Is there an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states?

John Gal

*Journal of European Social Policy* 2010 20: 283
DOI: 10.1177/0958928710374374

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://esp.sagepub.com/content/20/4/283
Is there an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states?

John Gal*

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Summary The goal of this article is to suggest that an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states exists and that it consists of eight different nations, some of which have been ignored in the ongoing discourse on Mediterranean welfare states. More specifically, it is claimed that the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states includes Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. The article underscores a number of features common to members of this extended family of welfare states. Finally, three overarching themes that, in the past and present, appear to underlie the commonalities of Mediterranean welfare states and that can offer potential fruitful avenues for further study will be identified and discussed. These are religion, family and the role of clientelist–particularist relations in the structuring and functioning of welfare state institutions.

Keywords clientelism, family, Mediterranean, religion, welfare state

The notion of a distinctive Mediterranean welfare regime emerged shortly after the publication of Esping-Andersen’s (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. In a series of studies published in the 1990s, scholars questioned Esping-Andersen’s inclusion of Italy in the corporatist regime type and his exclusion of other southern European welfare states from the analysis (Bonoli, 1997; Fargion, 1997; Ferrera, 1996; Liebfried, 1992; Rhodes, 1997). They suggested that a fourth Latin Rim, Southern European or Mediterranean welfare regime (or model), had characteristics which distinguished it from other welfare regimes. These nations were seen as belonging to a single welfare model not only because of their geographic proximity but also due to common historical and cultural legacies. Their history of relatively recent non-democratic rule (particularly in the cases of Spain, Portugal and Greece), the influence of religion (in particular Catholicism) upon diverse aspects of life, not least the family and the provision of welfare, and their seemingly ‘rudimentary’ welfare state systems were underscored as contributing to the need to differentiate these nations from other welfare states (Castles, 1995; Gough, 1996; Liebfried, 1992). More specifically, the three distinctive characteristics of the Mediterranean welfare regime, as identified by Ferrera (1996) in the mid-1990s, were the dualism, fragmentation and ineffectiveness of the social protection system, which often led to marked gaps between segments of society and high levels of poverty within specific geographical or social sectors; the existence of universal (or near universal) health provision by the state alongside a flourishing private health market; and the particularistic–clientelistic form that the welfare state took in these nations. In addition, a number of observers have underscored the major role of the family, rather than the state, the market or the workplace, as a provider of welfare in these countries (Moreno, 2002; Naldini, 2003). Looking at issues of social expenditure and the type of financing predominant in

* Author to whom correspondence should be sent: John Gal, Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt Scopus, Jerusalem, 91905, Israel. [email: msjgsw@mscc.huji.ac.il]
In this discussion. Drawing upon both the earlier generation of work on the Mediterranean welfare regime and some of the claims in that literature and on the more contemporary critiques of regime typologies, as well upon advances in the theoretical discourse, this article suggests that it may be useful to think more seriously about what will be described here, as an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states. This extended family of Mediterranean welfare states consists of eight nations – Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. This group of welfare states is clearly much larger than that identified in earlier conceptualisations. It is an extended family in the sense that the welfare states included in this grouping share a number of interesting and crucial commonalities, while they differ in other ways, some of which were seen in the past as integral features of the Southern European Model. Thus, for example, it diverges from the Southern European Model in that it does not associate membership in this extended family with a Bismarkian social protection legacy.

Recent developments in the theoretical debate and on the ground offer cause to rethink the ways in which we relate to welfare states in the Mediterranean region. While the grouping of welfare states as a means of making sense of the complicated universe of welfare states still appears to be a sensible approach to comparative research, criticism of the more rigid notions of ‘welfare regimes’ and ‘welfare models’ has underscored the limitations of this type of analysis (Bambra, 2006; Jensen, 2008; Kasza, 2002; Scruggs and Allan, 2006). The ‘extended family of welfare states’ notion adopted in this study seeks to address this critique. Based loosely on the idea of a family of nations, as employed by Castles (1993, 2006) and others (Brysk et al., 2002; Castles and Obinger, 2008; Stockard and O’Brien, 2006), it suggests that certain welfare states share common and relevant characteristics, both with regard to their social, demographic, cultural and structural characteristics as well as with regard to certain aspects of the structuring of their welfare states. As a whole, these features will tend to distinguish the members of this grouping from other welfare states. At the same time, there are clearly differences between the members of this relatively large group of nations (as well as inevitable similarities with welfare states not included in this grouping) that are a consequence of
distinctive legacies and of the impact of both internal and external forces. The usefulness of the notion of an extended family of welfare states is that it seeks to identify commonalities and learn from them, while neither ignoring nor diminishing the differences that obviously exist between the various countries.

It is not only comparative welfare state analysis that has moved beyond the rigid typology and terminology of the 1990s. Similarly the conceptual discourse pertaining to the welfare state has been dramatically enriched, in particular with regard to issues pertaining to gender issues (Lewis, 2009), to the concept of clientelism (Roniger, 2004), and to the role of cultural variables (Pfau-Effinger, 2005; Van Oorschot, 2007), not least among them religion (Van Kersbergen and Manow, 2009), in explaining welfare state development and variation. These concepts will be elaborated on in this article and employed in order to characterise the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states.

In addition to theoretical developments, the contemporary universe of welfare states is very different from that which existed in the early 1980s (during which the data for the original Esping-Andersen typology was collected). Not only do additional nations not included in the original schema clearly qualify as welfare states, but a number of them are (or are slated) to be formally integrated into international bodies, such as the European Union (EU) or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), that are generally perceived of as comprising welfare states.

The contours of the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states

A central claim of this article is that the discourse concerning Mediterranean welfare states needs to be widened beyond its previously narrow focus on mainland Europe so as to encompass additional Mediterranean welfare states ignored in earlier discussions pertaining to the Southern European Welfare Model. These are Cyprus, Malta, Turkey and Israel. Initial efforts to incorporate some of these nations into this grouping can be found in the literature, though this scholarship has generally taken the form of single country case studies. These efforts have often focused on the island nations of Cyprus and Malta in the wake of the southward expansion of the EU (Graselli et al., 2006; Peristianis and Kokkinou, 2008). Turkey, a candidate country and potential member of the EU, has been the subject of much debate within European Union nations and its welfare and social protection systems have been the subject of growing interest (Manning, 2007). Even though it is clearly an outlier with regard to living standards and social expenditure, observers both within Turkey and abroad have also included this country in a discussion of the Mediterranean family of nations (Buğra and Keyder, 2006; Gough, 1996; Grußgen, 2008). Finally, the geographic position and some of the characteristics of Israel, an additional Mediterranean welfare state, suggest that it should also be included in this discussion. Not being a candidate country for membership in the European Union (though affiliated to the EU in various ways), Israel has not generated much interest in welfare state–related discussions within Europe. While there is much uncertainty and contention regarding the relevance of existing welfare state typologies to the Israeli case (Doron, 2001; Gal, 2004; Lewin-Epstein et al., 2006; Okun et al., 2007), its affinity to other Mediterranean nations has seldom emerged in the literature (but, see Doron, 2003). Due to the exclusion of these four Mediterranean nations from much of the cross-national welfare state research, comparative quantitative (and certainly longitudinal) data supporting the existence of an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states is obviously very limited. Nevertheless, an initial basis for the claim that these eight nations do share a number of common distinguishing features can be found in the following comparisons with additional welfare states. The eight Mediterranean welfare states (though this is less the case for Italy) are generally characterised by relatively low levels of economic production, with GDP per capita figures lower than in most advanced industrial societies (Figure 1). This is, of course, particularly marked in the cases of Turkey, Malta and Portugal, with Turkey being the outlier. An examination of the effort spent on social protection programmes in these countries (Figure 2) indicates that, while most of the Mediterranean nations have undergone a catch-up process of growing social spending in recent decades (often in the context of Europeanisation), expenditure levels generally remain lower than those in the social-democratic (Sweden and Denmark in the figures) and corporatist (France and Germany)
welfare states and higher than those in liberal (U.S., Australia, Ireland and UK) welfare states.

Data on welfare outcomes also point to the existence of an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states. Figure 3 shows that the proportion of the population at risk of poverty in Mediterranean nations is higher than that in most other European welfare states and equal or higher than that in liberal

Figure 1 GDP per capita in Mediterranean and other welfare states, 2006 (current prices, PPP, US$)
Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database.

Figure 2 Total social expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Mediterranean and other welfare states, early 2000s
The sources of Mediterranean distinctiveness

In an historical perspective, the commonalities of the Mediterranean nations would appear to be linked
to the fact that all underwent relatively delayed processes of industrialisation. With the notable exception of Malta, and of some pockets in Italy and Spain, agriculture remained a major source of employment and domestic product in these countries long after this was no longer the case in other welfare states. Full-scale industrialisation occurred significantly later in these nations than in most of Western Europe or North America, reaching levels comparable to other advanced capitalist nations in Europe only in the 1960s and 1970s. This process generally involved the decline in the relative importance of agriculture, and the shift of employment and production from this sector to industry and services and marked changes in the organisation of capital (Hudson and Lewis, 1984). It also consisted of a move from primarily autarkic economies in many of these countries, particularly those with authoritarian regimes, to a more globalised economy with high levels of foreign investment, know-how and tourism (Sapelli, 1995; Williams, 1984).

Not unrelated to commonalities in economic development in these countries has been the nature of the labour market that has developed within them (García and Karakatsanis, 2006). A feature often identified with Mediterranean nations in the past, and still evident in the present to a certain degree, is labour market rigidity and segmentation that distinguishes between insiders, who are protected within a formal economy, and outsiders, who form a relatively unprotected temporary or informal segment of the labour market (Karamessini, 2007; Shalev, 1992; Mundlak, 2007). This has contributed to the emergence of significant shadow economies in these nations, with obvious implications both for the protection of workers within these sectors of the labour market and for the state revenues crucial for welfare state financing. These shadow economies continue to play a much larger role in Mediterranean welfare states than in other welfare states, as can be seen in Figure 5. A rapid growth in the influx of undocumented labour migrants into many of these countries in recent years has served to exacerbate this phenomenon (İçduygu, 2007; Baldwin-Edwards, 2005).

While all of these countries have distinctive political histories, they differ from other welfare states in the fact that they have democratic systems that are characterised by either discontinuity or have existed for a relatively short time period. These are nations that have recent histories of authoritarian rule (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey) or (in the cases of Malta, Cyprus and Israel) of colonial dominance until well into the twentieth century. In these welfare states, past and ongoing ethnic, political or regional strife have weakened the democratic

Figure 5 The shadow economy in Mediterranean and other welfare states, 2006 (% of GDP)
Sources: Schneider and Buehn, 2009; Malta: Cassar, 2001; Cyprus: no data available.
structure of the unitary state. As a result, while these nations underwent processes of democratisation and democratic consolidation during the second half of the last century (Diamandouros et al., 2006), the political systems in all these countries have appeared to be more prone to crisis than those in other welfare states and are often ineffective (Kurth, 1993). Indeed some observers have underscored the fact that the state in these countries is both stronger and weaker than in other welfare states. While low levels of welfare provision and institutions highly vulnerable to partisan pressure (Ferrera, 1996) are evidence of its weakness, the state in these nations has sought to play a major role in regulating most spheres of social life and in controlling major social and economic institutions (Andreotti et al., 2001). One indication of this is the structuring and functioning of bureaucracies in these countries. Sotiropoulos (2004b, 2006) has noted that bureaucracies in the four South European states are characterised by enduring party politicisation of the higher echelons of the civil service, patronage patterns of recruitment and an uneven distribution of human resources in the state sector, an emphasis on formalism and legalism and a lack of a traditional administrative elite. It would appear that most of these traits are to be found in the other Mediterranean welfare states as well.

Late industrialisation, labour market segmentation and a large shadow economy, a recent memory of colonial rule or non-democratic regimes and weak central states with ineffective public bureaucracies have implications for the funding, structuring and functioning of welfare states. These characteristics have limited the resources available for funding comprehensive social protection systems and have created difficulties in the administration of established programmes. Late industrialisation inevitably influenced the formation of the working class and the strength of broad-based working-class political and labour market movements, which traditionally formed the backbone of pro-universal welfare state coalitions in many countries. Limited democratic legitimacy or stability has encouraged the manipulation of social welfare programmes in order to gain political support while simultaneously undermining efforts to engage in long-term social welfare planning. Ethnic and regional tension has not only served to divert resources to other fields of state activity, such as military readiness or internal security, but also to undermine support for the introduction of universal social protection programmes that cut across ethnic, regional and class lines. Finally, the legacies of authoritarianism and colonialism had inevitable repercussions on public attitudes to social protection policies adopted by elites. In particular, these legacies have either created backlashes against the values of these regimes or, by contrast, have created path dependencies that have lingering impacts on welfare state structuring.

Characterising Mediterranean welfare states

Beyond and above these common political and economic developments, the Mediterranean countries share in common three broad cultural attributes that appear to have had a marked impact upon welfare state formulation and to distinguish them from other welfare states. These are religion, the family and the persistence of clientelistic–particularistic forms of welfare.

Religion

Apart from a few notable exceptions (Castles, 1994; Heidenheimer, 1983; Wilensky, 1981), the role of religion in the development, structuring and functioning of welfare states has only recently attracted significant theoretical attention (Algun and Cahuc, 2006; Cnaan and Boddie, 2002; Fix and Fix, 2002; Kahl, 2005; Manow, 2004; Manow and van Kersbergen, 2009; Opielka, 2008; Scheve and Stasavage, 2006). This contemporary literature perceives religion and religious belief as a variable that can contribute to understanding divergence and commonality between welfare states. It distinguishes between various religious denominations and seeks to unravel the links between religion, social cleavages, political structures and welfare state institutions.

While religion has been discussed in some of the literature concerning Southern European welfare states (Ferrera, 1996; Leibfried, 1992), this has generally taken the form of claims that the Catholic affiliation of the majority of the populations in these countries can contribute to explaining some of the features of these nations (Gough, 1996). Nevertheless, the employment of religion as an explanatory variable
in the literature on Southern European welfare states has been limited for a number of reasons. Among others, these explanations have had restricted impact on the debate because of the fact that only three of the four Southern European nations are indeed Catholic (most Greeks are affiliated with the Orthodox Church). Also problematic is the fact that Catholicism appears to be related to welfare state structuring in nations beyond Southern Europe as well and therefore is not a unique feature of the Mediterranean countries (Castles, 1994; Van Kersbergen, 1995). Finally the fact that a dramatic process of secularisation appears to have been underway in at least one of these nations of the Mediterranean (Spain) during the last few decades (Requena, 2005) would appear to undermine any effort to link religion to social policy development in this country.

Nevertheless, a re-examination of the way in which religion has been a force in the forging of welfare states in the Mediterranean region is warranted. It is suggested here that the role of religion can take two seemingly contradictory forms in the structuring of welfare states and social policy. It can, as an organisational entity or a set of cultural values, play a major role in initiating the establishment of social welfare institutions or in the actual formulation of social policies and the identification of their goals. Or, as in Spain during the post-Franco era and in Israel during the pre-state Palestine period, social policy can be formulated as a reaction against religion by political actors supported by anti-religious social groups.

In all the eight nations in this extended family of welfare states, religion has been a major source of values and organised religion has enjoyed institutional and political power during the period of welfare state formulation and beyond. Even in those nations where the role of the Church has waned, the ongoing legacy of Church-influenced social welfare structures continues, while the formulation of more contemporary policies is often seen as a reaction to the values or power of organised religion in the past. As can be seen in Figure 6, in these nations religious belief (measured here by the importance attributed to God in individuals’ lives) remains particularly strong and, with the exception of Spain, it is certainly stronger than that in other European welfare states. Indeed, compared to other welfare states, the separation of state and religion in Mediterranean nations is less clear-cut and far more likely to be contested (Danopolous, 2004; Makrides and Molokotos-Liederman, 2004; Falzon, 2007; Karagiannis, 2009). As such, religion continues to influence social policy through formal political representation (particularly in Turkey and in Israel) the activities of religious social welfare

Figure 6 ‘How important is God in your life?’ Mean scores (1= not at all important; 9 = very important)

organisations, via public attitudes or due to the more discreet impact of elite interaction.

While the populations of the Mediterranean nations adhere to diverse religious denominations, Protestantism has never enjoyed a major foothold in any of them. This is crucial due to the growing recognition of the influence of Protestantism, be it Lutheran or Calvinist, upon the structuring of welfare states (Manow, 2004). Social policies, particularly those regarding policy towards the poor and towards the role of the state in provision of social services, reflect the distinct social doctrines of these two denominations (Kahl, 2009). Thus, for example, Calvinist doctrine emphasised the obligation to work, while the Lutheran approach stressed a societal responsibility to provide for the poor. Though the diversity of religious affiliations in the Mediterranean countries and the specific contours of the political and social institutions in these countries inevitably lead to distinctive configurations of the role of religion in the welfare state, the fact that these are all non-Protestant nations clearly limits the appeal of values and policies that have been directly attributed to the influence of Protestant tenets. Moreover, not only are the nations which together form the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states non-Protestant but it would appear that there are certain similarities in the manner in which poverty, poverty alleviation and the role of the State in dealing with issues of social welfare are perceived by adherents to Catholicism, the Orthodox Church, Islam and Judaism and that these differ from those of Protestants. Prominent among these is the role that community faith-based social welfare organisations have in dealing with social needs and, in particular, poverty (Buğra, 2007; Jaffe, 1992; Symeonidou, 1997). These organisations, which have been seen as a reflection of an adherence to concepts such as *caritas*, *zakat* and *zedakah* in the various nations, can be seen as influencing the manner in which Mediterranean welfare states perceive of the need for, or the generosity of, state-run safety net programmes (Dean and Khan, 1997; Kahl, 2005; Kuran, 2003; Petmesidou, 2006; Sherwin, 2000). While in some of the nations this has led to the lack of such programmes, in others there is a marked emphasis on local provision of this support or of very limited support by existing national state-administered programmes, as these are seen to complement existing provision by community faith-based non-profit organisations. In sum, it would appear that in the nations of the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states religion has exerted, and generally continues to exert, a marked influence on the structuring and functioning of welfare state institutions, to a degree uncommon in other welfare states or in a manner that is unique to this family of nations.

**Family**

A second issue that has particular resonance in all the welfare states in the Mediterranean is that of the family. While the Mediterranean nations have long been seen as ‘familialistic’ countries, more recent research has sought to investigate the more specific contours of the ways in which the welfare state, the family and the market interact within these nations and the implications of this for households, gender relations and for the structuring of the welfare state (Ajzenstadt and Gal, 2001; Naldini and Saraceno, 2008; Kılıç, 2008; Moreno, 2004; Prince Cook, 2009). Indeed, despite ongoing changes in female labour market participation and the introduction of some social protection programmes and social services that facilitate a better family/work balance, the family unit in Mediterranean nations continues to play a distinctive role, and to take a form that differs from the norm in other welfare states. Naldini (2003) underscores the enduring sense of strong and extended family obligations in these societies along with the notion that care work remains a family responsibility. In addition, she noted the relatively low level of state support for families with children in the Mediterranean welfare states.

The centrality of the family in Mediterranean welfare states is, of course, not unrelated to the major role that religion has played in these nations, and continues to play in many of them. Indeed, as in the case of social assistance, there does appear to be a dividing line between the more ‘individualistic’ Protestant ethic and a more ‘communalistic’ ethic, which emphasises the importance of marriage and leads to more intense family ties and responsibilities, which is more predominant among the Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic and Jewish societies of the Mediterranean (Greeley, 1989; Martin, 1997).

Be it religion, or other cultural or societal variables, there are marked differences between these
nations and most other welfare states in the way in which the family is perceived and the form that it takes (Moreno, 2002). Low levels of labour market participation, particularly of women, has been identified as a feature of Mediterranean welfare states and linked to the nature of economic development and the dominance of the male-breadwinner model associated with these countries. Findings indicate that this is still true to a certain degree in most of these nations and that, with the exception of Portugal and Cyprus, these nations have relatively low levels of female labour market participation, that is on a par or even lower than those in corporatist welfare states (Figure 7).

Marriage is more institutionalised in these nations and family solidarity more important than in other welfare states, particularly when compared to those in central and northern Europe (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). Similarly, the proportion of single parent households is generally much lower in the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states than in Social-Democratic or Liberal welfare states. The age until which children remain in their parents’ household appears to be higher in the Mediterranean nations (Toren, 2003; Vogel, 2003). Finally, data on the levels of social connectedness of the elderly in these nations indicates that family relations are high while informal (non-kin) social relations are lower than in other welfare states (Kohli et al., 2009).

Fertility rates within the Mediterranean extended family are both the lowest and the highest among welfare states. Fertility rates are particularly low in Spain, Italy and Greece and high in Turkey and Israel. The lack of extensive pro-family social policies, labour market integration of women and the consequent opportunity costs involved in childbirth have been regarded as a determinant in the low fertility levels of Spanish and Italian women (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). In those Mediterranean nations with a recent legacy of authoritarian regimes that actively promoted pro-natal policies, a lack of pro-family policies and low fertility rates are interpreted as a reaction to the policies of that period (Naldini, 2003). The dominant role of religion in the past or present in the Mediterranean nations is apparently one of the factors that has apparently contributed to both the low and high fertility rates. In some cases, particularly in Catholic nations, the lack of divorce laws until much later than other welfare states appears to have discouraged early marriage and thus contributed to the existence of smaller families (Guerrero and Naldini, 1997). By contrast, adherence to the Muslim and Jewish faiths appears to encourage higher fertility rates, a phenomenon particularly common among more traditional and

Figure 7 Female labour market participation in Mediterranean and other welfare states, 2006–7
less educated inhabitants of Turkey and Israel (İşık and Pinarcıoglu, 2006; Manski and Maysjar, 2002).

The centrality of the family in the Mediterranean nations and a strong sense of solidarity within the extended family that is dominant within these societies has, of course, significant implications for the ways in which social needs are dealt with and hence upon the structuring and functioning of welfare states. In particular, the existence of strong family support networks and an acceptance of care responsibilities by family members (primarily women) lessen the pressure upon states to deal with diverse needs. The centrality of the family enables welfare states to rely on the family as an alternative to the state and market and thereby limit, or deflect, state spending on services and benefits intended to deal with specific needs. Thus, we find that despite a marked growth in female labour market participation in most of these countries, care for the young, the sick and the elderly is still very much the responsibility of the family (Andreotti et al., 2001; Graselli et al., 2006; Moreno, 2004).

One field of welfare provision in which the major role of the family in Mediterranean welfare state is developing into a unique form is that of elderly care. In virtually all the nations in this extended family of welfare states, there has been rapid growth of family-funded care provided mainly by immigrant caregivers over the last decade (Akalin, 2007; Da Roit, 2007). Female migrant workers employed by households form a disproportionately high proportion of overall foreign labour in these countries in comparison to that in other welfare states (Bettio et al., 2006; Simonazzi, 2009; Bank of Israel, 2009; Trimikliniotis and Fulias-Souroulla, 2007). These care workers are providing home care to the elderly and, in doing so, provide an alternative, generally financed by families, to the previous care responsibilities of female family members. This ongoing manifestation of intergenerational family care is linked to existing social norms and to a lack of adequate family-friendly social services and benefits that could offer state-provided alternatives to these tasks or encourage a more equitable gendered division of labour within the family.

**Clientelism – particularism**

A characteristic long associated with the Mediterranean nations has been that of clientelism. In particular, it has been claimed that politics in these nations is dominated (or, at the very least, tainted) by patron–client relations that entail the provision of tangible resources in return for political support (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). In the past, discussion of clientelism in Mediterranean countries was typically linked to their delayed process of modernisation and democratisation in comparison to other capitalist societies (Weingrod, 1968). These studies, however, tended to view clientelistic relations narrowly; they failed to account for change over time in the form that these relations have taken, or to satisfactorily explain the re-emergence, or the persistence, of clientelism in post-industrial and fully democratised society.

Renewed interest in the subject of clientelism in political science and sociological literature in recent years (Roniger, 2004) has resulted in more nuanced definitions of the phenomenon, more diverse applications of the term, efforts to better contextualise clientelism and to view it in an historical perspective. Current approaches to clientelism and patronage view these as potential strategies that can be employed in diverse forms and in various political settings and structures (Piattoni, 2001). Clientelism can then take a wide variety of forms. It may entail personal relations between a politician and an individual seeking a specific favour, but it may also emerge as reciprocal relations between politicians, political parties or political elites and social groups or social categories that can vary in size and characteristics. Mass clientelism will typically take the form of more formalised relations and be realised through the passage of laws that serve the particular needs of the members of the group. Here clientelistic relations reflect the decision on the part of both patrons and clients to choose this strategy as a means to further their interests and that, if these goals are not furthered, it will be abandoned or restructured (Shefter, 1994).

Given the centrality of welfare state services and benefits to the needs of individuals and families, the importance of welfare state institutions as a source of employment, and the sheer size of expenditure devoted to these institutions, it is hardly surprising that these have often been the focus of clientelistic relations. Ferrera (1996) identified this as a feature of Southern European welfare states, emphasising the scope and intensity of particularistic, rather than
universal and impartial, rules and practices in the welfare bureaucracies of these nations. Indeed it would appear that clientelism is a characteristic of all the nations in the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states and remains a critical tool in any effort to understand the nature of these welfare states (Davaki and Mossialos, 2005; Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984; García and Karakatsanis, 2006; Hopkin and Mastropaolo, 2001; Lynch, 2009; Mitchell, 2002; Rocha and Araújo, 2007).

While it exists in all the Mediterranean welfare states, clientelism takes on different forms in the various nations and its intensity and relevance varies between them, between regions within them, and over time. In some cases, such as that of Spain, Portugal and Greece, clientelism focuses on the provision of jobs within the higher or lower echelons of the bureaucracies engaged in welfare provision (Ferrera, 1996; Featherstone, 2005; Hopkin, 2001; Sotiropoulos, 2004a). In others, particularly Malta and Turkey, it can take the form of more direct distribution of resources by local political leaders (Heper, 2002; Mitchell, 2002; Mullard and Pirotta, 2008). Sophisticated practices intended to influence the decisions of administrative bodies, such as those determining eligibility to disability benefits, are another type of clientelism, often linked to the Italian welfare state. Finally, in the Israeli welfare state, legislation that favours the particularistic interests of the members of specific social categories can be adopted at the behest of political parties (Charbit, 2003).

Whatever its specific form or level of penetration, clientelism and the notion that particularistic social policies are a relatively widespread, legitimate or tolerated component in the workings of welfare states in the extended family of Mediterranean nations and distinguishes these nations from other welfare states. The continuing existence of clientelism in a rapidly changing labour market and welfare state system, and the fact that it has overcome conscious reform efforts specifically intended to eradicate it in many of these countries, is telling. It would appear that clientelism in Mediterranean welfare states can be linked to powerful historical commonalities, particularly those that are related to the process of political mobilisation and the establishment of welfare state institutions in these nations. In these contexts, it remains a useful tool with which to deal with the needs of both clients and decision-makers and to facilitate effective efforts to address them.

Differences within an extended family

The notion of an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states has been employed here in order to underscore the fact that, despite the commonalities described above, these eight nations clearly differ in many ways. Each of these nations has undergone unique economic, social and political processes that have influenced its welfare state structures (and outcomes) to a certain degree and led to divergences, alongside the similarities that have been identified. One major difference relates to the structuring and funding of social protection systems in these countries. In the earlier literature on the Southern European Model, a key claim was that the social protection structure of these nations reflects a Bismarkian legacy that distinguishes them from the Beveridgian legacy in other non-corporatist welfare states, and that this has implications not only for the structuring and funding of the welfare states but also for access to benefits on the part of different occupational groups and the distribution of resources between various groups in society (Ferrera, 1997).

An examination of the nations included in the extended Mediterranean family reveals that the existence of a Bismarkian legacy is not the case for all these nations. Two tools can offer a relatively straightforward means for discerning the impact of this legacy on social protection structures. Welfare states influenced by the Bismarkian legacy will presumably be those in which a greater proportion of funding for social protection programmes is based upon contributions from employers and employees (Bonoli, 1997) and in which alleviation of poverty among non-working individuals of working age is left to the non-government sector or is a relatively new development, primarily a consequence of the external influence of European integration. By contrast, a Beveridgian legacy should result in a greater tendency to fund social protection programmes through general tax revenues and an early adoption of residual safety net programmes for the poor. Figure 8 presents data on the Mediterranean welfare states with regard to sources of funding for social spending.
Two of the countries, Israel and Cyprus, have been clearly influenced by the Beveridgean legacy to a much greater degree than the others (Doron, 1994; Shekeris, 1998; Triseliotis, 1977). In each of the two, contributions form a relatively low proportion of social protection funding (less than half of total spending) and they both have long-standing safety net programmes, with the Israeli system introduced in 1980 and that in Cyprus in the first half of the 1970s. Not surprisingly, the social welfare systems in these countries were modelled closely on the British system during periods of British colonial rule and in its wake. In contrast, Greece, Italy and Spain are three nations clearly influenced by the Bismarckian legacy (Venieris, 1997). Contributions account for a major proportion of funding for social protection in each of these countries. Greece still lacks a general safety net programme. In Spain and Italy, social assistance programmes were introduced in the 1990s, but these lack a national statutory basis and are not uniform in their coverage (Matsaganis et al., 2003). While it has some social assistance programmes, Turkey lacks any comprehensive safety net infrastructure (Buğra and Keyder, 2006). Malta and Portugal appear to be more hybrid cases. While contributions account for a major proportion of social protection funding in Malta, this is a relatively new phenomenon, and the country has a long-standing safety net programme modelled on the British system (Graselli et al., 2006). In the Portuguese case, historical analysis has indicated the impact of both British and German influences on social security structuring (Guibentif, 1997). In this country, there has been a marked increase in state funding for social protection in recent years and a national safety net programme was introduced in 1997 on a national scale (Guillén et al., 2003).

The implication of this analysis is that a Bismarkian social protection structure is not a distinctive characteristic of all the nations included in the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states, though it is the case for some of them. Rather, the nations in this extended family reflect diverse legacies and developments. These exist alongside the commonalities identified in this article.

**Conclusion**

This article has sought to make a case for the existence and analytical usefulness of an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states. Drawing upon existing literature on the Southern European welfare state model and on additional welfare states in the Mediterranean, the claim here has been for the
inclusion of additional welfare states into what has been described as an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states. It suggests including Cyprus, Israel, Malta and Turkey in addition to Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain in the analysis.

While the eight nations included in this family of nations undoubtedly differ in various ways, not least in the existence of different social protection legacies, they do have other significant characteristics in common. A common modern history of late industrialisation shows that authoritarian or colonial rule, and weak, ineffective states have contributed to similarities in the structuring of their welfare states and in their ability to achieve acceptable welfare outcomes.

Crucially, the contemporary features of the welfare states which form this extended family of Mediterranean nations have been influenced by the combined and ongoing impact of three cultural forces: religion, the centrality of the family, and the existence of various forms of clientelistic relationships in the political arena. As a consequence of these common features, these nations are generally characterised by fewer resources, relatively low levels of social expenditure, weak state support for the poor, a major role for the family and religious organisations in the provision of welfare, relatively low levels of labour market participation (particularly among women), and overall limited success in alleviating poverty and overcoming social and economic gaps. While internal and external developments, such as the process of Europeanisation in some of these countries, have led to social spending levels and welfare state structures more similar to those in other non-Mediterranean welfare states, fundamental joint characteristics of the Mediterranean nations still remain in place.

This article provides an initial attempt to sketch the contours of an extended family of Mediterranean welfare states, to offer direction for future research, and to identify interesting avenues for further discussion. Hopefully, this overview of commonalities and differences and the attempt to identify three themes that were crucial to the emerging process of welfare states in these nations and which are still evident today, can serve as a basis for more fruitful comparative cross-national research on these welfare states and a better understanding of developments in them.

Notes

1 The choice of countries to be included in a grouping of the type described in this article is, to a large degree, arbitrary. In this case, the decision to include these four countries in the extended family of Mediterranean welfare states is based primarily on a comprehensive review of the relevant social policy literature (referred to in the text) that discusses these nations and the others included in this extended family. This literature, and a secondary analysis of quantitative data, has provided a foundation for the claim that all the countries discussed here share some common and relevant characteristics. Obviously, there may be other nations that could be included in this grouping. However, it would appear that these four are currently the only non-transition Mediterranean nations that have the capacities and (economic, political and welfare) structures that are crucial for inclusion in this grouping. One indication of this is that they are the only democratic Mediterranean nations ranked in the 80 nations with the highest HDI rankings. Another is the fact that all are members, or are candidates for membership, of the EU or OECD.

2 While, in comparison to the Catholic Church, Islam and Judaism, the Orthodox Church appears to have played a more minor role in social welfare provision, it has provided diverse social services, primarily social assistance and social care (particularly residential care), and recently has become more actively involved in public debate on various social policy issues, particularly those pertaining to the family and its structuring (Petmesidou, 2010).

References


Journal of European Social Policy 2010 20 (4)


Journal of European Social Policy 2010 20 (4)


