

СОЦИОЛОГИЯ

Navigating Social Protection: A Content Analysis of Core Definitions

Aghajanyan Martin A.

PhD student, Chair of Political Science,

Faculty of International Relations, YSU (Yerevan, RA)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4260-217X>

martinaghajanyan9@gmail.com

UDC: 304, 32, 35; **EDN:** COFPJM

DOI: 10.58587/18292437-2024.4-135

Keywords & phrases: Social protection, poverty prevention, risk management, social inclusion

Սոցիալական պաշտպանության հիմնական սահմանումների բովանդակային վերլուծություն

Աղաջանյան Մարտին Ա.

Միջազգային հարաբերությունների ֆակուլտետի Քաղաքագիտության ամբիոնի առկա սասփիռանտ, Երևանի պետական համալսարան (Երևան, ՀՀ)

Ամփոփագիր. Տվյալ հոդվածում ուսումնասիրվում է սոցիալական պաշտպանություն եզրույթի զարգացումը, ինչպես նաև միջազգային կազմակերպությունների կողմից տվյալ եզրույթի սահմանումները: 19-րդ դարից սկսած սոցիալական պաշտպանության համակարգերն դառնում են առավել բարդ՝ միտված բավարարելու հասարակության տարբեր խմբերի կարիքները: Հոդվածը համեմատում է հեղինակավոր մի շարք կազմակերպությունների սահմանումները՝ վեր հանելով այնպիսի կրկնվող թեմաներ, ինչպիսիք են աղքատության կանխարգելումը, ռիսկերի կառավարումը և սոցիալական ներառականությունը: Հոդվածում ընդգծվում է, որ թեև սոցիալական պաշտպանության ընդհանուր նպատակն է պայքարել աղքատության դեմ և նվազեցնել խոցելիությունը, դրան հասնելու մոտեցումներն ու ռազմավարությունները լայնորեն տարբերվում են կազմակերպությունների միջև, ինչը պայմանավորված է դրանց գործունեության ուղղվածության տարբերությամբ: Հոդվածում առաջարկվում է սոցիալական պաշտպանության եզրույթի այնպիսի սահմանում, որն ընդգծում է դրա գործուն, ներառական և համապարփակ բնույթը, ինչն էլ պայմանավորում է սոցիալական պաշտպանության կարևոր դերը սոցիալ-տնտեսական կայունացման և մարդու իրավունքների խթանման գործում:

Հանգուցաբառեր և բառակապակցություններ՝ Սոցիալական պաշտպանություն, աղքատության հաղթահարում, ռիսկերի կառավարում, սոցիալական ներառականություն

Контент-анализ основных определений социальной защиты

Агаджанян Мартин А.

*Аспирант кафедры политологии, Факультет международных отношений
Ереванский Государственный Университет (Ереван, РА)*

Аннотация: В этой статье рассматривается эволюция термина социальной защиты, а также то, как различные международные организации определяют ее. С XIX века системы социальной защиты становились все более сложными, удовлетворяя потребности различных групп общества. В статье сравниваются определения, данные различными авторитетными организациями, и выявляются общие темы, такие как предотвращение бедности, управление рисками и социальная интеграция. В ней подчеркивается, что, хотя общей целью социальной защиты является борьба с бедностью и снижение уязвимости, подходы и стратегии в разных организациях существенно различаются, что обусловлено различием направлений их деятельности. В статье предлагается определение социальной защиты, подчеркивающее ее проактивный, инклюзивный и всеобъемлющий характер, что делает ее необходимой для социально-экономической стабилизации и продвижения прав человека.

Ключевые слова и словосочетания: Социальная защита, предотвращение бедности, управление рисками, социальная интеграция

INTRODUCTION

Historically, social protection has been in a constant state of transformation, dating back to the early forms of social security during the 19th century. Over the decades, social protection systems

have become more complex and extensive, by taking into account diverse needs and situations within various societies across the world [7, pp. 1-4]. With the increasing complexity of social processes and society as a whole, a number of

countries started facing daunting challenges on the efficiency, effectiveness and social equity of their social protection systems. This has been more conspicuous in nations where no consistent vision and a comprehensive policy agenda were established. Moreover, numerous states have had their social protection schemes disintegrated so that various small initiatives operate in isolation rather than as part of a single unit [14, p. 1]. These threats, coupled with globalization and development tendencies [15, pp. 7-8], have underlined the immediate need for a more systemic and integrated approach to social protection that would guarantee harmonious operations across all spheres of the system in order to achieve desirable outcomes both at individual levels and for communities.

This article seeks to dissect and illustrate various perspectives from different international organizations on what is considered as essential components of social protection. It also aims to synthesize these outlooks together so that we can perceive how social protection addresses socio-economic challenges adequately.

MAIN BODY

Definitions in pertinent scientific literature

In the realm of social policy, social protection definitions outline the boundaries, mechanisms and purposes of social protection systems. They serve as a reference framework that helps different stakeholders understand what constitutes social protection as well as how it ought to work within a society. The definitions of social protection are fundamental in establishing the common language and benchmarks for designing, implementing, and evaluating programs on social protection.

First, we need to distinguish the concept of social protection presented in the scientific literature. Social protection, as a concept, is being used variably within country-specific as well as global socio-economic policy frameworks [11, pp. 5-24; 8, pp. 296-310]. In Andy Norton, et al., social protection is referred to as 'the public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society' [15, p. 7]. In other scholarly articles, it is defined as "...a core function of development policy..." which aims at "...achieving social justice outcomes, in terms of both objectives and implementation" [8, p. 1], or as written by Conway, et al., social protection encompasses 'public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk, and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society' [4, p. 241]. The authors come to the latter definition primarily due to the transformation in developing countries and development research that occurred in the 1990s

during which social protection became not merely an antidote to social injustice, but a painkiller for poverty and vulnerability [4, pp. 240-243].

Social Policy and Social Protection

In scientific discourse, there are two terms which may be confusing for many readers especially when considering that both pertain to social issues and challenges. Social policy as a concept was developed and implemented later than social protection itself, since as previously mentioned, the early forms of social protection trace back to the early 19th century, exemplified by covered pensions for trade union workers in the United States between 1890 and 1900 or the pension reforms in Germany, Denmark, and Austria [9, p. 94]. In contrast, social policy, which constitutes a broader framework, was introduced later with the tendency of increasing governmental regulation, particularly in the UK during the second half of the 20th century [9, p. 103]. This all indicates that social policy as a concept encompasses wider angles of social processes [3, pp. 8-11]. Consequently, social policy evolved to possess a more expansive nature. Where social policy is an umbrella term that includes various public policies aimed at promoting social welfare and equity, social protection is focused on systems and measures designed to protect individuals and households from economic and social risks, including poverty, illness, unemployment, disability, and ageing [1, pp. S127-S128].

Definitions by International Organizations

Social protection is defined through various frameworks by different agencies and organizations, each emphasizing distinct aspects based on their operational focus. While some organizations adopt definition of social protection with regards to its structural components such as contributory and non-contributory measures in addition to labor market programs; others frame it around specific goals like poverty reduction or protecting vulnerable populations. Moreover, the conceptualization of social protection tends to differ widely too. Some definitions emphasize its functional roles—protection, promotion, prevention and transformation—as means to propel individuals towards broader development objectives. These conceptual approaches have markedly distinct underpinnings; some emphasize poverty reduction, whereas others stress risk management [17, pp. 12-15]. Additionally, the range of coverage for social protection can be universal schemes embracing all citizens or targeted programmes addressing particular groups. Despite these variations, every description encompasses the role of social protection as a comprehensive policy framework aimed at alleviating poverty and reducing vulnerability within which it operates.

Table 1 gives a comparative analysis of different international organizations' definitions regarding social protection together with their respective implementation strategies concerning social protection. Each line of the table represents a distinct organization, provides their own interpretation of social protection, highlights major themes within these interpretations as well as indicates how these policies could be implemented.

The purpose behind this table is to summarize the various ways in which social protection is interpreted by different entities, pinpointing salient areas of concern, and giving suggestions on feasible frameworks. This would enable us to get a grasp of what global and national approaches for social protection entail and allow for a detailed discussion of various strategies employed by countries.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis Of Social Protection Definitions Across Various Organizations And Governments

ORGANIZATION	DEFINITION ¹	KEY THEMES	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS			
International Labour Organization	<i>“Social protection, or social security, is defined as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle. Social protection includes nine main areas: child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age benefits, disability benefits and survivors’ benefits [13, p. 29].”</i>	Poverty prevention, life cycle coverage, contributory and non-contributory schemes	Mix of contributory schemes (social insurance) and non-contributory tax-financed schemes (universal schemes, social assistance)
World Bank	<i>“Social protection and labor systems, policies, and programs help individuals and societies manage risk and volatility and protect them from poverty and destitution - through instruments that improve resilience, equity, and opportunity [18, p. 3].”</i>	Risk management, resilience, equity, opportunity	Broad instruments improving resilience, equity, opportunity (details not specified)
European Commission	<i>“Social protection may be broadly defined therefore as policies and actions that: - enhance the capacity of all people, but notably poor and vulnerable groups, to escape from poverty, or avoid falling into poverty, and better manage risks and shocks and - aim at providing a higher level of social security through income security and access to essential services (in particular, health and education) throughout active and inactive periods and periods of need throughout the life-cycle [10].”</i>	Poverty management, social security, access to essential services	Policies and actions for income security and access to essential services (health, education)
United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	<i>“A set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups [16, p. 2].”</i>	Poverty prevention, social inclusion, life-course coverage	Comprehensive policies targeting life-course events, emphasis on vulnerable groups
United Nations Development Programme	<i>“A set of nationally owned policies and instruments that provide income support and facilitate access to goods and services by all households and</i>	Income support, access to services, social inclusion	Nationally owned policies with a focus on income support and service access

¹ The definitions presented in the second column of the Table 1 are directly cited.

	<i>individuals at least at minimally accepted levels, to protect them from deprivation and social exclusion, particularly during periods of insufficient income, incapacity or inability to work [17, p. 12].”</i>		
Asian Development Bank	<i>“Social protection is defined as the set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people’s exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income [2, p. 1].”</i>	Poverty reduction, risk exposure management, comprehensive elements	Five major elements: labor markets, social insurance, social assistance, community protection schemes, child protection
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<i>“Social protection comprises a set of policies and programmes that addresses economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting livelihoods FAO [12].”</i>	Food security, economic and environmental resilience	Policies and programs aimed at economic, environmental, and social resilience
World Food Programme	<i>“Social protection consists of policies and programmes designed to protect people from shocks and stresses throughout their lives. It can include safety nets, social insurance schemes, labour market regulations or facilitated access to essential services [19, p. 1].”</i>	Shocks and stresses protection, government ownership	Government-owned systems, safety nets, social insurance, labour market regulations, access to services
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of UK	<i>“Social Protection is a sub-set of public actions that help address risk, vulnerability, and chronic poverty [5, p. 1].”</i>	Risk and poverty management, diverse protection instruments	Three-tier approach: social insurance, social assistance, minimum workplace standards

CONCLUSION

The key conclusions derived from studying these definitions are as follows:

DIFFERING VIEWS | There are different opinions about social protection from international actors which have their institutional logics and operational backgrounds. While all accept its role in managing risks and reducing poverty, the details vary. In the case of Britain’s Department for International Development, which has been replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, poverty reduction has been a priority area of operation. On the other hand, the World Bank perceives social protection as a means of managing risks, a point that is condemned for neglecting the needs of the permanently poor. In the same way, the European Commission considers social protection as a risk management device that enables every individual, especially those vulnerable to escape poverty or mitigate risks. Conversely, UNDP and FAO give more weight on how it relieves individuals from poverty conditions while safeguarding them against such conditions by giving them an opportunity to sustain their life through doing something important like farming for food. Furthermore, many scholars and entities, such as ILO, argue that social protection is a universal human right that aims at alleviating poverty and

vulnerability throughout the life course; this view has been growing stronger over time.

Further expanding on this theme, the primary concern of UNICEF is to secure children and families against poverty and social exclusion through promoting inclusion, access and equity to disadvantaged groups. The ADB on the other hand argues for a comprehensive toolbox that can deal with various economic, social, and environmental challenges in Asia including labor market programs and community-based protection schemes. These different perspectives contribute not only to global discourse on tailored strategies by revealing adaptability of social protection policies but also ensure their applicability across diverse global contexts.

OPERATIONAL LEVEL | Social protection systems provide different strategies to improve the general welfare and curb poverty. They include income supports that are either contributory or non-contributory, provision of essential services for all and programs to develop skills and opportunities for the marginalized. The schemes also help in building resilience against life shocks and breaking down barriers preventing well-being by means of social insurance, employment initiatives, education as well as health care among others. This holistic strategy guarantees that social protection addresses not only

5. **Department for International Development.** Social Protection in Poor Countries. – Social Protection Briefing Note Series, Number 1, 2006.
6. **Devereux, S. & McGregor J. A.** Transforming Social Protection: Human Well-being and Social Justice. // European Journal of Development Research, Sussex, 2014.
7. **Devereux, S. & Sabates-Wheeler, R.** Transformative Social Protection. - Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, 2004.
8. **Devereux, S. et al.** Social Protection for Social Justice. - Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, 42(6), 2011.
9. **Esping-Andersen G.** The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. – Polity Press, UK, 1990.
10. **European Commission.** Communication from the Commission to the European parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. - EUR-Lex Website.
11. **Ferreira, F & Robalino, D.** Social Protection in Latin America: Achievements and Limitations. - Policy Research Working Paper No. 5305, 2010.
12. **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.** Social Protection Framework: Promoting Rural Development for All. – 2017.
13. **International Labour Organization.** World Social Protection Report 2020–22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future. - Geneva: ILO, 2021.
14. **Loewe, M. & Schüring, E.** Introduction to the Handbook on Social Protection Systems. - Edward Elgar Publishing, UK, 2021.
15. **Norton, A., Conway, T. & Foster M.** Social Protection Concepts and Approaches: Implications for Policy and Practice in International Development. - Overseas Development Institute, London, Vol. 143, 2001.
16. **United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund.** Global Social Protection Programme Framework. – United Nations Plaza, new York, 2019.
17. **United Nations Development Programme.** Leaving No One Behind: A Social protection Primer for Practitioners. – New York, 2016.
18. **World Bank.** Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity: The World Bank’s Social Protection and Labor Strategy 2012-2022.- Washington, D.C., World Bank Group, 2012.
19. **World Food Programme.** Two Minutes on Social Protection: Working with National Social Protection Systems to End Hunger Globally. – 2017.

Сдана/Հանձնվել է՝ 27.06.2024
 Рецензирована/Գրախոսվել է՝ 09.07.2024
 Принята/Ընդունվել է՝ 18.07.2024