

ROUTLEDGE EXPLORATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT
STUDIES

Development and Welfare Policy in South Asia

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sitions from networks of family support to compensate for the fallout from competition and inequality. For example, in the analysis of the earliest welfare states with social and family welfare, poverty alleviation, in the 1930s, most authors argue that the industrial sector required a minimum of human capital (Jayasuriya 2000: 5; see also Chapter 10, *Dimensions of economic development* – measured in terms of ratios – may lead to a grouping of countries of economic development.

rate, more structurally, on the causes and effects, which are often driven by region-wide forces, and may lead to similar responses in

and focus on conceptual differences such as the role of welfare, or human development, or the state. This would encompass the guiding or organising principles that may be similar within regions. Examples include Keynesianism and post-war social democratic welfare; policies leaning towards neoclassical liberalism; the role of the state; policies informed by different approaches; or notions of welfare such as Islam, Christian social ethics or

perspective, arguing that 'ideas do matter' in the formation and change because they are at hand and the choices available to them. Such 'ideas' are always historical, social pressure from citizens or civil society to the state (Mehta 2011).

to create a classification of different types of welfare geography. In this school of thought, welfare is seen as a distinct type of welfare state, represented by Esping-Andersen. This is due to the developmental or productivist agenda, investment in human capital, notably via social economy social insurance (see, e.g. Jayasuriya 2005b),¹⁰ and in terms of the role of the state (UNCTAD 2012a; Johnson 1999).

of the political contestations that have arisen since the Asian financial crisis in particular result in a cross that region.

presented as another instance of a particular regional slant towards providing income

security to the military, civil servants, and selected, well-organised labourers in recognition of their particular role in economic development (Aspalter 2011: 742; Segura-Ubiergo 2007: 10ff., 26; Barrientos 2004) during the import substitution phase of economic development.

These conceptual interpretations offer a methodological point of departure for the analysis of developmental welfare states, and the specific social policies they adopt, in South Asia – a region that has not, before now, been typified as presenting a common welfare regime (see Chapter 3, this volume).

Delineating social policy domains within a developmental welfare state: a proposed framework

Looking beyond the conceptual and political aspects of a developmental welfare state, it is of interest to identify the functions and policy domains ascribed to social policy, since welfare states may be defined by the functions of social policy that they employ. The literature delineates social policy components in different ways. Social policy may be defined as 'collective interventions in the economy to influence the access to and incidence of adequate and secure livelihoods and income' (Mkandawire 2004: 1); it may be cast as having redistributive, protective and transformative or developmental roles (2004: 1).¹¹ Social policy, then, is closely intertwined with the notion of the state.

Which sets of social policies are adopted, and indeed 'what constitutes social policy and comprises its key policy areas, is the outcome of political bargains and conflicts – thus the study of social policies must be sensitive to the *political contexts*' (Mkandawire 2004: 12, emphasis in original). Mkandawire argues that different political arrangements tend to favour particular social policies, necessitating a sensitivity to the 'politics of social policy' (2004: 12). This implies that '[n]o amount of perceived instrumental efficacy or of the intrinsic value of particular social policies will lead to their adoption if they are not deemed to be politically feasible' (2004: 12; see also Kabeer 2013).

In its redistributive role, social policy can facilitate better capacity utilisation and broaden domestic markets – the Keynesian argument (Mkandawire 2004: 19). It can contribute to political stability if it lessens conflict and provides a notion of citizenship, and can decrease outlays for security (2004: 19f.). In late industrialisers, social policy as a whole can serve to create positive externalities via expenditures on health and education, which enable an economy to progress into higher productivity; social protection, as one specific area of social policy, helps enhance human capital. Social policy can enable investment by deferring consumption but ensuring that it will increase subsequently; moreover, social insurance can facilitate risk-taking and decrease the costs of failure and thus contribute to catch-up industrialisation. Social policy and social insurance can make structural change more acceptable (2004: 23).

Similarly, Ghosh understands social policy as a broad contract between capital and labour, and as a 'complex web of related policy schemes – maintaining ethnic harmony, or containing conflict when huge development projects lead

to geographic, social or economic displacement' (Ghosh 2004: 285). It thus helps the state to manage development projects (2004: 284). Social policy has a responsibility to provide basic needs and social services, and social insurance, for example, in the event of natural disasters. Education and health, improved working conditions, and access to other public services, as elements in social policy, raise labour productivity and decrease labour costs if there are provisions such as food sales at subsidised prices, basic housing, and so on (2004: 286).

Another way of defining social policy applies Sen's capabilities approach (1993), looking at outcomes on human development. Economic and social policies contribute or are seen to contribute to achieving better human development outcomes. The 'theoretical foundations of the capabilities approach lead to the integration of economic and social objectives and policies', according to Mehrotra and Delamonica (2007: 15), who see synergies between interventions for economic growth, poverty reduction and access to basic services (2007: 31). For them, social policy is cast more broadly to include some domains of economic policy. Kabeer (2013) also shows the interdependence of economic inputs and social development outcomes.

With the aim of providing a 'more wholesome and comprehensive social policy', Dev *et al.* (2001) work with the concept of social and economic security. They define this as encompassing social security; food and nutrition; health; housing; education; employment and income security; and security for vulnerable groups, and group different policy domains together. Interventions in the formal sector, such as medical care and benefits related to old age, maternity or sickness are considered 'protective', while measures primarily addressing the informal sector, such as self- and wage employment, and the provision of basic needs (education, health, food, etc.) are defined as 'promotional' (2001: 14).

For Mehrotra and Delamonica, relevant social policies include interventions in health, nutrition, family planning, water and sanitation, and basic education (2007: 31); they also include maternity benefits for women, disability and death benefits, and an old age pension. This is a narrower understanding of social policy than in their other work, where they make the case for integrating economic and social policy. Jayasuriya, writing on the early welfare statism of Sri Lanka, identifies 'three pillars of the welfare state' that constitute collective action for social welfare: the Education Act (1945), the Health Act (1953) and the establishment of the Department of Social Services (1948) (Jayasuriya 2000: 8, 10–12; see also Chapter 10, this volume). He shows how these three policy efforts were complemented by access to utilities such as transport, water and electricity, housing, and social care services for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

For social policy in the Indian context, Ghosh, too, establishes a broader range of policy domains: food procurement and distribution, education, employment creation through public works, affirmative action, anti-poverty programmes such as small asset creation and microcredit, and, at a more procedural level, the devolution of resources (Ghosh 2004: 294). She posits that public housing, basic health services and social insurance should also be included,

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placement' (Ghosh 2004: 285). It thus objects (2004: 284). Social policy has a range of social services, and social insurance, health, education and health, improved public services, as elements in social policy. It raises labour costs if there are provisions for social housing, and so on (2004: 286). It applies Sen's capabilities approach to development. Economic and social policy to achieving better human development of the capabilities approach lead to the 'synergies and policies', according to Mehrotra, synergies between interventions for access to basic services (2007: 31). For it to include some domains of economic interdependence of economic inputs and

wholesome and comprehensive social concept of social and economic security, security; food and nutrition; health; and security; and security for vulnerable groups. Interventions in the benefits related to old age, maternity or measures primarily addressing the employment, and the provision of basic services as 'promotional' (2001: 14). Social policies include interventions in health and sanitation, and basic education for women, disability and death. A narrower understanding of social policy makes the case for integrating economic policy in the early welfare statism of Sri Lanka, the 'state' that constitute collective welfare (1945), the Health Act (1953) and services (1948) (Jayasuriya 2000: 19). It shows how these three policy areas such as transport, water and electricity for disadvantaged and vulnerable

Ghosh, too, establishes a broader distribution, education, employment, affirmative action, anti-poverty provision, and, at a more procedural level (294). She posits that public policy should also be included,

although empirically, these sectors did not feature as prominently in India's social policy remit. Importantly, and uniquely, Ghosh defines agrarian reform as integral to social policy.

The above explanation is offered by way of situating social policy as the public policy approach of a developmental welfare state. Building on the above delineations of social policy suggests four overarching policy domains with sets of policy measures or programmes constituting elements of social policy in a welfare state with a rights-based approach (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Social policy domains in developmental welfare states with a rights-based approach

Policy domain	Primary objective
1 Policies addressing the basic social situation Food and nutrition Education Health Drinking water and sanitation measures Housing programmes Electricity Transportation Early child care, elderly care Family planning/reproductive health	Human development; Right to basic social services
2 Policies addressing socioeconomic insecurity Employment schemes for decent work Youth employment drives Land reform/access to land Formal sector social insurance Micro credit/micro asset schemes Area/regional development Industrial policy	Right to basic income and decent work; Poverty eradication
3 Social assistance policies and programmes addressing poverty Food-security related Poverty-related Age-related Conflict, emergency-related	Right to basic income; Poverty alleviation
4 Policies for voice and social inclusion Tools for social inclusion (grants) Affirmative action legislation for gender, caste, ethnic, religious equality Freedom of media, Internet access Freedom of organisation and collective bargaining Rights of civil society to organise and mobilise Right to information Legal instruments to address exclusion practice Local self-governance provisions	Social inclusion and human rights

Source: author.

The list of social policy programme types is illustrative and not exhaustive. It suggests that the boundaries of what constitutes social policy in a particular country at a particular point in time are fluid, but that there is a common universe of programmes observed across countries. Their genesis, their specific objectives as well as underlying assumptions may vary. They nevertheless have in common a declared intent to address human development, well-being and inclusion.

Notes

- 1 The author thanks Ellen Ehmke, Laksiri Jayasuriya, Naila Kabeer and Huck-ju Kwon for their insightful comments. Errors and omissions remain those of the author.
- 2 The notion of a developmental welfare state has been examined for other regions; see, e.g. Kwon (2005a, 2005b) and Aspalter (2011) for East Asia, or Segura-Ubiergo (2007) for Latin America.
- 3 Segura-Ubiergo (2007: 11) has shown how several middle-income countries in Latin America (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay) preceded the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in the establishment of income security programmes – such as accident, health, pension or unemployment insurance – by the 1920s.
- 4 Mehrotra and Delamonica (2007: 213) discuss post-colonial states and their developmental functions, which grew for at least three decades from the 1950s, to providing physical as well as social infrastructure. They see this as having ushered in rent-seeking: the role of the state became predatory as well as developmental.
- 5 For a critique of the political suppression of labour movements, for example in South Korea's industrialisation process, see Kwon 1999: 8. See also UNDP 2013: 67.
- 6 This view coincides with arguments for a rights-based developmental state issuing from various United Nations development agencies (UNRISD 2010: 257ff.; UNCTAD 2009: vii; UNDP 2013). For example, UNCTAD (2009: vii) speaks of a democratic developmental state, with continuing reflexive procedures calling on all actors, and it also posits the case for 'developmental governance' geared to create a better future for members of society through economic development and structural transformation (UNCTAD 2009: vi).
- 7 UNRISD (2010: 281) argues for a 'Weberian' bureaucracy, comprised of appropriately remunerated and recognised professionals with a commitment to their job and a sense of service to their country, technical competence, and a good work ethic. On this, see UNCTAD (2009: 40, 45).
- 8 There is also some work on social policy patterns in various regions, coming from the tradition of global social policy discourse (Deacon *et al.* 2010). Its concern is however less with inherent commonalities and more with influence on regions and on global social policy.
- 9 Contrary to this literature, other analysts have questioned the usefulness of transposing a framework developed in relatively similar societies in Europe 'to the extremely different, and highly differentiated, societies which make up the global south' because it would fail to 'capture the unique challenges of economic growth, poverty reduction and human development' that these societies face (Kabeer 2004: 2). There is also concern that the Northern welfare state approach does not internalise the 'care economy' and unpaid work (2004: 2). This would suggest using a broader concept such as sustainable livelihoods, which would better reflect the complexities of conditions and challenges in lower income countries, and acknowledges the fact that people's lives, especially that of poor, rural people, are not compartmentalised in the way welfare state theories or sectoralised social policies would suggest (2004: 18).

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development and welfare policy in the region. One of the main objectives of the book was to look at the role of governments to improve well-being in different states at the normative level, examining these policies in six countries. This is offered by Parts I and II, thereby providing a 'developmental welfare' states in

analysing the large number of recent changes in these to the typology of policies. The scope of the book's analysis is provided by: the triggers and factors for policy changes; the nature of these reforms; and any changes that were responsible for these policy changes. It also includes reflections on whether South Asia has a welfare geography, and the contributing factors.

and directions of change

There are a large number of social policies in the realm of social protection, but in Bangladesh, Mahmud and Mahmud protection policies: social assistance and works programmes (e.g. food for work), e.g. scholarships, vulnerable group stipends or emergency assistance. Similarly, according to Bonnerjee (Chapter 7), India, as has Sri Lanka (Jayasuriya,

the existence for a while, what is interesting in the recent past, both in terms of the

number of programmes and their coverage. A similar narrative of increasing breadth and depth of social policy programmes is recounted by Khatiwada and Koehler (Chapter 8) in the case of Nepal, albeit over a more recent period. New programmes have been put in place in Pakistan (BISP), India (e.g. MGNREGA, RTE, the unorganised sector workers bill, JNNURM), the Maldives (*Madhana* and *Aasandha*) and Sri Lanka (*Mahinda Chintana* and a revised *Samurdhi*). Table 12.1 lists selected policies introduced in the country studies, as per Koehler's classification, developed in Chapter 2 of this volume.

There is one country that in some ways bucks the recent trend of social policy proliferation. Jayasuriya notes that Sri Lanka was an early welfare state with universal health and education policies, but also that it has seen a significant decline in social policy provision owing to recent challenges to this welfare model from neoliberal forces as well as internal conflict (Jayasuriya, Chapter 10). The universal social policy rationale, according to Jayasuriya, has been replaced by a residual, selective policy strategy with regard to social protection – while preserving a universalist intent in education and health.

An interesting question to ask is why there has been so much emphasis on the social protection sector. Khatiwada and Koehler (Chapter 8) reflect on 'social protection ... as the policy area that is seen as essential to reduce income and social inequality and conflict potential ... and to cushion against crises – either financial and economic or related to natural disaster' (p. 132). Mahmud and Mahmud (Chapter 5) explain it partly as electoral politics, and partly in terms of being a response to the genuine needs of poor people at risk (p. 74). In Sri Lanka, Jayasuriya (Chapter 10, p. 175) speaks of this focus on social protection as arising from an overall negative turn of events:

in the absence of an institutionalised concept of social security as a prime defence against adversity, there was a strong emphasis on a residual role for social security through the family and the private market. In this context, the main role of social safety nets such as social assistance schemes and labour market policies was to mitigate economic exigencies faced by the poor.

This was caused in the first place by the neoliberal tendencies of the Sri Lankan government.

While India has seen a similar proliferation of social policies, the range of policies adopted for different sectors is cast wider, including health, education, urban development and social protection for unorganised sector workers. A broader set of social policies is also mentioned in the case of the Maldives (with a focus on health and education, and even areas such as transport), Bangladesh (with a focus on programmes relating to food security) and Nepal (which universalised health access), although to a much lesser extent.

India was the first country to embark on these wide-scale policy innovations. Importantly, what sets India's growth in social policies apart from the rest of the region is a critical shift towards rights-based policies, as discussed by Chopra in Chapter 6. Starting with the RTI Act, Chopra documents four such rights-based

Table 12.1 Social policies in six South Asian countries

<i>Policy domain</i>	<i>Name of country</i>	<i>Selected policies and programmes¹</i>
i Policies addressing the basic social situation		
Food and nutrition	Bangladesh	Open Market Sales
	India	Targeted Public Distribution Scheme
	Sri Lanka	National Food Security Act (Ordinance)
Education		Means-tested food subsidy
	Bangladesh	Primary Education Stipend Programme (previously known as Food for Education)
	India	Scholarships for girl children
	Nepal	Right to Education
	Maldives	<i>Ladli Lakshmi Yojana</i>
	Sri Lanka	Education for all
Health		Free education for all
		Universal, free and compulsory education for all
	India	National Rural Health Mission
	Nepal	<i>Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana</i>
	Maldives	Policy on free basic health services and essential drugs
	Sri Lanka	<i>Madhana</i>
Housing		<i>Aasandha</i>
	India	Health Services Act
	Sri Lanka	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)
Family planning/reproductive health		Million Houses Development Programme
	India	<i>Janani Suraksha Yojana</i>
	Nepal	<i>Indira Matrutva Yojana</i>
		Birthing grant
ii Policies addressing socioeconomic insecurity		
Employment schemes for decent work	Bangladesh	Test Relief under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
	India	Rural Employment and Road Maintenance Programme
	Nepal	Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest
		Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)
		Food and cash for work programmes
		One-Family-One-Employment Programme for the Poor
		Karnali Employment Programme
iii Social assistance policies and programmes addressing poverty		
Youth employment	Maldives	Vocational training institute
Tribal land and commodity rights	India	Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act
		Microfinance schemes (NGO initiated and run)
Microcredit/micro-asset schemes	Bangladesh	Microfinance schemes
	Nepal	Crop and livestock insurance schemes
Area/regional development	Nepal	Poverty Alleviation Fund
Urban renewal	India	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)
iii Social assistance policies and programmes addressing poverty		
Food-security related	Bangladesh	Vulnerable Group Feeding
	India	School midday meal programme
	Nepal	National Food Security Act (Ordinance)
	Sri Lanka	School midday meal programme
Income poverty and social/ethnic group related		Means-tested food subsidy
	Bangladesh	Allowances for Widowed, Deserted and Destitute Women
	India	Vulnerable Group Development

(MGNREGA)
Food and cash for work programmes
One-Family-One-Employment Programme for the Poor
Karnali Employment Programme

Youth employment	Maldives	Vocational training institute
Tribal land and commodity rights	India	Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act
Microcredit/micro-asset schemes	Bangladesh	Microfinance schemes (NGO initiated and run)
	Nepal	Microfinance schemes
		Crop and livestock insurance schemes
Area/regional development	Nepal	Poverty Alleviation Fund
Urban renewal	India	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)
iii Social assistance policies and programmes addressing poverty		
Food-security related	Bangladesh	Vulnerable Group Feeding
	India	School midday meal programme
	Nepal	National Food Security Act (Ordinance)
	Sri Lanka	School midday meal programme
		Means-tested food subsidy
Income poverty and social/ethnic group related	Bangladesh	Allowances for Widowed, Deserted and Destitute Women
	India	Vulnerable Group Development
	Nepal	Direct Cash transfers
	Maldives	Widow Pension
	Pakistan	Unorganised Worker Social Security Act
	Sri Lanka	<i>Dhanalakshmi Yojana</i>
		Social Welfare Act
		Remarriage grant
		Absolute Poverty Scheme
		Benazir Income Support Programme
		<i>Zakat</i>
		<i>Bait-ul-Maal</i>
		<i>Janasaviya</i> programme
		<i>Samurdhi</i>
Age-related	Bangladesh	Old Age Allowance
	India	Old age pension
	Maldives	Maldives pension law
	Nepal	Universal old age pension
		Social Security and Protection of Senior Citizens Act
		Children Welfare Act
		Child protection grant

Table 12.1 Continued

<i>Policy domain</i>	<i>Name of country</i>	<i>Selected policies and programmes¹</i>
Conflict, emergency-related	Bangladesh Maldives Nepal	Gratuitous Relief Targeted assistance for food and basic needs after tsunami Allowances related to the armed conflict
iv Policies for voice and social inclusion Tools for social inclusion: grants	Bangladesh Maldives Nepal	Primary Education Stipend Programme Allowance for the sight-impaired; for assistive devices for the disabled Education grants for girl children, excluded castes Protection and Welfare of Disabled Persons Act/Disability allowance Allowance for threatened ethnic groups Expenses allowance for inter-caste marriage
Right to information	India Nepal Bangladesh Pakistan Maldives	Right to Information Act Right to Information Act Right to Information Act Right to Information Act Right to Information Act

Sources: Author, based on Table 2.1, information drawn from respective country chapters.

Note

1 The table covers only programmes referred to in the country chapters. There are many more programmes in each of the countries, both at national and sub-national level, that are not mentioned by the chapter authors.

social policies that have been adopted in FRA and NRHM. The Maldives approach based move has been replicated, to a degree. There is, however, an important focus is founded on justiciable rights. A critical effect on changing power dynamics through a process of rights-claiming in Nepal,¹ the focus has been on providing a more comprehensive coverage but changes in power dynamics.

But even in India, rights are not available to all citizens – in fact, most of those who have rights in some arenas but not the ‘right to employment’ for all rural workers limited to a right to work for 100 days. Similarly, FRA recognises some rights to forest land access, use and ownership, but therefore only be said to be an ‘incorporation’ of welfare provision to rights-based welfare.

Political economy dynamics

It is clear from the above discussion that in several South Asian countries, starting from the book, we asked what triggered the factors created the space for political change. The politics of welfare statism at the national level among different players and actors in each section provides a political economy of the process. Drawing out four aspects as relevant to the book: the actors involved in the process; the innovation; the discourses that shape the process; and the motivations of relevant actors. Policy innovations towards a development state.

In Bangladesh, the main trigger for the process of electoral politics, with a new government, has recognised the dividends that could be gained from policies in place – in other words, welfare policies as a populist measure. It was very difficult for the government to rescind, because of a fear of backlash about the welfare of the population. The resulting fallout in terms of a number of programmes, rendering the process. But an interesting, unique aspect of

Sources: Author, based on Table 2.1, information drawn from respective country chapters.

Note

¹ The table covers only programmes referred to in the country chapters. There are many more programmes in each of the countries, both at national and sub-national level, that are not mentioned by the chapter authors.

social policies that have been adopted in India since 2004: MGNREGA, RTE, FRA and NRHM. The Maldives and Nepal are other countries where this rights-based move has been replicated, although to a much lesser or less systematic degree. There is, however, an important difference. In India, the rights-based focus is founded on justiciable rights that can be claimed. This can thereby have a critical effect on changing power relations between the state and its citizens, through a process of rights-claiming. On the other hand, in the Maldives and Nepal,¹ the focus has been on providing access on 'universal' principles, which imply comprehensive coverage but not necessarily a focus on justiciability and changes in power dynamics.

But even in India, rights are not defined by their being universally available to all citizens – in fact, most of the policies define selective target beneficiaries who have rights in some arenas but not in all. For example, MGNREGA is a 'right to employment' for all rural households, not individuals. It is further limited to a right to work for 100 days a year, and on public works programmes. Similarly, FRA recognises some rights of certain tribal communities with respect to forest land access, use and ownership. These are not absolute rights, and may therefore only be said to be an 'incomplete or partial move from mere top-down welfare provision to rights-based welfare' (p. 101).

Political economy dynamics

It is clear from the above discussion that important policies were put in place in several South Asian countries, starting around the new millennium. At the outset of the book, we asked what triggered these social policy innovations, and what factors created the space for policy reform. We were specifically interested in the politics of welfare statism at play in each of the countries, and the interactions among different players and discourses that shaped welfare policies. This section provides a political economy analysis for each of the six countries, drawing out four aspects as relevant to each of the country studies presented in the book: the actors involved in the policy process; the contextual triggers for innovation; the discourses that shaped the policy processes; and finally, the interests and motivations of relevant stakeholders in either furthering or hampering policy innovations towards a developmental welfare, and even a rights agenda.

In Bangladesh, the main triggers for policy reform seemed to come from electoral politics, with a new government being elected in 2008. Politicians recognised the dividends that could potentially be obtained by putting social policies in place – in other words, welfare policies were initiated by the incumbent governments as a populist measure. Interestingly, once in place, these became very difficult for the government (even led by different political parties) to rescind, because of a fear of backlash and a desire to not be seen as uncaring about the welfare of the population. Mahmud and Mahmud (Chapter 5) identify the resulting fallout in terms of small individual benefits spread across a large number of programmes, rendering welfare provision in Bangladesh piecemeal. But an interesting, unique aspect of Bangladesh's welfare provision is the role of