



# The Politics of Social Protection

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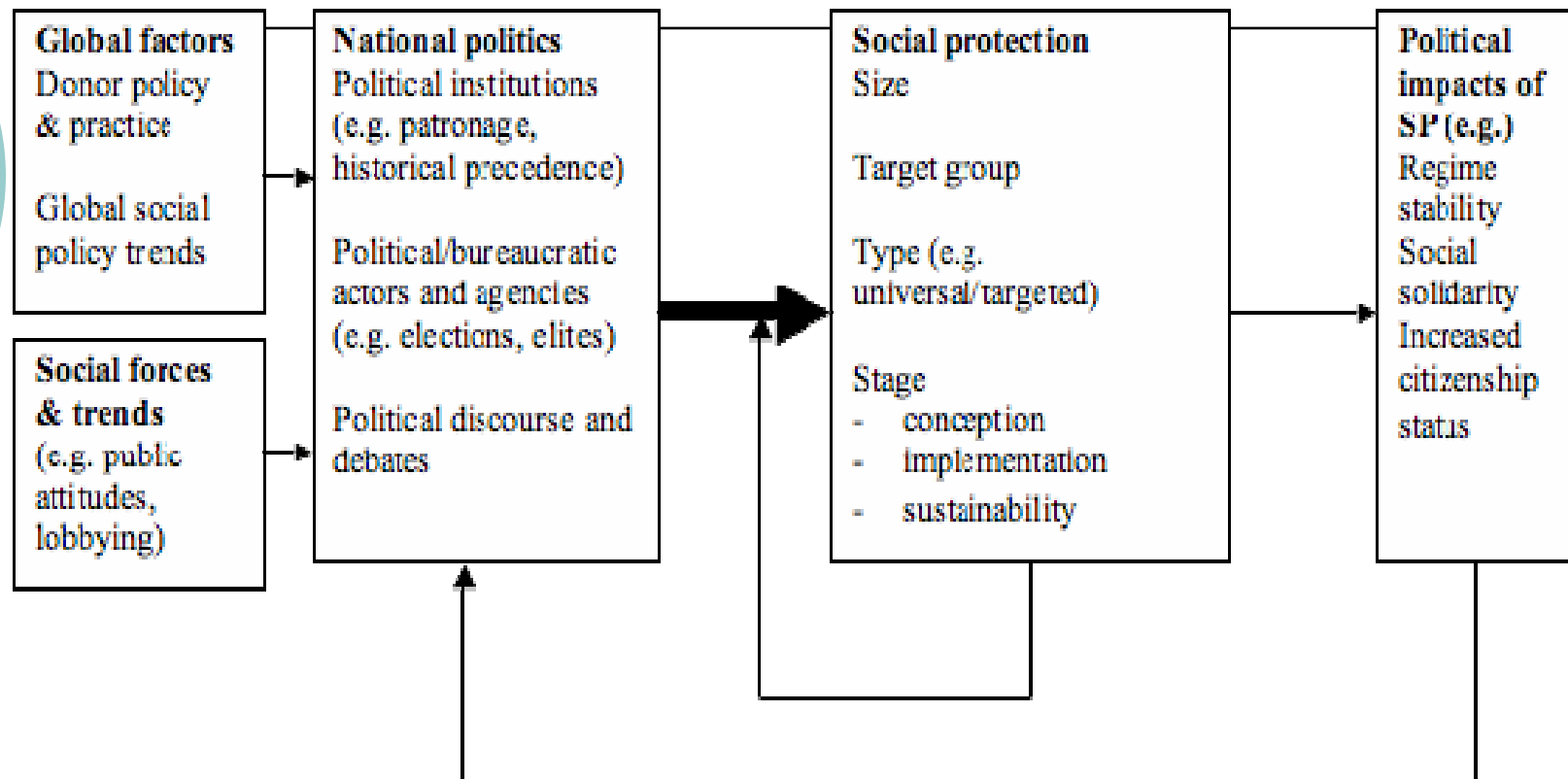


# Politics and social protection

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- Politics matters for social protection...
- ...but is trying to work out *how* a wild-goose chase?
- “The essential point here is that the impulse for social protection experienced so deeply within society can be mobilised by any number of political tendencies or would-be aspirants to social and political power. This could be a political party of any stripe, a religious movement, a charismatic populist appealing to ethnic or caste identity, a warlord or a fascist”
  - Putzel 2002: 3.
- Maybe, but some patterns seem to emerge...

## The links between politics and social protection: a basic conceptual framework



*Key*  
Political support for SP



# Key findings (1)

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- The types of politics that tend to underpin social protection are not necessarily those advocated within the current international development agenda
- Underlying processes of development are important, particularly capitalism and state formation
- Events matter particularly where they involve the renegotiation of political settlements. This includes elections and larger changes but depends on the character of political institutions. Dominant, programmatic parties in are important here.
- Ideas about poverty matter. Better data is important, but the broader battle of ideas in society – on the causes of poverty, or around concepts of development and nation-building – are more important.
- Political society as more critical than civil society (although longer term...)



## Key findings (2)

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- Power relations between different policy tendencies, 'finance' and 'civil society' are very important. Social welfare ministries provide a natural home but SP requires the political backing of key ministries (e.g. finance, planning).
- Targeted programmes may be politically sustainable. Can endure and expanded, even during economic decline, while more universal programmes can be placed under political pressure on cost grounds.
- Existing welfare policies can be extended to include the poorest people
- Overall, social protection social protection initiatives are closely shaped by the existence, extent and form of a *political contract* between states and citizens



# Policy implications

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**The key challenge is to build, strengthen and extend contracts for social protection in Africa, and to avoid undermining them**

- Strengthen the state and the public sphere
- Closer engagement with political society and discourses
- Stronger use of political and historical analysis (e.g. DoC) can help SP advocates to identify entry points
- Windows of opportunity to be monitored & responded to
- Capacity-building of SP advocates, in political and civil society; build relationships with 'finance ministry' tendency
- Cross-ministry partnerships & hybrid institutional arrangements worth exploring re: bridging policy tendencies
- The type and design of SP needs to be politically attuned to political discourse on development and public attitudes on justice (substantive & process)
- Elites need to be convinced that the poor face significant constraints that require public action. A much stronger focus on causality within poverty diagnostics is required.