
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL POLICY IN POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

This article argues for greater priority for social policy in post-conflict reconstruction, presenting normative and economic contributions that social policy can make in such contexts. Social policy provides a foundation for judging the level and type of social justice within a polity. Public perceptions of justice, based on levels of inclusion, promote political stability. Social policy can also provide the minimum level of human security needed for labour market engagement by helping reconstruct employment opportunities. The article argues that, despite the importance of social policy, it does not appear at the top of the reconstruction agenda. Instead a narrower, project-centred focus has dominated. Because social policy has not traditionally been integrated into post-conflict reconstruction, much of the present article is devoted to making the theoretical case for its incorporation. The article uses the case of social policy in post-conflict Kosovo to illustrate the underlying theory.

Introduction

With the imperative of the political dimension of peacemaking, concerns for social rights do not often draw the attention of international mediators. In attempting to mediate an end to the Kosovo conflict, for example, United States and European diplomats sought strong protections of political and civil rights. The Rambouillet Accords, which were presented as a solution for the conflict, addressed political rights through powerful autonomous local representative political institutions such as a Provincial Assembly, a Presidency of the

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Assembly, and a 'President of Kosovo'. Civil rights were addressed with proposals for reforms of judiciary and legal institutions detailed enough to specify even the standard police uniform. Alternatively, the Accords only provided that Kosovars would be able to call

freely upon the 'institutions of the Republic of Serbia' in order to express their social rights, such as 'participation in social benefits programmes, such as care for war veterans, pensioners, and disabled persons', according to Paragraph 7 of the first chapter of the Rambouillet Accords. Social rights were relegated to the sidelines. Left off the table during negotiations, social rights rarely rise to the top of the agenda for post-conflict reconstruction.

Despite this neglect, social policy reform is as vital for successful reconstruction as political, economic and judicial reform. The integrative mechanisms of social welfare programmes are one of the functional bases of incorporating citizens into economic life. Through social policy and redistributive programmes the state promotes employment and economic growth. On a more theoretical level, social policy validates or disqualifies a society's

claims toward justice. The importance of the relationship between social policy, social justice and post-conflict reconstruction cannot be overstated. Reconstruction is a normative political enterprise with the goal of creating new political, economic and social contexts that address issues that were at the core of the conflict. Social policy – the manner in which the state defines and meets its responsibilities towards its citizens – is both a core element of contention, as well as a foundation for successful reconstruction and, potentially, reconciliation. A state that defines its responsibilities in inclusive terms, and meets those responsibilities, embodies a strong citizenship regime which generates stability and cohesion.

A highly focused definition of social policy offers a strong foundation for incorporating attention to social welfare issues into reconstruction efforts. As argued by Richard Titmuss (1974:30), social policy aims at being ‘beneficent, redistributive and concerned with economic as well as non-economic objectives’. More specifically, Harold Wilensky (2002:61) identified ‘pensions, death benefits, and disability insurance; health insurance; education; family policies; job injury insurance; unemployment and related labour-market policies; war victims’ benefits; and miscellaneous aid to the poor’ as the eight core areas of social policy. Addressing these policy sectors in post-conflict reconstruction can affect change on a society-wide level by distributing risk or insecurity across social groups, reducing the potential suffering of any given individual at the expense of shared but widely dispersed costs. More recent studies of social policy (Wilensky 2002; Hacker 2004) have used the terminology of risk rather than insecurity, but the concepts are closely parallel. A specific and clear definition for social policy contributes to clarifying the priorities for post-conflict reconstruction. Too often, post-conflict social policy has been misunderstood as either a narrow, project-centred focus or an overly broad conception of loosely connected social, economic and cultural conditions, neither of which addresses the issue of creating the necessary institutions for social citizenship.

The destructive force of war is tremendous, and the post-conflict reconstruction challenge is always immense. Picking up the pieces left behind by war and reconstructing a functioning society have become a central concern of the international community, falling under a variety of related headings such as peacebuilding, nation building or post-conflict reconstruction. Each involves implementing policies to address the immediate results of the conflict; promote conflict mitigation; and build institutions for governance. The

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academic literature on such operations has grown substantially over the years, particularly during the 1990s. This literature complements an increasing number of international organisations, agencies and institutions that provide operational post-conflict assistance. Thomas Weiss (2001:230) neatly sums up the demands these organisations face: ‘A

task list would include transforming the security environment, strengthening local administrative capacities, reconstructing the political processes, and re-knitting the local social fabric.’ These are all daunting tasks, but re-knitting the social fabric stands out as especially nebulous. How does one repair the fabric of a society torn by war? In cases of seemingly intractable conflict, where violent contention seems woven into the very social fabric, repair is hardly the goal; rather what is needed is an even more challenging fundamental reconfiguration.

This article highlights social policy as central to the repair and reconfiguration of the social fabric; it argues that social policy lays a normative and economic foundation for post-conflict reconstruction. On the normative level, social policy provides a tool for evaluating the character of a society in relation to justice as social inclusion. This evaluation rests on the inclusiveness of the emerging post-conflict citizenship regime. Economically, social policy functions as a mechanism for human security which in turn supports re-engagement with the economic system. The article critiques the current emphasis on social projects as opposed to broader efforts at social policy reform, arguing that social 'policy' formation in the project-oriented context becomes a process dominated by a limited number of elites, often led by expatriate advisors. The process specifically excludes traditional determinants of social policy such as popular movements, labour, and progressive political parties. As a result, this process has little local input and may be at odds with efforts to build democratic mechanisms for social inclusion. With a primary focus on the under-appreciated theoretical role of social policy, the article references the development of social policy in post-conflict Kosovo. The article ultimately suggests that attention to social policy needs to be carefully included into post-conflict reconstruction efforts. This attention must move beyond the creation of specific social projects and address the need to create the institutions of policy formulation and implementation. These institutions must provide space for local political forces to express policy preferences that reflect the appropriate interests. In the Kosovo case, institutions for social welfare and social policy were successfully created after the conflict, but few, if any agents of local political interest played a role in the process.

Just Social Policy and its Relationship to Political Stability and Social Solidarity

Social policy plays an important normative role by defining parameters of justice in a society. Social justice in turn undergirds stability and fosters solidarity. Concerns of justice have consistently been central to post-war reconstruction; however, these concerns often focus on claims related to addressing human rights violations. Gary Bass (2000:6), for example, argues that legal prosecutions of war criminals can 'make the difference between war and peace'. Despite this declared emphasis on retributive justice, nearly all international and local actors also focus on restorative justice, working toward (re)building democratic, multi-ethnic or tolerant societies – essentially 'just societies'. These concerns for social justice are less often explicitly articulated in relation to broader reconstruction programmes than are legal standards of retributive justice.

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social systems by contributing to overall political stability. A key component of this stabilising effect is its quality of inclusion and integration. As Rawls argues, because included participants recognise themselves as beneficiaries of a just system of social regulation, such a system is self-reinforcing (1971:490-491). Furthermore, '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 implies exclusion of a segment or

segments of the polity as lesser or second-class citizens. Creating the conditions for a self-stabilising society while avoiding the pitfalls of stratification has clear implications for post-conflict reconstruction.

Violent civil conflict is a dramatic manifestation of exclusion. The process of building up to a deadly conflict in many cases corresponds with a parallel process of popular commitments to polarised identities articulated through social, political, economic and cultural institutions. Membership in conflicting communities – in the case of Kosovo, ethnic identity communities – defines strict boundaries of exclusion and overrides broader conceptions of citizenship. From 1989 to 1999 the interaction between the rise of Serbian and Albanian nationalisms led to increasing levels of exclusion between the two communities. The groups engaged in a process of separation that was mutually reinforcing but which generated high levels of internal social solidarity. This social solidarity was supported by political action and institutionalised self-help organisations.

The legal manoeuvres of the Belgrade regime regarding restrictions on the political autonomy of the province, and the waves of dismissals of Albanian state employees, which made access to public services increasingly contentious, denied Kosovo Albanians their full rights of participation. This exclusion was reinforced by the Kosovo Albanian system of parallel, autonomous, quasi-state institutions in the most important social sectors – health, education, and social welfare. This ethnicised self-help network, which rose to prominence before and during the conflict, sat in opposition to the state, which in turn had become dominated by the Serbian community. Overcoming this institutionalised social exclusion requires providing access to the resources needed to participate in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the polity. The extension of social rights as a protective measure against commodification is a core component of inclusion, and successful post-conflict reconstruction.

Access to social rights marks the inclusive/exclusive boundaries of citizenship itself and is often at the centre of the political struggle of a violent conflict. Effective post-conflict reconstruction addresses this cleavage, and reconstructs a inclusive citizenship. In economic terms, social rights are the right to maintain one's existence as human person outside the commodified system of the market (Esping-Anderson 1990:23). Exclusion from social citizenship is a denial of the social rights which constitute protection from deprivation caused

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by unemployment, illness, old age or ill fortune. Rebuilding the programmes of social policy – the public guarantees against these deprivations – creates the practical methods for addressing this problem of exclusion. Further, in a post-conflict context, these programmes must be structured so as to

provide security across the conflict cleavages. A citizen denied social rights is deprived of his or her full rights and is subject to 'gradations of citizenship' (Heater 2004:103). Prior to the international intervention in 1999, Albanians in Yugoslav Kosovo saw their form of citizenship degraded as compared to their Serbian neighbours. Since 1999, Serb Kosovars argue that their citizenship is now similarly degraded.

Exclusion from the full rights of citizenship is not only the denial of rights of political participation such as the right to vote or stand for public office, but also the denial of economic and social opportunities. Attention to social exclusion expands concern with the condition of

poverty and 'refers not only to low consumption due to material deprivation, but to the inability of the poor to participate fully through exercising their social, cultural and political rights as citizens' (Powell 2001:91). Powell further elaborates that 'social exclusion is a counter-concept to citizenship'. Such exclusions relate directly to a divided polity, such as Kosovo. Citizenship cleavages based on economic exclusion translate into, and reinforce other forms of exclusion, such as those based on religious, racial, cultural, or, as in Kosovo, ethnic identity. Both Nancy Fraser (1997:17-18) and Charles Taylor (1994:36) separately argue that cultural misrecognition constitutes a basic injustice. Powell (2001:92) cites Fraser's representation of 'cultural and symbolic injustice' – cultural domination, non-recognition and cultural disrespect – as delimiting the 'new paradigm of injustice' which is focused on misrecognition (1997:14). With economic concerns always high on the list of post-conflict concerns, attention to social policy is a natural corollary for guaranteeing that economic disparities are not transformed into cultural, ethnic, racial or religious cleavages.

In Kosovo, parallel governing structures persisted after the conflict, and in the social welfare sector became the foundation for the post-conflict aid distribution network. This was especially true of food aid. From June to October 1999 the vast majority of the more than 1.3 million food aid beneficiaries (Development Researchers Network 2002:9) were Kosovo Albanians. They accessed this aid through a system based on the same network that had functioned as a parallel social welfare system during the conflict. Similarly, in the post-war environment, the Kosovo Serb community has benefited from its own parallel social welfare system that exists outside of the official system. This system is based in the former Serbian state structures, and sits in opposition to the United Nations-administered system. In both the Albanian or Serbian cases, the beneficiaries fiercely defend the justness of the system. In a perverse manner, this follows Rawls's process of creating social solidarity through the public sense of justice. In these cases what was generated was a limited and exclusive sense of solidarity. Building a unified social welfare system that is perceived as just on both sides of the ethnic divide is central to overcoming these boundaries of exclusion in the post-conflict period.

By fulfilling an important aspect of citizenship rights, social policy functions as an integrative mechanism which furthers social solidarity. Social policy spells out parameters of the citizen-state relationship in regard to social rights. Returning to Wilensky (2002:211), 'The essence of

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the welfare state is government-protected minimum standards of income, nutrition, health and safety, education and housing assured to every citizen as a social right and not as a charity.' Gøsta Esping-Anderson (1990:21) attributes this 'proposition that social citizenship constitutes the core idea of a

welfare state' to T.H. Marshall (1964:10), who characterised the development of citizenship as the progressive expansion of a basket of rights and obligations. In Marshall's schema these rights and obligations fall under the consecutive development of civil, political and social rights. Each set of rights and obligations is supported by institutions for legal recourse, political representation and social welfare. Marshall's citizenship develops temporally, with civil rights prominent in the 18th century, political rights in the 19th century and social rights in the 20th. Couching his essay as an inquiry into the equalising potential of social rights, Marshall (1964:45) concludes that the 'preservation of economic inequalities has been made more difficult by the enrichment of the status of citizenship'. The extension of social rights erodes the practical differences of class. Despite recurrent arguments against the welfare state, these

programmes have remained at the centre of modern democracies. As argued by Yashar (2005:47), social rights are an important part of the 'content of citizenship'. Even in the face of sustained attempts at retrenchment, social welfare functions have remained politically popular and, for the most part, intact (Pierson 1994:2, 164; Wilensky 2002:223-224).

Although not often applied to post-conflict contexts, social policy and in particular the programmes identified with the welfare state are key components of an integrated society. Titmuss (1971:224) pointed out this relationship between social policy and integration: 'Thus, in terms of policies, what unites [social policy] with ethical considerations is its focus on integrative systems: on processes, transactions and institutions which promote an individual's sense of identity, participation and community and allow him more freedom of choice for the expression of altruism and which, simultaneously, discourage a sense of individual alienation.' In a society like Kosovo, where distinct communities sit in opposition to one another, the freedom to transcend these separate collective identities for a larger polity is vital for effective reconstruction. Following Titmuss, George and Wilding (1984:215-217) later argued that social policy contributed to political stability on a number of grounds, including the displacement of conflict from the central social cleavage, which, like Marshall,

they had identified as class, to more manageable cleavages. Wilensky (2002:211) articulates the manner in which the welfare state builds solidarity through the distribution of risk across 'generations, localities, classes, ethnic and racial groups, and educational levels' as a 'major source of social integration in modern society'. The

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distribution of risk underpins social solidarity through two methods. The first is to provide the necessary protections for full participation in market economies. With risk spread across society, citizens are better able to take advantage of entrepreneurial, educational or professional opportunities. The second is to link the citizen to the source of this protection, whether it is the state, or some other collective organisation. The conclusion that can be drawn from the cumulative effect of the scholarship cited above, is that when social rights are considered a component of full citizenship and they are guaranteed by the state they draw the loyalty of citizens.

The stabilising effect of social policy is determined by the actual social programmes. If the devil is in the details, then the details of social policy is the content of the social programmes that are determined by the policy. Scholars have identified specific policy configurations as particularly encouraging of social solidarity. Most notably, Esping-Anderson (1990:27-28) argued that highly decommodifying and universalist social welfare institutions promote a broad sense of solidarity. As defined by Esping-Anderson (1990:22), decommodification indicates the provision of 'a service as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market.' Social welfare programmes can promote social solidarity and stability, provided they are universal, decommodifying, and designed and implemented with these aims in mind. But they can also create or reinforce economic and social stratification. Poorly designed welfare programmes can create social stigma or dependency if they are tightly targeted toward economic or social status (Esping-Anderson 1990:55). Similarly, if they are strictly differentiated, either in design or practice, toward a particular collective group – an ethnic or religious community – they can exacerbate the cleavages that separate one group from the rest of the polity. Titmuss (1974:30-31) drew attention to the differing effects of welfare models with his three-part typology. Esping-

Anderson (1990:26-27) later built on Titmuss's work. Both disaggregate general social policy systems into three, roughly parallel models, and similarly argued that one type holds more potential for social integration. Titmuss's models were 'residual welfare', 'industrial achievement-performance' and 'institutional redistributive'. Esping-Anderson presented a schema of 'liberal', 'corporatist' and 'social-democratic'. The 'residual welfare' and the 'liberal' welfare state are both minimalist constructions, with a welfare system that is a safety net of last resort for those unable to provide for themselves through the market. The 'industrial achievement-performance' model and the 'corporatist' model both see welfare institutions as adjuncts of the economic system. These systems provide benefits based on traditional class or status hierarchies. The final categories, the 'industrial redistributive' model and the 'social-democratic' model, are built on universalist conceptions of social rights. Although these typological models have limitations, they are useful for post-conflict policy makers in providing a framework for designing and evaluating social programmes.

With the social assistance programme and the pension scheme in place, the social welfare regime that is emerging in Kosovo is taking on a more concrete, and analysable form. In short, this programme leans heavily toward a liberal model. The social assistance scheme is characterised by strict qualification criteria, means testing and modest benefits (UNMIK Regulation 2003/28). All three of these policy considerations – the qualification criteria, practice of means testing, and the level of benefits should be reconsidered. The weak structural universalism of the criteria is further limited by implementation that is bifurcated along the dominant ethnic lines. The parallel shadow administrative system in the Serbian areas undermines claims toward creating a non-ethnicised system. Incorporating the parallel administration into the emerging state institutions must be a major policy goal for the international administration. As it currently stands, and without policy revisions, one can expect the social assistance scheme to encourage the development of overlapping ethnic and economic dualism and to relegate welfare to a safety net rather than a social right. The basic pension, as a citizens' pension, is more universalistic; however, it is likely that it will be overwhelmed by the contributory schemes that are also written into the Kosovo pension law (UNMIK Regulation 2001/35). Those schemes are not universal, and can reasonably be expected to pay better benefits in the future. The extreme modesty of the benefits as indicated by very low replacement rate indicates that the 'basic pension' will not emerge as the dominant form of old-age support in Kosovo. Instead, this programme will become the safety net of last resort for the indigent elderly. A stratified system will likely emerge, with 'basic' pensioners at the bottom. The market promotion which is inherent in the design of the contributory pension programmes will divert the emerging pension regime from a corporatist model to an even more pronounced liberal model than the social assistance scheme. Overall, the social welfare system that has emerged in Kosovo is not likely to realise the full potential in terms of its contribution to social solidarity and stability.

Social Policy, Integration and Post-conflict Economic Engagement

Reactions against activist social policies have argued that they are an expensive luxury, rather than an integral component to a growing economy. Countering this is a body of well established scholarship that makes a strong argument for social policy as integral to economic growth. Most fundamentally, Keynes argued for a social policy that promotes state intervention for employment and economic growth (Shaw 1988:21-23). Keynesianism advocated

interventionist policies to increase employment, boost economic production and promote political stability after World War II. Lately, Keynesian ideas have been re-introduced into the larger social welfare discourse (Townsend 2002:5). One of the strengths of Keynesianism is its attention to employment generation. Promoting growth in employment has become almost an article of faith in post-conflict reconstruction. As Woodward (2002:201) points out, 'The critical role of active employment in redirecting behaviour and commitments toward peace is so obvious that no one disputes its importance.' Part of a functioning labour market – and successful efforts at employment generation – is social policy. Wilensky (2002:435) shows the success of democratic corporatism to serve as a foundation Keynesian economic policy. Wilensky's findings are especially important for post-conflict reconstruction because arguing that specifically in the post-war period of reconstruction (1950-1974) countries that invested heavily in social security had correspondingly high annual growth per capita, low inflation, and – most importantly in the post-conflict context – low unemployment. Five of the top nine economic performers – Germany, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands and Austria – during this period spent generously on social security (Wilensky 2002:433-434). These countries were among the most heavily damaged of World War II. Wilensky (2002:483) sees this relationship become increasingly less pronounced after 1974, but 'in no period and for no measure of economic performance is social-security spending a drag.' Effective social policies created the conditions for better productivity, employment and economic performance in post-war Western Europe. In a post-conflict situation, laying the institutional foundation for effective labour market management is a key to reviving employment generation.

Social welfare systems, the combined programmes of social policy, intercede to reduce the potential impact of negative outcomes in the labour market through the redistribution of material goods and the extension of insurance to guard against risk. There are numerous methods of redistribution, from subsidised private markets for loans that provide low-cost capital to state-administered grants to the indigent; from micro-credit schemes to food stamps. No type of redistribution sits exclusively at one end or the other of the private-public mix: public and private agencies both make efforts at redistribution. In Kosovo, like many post-conflict areas, the most active redistribution programmes have been organised by international and local relief and development NGOs. Insurance programmes also take multiple forms, such as unemployment or disability payments, and similarly are not necessarily either public or private. Private insurance markets co-exist with state programmes. Public social welfare

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programmes grant access to resources (redistribution) or protection from risk (insurance) as a right commensurate with one's citizenship status. Private programmes function through a market purchase, private charity or as a membership right. Although the market for private social insurance protection is currently underdeveloped in Kosovo, as argued above, the structure of the

new pension regime can be expected to encourage growth in this sector over time. The public pension programme, as a relatively limited programme, will most likely be marginalised over time. These two types of social insurance programmes will establish either market-based relationships to old-age protection, or citizenship based protection.

The impact of social welfare programmes varies depending on implementation and programme details. Social welfare institutions have variable effects at the economic as well as at the social level. Redistribution programmes that provide support for the unemployed

interact directly with the labour market. These programmes may be highly decommodifying, providing workers with greater flexibility and market power as they negotiate, explicitly or implicitly, for higher wages. Alternatively, by making benefits conditional, as they currently are in Kosovo, they may undermine labour's negotiating power by prohibiting its full market engagement. Other redistribution networks engage other market sectors such as food, housing or capital. These programmes have similarly variable effects, depending on programme design and implementation (Esping-Anderson 1990:47, 79).

Humanitarian aid, as a resource distribution programme, functions much like a social welfare programme. This functional similarity can lead to unexpected linkages between humanitarian aid programmes and emerging post-conflict social welfare programming. In Kosovo the combined World Food Programme (WFP) and U.S. Agency for International Development-Food for Peace (USAID-FFP) humanitarian distributions provided food aid as a protective measure for war-affected and vulnerable populations (Development Researchers Network 2002:8). The distributions counteracted the post-conflict scarcity of commodities and prevented dramatic price inflation. In the food commodity sector – the most important sector for social policy in Kosovo because it was the distribution system that led directly to the later social assistance scheme – the market intervention was largely successful. Food prices for staples such as flour and cooking oil did not rise steeply from July 1999, when post-conflict humanitarian aid began, to March 2002 when the WFP closed its operations (WFP 2002). Interactions between food aid and commodities markets are well studied, and the effect of distributions on market prices are often monitored. It is common for aid agencies to gather data regularly on commodity market prices in the course of operations. In Kosovo the larger and more important impact of the transition from humanitarian aid to social assistance was on the institutionalisation of the social welfare system, which in turn affects the local labour market. This impact on social welfare institutionalisation is a much less observed phenomenon. Food aid beneficiary criteria strongly influenced the social assistance criteria. Since targeting is such a strong component of food aid, the social assistance programme ultimately included a strong element of needs-testing. The determination of benefit levels largely followed budgetary constraints as in a traditional grant and project management mechanism, rather than building on expectations or demands of taxation or contributions as would be more traditional in a social welfare programme. In practical terms, this resulted in relatively meagre benefits and strict beneficiary criteria. Both of these programme characteristics lower the potential decommodification quality of the social welfare programme, potentially depressing wages and reducing incentives to return to the legitimate labour market. In political terms, the reliance on humanitarian NGOs as the core policy-makers for the original post-conflict social policy resulted in removing traditional political sources of social policy – popular movements, organised labour, progressive political parties – from the policy-making process.

Humanitarian and relief organisations need to be more conscious of their potential role in laying the groundwork for social policy formation. In Kosovo the movement from humanitarian aid programmes first established in the late 1980s to the post-conflict social assistance programming paralleled the course of the conflict. Humanitarian aid policy ultimately informed the formation of the social policy. The institutions developed to meet the social welfare needs of the ethnic communities functioned as mechanisms that promoted mutually exclusive economic and social life. Responsibility for social welfare needs in the post-conflict period was a contentious struggle between the emerging Kosovar state, backed by the UN, Albanian civil society organisations and the Serbian parallel system. Humanitarian NGOs were the strongest institutional actors within this contentious dynamic without necessarily being conscious of the stakes of the struggle being waged.

Within five years the original NGO-driven social welfare programme, based largely on the humanitarian distribution network of the immediate post-conflict period, had been legally institutionalised, through the legislative assembly. As specifically spelled out above, the Transition Task Force, organised and led by international humanitarian NGOs largely guided the establishment of the first post-conflict social assistance programme in Kosovo. This social assistance programme became the basis of the Kosovar social welfare system and the most important programmatic component of the province's social policy.

The Need for a Comprehensive Approach: Promoting Social Policy, Not Social Projects

Despite their importance, social policy and the social welfare institutions are not often addressed in a comprehensive manner in post-conflict reconstruction. Social policy is either seen as an issue that is better addressed once other policy considerations have already been made, or is relegated to small-scale interventions. Rather than being central to the debates surrounding reconstruction, social policy often drifts from public discourse, leaving decision making to devolve to interested elites or to expatriate experts. This locks out local participation and reduces public discussion of policy options. The post-socialist transitions of Eastern and Central Europe serve as examples. In the region 'international organisations paid little attention to social policy in the first years of transition, instead

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focusing on macroeconomics and privatisation'. (Orenstein & Haas 2002:13). According to Orenstein and Haas, lack of attention led to social policy formation being left to 'small groups of politically connected social policy experts' rather than being part of a more transparent, public

process. Macroeconomic adjustment was the dominant paradigm for transition assistance. International loans were offered with conditions that required cuts in social spending, many of which resulted in increases in poverty across the region (Townsend 2002:5). Social policy was subsumed into and overwhelmed by economic policy.

Kosovo followed a variation of this model. Instead of being overwhelmed by economic policy, however, social policy in post-conflict Kosovo was subsumed into humanitarian policy. Early attention was largely the by-product of efforts by the WFP and USAID-FFP to coordinate an exit strategy (Development Researchers Network 2002:8). The initial efforts for social assistance were organised by a Transition Task Force comprised of representatives from large international NGOs, a few local Albanian NGOs, a small number of inter-governmental organisations and major donor countries, all which had been involved in the distribution of food aid.¹ The Task Force was under the direction of the UN-led Joint Interim Administration Structures and was responsible for establishing the Social Assistance Scheme that was put into place in summer 2000. Although the Task Force successfully launched this limited social welfare programme, social policy itself did not shift to the uppermost levels of the international agenda. For example, the UN Development Group's January 2001 *Kosovo Common Assessment*, a document designed to 'provide the UN system with a unified and agreed upon set of common objectives', devoted less than two of 60 pages to a chapter entitled 'Social Welfare and Protection', mostly describing the Social Assistance Scheme put in place by the Task Force.

Missing from the policy-making table were the social, political and economic organisations, such as political parties, state agencies and organised labour and capital, that are historically the moving forces behind social policy. In short, the political agency of local actors to design and implement their own social policy was denied. Incorporating these more traditional political actors into the process represents a move beyond even participatory approaches to post-conflict policy-making. Instead, it is a return of the political dimension to the formation of policy. For the international actors involved, allowing the revival of

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political debate over policy choices is an obvious risk; these are after all contentious issues to be faced by former combatants. On the practical level this requires the identification of new and unorthodox partners for the international relief and development community. Social policy innovations are historically linked to 'working class parties and trade unions'

(Flora & Alber 1984), and international interveners may need look to these groups as potential collaborators. International relief and development organisations have been reluctant to become directly associated with such obviously politicised groups due to the risk of becoming embroiled in the local political conflicts. Despite the risks, social-policy formulation is a unique opportunity for a post-conflict policy-formation exercise that holds out the prospect of concrete results. Effective social policy, formulated by local political actors, can provide evidence of the workability of emerging post-conflict political and social institutions. Additionally, institutions and policies formulated through local politics benefit from greater legitimacy and are more sustainable. Given the immediate history of conflict, external mediation is a necessary and potentially challenging component to such policy-making, but the difficulty of the process does not negate its value.

If social policy is not addressed at a high policy level in a comprehensive fashion, it is often instead relegated to a micro approach which rests on small, localised projects designed to address the welfare needs of a limited population – i.e. a town, village or neighbourhood. Discrete amounts of money are directed toward solving discrete problems, and less attention is directed toward broad policy initiatives. Even when international funding is provided in large amounts, the focus continues to be on supporting particular projects, or providing the resources for beneficiary governments to establish their own project funding mechanisms (Tendler 2002:2). For example, in Kosovo emphasis has been placed on projects to facilitate the return of displaced Kosovo Serbs. These projects neglect both the empirical reality of the Kosovo Serbian presence and the core dynamic of the long-term viability of these communities.

The European Stability Initiative (ESI 2004) has presented strong evidence that as many as two-thirds of the Kosovo Serb population present before the international intervention remain in the province, primarily in dispersed rural communities. Although these communities are likely to remain so long as they have a minimum level of security and reasonable access to state services, it is unlikely that they will be sustainable over time since future generations will seek education and work in urban centres (ESI 2004:10). Without broad social policies that guarantee a minimum of economic security through social services, education grants or loans, minimum wages, unemployment insurance, disability insurance and pensions, jobs in Kosovo are unlikely to be attractive enough for young Kosovo Serbs to outweigh the pull from such locales as Belgrade or Niš in Serbia.

Similarly, social exclusion of Kosovo Serbs undermines their sense of the justness of the emerging Kosovar polity, reducing their incentive to stay. In the longer term, ethnic cleansing will be a result of slow trends toward ethnicised social exclusion.

Conclusion: Social Policy for Post-conflict Reconstruction

Building social welfare systems is rarely considered as a post-conflict policy option. Responses to violent conflict are often perceived as a continuum that runs from the provision of humanitarian assistance to full-scale reconstruction (Ferris 2001:324; Woodward 2002:189). An idealised version of the relief-to-reconstruction continuum starts with humanitarian relief to war-affected populations, such as the construction of refugee camps and the provision of food, shelter, health care and other essential items to both refugees and internally displaced persons. The continuum progresses to stabilisation programmes that alleviate immediate security risks such as mine clearance and the deployment of outside human rights monitors. This stage also includes 'quick impact projects' that are targeted toward addressing recovery and repair problems that have arisen due to the war such as school or hospital repair (UNHCR 2000:142-143). The reconstruction end of the continuum involves projects for long-term economic and social development.

Despite the usefulness of this continuum as a bureaucratic tool for ordering post-conflict priorities, its linearity belies the complicated nature of conflict dynamics and the need to appreciate the political contestations that were at the heart of the conflict. Disagreements about social policy are often part of these core political contestations because they are so important for the nature and quality of the governing regime. These political debates make up the ongoing global, regional or local history from which the conflict and post-conflict situation cannot be disengaged. Conflicts appear to have beginnings and ends – the day the first shots were fired, the week the old regime was overthrown, or the signing of the peace accords, for example. These markers signify moments of dramatic political change, but they do not happen in an historical vacuum. The first shots may signify not only the 'beginning' of the conflict, but also the maturation of violent opposition, or a radicalisation of non-violent opposition. The week the old regime falls marks the turning point of the regime's ability to enforce its will, not the destruction of all of the social, economic and political forces which had kept it in place. Peace accords are the beginning of a long and contentious implementation period, rather than the definitive end of the conflict. In any post-conflict environment it is necessary to recognise the historical context and the medium- and long-term impact of any policy choice.

The historical embeddedness of conflicts highlights the importance of social policy formulation. In an historical context the post-conflict transition from humanitarian assistance to social policy is inseparable from the conflict itself. The communities and groups that are supported through assistance may not have been the primary participants in the conflict, but neither are they bystanders. In the case of Kosovo, rural Albanian families that make up the majority of the social assistance rolls were not only the pool from which the most militant fighters were pulled, but also one of the core groups of the symbolic Albanian nation that was being fought over (Judah 2000:99-101,118). Similarly elderly rural Serbs who make up that community's largest social welfare recipient group were often the very group which Milosevic and the Serbian nationalist movement claimed to speak for and to protect (Dragovic-Soso 2002:141). The fight was not over welfare benefits *per se*, but it was a struggle over the boundaries of citizenship and the extension

of rights in Yugoslavia and Kosovo. Social rights were as much a part of the original contention as civil or political rights. In the post-conflict political environment agents of reconstruction such as the international NGOs, the UN and the local post-conflict government are not starting from scratch. They are building on the earlier struggles, including political struggles over social rights.

Social welfare is a powerful tool for creating a foundation for social solidarity on both normative and economic grounds. Universalistic, decommodifying and just social policy can create a broad sense of solidarity that can cut across the cleavages which had led to conflict. Social policies identified as just by the larger population support political stability

Social welfare institutions can provide an economic basis for multi-ethnic incorporation by providing the minimum level of human security needed for legitimate labour market engagement.

and a sense of positive identification with the larger social system. Social welfare institutions can provide an economic basis for multi-ethnic incorporation by providing the minimum level of human security needed for legitimate labour market engagement. Social policy, however, also carries risks. Social programmes that

strongly differentiate on the basis of either ethnicity or on factors which correlate with ethnicity may reinforce the divisions. To ignore the potential positive role of effective social policy is to ignore one of the most powerful integrative tools available in the post-conflict context. Similarly, to ignore the divisive potential of badly designed or poorly implemented social policy can lay the foundation for recurring violence.

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Endnote

¹ The attendance record from the minutes from the Social Welfare (CSW) Transition Task Force extraordinary meeting of 8 September 2000 listed Mercy Corps International, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, Action Against Hunger, Children's Aid Direct, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the Mother Teresa Society, UNMIK, the World Food Programme, USAID-FFP, UNHCR, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, the local office of the Red Cross of Kosova, and representatives of the UK Department for International Development also occasionally attended the Task Force meetings.

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