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Learning from Brazil and India: The Difference that Inclusion Policies can Make

Bernd Reiter

University of South Florida, breiter@usf.edu

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Learning from Brazil and India:

The Difference that Inclusion Policies can Make

Introduction

Most researchers, following the work of American scholar Kenneth Waltz (1979), focus their analysis on international factors only when seeking to explain international and foreign policies. However, foreign policy is based on a government's assessment of its own *national* interest. Once this interest is defined, the formulation of foreign policy objectives follows. The guiding theme of any objective is how a given policy can contribute to achieving *national* economic growth, political stability, and security. While Kenneth Waltz argues that to understand international politics one must ignore national politics as otherwise one would fall prey to "reductionism," his approach fails to capture the potential and reach of model-building and of applying diversified analytical tools. If we can gain insights from mixing different levels of analysis, national and international in this case, we should do so, precisely, as Waltz points out, because theory and reality are not the same. In a strict sense, theories and explanations cannot be true or false. They only can be more or less useful (which is something that Waltz also points out). Hence, there is no inherent risk in having "the wrong theory." At worst, such a theory does not help us to understand more and better. Furthermore, any theoretical model is inherently "reductionist," presenting us with a simplified reading of the world, or a segment of an overly complex reality, so that we can analyze and test the strength and robustness of the causal relations of factors we establish in an a-priori fashion. None of these elements – the factors or the relationships – emerge from reality; they are all fruits of our own minds in order to impose order on a messy world. Reductionism thus is the mark of our trade and ought not to be feared, but embraced.

Once we free ourselves from this fear of reductionism and include national elements into our analysis of international politics and foreign policy analysis, we open the door to new, and more fruitful, ways to think about and analyze the world of international relations. This article argues that national social policies are important elements of foreign policy, because countries copy and learn from each others' experience with a given national policy, applying it subsequently at home. Such a mutual learning often involves the interchange of expert knowledge, carried by country specialists who travel forth and back, unintentionally serving as ambassadors. If a country ends up adopting another country's national policy, such an interchange will also lead to mutual respect and increased knowledge of other countries, ultimately leading different countries on a path of gradual convergence.

Given that successful social policies invented in one country are often actively promoted and spread by such agencies as the World Bank, it comes to no surprise that in today's world, we find a bit of India and Bangladesh in many Latin American countries, as microfinance has become a very significant phenomenon all over the region. Along the same lines we also find a bit of Brazil in India, as conditional cash transfers have been widely adopted there. Such a policy exchange of successful social policies aimed at seeking the inclusion of historically excluded groups is potentially of much greater relevance than any foreign policy interaction based on threats and deterrence – at least among countries that do not have a history of conflict, because it can bring countries together by triggering changes from within, even if these changes are initiated externally. This article will focus on some national policies that have already traveled abroad from Brazil to India, and vice versa, in order to demonstrate the relevance of such an interchange. To allow for a more precise analysis, I will focus on policies focusing on inclusion, education, and democratic participation.

There is an intimate link that connects economic growth to democracy, citizen participation, and education, as such authors as Amartya Sen (1999), George Psacharopoulos (1993) and John Gaventa (2010) have demonstrated. The arguments supporting this link are old, reaching back to Alexis de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, and others. However, the more recent literature is able to specify that

link and assess its importance. This article will first discuss the causal paths that link democracy, participation, and education to economic growth and “development” and it will then discuss some empirical examples from contemporary Brazil and India that allow for some more specific learnings in this discussion. In the conclusion, the article highlights the importance of south-south dialogue and the interchange of social policy experiences between such countries as India and Brazil.

Modernization is Dead

Modernization theory has an important place in the discussions about economic growth, political stability, and development. Particularly the early work of Samuel Huntington (1968) still holds some insight for contemporary students of development, especially those from rich countries, because of his insistence on the importance of the degree, not the kind, of government. As Huntington puts it, “The primary problem is not liberty but the creation of a legitimate public order. Men may, of course, have order without liberty, but they cannot have liberty without order.” (Huntington, 1968:7f) While this has proven to be true, much of the other assumptions held by modernization theorists have not withstood the proof of time. There is no king’s road to development. The middle class is not the only driving force for democracy, and most of all: democracy will not automatically follow economic development, as Przeworski and Limongi (1997) have demonstrated, and as the experiences of Apartheid South Africa, China, and most of Latin America have amply shown. Democracy must be achieved, fought for, and actively constructed and defended or it will not emerge and survive. The direction of the causal link, if anything, goes the other way: it is not that economic development breeds democracy, but democracy has some important spillover effects on economic growth. (Sen, 1999) More precisely, the rule of law, a functioning judicial system, and the freedom, enforced and protected by government, of people to act as they want will also contribute to economic growth – if the government provides for the necessary opportunities (such as infrastructure and effective law enforcement).

Sen’s whole “capability approach” hinges on the idea that if given the opportunity, people will act in their own best interest and, if guided by effective government, this pursuit of self-interest will produce agglomerate economic output. Sen is thus very close to Adam Smith’s original (1776) understanding of markets. With Smith, he also shares the understanding that markets can easily be distorted and become dysfunctional – something that most contemporary free-marketeers conveniently forget. Sen’s approach to development as freedom supports demand-side driven approaches to stimulate markets, that is: Sen’s work follows Maynard Keynes, in that it believes that investments in people’s abilities and resources will impact the whole economy positively. However, he goes beyond Keynes and argues that “free agency is itself a constitutive part of development; it also contributes to the strengthening of free agencies of other kinds.” (Sen, 1999: 4) The core insight of Sen certainly is that it is not the amount of money you have that decides how happy or fulfilled you are, but what that money can buy you, that is: what kind of life you are able to live. Many of us have fallen prey to what Karl Marx has called “money fetishism,” which means valuing money for its own sake. Sen reminds us that money is a means to an end and that it is the ends that matter. Health, education, being a respected member of a community, being able to shape the institutions under which one lives, being able to breath clean air, being and feeling safe, being able to move about without being stuck in traffic jams – all of these are ends in themselves and not all of them can be bought with money. Money is a poor (yet easy) way to measure one’s capabilities.

Education

The most cost effective investment a government in Africa, Latin America and Asia can make is in public primary education. World Bank George Psacharopoulos has a lifetime career built on demonstrating and measuring the truth of this statement. In a 1993 World Bank paper, for example, his findings are summed up the following way: “Primary education continues to yield high returns in developing countries, and the returns decline by the level of schooling and a country’s per capita income.” (Psacharopoulos, 1993:i) His other findings are summarized as such: “Among the three main levels of education, primary education continues to exhibit the highest

social profitability in all world regions (...) Overall, the returns to female education are higher than those to male education, but at individual levels of education the pattern is more mixed.” (Psacharopoulos, 1993:ii) There is more, and more specific, information on the importance of basic public education readily available to anybody who cares to look. The success story of such quick developers as South Korea can hardly be told without noting the tremendous impact that its educational policy has had. Cuba, despite all its unfreedoms and problems, provides yet another empirical example of the importance of making education a government priority. It might also indicate some of the pitfalls of doing so: once people are learned, they will not readily accept unfreedom.

Indeed, economists Joseph Stiglitz and Shahid Yusuf (2001) have demonstrated that what matters the most for achieving sustained growth is what economists call “Total Factor Productivity” (TFP), which measures the increase of efficiency. Together with the value of how much input an economy receives (in terms of resources), TFP determines the overall output of an economy, where investment in education is computed as an input. Different from other inputs, however, educational input also impacts TFP, as higher levels of learning lead to more efficient behavior among workers and entrepreneurs. Hence, according to Stiglitz, “the key policy issue facing all developing countries remains: how to close the knowledge gap.” (Stiglitz and Yusuf, 2001:512) Stiglitz summarizes his explanation for the “East Asian Miracle” with this general statement: “The most successful governments have realized the importance of these *social* policies (including egalitarian income distribution and education policies), not only as ends in themselves but as *necessary* for long-term economic growth.” (Stiglitz and Yusuf, 2001:525)

As a result of these and many other, related, findings, investment in education, social policies, and democratic quality have moved to the center stage of the development discussion. This time this is not advocated by social scientists and humanists, but by economists, whose main concern is not social justice per se, but sustained economic growth and prosperity.

The Cost of Exclusion and Discrimination

Mayra Buvinic (2004), in her introduction to the Inter American Development Bank report *Social Inclusion and Economic Development in Latin America*, which she co-edited, writes that several Latin American countries have started to focus on strategies aimed at including historically excluded segments of their societies. She mentions the 1991 Colombian Constitution, Affirmative Action in Brazil, anti-discrimination legislation in Mexico, the 1997 Peruvian law which criminalizes discrimination, as well as several policies and projects for Garifunas in Honduras, indigenous people in Chile, Afro-descendants in Colombia, and for people with disabilities in Mexico and Nicaragua. Buvinic then argues that, “Reflecting this new interest, international development agencies have embraced the goal of social inclusion and supported research on the causes of poverty and inequality and the remedies.” (Buvinic, 2004:4) While it is not easy to define and measure what exactly inclusion is, Buvinic and her co-editors and co-authors all agree that poverty, access to quality services, access to physical infrastructure, access to participation in labor markets, social participation and social capital, justice and political participation, as well as violence and victimization constitute exclusion, so that policies aimed at inclusion must target these factors.

To these authors, excluded groups and individual tend to be invisible, poor, stigmatized, discriminated against, and suffer from an accumulation of these factors. All authors contributing to this publication also agree that, “Policies for inclusion call of public investments to correct imbalances in access to quality services and to productive and political resources. They strive to “level the playing field” and create an enabling environment for the excluded to exercise their agency.” (Buvinic, 2004:10) Indeed, several Latin American countries now provide statistical information on the situation of their minorities, which is deemed by many an important first step in the struggle to overcome exclusion, as it provides the necessary information on the excluded, their numbers, location, and characteristics, without which public policies cannot be designed. According to Buvinic, “Twelve

countries in the region included questions on ethnicity and race in the 2000 round of population censuses, some for the first time (Honduras, Peru).” (Buvinic, 2004:11)

Based on their assessment of several countries of the region, these authors assert that what needs to be done in order to break the vicious cycle of exclusion is to break the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage; to expand access to Labor, Land and Capital Markets; to implement integrated local development projects; to actively combat stigma and discrimination with laws and preferential policies; and to empower socially exclude groups. The policy recommendations these authors suggest in order to achieve these goals include “establishing national civil and social rights frameworks to address and remedy discrimination, and (...) addressing the multiple causes and consequences of exclusion through inclusionary social and economic policy.” (Buvinic, 2004: 25)

Why is fighting exclusion of such importance? My own answer is very much in tune with Buvinic’s: beyond issues of justice, “Discrimination and exclusion are costly to the economy and society.” (Buvinic, 2004:26) How costly exactly is difficult to say, but some economists have attempted to measure the economic of exclusion and discrimination. Jonas Zoninstein, in his contribution to the same IDB publication, asserts that without discrimination, “Bolivia’s economy grows by 36.7 percent, Brazil’s by 12.8 percent, Guatemala’s by 13.6 percent, and Peru’s by 4.2 percent.” (Zoninstein in Buvinic et.al., 2004:45). Zoninstein also locates the most important cause responsible for reproducing exclusion: education. He writes: “In a comparative study of schooling and earnings in South Africa and Brazil, Lam (1999) found that differences in schooling explain much of the earning inequalities in both countries.” (Zoninstein in Buvinic et.al., 2004:48) And he concludes, that “A social inclusion strategy could start by promoting more and better investment in human capital of Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples and by ending occupational discrimination. These changes would increase the productivity and reduce unemployment among these excluded groups, leading to increases in the productivity of labor and capital, the incentives to invest in new plant and equipment, and the competitive strength of the economy as a whole, including activities oriented to external markets.” (Zoninstein in Buvinic et.al., 2004:49)

The case for social policies, particularly investment in primary education, could not be any clearer, stated more pervasively, or supported with more evidence. Anybody who opposes it opposes sound empirical evidence and research. Social investment *is* investment into a country’s economic growth and development, with investment in education standing out as by far the most effective. The case for social and educational policies thus is no longer a case for justice alone; it is a case for collective economic growth.¹

Democratic Participation

Democratic participation provides an important way to achieve democracy, agency, capabilities, and hence: development. Similar to the cases for democracy in general and for social policies and education in particular, the case for democratic participation is old and well known, but it has only recently received some important backing from systematic research. Particularly the work of John Gaventa and his colleagues at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex (UK), as well as the work by such authors as Archon Fung (2003), Abhijit

¹ From a justice point of view, much deeper and more far reaching policies to reverse the accumulated effects of exclusion and discrimination would be called for. Given the unequal asset distribution that has resulted from hundreds of years of slavery or from exploiting the labor of scheduled casts, for example, a justice agenda would demand that the historically excluded would receive preferential treatment to offset their historical discrimination, which would require hundreds of years of exclusive privileges, the same way that those that built their riches on their backs have enjoyed. Such an agenda is, of course, utopian even if it were just.

Banerjee (2008), and Brigitte Geissel (2009) have allowed us to reach a clearer and more precise understanding of the importance of democratic participation and the different conditioning factors that determine its effectiveness. Gaventa and his team have gathered information on 100 participative projects in poor countries over ten years (2000 to 2010) and published eight books plus many working papers on their findings. Archon Fung (2003) has analyzed some American cases of participative governance and proposed an institutional typology of citizen participation. He has also gathered empirical data on participatory experiments in Chicago (2001) and Minneapolis (2006). Abhijit Banerjee and his colleagues have analyzed the reasons for failed parental involvement in India (2008) and Brigitte Geissel (2009) has examined the experiences of citizen participation in local German government.

In addition to this rich information, we now have assessments of several attempts by different governments of very different countries to fight exclusion with innovative programs, all aimed at fostering active involvement of historically excluded groups - the poor, underrepresented, women, and minorities. This new, more empirically grounded information, allows us to re-examine the older literature on social capital, associations, civil society, and civicness, as well as the discussions about deliberative democracy in important new ways. We can now determine how important, exactly, civic participation is and what kind of participation is more likely to achieve the outcomes it seeks, that is: what works, under what conditions, and how. The title of Gaventa and Barrett's (2010) IDS Working Paper 347 sums up this possibility. It is called *So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*.

Gaventa and Barrett (2010) sum up their 10 year, 100 case study about the effectiveness of citizen participation in a table that maps out the possibilities as well as the pitfalls. This is the table:

Outcomes of citizen engagement

Positive	Negative
Construction of citizenship	
Increased civic and political knowledge	Increased knowledge dependencies
Greater sense of empowerment and agency	Disempowerment and reduced sense of agency
Practices of citizen participation	
Increased capacities for collective action	New capacities used for 'negative' purposes
New forms of participation	Tokenistic or 'captured' forms of participation
Deepening of networks and solidarities	Lack of accountability and representation in networks
Responsive and accountable states	
Greater access to state services and resources	Denial of state services and resources
Greater realization of rights	Social, economic and political reprisals
Enhanced state responsiveness and accountability	Violent or coercive state responses
Inclusive and cohesive societies	
Inclusion of new actors and issues in public spaces	Reinforcement of social hierarchies and exclusion
Greater social cohesion across groups	Increased horizontal conflict and violence

Source: Gaventa and Barrett, 2010: 25

They explain:

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of positive and negative outcomes across the four categories. Overall, 75 per cent of total outcomes were coded positive and, the remaining 25 per cent negative. Turning to the positive-negative split within each outcome category, we see that the division conforms broadly to the overall 75–25 per cent split in total positive and negative outcomes, respectively, in our sample, with the ‘construction of citizenship’ showing the highest percentage of positive outcomes (80 per cent) and ‘inclusive and cohesive societies’ the lowest (70 per cent). (Gaventa and Barrett, 2010:25)

In other words: active citizen engagement has an overwhelmingly positive effect on such attributes as the awareness and practice of citizenship rights, the responsiveness and accountability of states, and on the overall cohesiveness of societies, even if social cohesiveness is a more complex phenomenon and cannot be reduced to democratic participation alone. By giving historically excluded groups and previously passive citizens a voice and active role in the fashioning of their own destinies, democratic participation does actively fight alienation from and disenchantment with politics as it transforms former clients into agents.

Learning from Brazil and India

Brazil and India provide some of the richest experiences that offer important lessons for all those committed to more equitable development and sustainable economic growth. In this article, I will focus on the experiences of the Brazilian *Service de Atendimento ao Cidadão* (Citizen Service), known as SAC and the related *Poupatempo* (Save Time) Program.

SAC was created by the Bahian state government in 1995. The core approach was to offer all the state-related services that Brazilian citizens routinely need from their federal, state, and municipal governments, in one place. In addition, given the need for health care in remote places, two mobile SAC units were created that went to rural areas, also offering basic health care and vaccination services where they were not readily available. Since 1995, Bahian citizens thus can get voting titles, criminal records, water bills, energy bills, tax bills, drivers licenses, passports, working papers (*carteira de trabalho*) and the like issued and resolved in one day, in one place. This experience met with so much citizen approval that it became a model that quickly spread all over Brazil and even to other countries. According to Daniel Annenberg (2008), former manager of *Poupatempo* Sao Paulo, SAC delivered, on average, 42,300 services per day and 847,000 per month. *Poupatempo*, delivered 75,000 daily services and 1.5 million per month, with 11 fixed units and 7 mobile units. A similar experience was started in 2001 in Rio de Janeiro, called *Rio Simples* (Simply Rio). *Poupatempo* received a 99% approval rate among the population (Annenberg, 2008).

Similar efforts to provide citizens with easier and quicker access to government services are undertaken by the Indian government. The Indian National e-Governance Plan (NEGP) envisages Citizen Service Centers as providing a primary mode of service delivery channel for rural areas. The ‘E-Seva’ (Andhra Pradesh, India) program was started as a pilot in 1999, and presently features over 1000 centers in Andhra Pradesh districts and plans to add 8000 more. E-Seva is the most evolved model of e-service delivery in India, integrating the services of 13 state and local government agencies, 3 central government agencies and 9 private sector organizations. It provides more than 130 G2C and B2C services. Nearly 1.6 million citizens use e-Seva services in Hyderabad every month. It offers the widest choice of channels (Departmental counters, Internet, ATMs, e-Seva counters in Banks, any e-Seva service center, AP Online kiosks) and the widest array of services. Citizens can not only pay bills online (telephone, electricity, property taxes, etc) and apply for passports, but also recharge mobile phones, purchase milk coupons, reserve movie tickets, etc.²

² This information is from the World Bank E-Development Thematic Group:
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTINFORMATIONANDCOMMUNICATIONANDTECHNOLOGIES/EXTDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:20920866~menuPK:2643963~pagePK:64020865~piPK:51164185~theSitePK:559460,00.html>

This sort of efficient Service provision is an important tool to actively include historically excluded groups and individuals into “official society.” In Brazil, even though the percentage of Brazilians with a bank account increased from 16.1% in 2005 to 60.5% in 2011, according to the Brazilian Fundação Getúlio Vargas, a significant portion of Brazilians is still not part of the economically active population. In India, only about half of the population has a bank account, thus effectively excluding the other half from actively engaging in money transactions beyond a very rudimentary, direct, level.

Conditional Cash Transfers

According to Ariel Fiszbein and Norbert Schady (2009), “Countries have been adopting or considering adoption of CCT programs at a prodigious rate. Virtually every country in Latin America has such a program. Elsewhere, there are large-scale programs in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Turkey, and pilot programs in Cambodia, Malawi, Morocco, Pakistan, and South Africa, among others. Interest in programs that seek to use cash to incentivize household investments in child schooling has spread from developing to developed countries—most recently to programs in New York City and Washington, DC.” (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:1) These authors speak of a “CCT Wave” which in 2009 benefited 5 million households in Mexico and 11 million families in Brazil, that is: some 46 million people in Brazil alone.

The idea behind Conditional Cash Transfer Programs is simple. Families need savings to make investments. Given that the poorest are unable to save, they cannot invest and thus remain outside of markets, or, in the case of the very poor, they have not enough money for their own consumption. By giving them small amounts of money, they will be able to feed their families and gain the opportunity to invest - and thus be able to work their way out of poverty. This is not a new idea, but classical demand-side Keynesian economics. What gave this old idea its revolutionary character was the insight that most poor children are out of school not because they want to, but because their parents make them work. In 1995, under the governorship of Cristovam Buarque, the Brazilian capital of Brasilia thus started a social program called “Bolsa Escola” that sought to give parents incentives to keep their children in school, namely by providing them with the money they could otherwise earn begging in the streets or working. From the beginning, this program was conditional: parents could get the money only as long as their children remained in school. By paying parents if they kept their children in school, this program was able to address several problems at once: to provide money to poor families so they could invest and participate in markets and to find a way to keep children in schools, which not only positively impacts them, but promises to contribute to the GNP by actively fighting exclusion. (Castro and Burstyn, 2008) In 2003, when Luis Inacio Lula first took office in Brazil, this program was merged with others into the now-known *Bolsa Familia* Program and applied on a national level. In its current form, *Bolsa Familia* demands that children under 17 stay in school; that children ages 0-7 receive all required vaccinations and grow according to the established plan; that pregnant women participate in prenatal care; and that lactating women participate in a monitoring program. In 2007, this program cost the Brazilian Federal government US\$4.7 billion, which equals 0.3% of its GDP. (Brazilian Ministry for Social Development and Hunger Eradication)

The impacts of Bolsa Familia and similar programs have been impressive. Not surprisingly, according to Fiszbein and Schady (2009), “the largest consumption impacts are found when the transfer amount is generous (as with the Red de Protección Social [RPS] program in Nicaragua). Moreover, because transfers generally are well targeted to the poor, the effects on consumption have translated into impacts on poverty (...). Some of the reductions in poverty are quite large. In Nicaragua, for example, poverty fell by 5–9 points (using the 2002 data).” (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009:15) Between 2003 and 2009, the income of poor Brazilians has grown seven times as much as the income of rich Brazilians and poverty has fallen during that time from 22 percent of the population to 7 percent. (World Bank) To these direct benefits, one should add the money the Brazilian government is saving by preemptively avoiding all those costs that a population without education and good health is likely to accrue. In addition, as shown above, Brazil, and the other countries with similar programs are also actively investing in its future economic

prosperity by making investments in its population's health and education, the most efficient economic long-term investment any country can make.

In 2012, Conditional Cash Transfer programs exist not only in Brazil and Mexico, the pioneers, but in almost all of Latin America, as well as in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. By adopting such programs India is not only learning from the Brazilian experience, a country with similar problems of poverty, inequality, and exclusion. India is also moving closer and becoming more similar to Brazil by applying some of the same social policies. Instead of focusing on its differences, some sectors within both governments have decided to focus on their similarities instead. In terms of foreign policy, this must be seen as a major step towards fighting the true enemies of both countries: hunger, poverty, ill health, and lack of education of significant parts of their populations.

Conclusion: Rethinking Foreign Policy

In a Hobbesian world of anarchy and mistrust, deterrence and balance of power politics might be necessary to ensure security. However, such a framework is less and less able to capture the needs and wants of countries that are not latently at war with each other, but rather have started to recognize that they face very similar problems and thus might learn from the different solutions that emerge, and are already tested, in one locality. This is the case of India's relationship to Brazil and to Latin America in general. They all have one common enemy: poverty, inequality, social exclusion and all the resulting phenomena associated with those, namely violence, lack of sustained economic growth, high health care costs, and all the other problems created when a significant part of the population is uneducated, in bad health, and poor. As a result, each can learn much from the other's experience. Recent research on the impact of social investment and democratic participation all point to the path that both countries need to follow if they want to win this battle. They need to find ways to fight back the extremely entrenched exclusion of parts of their populations, so that these historically excluded segments can become active members in their democracies and in their national markets. The cost of neglecting this task is extremely high. However, the solutions to these problems come less and less from the old colonial powers, but they emerge autochthonously, from Indian and Latin American thinkers, researchers, and practitioners such as Amartya Sen, Cristovam Buarque, Jaime Lerner, and Antanas Mockus. In a world where more and more of "our" problems are also "their" problems, foreign policy needs to focus more and more on what different countries can learn from each other. The future of security, stability, and prosperity of all countries depend on it.

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