



Rethinking the Welfare State: Social Policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic and in the Post-pandemic Period

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Rethinking the Welfare State: Social Policies in COVID-19 Pandemic and the Post-pandemic Period¹

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Abstract

This study will examine the possible effects of COVID-19 on social policies. Welfare states have long faced economic, social, demographic, and environmental problems. The intense pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic on social policies -particularly healthcare and employment- is a major challenge for welfare states that are established through nation state formation and financed through social security premiums and economic growth. In this context, it is inevitable for the welfare regimes to be re-structured and for the state to collaborate more closely with other actors (the family, civil society, and the market) in the distribution of social welfare. In addition to the transformation on a national scale, there are regulations to be made regarding the distribution of social welfare on a global scale. The current COVID-19 pandemic requires considering the possibilities of a global welfare regime, which aims to reduce income inequalities and to achieve an equitable and democratic regime shaped by comprehensive regulations, and where global welfare is again distributed on a global scale.

Keywords

Welfare State, Social Policies, Pandemic, COVID-19, Risks

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Introduction

COVID-19 that first appeared in China as a local problem, gained a global magnitude after it spread to the neighboring countries and Europe. The spread of the virus to America and Africa in combination with the rapid increase in death rates no comma triggered governments to take significant precautions. The economic burdens of the pandemic on the healthcare systems and the precautions taken by the governments during this period caused the reassessment of the welfare state and social policies. Healthcare systems, employment regulations, and precautions taken for the most vulnerable groups are the most prominent social policy implementations. Even though the measures taken against COVID-19 continues to improve and differ during this process, there is enough data to understand the reactions of the welfare states during the first stages of the pandemic.

This study aims to discuss the future of social policies in regard to social, economic, and political circumstances after the pandemic. The main claim of this study is that the welfare regimes are path dependent and they will develop social policies that are specific to their institutional and historical characteristics. In addition to this, it can be claimed that the pandemic will accelerate the ongoing restructuration of the welfare regime. There is a need for fair, inclusive, and sustainable regulations on a global scale for social policies.

This study examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on social policies and welfare states and how these social policies will evolve post-pandemic. This study includes four sections. The first section will provide a brief description on the institutionalization of social policies in different welfare states. The second section will cover the first responses of countries to COVID-19 and social policy practices. The third section will provide details on the risks welfare states have been facing for a long time. The fourth section will address

the post-pandemic evolution of social policies based on former experiences. Conclusion will provide a brief discussion on the evolution of Turkish social policies post-pandemic.

Development of Social Policies

Even though the formation of the welfare state and modern understanding of social policy can be traced back to the 19th century Bismarck's Germany, it was institutionalized and widened in Europe during the second half of the 20th century due to the Great Depression of 1929 and heavy destruction caused by the immediate outbreak of World War II. According to Mullan and Spicer's (1998) approach, the modern welfare state formation differs based on various ideologies; nonetheless, it has become a key player in welfare distribution in the 20th century.

The welfare state can be viewed as a deep form of protective state (Rosanvallon, 2004). The welfare state state, on the one hand, protects individual gains such as civil and political rights, on the other, undertakes social developments such as improving social services and redistribution of wealth (Rosanvallon, 2004: 22). Issues that were previously viewed as individual or family problems such as unemployment, disability, seniority, were now recognized as social problems and managed by social policies (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 33). Although social risks vary in different periods and societies, nation state and capitalism are preconditions of a welfare state (Pierson, 2007: 106). To ensure the preservation of these preconditions, for the first time in human history, state took active role in the distribution of social welfare and sought to decline social inequalities. While examining the social citizenship, Marshall (1964) makes a distinction of civil, political, and social rights when emphasizing the importance of social rights on welfare state formation and legitimation of the economic system. Social citizenship causes the revision of the capitalist class system while also preventing persistent economic inequalities (Marshall, 1964: 122). Referring to the protective role of the state, it can be argued that welfare states have three fundamental functions: ensuring minimum wage for individuals and families regardless of property and occupation; declining of mistrust due to family and individuals' protection against sudden loss of income; ensuring for all citizens the best quality social services, regardless of class and status (Briggs, 1961: 228). Five policies come forward within this framework: work and unemployment, pension system, healthcare services, shelter, and family aid (Beland, 2010: 28).

Management of social risks and distribution of welfare falls to four integral welfare actors, namely state, market, family, and civil society in varying proportions (Aysan, 2018). Similar categorizations such as welfare mix and welfare plurality are discussed taking into account functions of varying different actors such as occupations and religious institutions (Gilbert & Terrel, 2013; Ozdemir, 2004).

It is impossible to suggest a monolithic welfare state in all industrial countries with similar features and social policies. Based on Titmuss's (1974) studies, Esping-Andersen (1990) analyses social policies in liberal, social democratic, and corporatist threefold "welfare state regime". This classification was further developed in the following years with different welfare regime groups. (Castles & Mitchell, 1993; Fenger, 2007; Gough, 2001; Korpi & Palme, 1998). Various classifications were made, such as Southern European (Mediterranean), East Asian or Confucian, Latin American, and Post-Soviet welfare states.

Four different welfare states come forward when we examine the welfare regimes and social policies. Social Democratic welfare regimes, such as Sweden and Norway that prioritize universal social rights, differ from other states with state centered welfare distribution and operation. In addition, Continental European corporatist welfare regimes, such as Germany and France, distribute social welfare based on occupational social status. This group is also categorized as Conservative welfare regime since it prioritizes class differences and hierarchy. Civil society and market in Liberal welfare regimes including Anglo-Saxon countries such as the US and the UK, with highly identified social inequalities, play more active roles in managing social risks than the state and the family. welfare regimes that institutionalized after the first two welfare regime groups, differ from other welfare regimes since it prioritizes family rather than distribution of welfare and use populism and patronage as a tool for welfare distribution.

In various countries, social policies are generally financed by social security contributions of employees and tax. State played a dominant role in economic life when Keynesian microeconomic policies came forward after World War II. Specifically, the welfare state which has government provided economic growth, supported national production with high tariff rates, closed off to foreign competition and based on Fordist production structure has successfully endured for a long time. Key to this success was the implicit social contract among employee, employer, and the state.

However, criticism towards welfare states increased after the oil crises of 1970s. These criticisms are suggested to be based on two political approaches. The first criticism by the leftists claimed a lack of social inequality that legitimized the capitalist system thus delaying the revolution (Offe, 1984). Liberal Economists, particularly Hayek (1960) and Friedman (1962), argued that the welfare state is massive in size, cumbersome, reduces the freedom of venture and negatively affects the individual and the social welfare. The report published by OECD (1981) claimed that the welfare state was in crises due to public expenditure and budget problems. There were several reforms in the last forty years that aimed to reduce public expenditure, address the changing social needs, and sometimes led to neo-liberalization. However, since the OECD declaration of welfare state crises, there was not a serious drop in social spending of OECD countries. As shown in Table 1, while there is a stagnation in the last ten years, social spending remained high due to an increase in senior population.

The OECD average in public expenditure for gross domestic product (GDP) medium was 14% in 1980s; it was up to 20% in 2018. Turkey has one of the highest increases from 2% to 13% in social expenditure amongst these countries.

Table 1. Public Social Expenditures GDP Ratio in Selected OECD Countries (1980-2018)

	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
Australia	10.3	12.1	13.1	16.9	18.3	16.7	16.6	18.5	17.8
Belgium	23.1	25.6	24.4	25.2	23.5	25.2	28.3	29.2	28.9
Canada	13.3	16.4	17.5	18.4	15.8	16.1	17.5	17.6	17.3
France	20.1	25.2	24.3	28.3	27.6	28.7	31.0	32.0	31.2
Germany	21.8	22.2	21.4	25.2	25.4	26.2	25.9	24.9	25.1
Italy	17.4	20.1	20.7	21.1	22.7	24.2	27.1	28.5	27.9
Japan	10.0	10.8	10.9	13.3	15.4	17.2	21.3	21.9	21.9
Mexico	-	1.9	3.1	3.7	4.4	6.1	7.4	7.7	7.5
Norway	16.1	17.2	21.6	22.5	20.4	20.7	22.0	24.7	25.0
Netherlands	23.3	23.8	24.0	22.4	18.8	20.2	17.8	17.7	16.7
Portugal	9.5	9.8	12.2	16.0	18.5	22.3	24.5	24.0	22.6
South Korea	-	-	2.7	3.1	4.5	6.1	8.2	10.2	11.1
Spain	15.0	17.1	19.2	20.7	19.5	20.4	24.7	24.7	23.7
Sweden	24.8	27.0	27.2	30.6	26.8	27.3	26.3	26.3	26.1
Turkey	2.2	2.0	3.8	3.4	7.5	10.1	12.3	11.6	12.5
UK	15.6	18.2	14.9	16.7	16.2	18.3	22.4	21.6	20.6
US	12.8	12.6	13.2	15.1	14.3	15.6	19.4	18.8	18.7
OECD Average	14.4	16.1	16.4	18.0	17.4	18.2	20.6	19.0	20.1

Source: OECD, 2020a.

Not: There is no 2018 data on Australia, Japan, Canada, Mexico and Turkey. Closest date is used for 2018 data.

Responses to the Pandemic

A comprehensive examination reveals countries' political response to the pandemic varied. COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan, China, and within a couple of weeks, it was detected in Thailand and South Korea. Cases and deaths were reported from France, Italy, and Spain at the end of January. On March 11, 2020, The World Health Organization (henceforth WHO) announced COVID-19 as a pandemic. Turkey had its first COVID-19 case on the same day. Even though it was relatively slow to spread to North America, it became the new centre of the pandemic in May.

The WHO's failure to effectively and widely warn about the severity of COVID-19 and the initial assumption that it would only effect a region much like SARS or MERS caused several countries to be caught unprepared. In addition to this, countries such as the UK, Sweden, and Netherlands' decision to impose herd immunity caused the virus to spread much rapidly. Although countries' first reaction to the pandemic was diverse, subsequently many countries adopted similar responses. Table 2 shows selected countries' social policy responses to the pandemic. Large gathering areas in countries, such as schools, malls, restaurants, cafes, gyms, and prayer centres performed under some restrictions or were in time closed down to prevent the spread of the virus. Mandatory closure of numerous workplaces or transitioning towards flexible working hours made employees reconsider their work hours. In order for employees to maintain their work status, countries considered in this study except Mexico all developed new regulations. During this period, income support was available for self-employed people as well as those that were unemployed during this period. However, there were no long-term regulations for employees who were laid off during this period. In addition to this, in several countries, healthcare workers and their families were provided various income supports as well. Employment regulations and income aids varied according to each country, however, they were based on similar policies.

Countries differed in healthcare and care policies. For instance, America, Brazil, South Korea, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Norway did not necessarily reserve additional resources to fund their healthcare system; other countries formed additional resources to lessen the burden of the pandemic on the healthcare system. In addition to this, the demand for basic needs such as diagnostic tests, protective gear, and ventilators. Some countries such as Turkey quickly produced these essentials in the country and distributed to others. Basic needs and care services were not effectively provided for the elderly in most of the countries.

Table 2. Social Policies on the Pandemic of Selected Countries

	Confinement Measures	Income support to sick workers and their families	Income support to persons losing their jobs or self-employment income	Helping firms to adjust working time and preserve jobs	Regulations concerning layoffs	Increase supplies of diagnostic tests, protective equipment, ventilators, essential medicines	Protection of the elderly	Additional funding/ financing for the health system
Australia	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Belgium	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Brazil	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
China	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Canada	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
France	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Germany	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Italy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Japan	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Mexico	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Netherlands	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
North Korea	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Norway	✓		✓	✓		✓		
Portugal	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Russia	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Spain	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sweden	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Turkey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UK	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
US	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		

Source: OECD, 2020b; The Health System Response Monitor (HSRM), 2020.

Periodic global economic crises are inevitable due to the nature of the capitalist system. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that this is not just a temporary health issue, but rather brings with it serious social and economic threats. Beyond these conditions, the pandemic indicates a profound systematic global crisis that deeply upsets the fundamentals of the welfare state. Even though this period brought with it entwined problems, three are the most prominent. First of these is that most countries have not made accurate and on time responses since the beginning of the pandemic. Failure of the politicians to grasp the significance of the situation and their attempts to control the rapid spread of the virus with palliative precautions caused rapid rise in deaths in countries, such as the UK, the US and Brazil. Healthcare system crisis is, however, based on its long-term structural problems. While aging of the population and increasing life standards added to the burden on healthcare system, countries' failure to develop new policies on systems financial sustainability made these malfunctions noticeable. As can be seen in Table 2, many countries for this reason had to make extra financial contributions to their healthcare. Lastly, rapid rise in unemployment and economic constraints caused by the pandemic will have long lasting effects. Data on employment and commerce can provide detail on the extent of economic problems. For instance, China's export in the first quarter of 2020 dropped 13% compared to the first quarter of 2019 (OECD, 2020b). The US employment in April decreased 20 million, while unemployment rose to 15% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020).

Risks for Welfare States Ahead

The pandemic period intensely engaged the public agenda with variously questioned and criticized social policies, and caused great discussions on the welfare state as we know. There are four fundamental dynamics that challenge the welfare state as we know: expanding economic issues, demographic shift, social change, and environmental problems.

Intensifying economic problems

The economic growth that did not yield employment has been widely discussed since 1990s (UNDP, 1993). During this period, even with the economic growth, post-war employment could not be attained. Rifkin (1995) declared "the end of work" by associating this development with the 3rd industrial revolution and market centred policy. Even though there were new job opportunities for white collar workers in service sectors, when compared to the security and full-time work Fordist period entailed, these unstandardized jobs were short term and insecure and brought less income.

With globalization, production shifted towards developing countries and Asia, especially after 1980s. Welfare states, which were financially dependent on premiums and tax, had immense economic loss. Slower economic growth made it difficult to comply with the growing social equality demand and increase in social spending. Furthermore, the recent technological developments, robotization of production caused reduced long-term and secure employment

and decline of income. Even though some claim that developing sectors, such as information technology, finance, and logistics have increased employment, its effects on total employment ratio is still low. These new sectors somewhat increased employment rates; however, whether these are stable and offer good income is debatable. Moreover, the changing employment conditions that bring hardship on individual's economic circumstances and add psychological pressure are some of the problem areas (Ehrenreich, 2001; Sennett, 1998). These economic fluctuations and growing insecurity increased over the years. The financial crises of 2008 that began in the US and spread around the world disrupted employment structures and pension systems, especially in industrialized countries. This economic crises raised the question on financial sustainability of the welfare state, yet also caused increasing numbers of unemployed, poor, and homeless to feel insecure (Hemerijck vd., 2012).

Demographic transformation

The world population has rapidly aged, especially within the last 30 years. Today, 65 and older population constitute up to 28% in Japan, near 23% in Italy and about 9% in the world (United Nations, 2019). Even though this demographic change especially affected Southern Europe and Japan, for the first time in its history, the whole world is aging. When generally studied the aging of the population is due to aging at the bottom and aging at the top. Aging at the bottom is the rapid decline in fertility rates leading to an overall decrease in youth in the population. Aging at the top is defined as the slowing of the mortality rates, longevity and overall increase of elderly in the population.

In the last 70 years, Western Europe's life expectancy at birth increased from 68 to 82 and 47 to 72 worldwide (UN, 2019). Social and economic risks produced by aging caused the discussion on demographic shift and its effects on social policies. Discussions on ageing issues in welfare states are mostly based on retirement pension systems, ongoing reforms, and its implications (Taşçı, 2010; Aysan, 2012a, Aysan, 2019). The most important factors that threaten the sustainability of the welfare state, which is based on post-war premiums, is the aging populations' increasing needs in health care and the increasing burden on the pension system that is based on negative and positive balance. When these expenses are examined, the OECD's health spending as a share of GDP went from 4.1% in 1980 to over 5.3% in 2015; however, elderly spending went from 4.8% to 7.0% (OECD, 2020a).

Aging population is the result of both the success and the failure of the welfare state. Its success because the developing healthcare system and services rapidly increased the life expectancy rate at birth. Its failure since individuals who are affected by economic and social changes were not provided necessary social policies to ensure the formation of a solid family to raise children. Industrialized countries drop in fertility rate reveal the insufficient policies, especially family regulations, employment and child policies. Current fertility rate in Italy and Japan is 1.3; while it is 2.2 in Turkey and 2.5 globally (UN, 2019).

Social changes

While there was a more consistent social structure during the institutionalization of the welfare state, social change rapidly increased, specifically in 2000s. General changes with the use of communication technologies and consequently increase in interaction, secularization, and individualization deeply affected the welfare state that was shaped by a more consistent society. Within the last 70 years, increase in women's education and participation in paid labor has led to a change in the structure of the family and gender based domestic work. Change in the family structure such as delayed marriage, decrease in fertility rates, increasing divorces, brought with it new social risks. Risks (i.e. child and elder care, unemployment, and disability) alongside rapid structural changes could not be sustained by family and women who traditionally provided unpaid care. During this period of social change, the state and the market took more of an active role as social welfare providers, with institutional long-term care support and various insurance services during this period.

In addition, starting from 2000, conflicts in Western Europe and Northern Africa brought with it mass waves of migration. Globally, there were 174 million immigrants in 2000; this number reached 221 million in 2010 and 272 million in 2019 (UN, 2019). About 11% of these immigrants were refugees or asylum seekers. Today, more than half of the immigrants live in European countries with strong social policy practices (82 million) and Northern America with significant job opportunities (59 million). Even though immigration enriches the host nation's society and culture and brings new economic opportunities to; nevertheless, it increases social policy expenses and creates new financial burdens for the welfare state. On the other hand, for low paying jobs that require no qualification or certificate, citizens may view immigrants as threats to them and their jobs thus it can cause increasing ethnic chaos and discrimination. In order to solve these problems, increase in multi-cultural practices, enrichment of adjustment policies, and a re-evaluation of employment policies are needed. However, all these increase the burden on welfare states.

Changing social structure in terms of ethnicity, religion, and culture poses new risks for welfare states that protect their citizens' social rights within the boundaries of the nation state. New risks brought on social change if not managed right threatens the future of the welfare state and social harmony. Under these circumstances, the reason for populist discourse and the rise of the racist parties can be attributed to the reactions of the blue collar workers to an increasing hardship while facing decreased social support supplied by family and close friends and a competitive job environment created by mass immigration.

Environmental problems

Social policies in welfare states tried to ease the social risks and market failures, and at the same time legitimized the capitalist accumulation and economic growth paradigm. However, capital accumulation and economic growth are based on intensive use of the fossil fuel energy source, constant

increase in consumption, and growing discrepancy between the rich and the poor countries. Natural disasters and environmental problems, such as global warming, food shortages, floods, earthquakes, and epidemics pose a threat to the welfare states that are established upon stable society structure and economic progress. Increasing number of studies show that global warming and other environmental factors affect well-being. Welfare states are sometimes analyzed with concepts such as “ecosocial welfare” (Fitzpatrick & Caldwell, 2001) “sustainable welfare” (Gough, 2015) “ecosocial policy” (Hirvilammi & Helne, 2014). However, inevitable natural disasters and their effects on human life stressed the re-evaluation of policies that only targeted economic growth and worked hard to achieve sustainable and eco-friendly social policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused mass unemployment in short time and widened the economic crises. The ongoing environmental problems, such as drought, air pollution, excessive use of natural resources caused economic crises, migration waves and social dissatisfaction that welfare states are unable to tackle on their own and require global regulations.

Post-Pandemic Social Policies

The pandemic revealed that rich European countries, that can barely meet their healthcare needs, are unable to overcome the challenges posed by the virus, illegal immigrants, and contraband products by closing their borders. Thus, the virus reminded us the interconnected fate of the world through financial systems, production chains and societies. Due to abovementioned risks, it is unavoidable for welfare states to question the very foundation of the welfare state against the increasing social welfare needs post- COVID-19. The role of the welfare state, which is one of the four fundamental components in social welfare distribution along with family, civil society and market, increased after World War II. In other words, welfare regime began to apply state centered distribution of social welfare; and for the first time in history, the state came forward with institutions such as social security, education, social services, and health for social welfare distribution. However, under today’s circumstances, in social welfare distribution state needs to form a better collaboration with other social welfare distribution actors (family, civil society, and market). Signs of what we can call the restructuration of the welfare state began to appear (Aysan, 2012b). For instance, in Scandinavian countries that are recognized for their generous social policy practices, the state collaborates with family and civil society in social welfare distribution. However, we cannot forget that every welfare regime with its own features will have to continue their social policies as path dependent. Hence, it can be claimed that in the post-COVID-19 period, states would follow three main routes: persistence of the ongoing social policies and welfare distribution with small reforms, reducing the financial pressure of the pandemic on the welfare state with neo-liberal policies, and forming a sustainable welfare regime in a global and national level in light of new conditions.

The first option, based on the burden placed on health and employment due to COVID-19, does not seem feasible. This pandemic displays that social welfare distribution, that challenge global problems, cannot be sustained by the current welfare system which is based on social security contribution and constant economic growth. Demographic aging not only causes a proportionate decrease in financing and financial difficulties in pension system that is supported by premium payments, but also brings additional burdens on health, long-term care, and pension system. In addition to this neo-liberal policies, which resulted in part-time jobs, less pay, and insecurity with outsourcing of jobs to other countries, cause insufficient collection of income tax and insurance premiums, which are the main source of finance for social policies. Changes in the social structure causes welfare states, which are based on gender division of labor and a stable social structure, to undertake many unpaid domestic services, which were previously performed by women. Hence, the welfare state does not appear to be sustainable for countries that do not have the capability to finance this increased cost through simple reforms such as those made after 1980s.

Secondly, some might argue neo-liberal policies as an effective means to solve financial problems of welfare states and provide practices that are more effective. The convergence approach in literature suggests that neo-liberal policies will result in different welfare state models to resemble that of the US and decrease the role of the state in social welfare distribution (Häusermann, 2010). However, analysis of financial reforms after 1980 suggests that gains of the welfare state tend to be overlooked from time to time, contrary to some claims not all welfare states adopted neo-liberal policies. In other words, different welfare states carried out appropriate reforms based on their particular historical and institutional structure (Myles & Pierson, 2001). Furthermore, the post-COVID-19 period have shown the central role of the state in delivering and maintaining the social welfare, and underlined the vital importance of broadening social welfare programs for the public. Due to current climate of citizens affected by the economic problems with increasing unemployment rates, as well as the grasp on the importance of universal healthcare, makes it unlikely that a move to neo-liberal policies will be a welcome change by the masses.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and related risks reminded us the global inter-dependence of nations. Third path in the post-pandemic social policies argue the adoption of a global welfare policy approach against global risks. Some important features of this new global social policy approach are global redistribution, social regulation, and social rights (Deacon, 2007). Nevertheless, global social policies do not just naively depend on international actors, but take into consideration local dynamics, politics, and ideologies while maintaining a global governance perspective (Yeates, 1999). In fact, this approach, although not fully, is applied in certain regions and in limited fashion for many years. The International Labor Organization (henceforth ILO) regulations enacted regarding employment, social policy guidelines the

EU imposed on the member states are some examples of such global measures already in effect. However, these measures as in the case of the EU can remain local and create problems in decision-making. Furthermore, the EU's power in enforcing such measures is the subject of constant debate. Despite their global reach, organizations such as ILO are very restricted in enforcing their mandate.

This pandemic has shown that the model of national welfare state, that is based on social security contributions and continuous economic growth, is not sustainable; nor is the distribution model for welfare viable any longer as it has been fundamentally challenged by the many global problems. Thus, beyond national welfare, there is a clear need for global welfare regime in a global scale. Global welfare regime, besides ensuring each and every individual welfare regime's economic, cultural and institutional properties, prioritizes global welfare distribution rather than national. It is a welfare regime that aims to, globally and locally, reduce inequality in income distribution, promote an egalitarian atmosphere in which different members can voice their concerns, and is shaped by extensive regulations with the aim to distribute global welfare in a global scale.

The main issue here, which perhaps, to some people, seems to make this impossible to implement, is how a global regime such as this can be established in an international environment with dominant populist and nationalistic discourse, and where every nation prioritizes its own interests. Though this certainly may seem as a challenge, without deviating from the target and with a strong and confident approach a novel economic approach and political system can be built. Otherwise, it is impossible to solve the above mentioned global post-pandemic risks with the means of a national welfare state and without global social policies.

While COVID-19 disturbs the dynamics of global production, the multinational companies that are globally entwined and dominate the global supply chain, can be reconsidered with new focus placed on local production. However, the inherent desire for corporations to grow and increase their profit margins, regulations of the World Trade Organization (WTO) regarding free trade, and the added cost of local production, all reveal that the protective and exclusive approaches to production is not sustainable in the long run. The reality is that global crises such as the current pandemic, migration, inequality, environmental disasters all need solutions at a global scale. Global welfare regime's regulations regarding equal distribution will benefit both developing countries and developed countries that face low economic growth, immigration, and aging population. Global welfare distribution and the formation of necessary institutions that will sustain this distribution is inevitable in an environment where financial markets are entwined with blockchain technology, and in the age of social media that sustain constant communication with every person and nation; and in an atmosphere where humanity is threatened with environmental disasters and pandemic.

Conclusion

While COVID-19 pandemic questioned the long debate on welfare state and its political promises in a period with increasing economic fluctuations, rapid social changes, global environmental problems, and quickly aging population; it also emphasized the importance of social policies, especially healthcare and income support. Even though crises of welfare states are usually affected by global fluctuations, up until COVID-19 these effects were mostly national. Many countries searched for national solutions to the global pandemic that brought with it health and economic problems. Liberal welfare states such as the US and the UK are accused of not being able to protect their citizens against the virus, negligence of the disadvantaged groups such as elderly, poor, and minorities resulting in loss of life. Countries such as Japan and South Korea, with active healthcare services, relentless treatment programs, and adherence to social distancing, achieved low death rates despite their dense population. Even though welfare states have developed path dependent solutions in their battle against the pandemic, it is necessary to develop global solutions for global problems. Environmental problems, economic fluctuations, immigration waves, and fast progressive social change all highlight the need for a better, fair and more sustainable welfare regime with global as well as national implications.

There are lessons to be learned from the pandemic for the Turkish welfare state. In the near future, Turkey is very likely to face the economic, social, and demographic challenges the European nations are facing now. Turkish policy makers can benefit from analyzing the mistakes these welfare states made in order to construct better approaches and develop solutions. Some lessons to be taken from this is to develop sustainable social policies that are transparent, free from populism and clientalism, and to build on its strength, and improve weaknesses to ensure a fair social welfare distribution.

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