United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Revisiting Post-conflict Social Policy

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Note*: The following is a draft edit, and partial re-write of the first chapter of War and Social Welfare, my 2009 book on the reconstruction of the social welfare regime in post-conflict Kosovo. The intention of the paper is to revisit some of the theoretical foundations of that work in order to begin a process of re-evaluating the original work. The primary problem with the original work was a heavy reliance on theoretical assertions of the potential political impacts of social policy reform in Kosovo. In rethinking these theoretical claims, I hope to begin the process of identifying where stronger empirical evidence for their support.*

Post-conflict social policy fits into the broadening in the academic social policy literature that has occurred over approximately the past fifteen years. This broadening has primarily focused on three areas. One has been a shift in focus beyond the developed, capitalist economies to a greater attention to the developing world. Lead by such institutions as UNRISD (see the Social Policy and Development Project from 2000 to 2005, and its associated publications), as well as by key scholars (Haggard and Kaufman 2008; Gough and Woods 2004; Kapstein and Milanovic 2002) issues of social policy became less marginal to development studies. A second area, pioneered by Bob Deacon, along with his colleague, Paul Stubbs, but taken up by other scholars has been the ideal of social policy as a transnational or global process (Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs 1997; Deacon and Stubbs 2007; Orenstein 2008). Within this field of inquiry, global institutions such as the UN, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund, as well as

major donor states are argued to have assumed a greater role in creating a global social policy, and international interventions in social policy formation and implementation fall under special scrutiny. Finally, special attention was drawn to the issues of economic transitions and social policy, with important volumes from Nicholas Barr (1994 and 2005), as well as others. Post-conflict social policy, which sits at the intersection of the expansion of social policy studies into development, international institutions and interventions, and political and economic transitions remains one area where the academic literature remains sparse.

Post-conflict social policy encompasses the formulation and implementation of a wide range of social welfare programs, such as pensions, social assistance, disability payments, and unemployment support, as well as programs that provide other kinds of social support such as social care institutions, and social work agencies under the particular conditions that exist after the conclusion of a violent conflict. The idea of paying special attention to social policy in the post-conflict setting is recent development, only really emerging at the end of the 1990s.[1] Although the emphasis is on the local formulation and implementation of policy, the expansion of attention to post-conflict social policy is deeply integrated into issues of international intervention. The expansion of international peace operations beyond the traditional "First Generation" model in which international actors primarily used military peacekeepers to separate belligerents to more comprehensive missions designed to assist in the broader social and political reconstruction of post-conflict states led international agencies to integrate long-term social welfare concerns into their programming. United Nations missions such as UNTAC (Cambodia 1992-1993), UNMIK (Kosovo 1999-ongoing), UNTAET (East Timor 1999-2002), UNAMA (Afghanistan 2002-ongoing), as well as

1 Notwithstanding the assertion of the recent of vintage of post-conflict social policy, the analysis of the establishment of social welfare regimes in relation to historical conflicts such as World War II, and the US Civil War have become part of the post-conflict social policy literature. (see Skocpol 1992, Mazower 1999, Judt 2005).

the non-UN multilateral reconstruction mission in Bosnia Herzegovina (1995-ongoing) were all representative of these types of missions. In each of these cases, social policy or social protection became at least a part of the reconstruction process. Actors who have been involved in the issue include the United Nations, the World Bank, and major donor states, as well as international and local humanitarian and development NGOs.

At the operational level, social policy, usually couched in the language of social protection, has become an increasingly important aspect of post-conflict peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. The World Bank, as well as some major donor states, such as the UK has supported social protection projects in a variety of post-conflict cases, including in the Balkans, as well as in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Liberia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal and others (See the World Bank webpage on Social Protection for examples of funded projects http://goo.gl/2iyhkE). Some of these efforts have come to the attention of social policy analysts and have generated a small, but (hopefully) growing set of literature. Some examples include studies of the Bosnian (Holiček and Rašidagić 2007) and Kosovo cases (Cocozzelli 2009) in the Balkans in the late 1990s, as well as Iraq (de Freitas and Johnson 2012), and Nepal (Köhler, Marta Calì and Stirbu 2009). Despite these examples, the literature specifically addressing post-conflict social policy remains limited, not only in volume but in levels of analysis. There remains a strong need for more varied and more detailed case studies, more sophisticated theorizing about general causes and consequences of post-conflict social policy, and more data driven analysis and evaluations of programs, policies, and emerging regime types.

Despite the limitations of the literature, some strong theories have been put forward regarding the role of social policy in successful post-conflict reconstruction. In the economic realm, it has been posited that the integrative mechanisms of social welfare programs provide a functional bases for incorporating citizens into economic

life, generating positive constraints for the re-emerging labor market. Further, in times of economic crisis, social policy and redistributive programs can function as stabilizers, promoting employment, and helping to foster a return to growth. Although comparative social policy analysts have been able to provide some support for these positions as they apply to established capitalist and democratic states (see Wilensky 2002 for a broad overview), we continue to lack a significant body of work that provides empirical evidence for understanding the economic impact of social policy on post-conflict reconstruction.

Some of the work done in analyzing more general questions of post-conflict economic and fiscal reconstruction can hold lessons for social policy. In particular, the debates concerning the sequencing of international assistance during the post-conflict period offer insights that should prove applicable to social policy. Central to this debate has been the work of Collier and his collaborators (Collier and Hoeffler 2002, 2004), and Woodward (2002, 2007). Despite strong differences in terms of analytical perspective, and conclusions regarding theories of conflict, both ultimately argue for aid sequencing that prioritizes social and political stabilization prior to any potential standard macroeconomic stabilization.[2] This debate has bearing on the issues of social policy, in large part because social programs can provide the channels for providing material resources for such social and economic stabilization. Institutionalized and regular cash transfers in the form of pensions, social assistance, and disability insurance inject much needed financial resources into post-conflict economies, with less risk of the temporary distortions associated with high IO (International Organizations) and NGO expenses, including salaries, and discretionary income of expatriate aid workers and international bureaucrats.

On a more normative level, one can posit that social policy is one of the

2 Notably, Woodward takes position which emphasizes the international political economy of conflict and reconstruction (2007).

variables that validates or disqualifies a society's claims toward justice. This can have implications for the study of social policy not only in the post-conflict period, but also prior to the conflict. Accepting a theory of conflict that still allows for the role of grievances, the delegitimation of a society's claim of justice can become an element of contention that helps to drive the conflict. Conversely, social policy that legitimates a society's claim of justness, can potentially serve as a foundation for successful reconstruction and, even reconciliation. The mechanisms of this relationship between social policy, justice, regime legitimation, and stability or instability, however remain unclear, and this remains an area where more research is needed.

Incorporating justice claims such as demands for social inclusion, economic opportunity, and rights for social security into reconstruction programs potentially strengthen social systems by contributing to overall political stability. This stabilizing effect derives from its quality of inclusion and integration. As Rawls has argued, because included participants recognize themselves as beneficiaries of a just system of social regulation, such a system is self-reinforcing (1971, 490–491). Or more explicitly, "a society regulated by a public sense of justice is inherently stable" (1971, 498). This suggests an inclusive system that incorporates members of the polity as citizens. Anything less means the exclusion of a segment or segments of the polity as lesser or second-class citizens. This type of segmented social citizenship is especially relevant in post-conflict environments where parallel arrangements, often defined by ethnic