentralized states to generous and expanding social expenditures (Castles 1982b; DeViney 1983; Wilensky 1976, 1981). Yet in their time-series study of social expenditures in Britain, France, Italy, and Germany, Hage & Hanneman (1980) argue that centralized states can either promote or retard social expenditures. What is more, findings about “decentralized” state structures primarily refer to federal polities, and careful comparative studies make it clear that “federalisms” vary. Thus, Leman’s (1977, 1980) work on Canada and the United States

proposes that Canada's relatively centralized and parliamentary federalism has facilitated steady streams of social policy innovations and their diffusion across levels of government, whereas the highly decentralized federalism of the United States, combined with divisions of power among legislatures, courts, and executives, has forced major social policy innovations to come in "big bangs" at times of national economic or political crisis. Moreover, interesting arguments about the contrasting policy effects of German federalism and US federalism appear in Heidenheimer et al (1983).

Beyond such examinations of state structures and capacities, comparative and historical scholars have also demonstrated that "state building" and the varying institutional structures of states affect social policymaking over the long run via their impact on political parties, class formation, and political culture. Thus Orloff & Skocpol (1984) and Orloff (1985) show how various sequences and forms of democratization and state bureaucratization affected both the capacities of civil administrations and the orientations of working-class groups and middle-class reformers toward social spending policies in Britain, Canada, and the United States from the nineteenth century through the 1930s. These works draw upon and complement the work of Katznelson (1981, 1985) and Shefter (1983; forthcoming) on the effects that varying national processes of state formation have had on the organization of political parties and on the political orientations and capacities of industrial workers. Analogously, Fainstein & Fainstein (1978), Skocpol (1980), Skowronek (1982), and Vogel (1978, 1981) all suggest ways in which the peculiar history of US state building has affected the political outlooks and capacities of American capitalists—encouraging their fierce opposition to many public social policies that, once instituted, might help (or at least not harm) the capitalist economy. And Kelman (1981) attributes to historical processes of state formation many differences in the styles of industrial safety regulation practiced in Sweden versus the United States since the 1960s.

### *Social Policies Reshape Politics*

As we have just seen, states can be analyzed "architecturally," to find out how state building and state structures affect social policymaking through administrative and political processes. The effects of states can also be examined in a more fine grained and inherently dynamic way by *tracing the political consequences of already instituted policies or sets of policies*. For not only does politics create social policies; social policies also create politics. That is, once policies are enacted and implemented, they change the public agendas and the patterns of group conflict through which subsequent policy changes occur. Not surprisingly, scholars' sensitivity to such political feedback effects has emerged as public social provision matured in the West after the war.

"Policy feedbacks" (as we label the effects of social policies on politics) have

been analyzed in a number of ways, depending upon the investigator's underlying model of the political process. For one example, Wilensky (1976, 1981) probes for possible "fiscal backlash" against high and growing social expenditures in the most industrially developed capitalist democracies (see also an alternative formulation in Rosenberry 1982). Wilensky maintains that "painfully visible taxes" (e.g. income and property taxes) arouse generalized public resistance to welfare state expansion, whereas democratic politicians who use "invisible taxes" (e.g., contributory-withholding or value-added taxes) can "tax, spend and yet stay cool." These ideas resemble those of economists who discuss "the fiscal illusion," referring to characteristics built into tax systems that lead voters to underestimate the cost of public goods (Borcherding 1977, Lowery & Berry 1983). There are, however, many disagreements over how to classify various kinds of taxes.

While Wilensky views politics as a dialectic between leaders and the public and analyzes policy feedbacks in those terms, Heclo (1974a) sees politics primarily as a process by which administrators, politicians, and reformist intellectuals "puzzle" about solutions to societal problems. But this "puzzling" does not occur in a vacuum. Rather it reacts to the perceived shortcomings of previous policies and asks how the governmental means at hand can be used to do better with adjusted or alternative policies. Heclo applies this "political learning" perspective to the long-term development of old-age and unemployment policies in Sweden and Britain from the nineteenth century through the 1960s, yet he does not offer explicit methods for analyzing the conditions under which administrators or intellectuals can actually influence policy developments. Amenta et al (1984) try to operationalize political learning variables more precisely in a comparative study of five US states; Weir & Skocpol (1985) analyze the varying relationships of economists to administrators and politicians in their comparative study of Sweden, Britain, and the United States.

Scholars who view social policy-making as wholly or partially grounded in sociopolitical conflicts and coalitions have also invoked policy feedbacks for explanatory purposes. Thus Orloff & Skocpol (1984) argue that reactions to Civil War pensions in the early twentieth-century United States undermined possibilities for cross-class coalitions in support of old-age pensions, and Weir & Skocpol (1985) argue that early New Deal interventions helped to undermine subsequent possibilities for farmer-worker coalitions in support of a "social-Keynesian" welfare state. In his comparative study of housing policies in Britain, Sweden, and the United States, Headley (1978: Ch. 9) shows how initial public programs in Sweden set in motion a "positive sequence of policy development" by creating new interest groups favoring further government interventions. In studies of the US case alone, Janowitz (1976, 1980) argues that the fragmentation and disorganization of American social policies has

furthered political party decomposition and helped to prevent realigning elections. Piven & Cloward (1982) stress that US social policies since the New Deal have created new bureaucratic and popular constituencies favoring expanded welfare programs; these include groups self-consciously oriented to the needs and values of women and children. Women, in fact, are a political constituency whose visibility has been enhanced by the operation of welfare-state programs (see Balbo 1982; Joffe forthcoming; Pearce 1978, 1983; Piven 1984).

Finally, perhaps the most thorough piece of research featuring an argument about policy feedbacks is a comparative study by Gösta Esping-Andersen (1978, 1985) of the long-term development of welfare states in Sweden and Denmark. Seeking to explain why the Danish Social Democratic party and welfare state are losing support, while their Swedish counterparts are proving more resilient in the face of fiscal stringencies, Esping-Andersen does detailed analyses of the political effects of major policies instituted in each country, including pensions, employment policies, and housing programs. He shows that the policy choices made by parties in power are crucial. Over time, policies affect various social groups in visible ways; the policies thus either undermine or help to consolidate and extend the electoral coalitions on which depend the future fortunes of the parties that authored the policies in the first place. This approach to analyzing policy feedbacks—through their effects on parties and electoral coalitions—can be applied far beyond the Danish and Swedish materials discussed by Esping-Andersen.

## CONCLUSION

Since the mid-1970s, Western welfare states have apparently been in crisis, with fiscal stringencies brought on by international economic difficulties (Mishra 1984, Schmidt 1983). In the world of social science, however, the effect has merely been to heighten interest in the politics of social policy. Thus the theoretical and research tendencies that we have surveyed seem certain to undergo rapid development—and no doubt transformations—in the immediate future. All we can do is tentatively speculate about the likely directions for new work.

A point of diminishing returns seems to have been reached for highly aggregated quantitative analyses inspired by the logic-of-industrialism perspective or the social democratic model. The most informative quantitative studies are likely to be those that disaggregate, probing detailed program characteristics (e.g. Alber 1981, Steinberg 1982) or particular types of social spending (e.g. Castles 1982b, Coughlin & Armour 1983). Otherwise, we are likely to learn most in the near future from thorough comparative-historical studies of a few well-chosen cases at a time (e.g. Esping-Andersen 1985, Orloff 1985, Castles 1985). And this category should be considered to include studies of

telling single cases, when such studies are explicitly informed by the hypotheses and findings of previous comparative research (e.g. Heclo 1974b, Pempel 1982, Quadagno 1982, Segalman 1982, Shalev 1984, Skocpol & Ikenberry 1983). Detailed historical studies of one or a few cases allow investigators to look for configurations of causes to explain social policies. As scholars move beyond single-factor hypotheses in this way, further insights can be expected about the effects of international contexts, and about the impact of states and parties, as well as social structures. And social policies can be analyzed in relationship to the totality of things states do—or refrain from doing—in various national and international situations.

As new research is designed, scholars should presume that the causes of policy origins are not necessarily the same as the causes of the subsequent development of policies, in part because policies themselves transform politics. Researchers should likewise be sensitive to precise time periods on national and world scales and attuned to processes unfolding over time. Analysts of states and social policies must, in short, become unequivocally *historical* in their orientation. That is the message that emerges most clearly from our brief overview of recent comparative research on the determinants of social policies. Both states and their policies are made and remade in a never-ending flow of politics, and social scientists must ask questions and seek answers in ways that respect such historicity.

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