

BOOK REVIEWS

The Double Crisis of the Welfare State and What We Can do About It. By **Peter Taylor-Gooby**. Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot. 2013. 144pp. Ebook.: £21.00; ISBN 9781137328113.

In his book *The Double Crisis of the Welfare State and What We Can Do about It*, Taylor-Gooby explains the immediate and long-run financial crisis and its impacts on the welfare state. With a specific focus on the UK, the author demonstrates the radical liberal policy reactions towards the crises and points out politically feasible welfare policy approaches that would promote a more inclusive and generous welfare state.

Being a welfare state that is mainly financed through taxation rather than contributions, the UK adopted a radically liberal way of handling the economic crisis and its side effects. At the core of the government's policy response was an emphasis on harsh cuts in government spending and much less of a focus on raising taxes. Spending on popular mass services in areas like health, education and pensions has been maintained, however, spending on less popular services, such as services for the most vulnerable groups of working-age - low-paid, unemployed and disabled people, families with children, women and the homeless - were hit hardest.

From Taylor-Gooby's point of view, these cutbacks fuel the immediate crisis of a work-centred social division between middle/upper classes and the working-class poor, between deserving and undeserving. In order to establish a more developed welfare state, policies that meet the conditions of generous and inclusive provision, political feasibility and effectiveness in delivering desired outcomes should be introduced. Public resistance in the UK to paying higher taxes, as well as the relatively strong public support for popular mass services such as health-care, education, and pensions in contrast to the more stigmatic attitudes towards unemployed, are obstacles to the idea of a developed welfare state. In line with Van Oorschot's five deservingness criteria (2000), Taylor-Gooby links the stigmatisation of certain benefit recipients to society's perception of personal responsibility for welfare dependence. This in turn leads to the classification of deserving and undeserving welfare recipients. Taylor-Gooby adopts a problem-solving approach and suggests reframing welfare redistribution. Redistributive policies should present benefit recipients as member of groups who have already made, who are currently making, or who will make contributions to society, such as through low-paid work. Social investment programmes focusing on labour market participation, prevention programmes in areas such as health care, and pre-distribution programmes that mitigate inequalities at source, could support this reframing process. Another possibility would be to use family-centred approaches targeting child poverty, which have the potential to circumvent negative values attached to welfare recipients because children are not considered as personally

responsible for their dependence.

Furthermore, Taylor-Gooby argues that new social risks which have arisen in liberal European economies could provide an opportunity to recognise shared needs in a society that is increasingly marked by social division. In the UK, both liberalism and new social risks have accelerated since the economy transitioned from a manufacturing based one into more service sector employment. A consequence of this has been widening inequalities and, therefore, state provisions to meet needs for those with low wage are relatively weak compared to other European countries. In some areas like education and training, which are necessary for successful labour market integration, new patterns of risk traverse horizontally and vertically through redistributive mass and minority welfare. These areas could offer opportunities for developing new coalitions of interest between mass and minority needs. Such policies could be framed as the effective response to current challenges and could be supported by the majority of voters.

Taylor-Gooby elaborates on a very broad issue and therefore uses rather general approaches in providing answers and solutions to this 'double crisis'. Considering the diversity of society, such as ethnic diversity, adopting a narrow perspective might be more challenging than expected in promoting collective support for a more inclusive and universal welfare state. In the British context in particular, the assumed political feasibility of policies that target child poverty might not be easily applicable. Children from families with lower socio-economic resources and migrant backgrounds are seen as an economic burden and, furthermore, as potential gang members which makes them untrustworthy citizens (Larsen 2013: 172). In the US, efforts to establish more generous and inclusive welfare schemes were hindered by the negative relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and welfare spending across the US (*Ibid.* 205). This relationship also applies to the UK with regard to non-Western immigrants, and increased ethnic diversity might fuel low public support for anti-poverty policies in this country (*Ibid.* 216). Therefore, the justification for a developed welfare state might be problematic, even if shared needs, child poverty and potential contributions are emphasised through policies. This reason for this is that such policies do not pay specific attention towards the impact of ethnic diversity on public support. Specific policy programmes that promote the perception of shared identities might be necessary. Achieving political feasibility and broader public support for a generous and inclusive welfare state requires these programmes to take into consideration new social risks that cut across ethnically different groups.

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References

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Van Oorschot W (2000) Who should get what, and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity among the public. *Policy and Politics* 82(1): 33-48.