# States and welfare states: government for the people.

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# 1 Introduction: the state, and what it has become

**Summary.** *The state is often represented- or misrepresented - as if its role was defined by the use of physical force. For most of us, however, the state refers as much to a set of administrative processes, and to the services that its institutions provides, as it does to any of the other activities associated with government. The state routinely interacts with people in their daily lives. It manages the social infrastructure. It delivers benefits and services, typically including health care, education and cash benefits. Some states do this more effectively and more comprehensively than others, but even those which fall short in some respects can at least say that it is part of what they do, and what they are meant to do.*

*States and welfare states* is a work of normative political theory, applied to social policy. It discusses the role and responsibilities of contemporary governments. The central questions of political theory have mainly been understood to be either the question of political obligation - the responsibility that people have towards their government - or the question of who benefits, which focuses attention on the ways that government can be used to serve particular interests. This book addresses a different set of questions. What responsibilities do governments have towards their populations? What ought they to do, and what not? How can they do things better?

Government is both a set of institutions and a process. As a set of institutions, the government consists of the agencies and the officials who make and set policy: it is the government of a country that leads in developing the legislative framework and administers the policy-making process. As a process, government refers to the political direction of these institutions. The 'state' might refer either to those institutions which are part of the apparatus of government - primarily its legislative and executive functions - or to the country that is being governed; but 'the state' is also a shorthand for referring to the system as a whole, and that is how the term will be used in this book. The other term most used here, 'welfare state', is evocative, but richly ambiguous. It can be taken variously to refer to the provision of services by the state, to societies where welfare is provided, and to an ideal model where welfare is provided more extensively. I will return to those ideas in due course, but for the purposes of the argument I will begin with the first of these, and qualify the position as I go on.

When political theorists have considered the question of a government's duties in the past, it has often been treated as an exchange between the rulers and the ruled; the rulers gain power, the ruled get order. For Locke, governments undertook to protect life, liberty and property[1]; for Adam Smith, 'The first duty of the sovereign [is] that of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies'[2]; and for contemporary neoliberals, the primary role of a government is

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[1] J Locke, 1689, Second treatise on civil government
[2] A Smith, 1776, The wealth of nations, Book 5 chapter 1.

taken to be the maintenance of social order.[3] Other theorists - notably Hobbes,[4] Rousseau[5] and Rawls[6] - have drawn on the metaphor of a social contract to establish a process or set of rules, through which government will reflect the wishes and interests of the governed.

There is, however, another current running through some of these discussions. This is the ancient principle, *salus populi suprema lex:* 'the welfare of the people is the highest law.' Thomas Hobbes is widely thought of as advocate for absolute rule, making a case for citizens to give up any claim to rights in return for security. He also argued, however, that as part of the social contract, and respecting the demands of 'natural law', a sovereign ruler should be working for the good of the people.[7] He put it this way:

> For the duty of a sovereign consisteth in the good government of the people ... governing to the profit of the subjects, is governing to the profit of the sovereign ... And these three:
>    1. the law over them that have sovereign power;
>    2. their duty;
>    3. their profit:
> are one and the same thing contained in this sentence, *Salus populi suprema lex*; by which must be understood, not the mere preservation of their lives, but generally their benefit and good. So that this is the general law for sovereigns: that they procure, to the uttermost of their endeavour, the good of the people.[8]

The first part of this says that good government is in the interests of both the ruler and the people who are ruled. The second part declares that the test is whether a government improves people's welfare – 'their benefit and good'. The third part is that this advancement of welfare is a moral duty on governments.

Hobbes developed his argument by considering what a ruler should actually do. He identified four ways in which sovereigns should advance the good of the people. There should be a 'multitude': a thriving population would increase in number. The next objective was the 'commodity of living', mainly liberty and wealth. 'Peace amongst ourselves' was intended to include justice, fair dealing, and the suppression of dissenting opinions. Lastly, there was 'defence against foreign power'.

I am not going to develop Hobbes' specific prescriptions further – he was writing this just before the English civil war, and the demands of the seventeenth century are not the demands of the twenty-first - but it does point to the kinds of issue I want to address here. Abraham Lincoln presented government 'for the people' as a characteristic of democracy, but it is a moral duty on all governments, everywhere. *States and welfare states* is an attempt to understand what governments are supposed to be doing, and how they should do it.

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[3] R Nozick, 1974, Anarchy, state and utopia, New York: Basic Books
[4] T Hobbes, 1651, Leviathan, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.
[5] J-J Rousseau, 1762, Du contrat social; 1966 edition, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion.
[6] J Rawls, 1971, A theory of justice, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[7] Hobbes, 1651.
[8] T Hobbes, 1640, The elements of law, chapter 9.

# Some misconceptions

Many of the most influential sources which consider government and the state still reflect the views of a previous age, rather than the world as it is now. The role of the state has traditionally been seen as an exercise in power.[9] Weber claimed that 'Ultimately, one can define the modern state only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force'.[10] Taken literally, that has two implications: first, that force is basic to what states do, and second that this is the 'only' thing that defines the state - there are no other common distinguishing factors. That is almost certainly not what Weber meant to say: he went on to write that 'the use of physical force is neither the sole, nor even the most usual, method of administration of political organizations.'[11] That being the case, it can hardly be said to define the situation, either.

Weber described the state as 'a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.'[12] This is still widely cited as a definition of the state,[13] but it is an exaggeration, and looked at coldly, it is just not true. States do use force, but they do not necessarily have or claim a monopoly of it. The constitution of the United States explicitly, and famously, reserves to its citizenry the right to use force as a defence against tyrannical government, and it did that long before Weber was alive. More generally, interpersonal violence, especially against women and children, has often been treated as a legitimate action by the head of a household, and it is still commonly treated as permissible – disgracefully, from the perspective of human rights. The most that can be said about the use of physical force is that states reserve the right to employ it, while generally claiming a complementary right to constrain the use of force by their citizens. However, states also routinely constrain their own use of force – that is the implication of the word 'legitimate'.

The representations of defence, security and armed force as the primary duties of governments are all part of the same paradigm: a view of the state as an exercise in armed power. There was a time, not that long ago, when many states in developing countries were dominated by their military leaders. As former colonies gained their independence, the activists for whom the acquisition of power had been central to their struggle often behaved subsequently as if maintaining armed power was all that mattered. There are still states where armed power plays an important role, and a small handful which are concerned with the exercise of power to the exclusion of nearly everything else. That, when it occurs, is a ground for criticism. The strength of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Natasha Lindstaedt comments, 'is in repression and guerrilla war, not governing and providing services.'[14] Nevertheless, the fledging

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[9] G Sabine, 1920, The concept of the state as power, Philosophical Review, 29(4) 301-18.

[10] M Weber, 1918, Politics as a vocation, in H H Gerth, C W Mills, 1948, From Max Weber, London: RKP, pp 77-8.

[11] M Weber, 1978, Economy and society, Berkeley: University of California Press, p 51

[12] Weber 1918.

[13] For example C Pierson, 2011, The modern state, Abingdon: Routledge; S Orvis, C Drogus, 2021, Introducing comparative politics, New York: Sage, ch 2.

[14] Cited in S Sandhu, ,2021, 'Taliban's strength is in repression, not governing and providing

government has almost immediately become embroiled in discussions about schooling;[15] it is not open to the new government to say that education has nothing to do with them. Even fifty years ago, seizing power might have been enough, but the world has changed.

Defence is only one function of many that governments engage in. It should be obvious that a country's economy, living standards and institutions also need to be taken into consideration. Humboldt, writing in the mid-19th century, believed like many other writers of the time that the role of the state ought to be limited to security and defence. However, he acknowledged frankly that the trend was against him: contemporary states had become committed to 'positive welfare' – that is, action to improve the welfare of the people. He wrote:

> It has been from time to time disputed ... whether the State should provide for the security only, or for the whole physical and moral well-being of the nation. The vigilant solicitude for the freedom of private life has in general led to the former proposition; while the idea that the State can bestow something more than mere security, and that the injurious limitation of liberty, although a possible, is not an essential, consequence of such a policy, has disposed many to the latter opinion. And this belief has undoubtedly prevailed, not only in political theory, but in actual practice. ... I am speaking here, then, of the entire efforts of the State to elevate the positive welfare of the nation; of its solicitude for the population of the country, and the subsistence of its inhabitants, whether manifested directly in such institutions as poor-laws, or indirectly, in the encouragement of agriculture, industry, and commerce; of all regulations relative to finance and currency, imports and exports, etc. (in so far as these have this positive welfare in view); finally, of all measures employed to remedy or prevent natural devastations, and, in short, of every political institution designed to preserve or augment the physical welfare of the nation.[16]

The sort of thing which is described here as 'positive welfare' (not to be confused with a more recent, somewhat opaque, use of the same phrase[17]) has become a routine part of the agenda for modern governments. Rosenvallon suggests that it follows straightforwardly from a view of the state as a protective organisation: a state which aims to protect its citizens from violence will aim to protect them economically and socially as well.[18] Welfare is 'positive' when government takes action to benefit people directly - not just safeguarding rights or security, not just creating a framework, but engaging actively in measures intended to serve the public. There are clear deficiencies in any government which fails to do this.

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services', i newspaper, 1st September, page 9.

[15] S Glinski, R Kumar, 2022, Taliban U-turn over Afghan girls' education reveals deep leadership divisions, The Guardian 25.03.22.

[16] W von Humboldt, 1854, The sphere and duties of government, Carmel, IN: Liberty Fund, pp 10, 21, https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/coulthard-the-sphere-and-duties-of-government-1792-1854, last accessed 16.3.22.

[17] A Giddens, 1998, The third way, Cambridge: Polity, ch 4.

[18] P Rosenvallon, 1981, La crise de l'État-providence, Paris: Seuil, pp 20-24.

# The growth of 'positive welfare'

The character of the modern state was taking shape, and could be discerned, long before the creation of the contemporary 'welfare states' as we now understand the term. It would be difficult to identify any clear point in history at which governments undertook to promote 'positive welfare', but it has been going on for centuries, and the idea that governments should take on such a role was there long before the states that exist now took their modern form. The organisation of welfare delivery either preceded, or went hand in hand with, the development of the state.[19] Some religions had made prescriptions for the organisation of charitable relief – such as the collection of tzedakah advised in the Talmud,[20] or zakat in Islam[21] - but in 16th century Europe, the christian Church came to cede that responsibility to the secular authorities, reflecting the major upheaval of the Reformation. The earliest examples of a formal collective engagement with welfare services in the modern sense took place in the Low Countries, at that time part of the Spanish empire. The best documented of these systems is the scheme introduced in 1525 in the city of Ypres. Ypres instituted an extensive, formal system of support for the city's poor, including provision for education, cash support, residential accommodation, and free medical care. (Earlier schemes at Douai and Mons are less fully recorded.[22] The authorities at Ypres took an evaluation report to the University of Paris at the Sorbonne, in order to fend off accusations of Lutheran heresy. They defended themselves in these terms: 'The chief office of a Senate is not only to preserve the welfare of a commonwealth, but also to make it richer and better.'[23]) At around the same time, Luther and Zwingli established ordinances for the civic administration of charity in Leisnick and Zurich.[24] In England, the example of Ypres, and the need to replace the role of the monasteries in distributing charity, led to the Tudor Poor Law of 1535.[25] England was also the site of the first truly national scheme, the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1598, codified in 1601; that scheme was to last, in one form or another, for 350 years.

These examples happened long before the industrial revolution and the emergence of the modern state. The principle of laissez-faire, which is the idea that the role of the government should deliberately be limited to a minimum, came somewhat later: there are some early antecedents, but laissez-faire could only make sense as a guide to action once states were powerful enough to do something beyond it. The doctrine took such a hold in the most developed economies that we may have come to think of it as a norm, or the starting point from which later policies have developed. That would be misleading. The leading advocates of laissez-faire, such as Herbert Spencer[26], were highly influential, but they were fighting a losing battle: in the

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[19] See P Spicker (ed), 2010, The origins of modern welfare, Oxford: Peter Lang.
[20] Talmud, Tractate Baba Bathra, 8.
[21] A Tajmazinani (ed) , 2021, Social policy in the Islamic world, London: Palgrave Macmillan., 2021
[22] J Nolf, 1915, La réforme de la bienfaisance publique à Ypres au XVIe siècle, Gand: van Ghoetem/Universite de Gand.
[23] City of Ypres, 1531, Forma subventionis pauperum, in Spicker, 2010, p 113.
[24] F Salter (ed), 1926, Some early tracts on poor relief, London: Methuen.
[25] G Elton, 1953, An early Tudor Poor Law, Economic History Review 6(1) pp 55-67.
[26] H Spencer, 1851, Social statics

course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century governments became incrementally more engaged with measures to support welfare. The work of Johann Bluntschli, a Swiss legal theorist writing in the 1870s, may now strike us as somewhat eccentric (he thought that the state was organic, and masculine), but he was able to recognise something about the emergent role of contemporary governments, a pattern of behaviour which has grown more prominent as time has gone on. He put it like this:

> 1. The modern State recognises the rights of man in every one. ...
> 2. The modern State has become conscious of the limits of its power, and its rights. It considers itself essentially a legal and political community. ...
> 3. Man has his rights as an individual, private law is sharply distinguished from public law, and is rather recognised than created by the State, rather protected than commanded. ...
> 4. The sovereignty of the State is constitutionally limited.
> 5. The modern State is representative. ...
> 6. Modern States are essentially national States. ...
> 7. In the modern State different activities have different organs ...
> 8. Modern states recognise international law as a limit to their dominion.[27]

It is only the date of this text, coming very soon after the formation of Germany, that might be surprising to a modern reader. I could speculate as to why so many subsequent writers failed to see the same patterns - they may have been distracted, not unreasonably, by the experience of global war, the impact of totalitarian governments, communism and its client states, or the resurgence of neoliberal economics - but the epoch of the state conceived as power[28] has largely passed, and much of what has been written about government fails to relate to the institutions that have emerged.

## The contemporary state

The state, for most of us, refers as much to a set of administrative processes, and to the services that its institutions provides, as it does to any of the other activities associated with government. My own work has mainly been done in policy analysis, examining how social policies work and what they achieve. The areas I have engaged with during my career - health and social care for older people, social security, managing public housing or anti-poverty policy – may be specialised, but they are not exceptional. The state routinely interacts with people in their daily lives. The state employs people. It manages the social infrastructure. It delivers benefits and services, typically including health care, education, cash benefits and, where applicable, disaster relief. It creates ways and means to reduce poverty. Some states do all this more effectively and more comprehensively than others, but even those which fall short in some respects will usually claim that it is part of what they do, and what they are meant to do. That is true even among states which have little regard for democracy, individual freedom, or human rights.

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[27] J Bluntschli, 1875, The theory of the state, Ontario: Batoche Books (2000), pp 58-59
[28] G Sabine, 1920, The concept of the state as power, Philosophical Review, 29(4) 301-18,

Most commentators are aware, from the work that has been done in comparative policy studies, of differences between countries. Every detailed account, looking at historical or social context, inevitably highlights those differences, and there is a minor cottage industry based on the classification of differences into régimes.[29] In this book, I want to pay more attention to a phenomenon which is, to my mind, far more surprising than the differences: that government responsibility for social welfare services, even if it is done differently in different places, has become the norm. Readers who have come to this book with a primary interest in political thought might well have raised a sceptical eyebrow at my assertion in the previous paragraph that the activities of the state 'typically' include the provision of health care, education and cash support. That may not be how states are represented in the literature, but it is what they do in practice. Just about every government in the world spends something on education and health care. In relation to education, the average expenditure by government is 4.5% of national income (GDP, or Gross Domestic Product).[30] In relation to health care, average government spending is 5.9% of GDP, rather more than half all expenditure on health.[31] There is considerable variation, and coverage can be patchy: less than half the global population has access to essential health services, and by 2030 there will still be 200 million children who do not get basic schooling.[32] Nevertheless, states have come generally to accept that this is their responsibility, and they have been doing what they can to fill the gaps.

Cash support is less comprehensively provided, but there has been rapid and extensive growth. The most common monetary benefits are pensions, which still only cover three-quarters of the global population. Most states now also provide social safety nets for poorer people below pension age, in the form of cash transfers. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has charted the progressive extension of commitments to provide social security since 1900. Figure 1 shows the trend in striking terms. The policy areas referred to cover sickness, unemployment, old age, family or child benefits, maternity, invalidity, employment injuries and survivors' benefits.[33] By 1920, a handful of countries had accepted standards in several policy areas. By 1950, there was comprehensive provision in many richer countries, but only partial coverage in some and relatively little in the poorer countries. By 1980, the distinctions between north and south were clearer and stronger, with some marked exceptions – partial coverage in North America, but more extensive coverage in South America. By 2015, however, there was comprehensive coverage in most countries in the world, with the main exceptions reflecting partial coverage in sub-Saharan Africa.

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[29] Following G Esping Andersen, 1990, The three worlds of welfare capitalism, Cambridge: Polity; see e.g. M Powell, A Barrientos, 2011, An audit of the welfare modelling business, Social Policy and Administration, 45(1) 69-84.

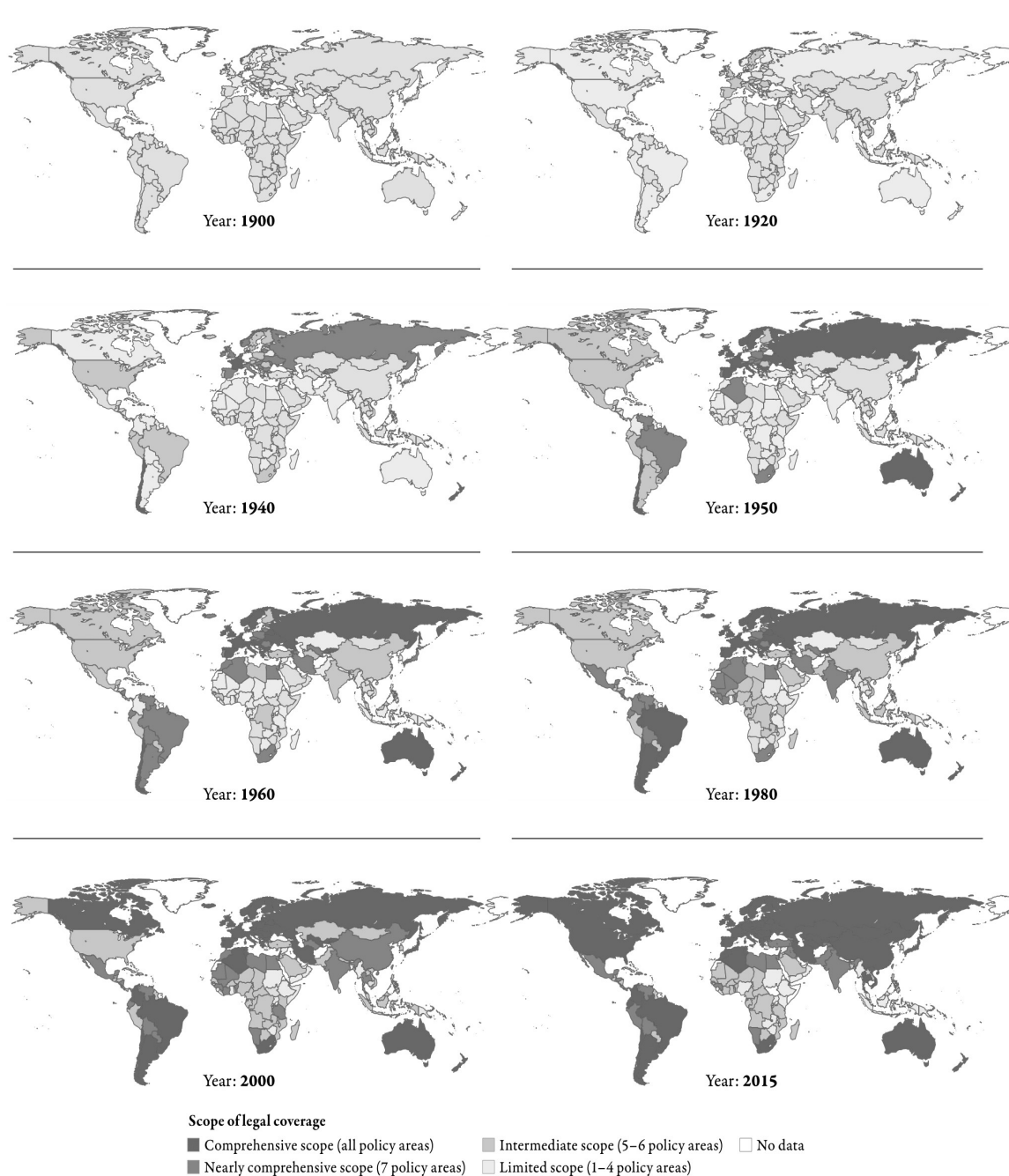[30] World Bank, 2021, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS, last accessed 2.2.21.

[31] World Bank, 2021, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS, last accessed 2.2.21.

[32] United Nations, 2020, The Sustainable Development Goals report 2020, New York: United Nations

[33] ILO, 2017, World Social Protection Report 2017-19, Geneva: International Labour Organization, Figure 1.1, p.5

[*Insert Figure 1 about here*]

**Figure 1**: Number of policy areas covered in social protection programmes anchored in national legislation 1900-2015 (ILO, 2017)



Scope of legal coverage

- ■ Comprehensive scope (all policy areas)
- ■ Nearly comprehensive scope (7 policy areas)
- ■ Intermediate scope (5–6 policy areas)
- ■ Limited scope (1–4 policy areas)
- □ No data

This may say more about how policies are made than it does about service delivery in practice; some states do not have the capacity to deliver what they promise.[34] *The Economist*, while noting the development in many countries, points to a series of practical problems: the lack of information at governments' command, over-reliance on technologies that people may not be able to access, and meagre resources.[35] The widespread acceptance of common policies, however, is a demonstration of something quite remarkable: a growing acknowledgement among governments of all political colours and temperaments that this is the sort of thing they ought to be doing. A substantial majority of governments around the world – including many that are autocratic or authoritarian - have elected to pursue a policy of 'positive welfare', and to develop social welfare services.

The process of adapting institutions to social protection and service delivery has shaped most people's experience of the modern state. Governments increasingly see it as their responsibility to do things to help and support their populations. There has been a proliferation of new states in recent years. They are offering much more than defence: a range of practical services, economic management, and a promise of general prosperity.

## Developing the argument

The plan of the book is fairly straightforward. In the first part, I am looking to develop an understanding of the role of government and the state in the contemporary world. Chapter 2 considers the institutions of government and the ways in which governments can act; chapters 3 and 4 consider the main fields of domestic policy; and chapter 5 considers state action in relation to other states, and international organisations. The second part is mainly concerned with normative positions. Chapter 6 presents competing views about the responsibilities of government, chapter 7 reviews different interpretations of welfare, and chapter 8 the elusive question of who the people are, who such duties are owed to. Chapters 9 and 10 review the guiding principles that might be applied to welfare policy.

The methodology that underpins the argument may be harder to explain. Comparative social policy has mainly been done in three ways, and this book does not follow any of them. The first approach is the classification of governments into normative categories or families, used both to describe patterns of governance and to evaluate them. There are many problems with this approach. The criteria are vague, the measures taken are often understood differently in the context where they are applied, the models are static while policy making is dynamic, and there are many variations within systems to classify.[36] The selection of criteria is crucial; so is the choice of services and actions which are used as the basis for the classification. Most generalisations break down when they are considered in detail.[37]

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[34] ILO, 2017, p 4.

[35] The Economist, 2022, Just keep us alive, 5th February, pp 54-56.

[36] P Spicker, 1996, Normative comparisons of social security systems, in L Hantrais, S Mangen (eds) Cross-national research methods in the social sciences, London: Pinter; C Aspalter (ed), 2020, Ideal types in comparative social policy, London: Routledge.

[37] H Bolderson, D Mabbett, 1995, Mongrels or thoroughbreds: a cross-national look at social

The second main set of methods relies on the use of multivariate analysis to identify trends and relationships. Here, again, there are problems. The variables are interdependent, and violations of the statistical assumptions are rife. More fundamentally, the assumptions which underly this kind of deductive analysis are deeply flawed. The analysis commonly rests on a belief that there is a causal link between variables, which can be identified through a rigorous scientific procedure, and that this link, once established, will make it possible reliably to predict the outcomes of future policy. This is what economists do, when they claim that a relationship holds 'when other things are equal' - but other things never are. Conceptually, 'bracketing off' information about politics and society in order to identify influences is inherently liable to lead to false trails; studies of implementation or service outcomes are always dependent on context.[38] The best that this method can achieve is to identify common patterns which might serve as a guide to practical judgment.[39]

The third approach is historical and qualitative. Leisering discusses recent developments in social protection in terms of 'the social question':

> Raising the 'social question' means that a society recognises social issues in a generalized way as a key concern of society, to be addressed by the state, linked to a call for political remedies. The underlying assumption is that the state is responsible for individual welfare.[40]

The social question, he argues, can be examined by considering the historical evolution of institutions and services; the social construction of state responsibility – what it involves, and who it is for; the political language or discourse used in justification; the framing of ideas in terms of general principles; and the transnational diffusion of ideas. In other work, Leisering puts great emphasis on ideational influences and global discourses.[41]

These factors can all help to explain the differences in national provision. The interpretations derived from a qualitative approach are usually defensible – they are based on specific evidence - and often sound. The depth and specificity of the analysis means, inevitably, that it highlights the differences between countries. This is amply demonstrated, for example, by the detailed case studies of China, Brazil, India and South Africa that are in Leisering's 2021 book.[42] Focusing on the differences tends to imply, if not that every state is distinctive, that the best that can be said about states is that some bear a 'family resemblance' to others.[43]

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security systems, European Journal of Political Research 28(1) 119-139
[38] P Spicker, 2018, The real dependent variable problem: the limitations of quantitative analysis in comparative policy studies, Social Policy & Administration 52(1) 216-228
[39] P Spicker, 2011, Generalisation and phronesis: rethinking the methodology of social policy, Journal of Social Policy 40(1) 1-19.
[40] L Leisering (ed), 2021, One hundred years of social protection, Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 394-5.
[41] L Leisering, 2018, The global rise of social cash transfers, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[42] Leisering, 2021.
[43] For example M Bevir, R Rhodes, 2010, The state as cultural practice, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

I have no qualms about the soundness of this approach; the difficulty I have with it, simply put, is that it leads in the opposite direction from the course I want to follow. I cannot look at the development pictured in Figure 1 and suppose that the way to understand the movement it shows is to have a deeper understanding of the many differences between countries. The similarities between countries are strong and surprising enough to merit attention in their own right. I do not plan to argue that every state in the world is beneficent, or even that most are. Poor people from around the world complain about abuse by those in authority; police are often seen as part of the problem.[44] Common exclusions and failures relate to the situation of migrants, homeless people, indigenous minorities and people with disabilities. Nor am I claiming that any state acts perfectly in line with their stated values and international commitments. Human rights are said to guarantee an adequate standard of living, sufficient to cover food, housing and medical care;[45] but there are grounds to criticise even the best governments about their failure to secure all such rights for everyone. The puzzle is not that governments fall short of the standard. It is that so many recognise the responsibilities they have in relation to positive welfare, and have taken steps to develop services which at least move in that direction.

The style of argument I employ in this book has more to do with normative theory than it does with the policy sciences. The primary purpose of theoretical writing is to clarify; it works through a process of description, analysis and evaluation. The aim of original theory is to interpret issues in a new way, and that is central to the purpose of this book.  I aim to argue that states have a responsibility for the welfare of their citizens, but that principle is not new. I have already started, in this chapter, to challenge the view that the authority of states is rooted in the application of physical force. I will go on to argue for a reconsideration of the classifications we use in comparative social policy, and for a view of the welfare state as a process, rather than a definable set of outcomes.

The questions that I posed at the beginning of this chapter are normative rather than descriptive; but empirically speaking, there has been a remarkable confluence of ideas, approaches and methods, which call into question much of what has been written about the character of the modern state. However, the originality of a work of theory is based on the selection, critical examination and synthesis of material from different sources, not the discovery of new facts. I have referred in general terms to facts and examples at several points in the argument, but everything I write is an interpretation: facts are rarely incontrovertible, and most of the facts that exist about government are indicative - pointers and signposts, rather than 'hard' evidence. They are more persuasive when they are backed up either by other evidence, or by reasoning. There is a common trend in political theory to abstraction, and sometimes to fantasy: arguments are built out of thought experiments, literary analogies and what Robert Goodin has called 'crazy cases'.[46] I do not use that kind of material in this book; I do not think I need to.

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[44] D Narayan, R Chambers, M Shah, P Petesch, 2000, Voices of the poor: Crying out for change, World Bank/Oxford University Press, pp 162-6

[45] United Nations, 1948, Declaration of Human Rights, art 21.

[46] R E Goodin, 1982, Political theory and public policy, Chicago: Chicago University Press.