

Social Welfare Policy: Its Effects and Attitude toward the Policy นโยบายสวัสดิการสังคม: ผลของนโยบาย และทัศนคติต่อนโยบาย

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Abstract

The extent and substance of social welfare policy make it a controversial issue, as different and usually contradicting political and economic ideologies all provide defensible rationale for them. Along with the policy is the forced resource relocation in the society. Since the policy effect is more empirical than the ideologies, the first objective of this research, therefore, examines, on the global scale, the effect of social welfare policy on equality and social well-being, as forms of social justice. Available secondary data are compiled for the study, with countries as the unit of analysis. The second objective is to study the attitude of a group of Thai university students from middle class families or above toward the Thai social welfare policy, since the policy responsiveness is necessary in a democratic country like Thailand. Survey is used as the method of data collection.

For data analyses, regression analyses and chi square tests are used in response to the first and second objectives, respectively.

The finding indicates an impressive result of social welfare policy on equality and social well-being, when it is compared to political, economic, and social factors. Urbanization is the one social factor that is equally significant as the policy factors in determining social equality and social well-being. This finding is in line with the Convergence Thesis, positing the conformance of urban societies to social welfare policy and, ultimately, the social well-being. The survey of Thai university students shows their favorable attitude toward social welfare policy and social equality, although the types of equality requiring more extensive resource transfer receive less support. With these empirical findings and

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welfare literature, the New Convergence Thesis having three aspects is proposed. First, the impressive empirical result of social welfare policy as well as the favorable attitude toward equality and the policy push the non-welfare states to conform more with some features and substance of state welfare of the Western, developed countries. Second, the welfare states and non-welfare states conform with each other in the use of the non-state sector, through privatization as a promising alternative to state welfare. With privatization, however, remains the distinctive role of the state as service arranger. At times, it also subsidizes the private sector in delivering services, due to the positive effect of welfare spending indicated in this study. Third, there is a convergence of social welfare ideologies from two polar opposites of the Right on the one hand and the Collectivism on the other, reaching the middle ground or the gray area. With such gray area are the positive components of the contradicting, opposite ideologies, which are adopted by many countries.

บทคัดย่อ

ระดับและสาระของนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคม ทำให้เป็นประเด็นถกเถียงได้เสมอ เมื่อแต่ละอุดมการณ์และปรัชญาทางการเมืองและเศรษฐกิจ สามารถให้เหตุผลอ้างอิงระดับและสารดังกล่าวได้ และเมื่อมีนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคมก็จำเป็นต้องมีการเคลื่อนย้ายทรัพยากรและรายได้ภายในสังคมอีก ด้วยผลของนโยบายเป็นที่ประจักษ์แจ้งกว่าอุดมการณ์ งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์แรก ที่จะศึกษาผลของนโยบาย

สวัสดิการสังคม ที่มีต่อคุณภาพชีวิตและความเท่าเทียม ในฐานะเป็นความยุติธรรมในสังคม งานวิจัยใช้ข้อมูลทุติยภูมิ ในการตอบวัตถุประสงค์แรก โดยใช้ประเทศเป็นหน่วยวิเคราะห์ วัตถุประสงค์ที่สองของงานวิจัย ศึกษาทัศนคติของนักศึกษาไทยกลุ่มหนึ่ง ที่มาจากครอบครัวยุคใหม่ กลางขึ้นไป ที่มีต่อนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคมในประเทศไทย ด้วยประเทศในระบอบประชาธิปไตยต้องตอบสนองความประสงค์ของสังคมในเชิงนโยบายในระดับหนึ่ง การสำรวจใช้เป็นวิธีการเก็บข้อมูล เพื่อตอบวัตถุประสงค์นี้ สำหรับการวิเคราะห์ ใช้ Regression analysis และการทดสอบ Chi square สำหรับวัตถุประสงค์ที่หนึ่ง และที่สอง ตามลำดับการวิจัยพบผลที่น่าสนใจของนโยบาย คือความเท่าเทียม และคุณภาพชีวิต เมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับผลของปัจจัยทางการเมือง เศรษฐกิจ และสังคม สภาพความเป็นเมือง คือปัจจัยทางสังคมปัจจัยเดียว ที่มีผลเชิงบวก เช่นเดียวกับปัจจัยนโยบาย ต่อความเท่าเทียมและคุณภาพชีวิต ผลวิจัยนี้สอดคล้องกับ The Convergence Thesis ที่อ้างถึงสังคมเมืองที่มีแนวโน้มที่จะกำหนดนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคมมากขึ้น ซึ่งในท้ายสุด จะเพิ่มคุณภาพชีวิต การสำรวจทัศนคติของนักศึกษาไทย พบทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคมและความเท่าเทียมของสังคม โดยที่ความเท่าเทียมประเภทที่มีผลมาจากการเคลื่อนย้ายทรัพยากรภายในสังคม จะได้รับการสนับสนุนจากกลุ่มนักศึกษาน้อยกว่าความเท่าเทียมประเภทที่ไม่จำเป็นต้องมีการเคลื่อนย้ายทรัพยากร ด้วยการค้นพบเชิงประจักษ์นี้ ร่วมกับวรรณกรรมด้านสวัสดิการสังคม งานวิจัยนี้

นำเสนอ The New Convergence Thesis ที่มีสามมิติ ในมิติแรก ผลที่น่าพอใจของนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคม และทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อนโยบายและความเท่าเทียม น่าจะผลักดันให้ประเทศที่มีสวัสดิการน้อย หรือประเทศที่ไม่ใช้รัฐสวัสดิการจัดหาสวัสดิการในระดับที่มากขึ้น ซึ่งใกล้เคียงกับประเทศที่มีสวัสดิการสังคมระดับสูง หรือประเทศที่เป็นรัฐสวัสดิการในตะวันตก ในมิติที่สองทั้งประเทศที่เป็น และไม่ได้เป็นรัฐสวัสดิการจะคล้ายกัน ในการโอนภารกิจด้านสวัสดิการสังคมสู่ภาคเอกชนมากขึ้น ในฐานะเป็นทางเลือกของบริการด้านสวัสดิการสังคม แต่แม้จะมีการโอนภารกิจสู่เอกชนเช่นนี้ ภาครัฐยังต้องคงบทบาทการดูแลการให้บริการของเอกชน และที่สำคัญ ควรให้การสนับสนุนภาคเอกชนด้านงบประมาณ ด้วยผลเชิงบวกของการกำหนดงบประมาณและนโยบายสวัสดิการสังคมที่พบในงานวิจัยนี้ สำหรับมิติที่สาม จะมีการสนองรับอุดมการณ์ในระดับกลางๆ ระหว่างอุดมการณ์สุดขั้ว หรือตรงข้าม คืออุดมการณ์ฝ่ายขวา ในชั่วหนึ่งและสังคมนิยม ในอีกชั่วหนึ่ง ซึ่งอุดมการณ์ในระดับกลางๆ ที่หลายประเทศให้ความสนใจนี้มีข้อดีตรงที่บรรจุกิจกรรมด้านบวก ของทั้งสองชั่วอุดมการณ์ไว้ทั้งสิ้น

Introduction

The controversy in the issue of social welfare makes it interesting and a challenging human endeavor. The debate around the issue usually concerns the proper amplitude of social welfare in each society. In other words, the extent of the government's roles is contentious, since

they imply some extent of resource relocation from the well-off to the worse-off in the society. The arguments for and against the government's intervention in the enforcement of resource relocation are based on political, economic, and social ideology. Therefore, many fields of study, such as various branches of political science, economics, as well as social work, all have contribution to the debate and contention. Nevertheless, although the debate within the issue is philosophy-based, which is abstract, what is concrete is the empirical outcome of the actual government's role in pursuing social welfare policy. And the outcome should vary, mainly depending on the amplitude of the government's intervention.

This study has two main objectives. One, it studies the empirical effect of social welfare policy or social well-being on the global scale. The effect is hypothesized to be positive in relation to the level government's policy. With such aim and hypothesis, the second purpose examines the attitude of a group of Thai people - college students from at least middle-class background-with respect to social welfare policy and government's intervention. In spite of the hypothesized positive policy effect, the policy process - the policy formulation and implementation in particular- cannot disregard the views of electorate, especially in Thailand, where democracy has been moving toward the consolidation stage. The paper starts by briefly reviewing the philosophical grounds of social welfare - both for and against it. It then elaborates the framework for the study, while discussing the

existing literature rendering such framework. After that, there is the explanation of methodology, result, as well as the analysis and discussion of the study results.

The controversy of welfare and welfare policy

Social welfare and resources are almost always intermingled. In most respects, social welfare focuses on the provision of resources and services, such as medical care, benefits in case of invalidity, unemployment, old age, and sickness, education, public safety, and housing (Jansson, 1990, pp. 18-19; International Labor Office, 1984, p. 27; Morgan & LaPlant, 1996, p. 215; Yu, 1996, p. 416; Hutchinson & Schumacher, 1995, p. 4; Roemer, 1999, p. 250; Tang, 1999, p. 99). Most literature defines welfare as government's expenditure on merit goods and services, whose consumption exceeds the valuation in the private market.

Welfare is linked to the concept of the welfare state, where there is guaranteed minimum income of individuals and families; the care for contingencies, such as sickness, old age, and unemployment; and the provision of standard social services (MacGregor, 1999, p. 95). Sweden is usually regarded as a welfare state leader, whereas the United States as laggard, with the exception of the latter's education policy. Philosophy abounds in providing arguments for and against social welfare policy.

Certain values bring about the justification for the minimal role of the state in

social welfare or a low degree of social intervention. These are Individualist, Conservative, and the Right's values. Freedom and self-determination should be endorsed, since they lead to prosperity. Individuals, if left alone by the state, will act on their own self-interest and increase work and wealth acquisition, leading, in turn, to a prosperous economy. Social Darwinism and Capitalism are closely related to the Right's values, in their adherence to the power of individualism. The idea, undertaken by Herbert Spencer, is coined in the term, "survival of the fittest" to describe an endless struggle to survive in the market place (Heywood, 1994, p. 318). With the main values of individualism, the dimension of justice linked to such values comprises the endowment-based criterion of social justice, opting for the kind of rights as entitlement to the work one puts down, as well as its consequences (Musgrave & Musgrave, 1989, pp. 76-78). Citizenship's responsibility to care not only to the self but also others is also ingrained in the philosophy. Most Neo-conservatives would endorse John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" (Heywood, 1994, pp. 161-162).

To the opposite of the minimalist state is social intervention by the government - the statist perspective. The associated ideologies and values would be compassion, equality, equity, social rights, and collectivism. Egalitarians have long argued for the maximization and equalization of social welfare (Musgrave & Musgrave, 1989, pp. 76-77). The rationale for

state intervention is mainly needs-based, deserts-based, and rights-based criteria. With respect to the needs-based criterion, people are entitled to different resource distribution, because they are differentiated on certain characteristics, such as race, gender, class or caste of origin, kinship, or age (Hurst, 1992, p. 288). The basic judgement would be the principle of "no fault of one's own" (Pereira & Van Ryzin, 1998, pp. 409-410; Heywood, 1994, pp. 242-243). The rights-based criterion is somewhat more subtle, as the rights criterion could be argued for both minimal state and state intervention. While the entitlement to work effort can be defended as one's rights, people are also entitled to social welfare as of citizenship's rights. In Thailand, examples of state intervention comprise the entitlement of the Thai to twelve years of free education and the present government's Thirty-Baht Health Policy (1997 *Thai Constitution*; Kamhom, 2002, pp. 93-94). Democratic Socialism adheres to collectivism, as opposed to individualism on the part of the New Rights and Conservatives. The state makes an agreement with citizens or a social contract, in which the authority of the former is accepted, while functioning to the benefit of the latter in the form of social welfare policy (Heywood, 1994, pp. 337-338; George & Wilding, 1994, pp. 82-83). Collectivism, as an integral part of Democratic Socialism, posits that actions of individuals sometimes have consequences both to the selves as well as others, hence, arguing for the upholding of collective interests. In order for a society to have the integrity, it depends on

everyone in it. For instance, a starving or destitute person could pose danger as well as embarrassment to other members of a society (Chatterjee, 2002, p. 374):

In each ideology, there are additional, related arguments and concepts, all contributing to the difficulty in the judgement of right and wrong, since each value has its own rationale behind it. Even within the Welfare State Regime, various amplitudes of redistribution is possible. Twine (1994, pp. 145-146) relates the intensity of welfare state to the level of decommodification of welfare service. Ranging from the lowest to the highest level are the Liberal Welfare State Regime, the Corporatist Welfare State Regime, and Social Democratic welfare states. Titmuss (1974, pp. 30-31) offers the categorization of welfare state as Residual, Industrial Achievement-Performance, and Institutional Redistributive Models, ranging from low to high levels of decommodification, respectively. Within the welfare state and welfare services, various methods exist to achieve a certain extent of social well-being. For example, some programs, such as public education provide universal benefits, while others are designed to gear benefits to particular groups, such as minorities, the elderly, and the disadvantaged. Progressive taxation also generally relocates resources from the more to the less wealthy (Roemer, 1999, p. 65; Musgrave & Musgrave, 1989, pp. 228-230). Such programs would be well supported by Rawls' famous idea of "veil of ignorance," as it posits that being unable to foresee their end state, people would

choose an equal over unequal society to avoid the state of despair. On the contrary, Nozick, a Libertarian, perceives a just society as one in which talents and capacities, as well as their consequences are solemnly valued and upheld (Hurst, 1992, p. 290; Heywood, 1994, p. 239; Musgrave & Musgrave, 1989, p. 80).

Related literature and research framework

Intended as a policy study, this research expects to see the positive effect of social welfare policy on the social well-being. Some literature provides support for such contention. Li (2000) comparatively examines income distribution in Taiwan and Mexico, as both countries, since 1960s, have rather approximate levels of economic development. However, the level of income distribution in Taiwan is conspicuously higher than that of Mexico. Li argues that this incident could be explained by the disparity in economic and social policy. There was a higher degree of government's intervention in Taiwan in the forms of education reform policy, increased mandatory social insurance to cover the majority of population and a specific coverage on the aged and unemployed, subsidies to labor-intensive export industries, the encouraged use of internal savings in domestic investment, as well as land reform policy. On the other hand, the Mexican Government, being reluctant of social intervention, pursued a more liberal policy. As a result, access to education is more unequal, exacerbating income disparity. The Government

pursued privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization policies, resulting in the oligopolistic form of market failure. While the Taiwanese Government promoted small and medium enterprises, trade liberalization in Mexico led to the use of more capital intensive enterprises for the purpose of export, negatively affecting the level of unemployment. Hutchinson and Schumacher (1995) also found a positive correlation of government's spending per capita on public and merit goods and human development. Tang (1999, p. 97) discusses China's transformation to the more capitalist orientation, where the egalitarian ideal of "everyone eating from the same pot" gave way to the principle of "to each according to his labor". As a result, there was a growing unemployment in cities, urban poverty, and a widening gap in income distribution. Adolino and Blake (2001, pp. 237-239) relate government's social welfare spending to the policy outcome, by comparison of spending in social policy and health policy in six developed countries - France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The health policy outcome indicates that the U.S. has exceptionally worst outcomes on several major indicators. The lowest infant mortality rate is found in France, Germany, and Japan, where there is mandatory health insurance. Despite a large amount of total spending of health care in the U.S., the amount of government's spending through State's revenues is the lowest of all six countries, contradicting the general belief that the private sector leads to efficiency. Morgan and LaPlant

(1996) studied state and local spending on health and hospitals in the U.S. The study finds a relationship between spending and immediate output measures, reflected in the number of health workers and hospital beds. The relationship between spending and longer-term outcome - some specific health quality indices - is insignificant, however.

In order to see more clearly the policy effect, the present study intends to compare such effect to political, economic, and social factors. Wickrama and Mulford (1996) studied the independent effect of political democracy on social well-being in the global perspective. A significant positive relationship is found. Within the emergence of democracy and democratic institutions, positive consequences possibly follow, such as government's legitimacy, political participation and more viable civil society. Within the latter, in particular, governments are relieved of responsiveness to the dominant class, unlike those in Authoritarian and Bureaucratic Politics Regimes. Pressure for policy making could come from groups of all social statuses, not just the more dominant groups. Crone (1993) refers to such pluralism as a broad political regime, where state is equipped with political capacity to initiate and implement social welfare change. Varshney (2000), along the same line, argues that although democracy does not always achieve the best result in poverty alleviation, it usually prevents the worst-case scenarios such as famine.

Economic and social factors could also affect social well-being. Wilensky (2002)

states that economic development and its wealth-inducing correlates are the main explanation for improved health, one indicator of life quality. With respect to social factors, Wuthnow (1994) studied the influence of religiosity upon attitude toward the indigent, revealing that religious people feel more socially responsible to the poor than do those who are not religious. This is due to the moralistic attitude associated with religiosity. The Industrial Society Perspective or the Convergence Thesis - possibly another social factor - is studied by Tang (1996) to influence social security and social well-being. As a country develops by way of industrialization, urbanization inevitably emerges, leading the way to social policy and social welfare.

Since the policy outcome is of interest in the present study, some criteria of such measure are specified, using previous studies as the frame. Wickrama and Mulford (1996) examine social well-being in terms of infant mortality, life expectancy, primary education enrollment, and adult literacy. Economic development is measurable by per capita GNP. Income distribution, usually perceived as leading to social equality and, in turn, social justice, is reflected in Gini Index (The World Bank, 2000/2001; Li, 2000; Hutchinson & Schumacher, 1995).

The second objective of the present study examines the attitude of Thai university students toward social welfare policy, since the policy direction needs support from tax payers. The literature on policy responsiveness from



the state to society abounds. Ramesh (2000) explains that the promulgation of social security in Indonesia and Thailand reflects the political salience. In the case of Indonesia, Sukarno intited Guided Democracy, while increasing the extent of social programs only when in need of public support for remaining in office. In Thailand, by the same token, after some progress in the development of democratic institutions in the late 1980s, the real necessity emerged for the political parties to devise policies to appeal to voters, as they face growing competition among themselves and more frequent elections. As such, it is argued that Asian values and Asian style of welfare provided within families and friends should not be entirely true. Crone (1993) also states that broad regimes lead governments to be responsive to the mass public in fulfilling social welfare obligation. Yu (1996) considers the Hong Kong Government to be pragmatic, in that it picked the right timing in early 1970s to improve economic and social lives. This was done primarily to placate the public at the time when the country was not as democratic as some other Asian countries. At the present time in Thailand, the so-called populist policies under the Thaksin Administration are perceived by many to be goods in the form of social and economic policies to be purchased by electorates in the political market.

The survey of Thai students' attitude is also imbued with some other concepts related to ideas and ideology of welfare. The main thrust of study by Pereira and Van Ryzin (1998) on

the New York residents' attitude toward social welfare reveals the perception of deserts as the main key to welfare provision. Roller (1995, p. 176) also examined public attitude on the government's role in achieving different kinds of equality, revealing a strong support for equality of opportunity and a lesser degree of support on a more radical redistribution, namely the guarantee of basic income. The generally known types of social equality comprise equality before the law, equal opportunity, and equal outcome (Heywood, 1994, pp. 226-235). The public support for these types, as confirmed by Roller (1995), ranges from the higher to lower degree, respectively, heavily depending on the extent of resource transfer within a society. Social inequality is strongly related to social stratification. Marx believes that the social division into the bourgeoisie and proletariat creates both social stratification and inequality. Weber contends that people with certain kinds of similarities, such as interests and level of wealth, flock together, forming status groups. A more modern view offered by Pearson, Davis, and Moore - the Functionalists - see stratification as social functions. Individuals occupy and fulfill different functions, with certain positions or roles, such as physicians, more important than others. Along the line of these as well as different rewards for different positions and functions come social stratification and, unavoidably, social inequality (Rothman, 1999, pp. 28-31; Hurst, 1992, pp. 204-205). Also related to social welfare are the concepts of materialism and altruism. More altruistic and less materialistic individuals are

believed to give more support to good deeds, including the tendency to have pro-social welfare policy attitude. Post materialism in welfare states, nowadays, tends to argue for a society where the transfer of resource is made by choice, not by force of the state (Roller, 1995, p. 171; Ringen, 1987, p. 48; Sangiampongsa, 1995, pp. 4-6).

Methodology and procedure

Objective 1: The first research objective examines the empirical effect of social welfare policy on social well-being on the global scale, taking advantage of available secondary data sources. But naturally, the research is limited to the available data. In particular, the World Bank (2000/2001) publishes global data on public expenditure on education in each country,

measured as the percentage of GNP (1997), plus subsidies to private education. Public expenditure on health, measured as percentage of GDP (1990-1998), is also available. These two pieces of information become social welfare policy variables for this research objective, whose unit of analysis comprises individual countries. The World Bank (2000/2001) also releases information on many social and economic indicators, many of which become other variables of interest in the present research, namely GNP per capita, percent of urban population, Gini Index, life expectancy, child and infant mortality rates, illiteracy rate, as well as primary and secondary school enrollments. The extent of democracy as the political variable is taken from Freedom House (www.freedomhouse.org). And religion as one social variable is available in *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2001*(2001). Table 1 provides the detail of all variables and their operational definitions.

Table 1 Variables¹ and their operational definitions in relation to the framework

Variables	Operational definition	Literature providing the framework
Education policy (Education)	Public expenditure on education (% of GNP). High = high spending; Low = low spending.	Li (2000); Hutchinson & Schumacher (1995); Yu (1996); Jones (2002); Adolino & Blake (2001); Morgan & LaPlant (1996).
Health policy (Health)	Public expenditure on health (% of GDP). High = high spending; Low = low spending.	Same.
Politics (Democracy)	Civil liberty & political rights. ² High = undemocratic; Low = democratic.	Wickrama & Mulford (1996); Crone (1993); Varshney (2000).
Economics (Wealth)	GNP per capita. High = wealthy; Low = poor.	Wilensky (2002); Minami & Kim (1999).
Social factor / Urbanization (Urban)	Urban population, measured as % of total population. High % = urbanized; Low = rural.	Tang (1996).
Social factor / Religion (Religion)	Main religion / the religion of the largest portion of population (Christian, Muslim, Others).	Withnow.
Equality / Income Distribution (Equality)	Gini Index (0 = perfect equality; 100 = perfect inequality.	Wickrama & Mulford (1996); World Bank (2000/2001); Hutchinson & Schumacher (1995); Li (2000); Adolino & Blake (2001).
Life expectancy (Life)	High = long life expectancy; Low = short life expectancy.	Same.
Child mortality (Child)	Mortality before the age of 5, per 1,000 children. High = high child mortality rate; Low = low child mortality rate.	Same.

Table 1 (continued)

Variables	Operational definition	Literature providing the framework
Infant mortality (Infant)	Mortality before the age of 1, per 1,000 infants. High = high infant mortality rate; Low = low infant mortality rate.	Wickrama & Mulford (1996); World Bank (2000/2001); Hutchinson & Schumacher (1995); Li (2000); Adolino & Blake (2001).
Primary school enrollment (Primary)	Net enrollment in primary schools, measured as % of primary school-aged group. High % = large % in school; Low % = small % in school.	Same.
Secondary school enrollment (Secondary)	Net enrollment in secondary schools, measured as % of secondary school-aged group. High % = large % in school; Low % = small % in school.	Same.
Illiteracy (Illiteracy)	% of people age 15 and above who cannot read and write. High % = high illiteracy; Low % = high literacy.	Same.

Note: Information from www.Freedomhouse.org (Freedom in the World 2002; The Democracy Gap) for the variable Democracy; The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2001* for the variable Religion; and World Bank (2000/2001) for other variables in the table.

* In parentheses are variable names.

² Democracy is the composite score of two factors: political rights and civil liberty. Political rights are measured on the scale of 1 (most ideal) to 7 (least ideal). Criteria of ideal, favorable political rights (rating of 1) are the following: free and fair elections, the existence of competitive political parties and interest groups; self-determination and higher autonomy among citizens; political participation, especially among minority groups; and decentralization. Civil liberties are also measured on the scale of 1 (most ideal) to 7 (least ideal). Ideal civil liberties possess the following conditions: freedom of expression, assembly, association, and religion; well-established system of rule of law; free economic activity; equality of opportunity; and absence of government's corruption. With the summation of political rights and civil liberty into one variable - Democracy - the lowest score of most ideal democracy is 2, while the highest score of least ideal democracy is 14.

Multiple regression analysis is performed to examine the policy effect, as compared to that of political, economic, and social variables, upon social well-being. With more than one dependent variables standing for social well-being, a series of regression equations are needed. According to Table 1, social well-being is represented by the following variables as dependent variables: Equality, Life, Child, Infant, Primary, Secondary, and Illiteracy; while Education, Health, Democracy, Wealth, Urban, and Religion are independent variables. From the independent variables in each regression equation, the effect of policy variables - Education and Health - can be compared to that of political, economic, and social variables. The political and economic variables are represented by Democracy and Wealth, respectively, while social variables are reflected in two variables - Urban and Religion. However, as Religion is measured categorically, according to Table 1, two dummy variables - Christ and Islam - are used in place of Religion for a three-category measure of religion - Christianity, Islam, and other religions. In order to delineate the exact effect of each religion, if any, one-way ANOVAs with post hoc analyses will be pursued with each dependent

variable.

Objective 2 : As the positive policy effect is expected, Objective 2 surveys the attitude of some Thai university students regarding social welfare and policy. A reflection of their attitude might be informative for policy makers, if there were to be an increase in social welfare policy. Thai university students in their fourth year undergraduate class (seniors) as well as graduate students with middle class family background or above are sampled from both public and private universities within Bangkok Metropolitan Area. Being from at least the middle class family background, these students should have resources for the transfer purpose, as social welfare policy usually needs resource relocation from the more to the less wealthy. In addition, this population is highly educated and, therefore, should be more inclined than other population to give some thoughts to the survey, hence, making the study of their attitude meaningful. Also, being in the academic environment and not being as busy as people at work places, they should be more inclined to cooperate with the study. With the selection of fourth year university students or above, this research should benefit from their maturity. The sample size is $N = 302$.

Table 2 Summary of questionnaire items in relation to the framework

Items	Attitude / perception of interest	Literature providing framework of items
1-17	Pro-social welfare policy / state intervention; Or not pro-social welfare policy	Pereira & Van Ryzin (1998); Roller (1995); Heywood (1994); <i>Thai 1997 Constitution</i> ; Kraft & Furlong (2004)
18-20	Pro-equality before the law, equal opportunity, And equal outcome or not pro-equality	Heywood (1994); Roller (1995); <i>Thai 1997 Constitution</i>
21-23	Materialist or non-materialist	Roller (1995); Ringen (1987)
24-26	Perception of society as stratified or not stratified	Rothman (1999); Hurst (1992)
27-29	Altruistic or not altruistic	Sangiampongsa (1995)

Questionnaire items were generated and pre-tested with 30 undergraduate and graduate students at Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, with corrections made for the purpose of clarity and effectiveness of the instrument. Table 2 provides the summary of survey items with their mechanism of attitude examination. All questionnaire items have two or three response options, making their measurement categorical in nature. Non-parametric, chi square tests (χ^2) are pursued to delineate the proportion of those pro-state intervention or pro-social welfare policy from those not pro-state intervention or not pro-social welfare policy, of materialists from non-materialists, of those perceiving social stratification from those perceiving non-stratification, and of altruistic

students from non-altruistic ones. Chi square tests are also performed to distinguish students who are pro-equality of each type from those who are not. The chi square values, along with their associated indicator of statistical significance (p-values), show which types of equality are more accepted than others.

Results

Objective 1: Table 3 shows regression coefficients of each equation as well as the test of significance of independent variables. Religion adds to the explication of dependent variables when $F_{2, 109} > 3.07$ at the .05 level (Harnett & Murphy, 1985, p. 659). It turns out that religion contributes to the explanation of primary school enrollment and illiteracy (respectively, $F_{2, 109} = 3.98$ and $10.10 > F_{2, 109} = 3.07$ at the .05 level).

Results of one-way ANOVA on Religion as independent variable, however, reveal significance with respect to all dependent variables, but Gini. Follow-up tests for group effects using Tukey post hoc analyses among three religions with respect to dependent measures of social well-being mostly show Christian countries to be the leader in social well-being. Islamic countries and those of other religions fare less well and have approximately

the same level of life quality.

Table 3 reflects some patterns of result. The coefficients of multiple correlation, R, are rather high on most dependent variables, except Gini. A large portion of their variation can be explained by independent variables in each equation. Particularly, almost 70 percent of life expectancy and infant mortality are explained by the equations. A closer look at the explanatory

Table 3 Regression coefficients, R, and R² for dependent measures of equality and social well-being

Independent Variables	Regression coefficients for each dependent variable						
	Gini	Life	Child	Infant	Primary	Secondary	Illiteracy
Constant	48.25	50.30	178.85	110.95	59.92	19.66	62.71
Education	.28	-.08	-1.96	-1.16	1.12	3.22**	-1.29 ^{as}
Health	-1.84**	1.20*	-7.28*	-4.57**	1.51	1.76	-2.41*
Democracy	-.37	-.40	.30	.37	.30	-.45	-.50
Wealth ¹	-.00**	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00**	.00
Urban	.02	.29**	-1.78**	-1.00**	.28**	.48**	-.46**
Christ ²	1.64	-2.20	8.21	2.65	-.29	-1.64	-5.67
Islam ²	-1.68	-1.90	18.95	7.44	-11.46*	-7.49	12.57
R	.47	.80	.75	.79	.62	.78	.78
R ²	.22	.63	.57	.63	.38	.61	.61

* p < .05

** p < .01

^{as} = approaching significance (p < .10)

¹Regression coefficients for Wealth as independent variable are all very small numbers, e.g., .00033 for Gini.

²Christ and Islam, indicating religion as a social factor, comprise dummy variables, due to their categorical measurement. For each dependent variable, two blocks of variables are entered into the regression equation. One block consists of qualitative independent variables (Christ and Islam), and another block consists of all independent variables, both qualitative and quantitative. The ability of religion, as a social factor, in explaining each dependent variable is computed by

$$F(J, n-m-1) = \frac{(SSE_0 - SSE_1) / J}{SSE_1 / (n-m-1)}, \text{ where}$$

SSE_s	=	Sum of squares (residuals) of the shorter regression model of independent variables (excluding dummies);
SSE	=	Sum of squares (residuals) of the full regression model of independent variables (both quantitative and dummy variables);
J	=	Number of dummies;
m	=	Total independent variables in the complete regression model.

power of each independent variable reveals that health policy factor is a significant variable in almost all regression equations, except education-related variables - primary and secondary school enrollment. The same can be said for urbanization as a social factor. Education policy variable does not fare well in the equations, although it is somewhat more powerful than the economic, political, as well as social (Religion) factors. Algebraic signs, especially for significant independent variables are all in the correct, reasonable direction. For instance, the higher health spending is, the less infant and child mortality rates are. The higher spending on education is, the more secondary school enrollment and the less illiteracy rate are. The significant effect of urbanization on almost all well-being variables is in line with the Convergence Thesis positing the relationship among industrialization, economic development, and social welfare policy, leaning toward social well-being (Tang, 1996, p. 378; Ramesh & Asher, 2000, pp. 5-6).

Health and education are different types of policy, possibly bound to have different effects on social well-being. Thus, for further analyses,

education and health policies, as independent variables, are analyzed separately in different regression equations for each dependent variable, as illustrated in Tables 4 and 5. When either health or education policy is put into each regression equation, as the only policy factor, analyses reveal that the amount of variation in dependent variables can, more or less, be equally explained as in regression models with both policy factors indicated in Table 3. This tends to suggest that each individual policy factor is quite powerful in itself in explaining dependent variables. In particular, although Table 3 shows that education policy is somewhat less able than the health policy factor to explain dependent variables, Table 4 shows its increasing power, if delineated from the health policy factor. Its significance is found in most dependent variables, as opposed to rather few in equations with both policy factors. The similar result is found in Table 5 with health as the only policy factor. It is highly significant in determining positive quality of life, as well as income distribution and school enrollment, despite the latter's more relation to education policy factor. Similar to Table 3, urbanization is a powerful factor in explaining the positive quality of life, which is along the line of the Convergence Thesis (Tang, 1996, p. 378; Ramesh & Asher, 2000, pp. 5-6).

Table 4 Regression coefficients, R, and R², with education policy as the only policy variable for dependent measures of equality and social well-being

Independent Variables	Regression coefficients for each dependent variable						
	Gini	Life	Child	Infant	Primary	Secondary	Illiteracy
Constant	45.68	51.98	168.67	104.57	62.03	22.13	59.35
Education	-.22	.24	-3.92 ^{as}	-2.39*	1.52*	3.69**	-1.44**
Democracy	-.13	-.55	1.24	.96	.10	-.68	-.19
Wealth ¹	-.00**	.00	-.00	-.00	.00	.00*	-.00
Urban	-.00	.30**	-1.85**	-1.05**	.30**	.50**	-.49**
Christ ²	-.11	-1.06	1.27	-1.69	1.15	.04	-7.97*
Islam ²	-2.46	-1.38	15.84	5.49	-10.82*	-6.73	11.54
R	.40	.79	.74	.78	.61	.78	.77
R ²	.16	.62	.55	.60	.37	.61	.59

* p < .05

** p < .01

^{as} = approaching significance (p < .10)

Regression coefficients for Wealth as independent variable are all very small numbers, e.g.,

-.000464 for Gini.

² Explanatory power of Christ and Islam as dummy variables for the religion factor is computed by

$$F(J, n-m-1) = (SSE_0 - SSE) / J$$

$$SSE / (n-m-1)$$

Table 5 Regression coefficients, R, and R², with health policy as the only policy variable for dependent measures of equality and social well-being

Independent Variables	Regression coefficients for each dependent variable						
	Gini	Life	Child	Infant	Primary	Secondary	Illiteracy
Constant	49.04	50.07	173.30	107.66	63.08	28.77	59.06
Health	-1.70**	1.16*	-8.25**	-5.14**	2.06*	3.36**	-3.05**
Democracy	-.37	-.40	.31	.37	.30	-.46	-.50
Wealth ¹	-.00**	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00*	.00
Urban	.02	.29**	-1.79**	-1.02**	.29**	.50**	-.47**
Christ ²	1.61	-2.20	8.37	2.75	-.38	-1.91	-5.57
Islam ²	-1.77	-1.87	19.57	7.81	-11.82*	-8.50	12.98
R	.46	.80	.75	.79	.61	.75	.77
R ²	.21	.64	.57	.62	.37	.57	.60

* p < .05

** p < .01

¹ Regression coefficients for Wealth as independent variable are all very small numbers, e.g., -.00033 for Gini.

² Explanatory power of Christ and Islam as dummy variables for the religion factor is computed by

$$F((J, n - m - 1) = \frac{(SSEs - SSE) / J}{SSE / (n - m - 1)}$$

Surprisingly, Tables 3, 4, and 5 all reveal mediocre contribution of political and wealth factors to the explanation of quality of life. One should find it logical to expect the wealth factor, in particular, to provide a substantial contribution to the regression equations. Simple correlational analyses are performed to explore paired relationships. The results indicate many high Pearson Correlations (*r*s), such as *r*Democracy, Child = .47, *p* < .01; *r*Democracy, Life = -.55, *p* < .01; *r*Wealth, Gini = -.38, *p* < .01; and *r*Wealth, Secondary = .59, *p* < .01. In overall, high level of democracy is associated with low child and infant mortality, low illiteracy rate, long

life expectancy, and high level of primary and secondary school enrollment. The wealth factor is related to low infant and child mortality, more equality in income distribution, low illiteracy rate, long life expectancy, and high level of primary and secondary school enrollment. These results suggest the positive effect of both democracy and wealth upon social well-being, if each factor is examined separately away from the policy and urbanization factors. But still, of all independent variables in the regression models, these latter factors are most powerful in determining the social well-being.

Objective 2: The attitude of some Thai university students regarding the extent of state intervention in social welfare policy should provide some direction for policy making and policy change, as there is more policy responsiveness in democracy than in authoritarianism and bureaucratic politics (Ramesh, 2000; Crone, 1993; Yu, 1996).

Table 6 Sampled results of the survey on students' attitude and related chi square values¹

1. ใครควรช่วยเหลือเด็กกำพร้าก่อน เป็นอันดับแรก รัฐ = 78 (25.8%) ญาติ = 224 (74.2%) (Not pro-social welfare policy)	$\chi^2 = 80.58^{**}$
4. อย่างไร ไม่เป็นธรรม มากกว่ากัน คนจำนวนมาก มีฐานะยากจน = 223 (73.8%) รัฐเก็บภาษีจำนวนมาก จากผู้มีเงินได้ = 79 (26.2%) (Pro- social welfare policy)	$\chi^2 = 68.66^{**}$
5. หากรัฐบาล จะเก็บภาษีเพิ่มจากท่าน เมื่อท่านมีรายได้ แล้วนำมาช่วยคนพิการให้มากขึ้น ท่านคิดอย่างไร เห็นด้วย = 223 (73.8%) ไม่ถ้อยเห็นด้วย = 79 (26.2%) (Pro-social welfare policy)	$\chi^2 = 68.66^{**}$
6. ท่านเห็นเด็กขายพวงมาลัยบนท้องถนน ท่านคิดอย่างไรก่อน เป็นอันดับแรก ท่านคิดว่ารัฐควรช่วยเหลือ = 210 (69.5%) ท่านรู้สึกอยากช่วยซื้อพวงมาลัย = 92 (30.5%) (Pro-social welfare policy)	$\chi^2 = 46.11^{**}$
7. หากต้องเลือก ท่านเลือกสิ่งใดก่อน เป็นอันดับแรก ความเท่าเทียมของฐานะทางเศรษฐกิจของประชาชน = 154 (51%) เสรีภาพของประชาชน = 148 (49%)	$\chi^2 = .12^{ns}$
9. เมื่อมีการหย่าร้าง ท่านคิดว่าอย่างไรเหมาะสมกว่ากัน การจ่ายค่าเลี้ยงดูบุตร เป็นหน้าที่ตามกฎหมาย = 240 (79.5%) การจ่ายค่าเลี้ยงดูบุตร เป็นไปตามความสมัครใจ = 62 (20.5%) (Pro- social welfare policy)	$\chi^2 = 104.91^{**}$
11. อย่างไร ยุติธรรม มากกว่ากัน ผู้มีรายได้มาก แบ่งปันเงินแก่ผู้มีรายได้น้อย = 90 (29.8%) ผู้ที่ทำงานหนัก มีรายได้สูง = 212 (70.2%) (Not pro-social welfare policy)	$\chi^2 = 49.29^{**}$

Table 6 Sampled results of the survey on students' attitude and related chi square values¹ (continued)

12. ท่านคิดอย่างไร กับการที่รัฐเก็บภาษี ที่บ่งชี้ความมั่งมี เช่นภาษีมรดก หรือภาษีที่ดิน ในอัตราสูงๆ แล้วนำมากระจายให้ผู้มีรายได้น้อย	<p>ยุติธรรม = 229 (75.8%)</p> <p>ไม่ยุติธรรม = 73 (24.2%)</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 80.58^{**}$</p> <p>(Pro-social welfare policy)</p>
13. หากญาติสนิทของท่านชราภาพ และต้องการการดูแลจากท่าน ท่านคงรู้สึก	<p>ยินดี แต่อาจไม่ค่อยสะดวก เพราะท่านคงมีภาระหน้าที่อื่นด้วย = 77 (25.5%)</p> <p>ยินดี และจะดูแลแน่ = 225 (74.5%)</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 72.53^{**}$</p> <p>(Not pro-social welfare policy)</p>
18. ท่านคิดอย่างไร: ประชาชนไทย ควรได้รับการปฏิบัติโดยกฎหมาย เสมอเหมือนกัน	<p>เห็นด้วย = 284 (94%)</p> <p>เฉย ๆ = 18 (6%)</p> <p>ไม่ค่อยเห็นด้วย = 0 (0%)²</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 234.29^{**}$</p> <p>(Pro-equality before the law)</p>
19. ท่านคิดอย่างไร: ประชาชนไทย ควรได้รับการบริการด้านการศึกษาฟรีจากรัฐ จนจบชั้นมัธยม หรือเทียบเท่า เสมอเหมือนกัน	<p>เห็นด้วย = 273 (90.4%)</p> <p>เฉย ๆ = 26 (8.6%)</p> <p>ไม่ค่อยเห็นด้วย = 3 (1.0%)</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 445.16^{**}$</p> <p>(Pro-equal opportunity)</p>
20. ท่านคิดอย่างไร: ประชาชนไทย ควรได้รับแบ่งทรัพยากรในสังคม เช่นทรัพย์สิน ความมั่งคั่ง และรายได้ อย่างเท่าเทียมกัน	<p>เห็นด้วย = 158 (52.3%)</p> <p>เฉย ๆ = 85 (28.1%)</p> <p>ไม่ค่อยเห็นด้วย = 59 (19.5%)</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 52.34^{**}$</p> <p>(Pro-equal outcome)</p>
21. หากต้องเลือก ท่านเลือกอย่างใดก่อน เป็นอันดับแรก	<p>งานที่ชอบ = 176 (58.3%)</p> <p>งานที่ได้เงินดี = 126 (41.7%)</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 8.28^{**}$</p> <p>(Mostly non-materialists)</p>
22. หากต้องเลือก ท่านจะเลือกร่วมทำงานกับใครก่อน เป็นอันดับแรก	<p>คนที่มีชื่อเสียงในสังคม = 39 (12.9%)</p> <p>คนดี = 263 (87.1%)</p>	<p>$\chi^2 = 166.15^{**}$</p> <p>(Mostly non-materialists)</p>

23. ท่านคิดอย่างไร: เงิน เป็นที่มาของความสุขได้มาก

เห็นด้วย = 204 (67.5%)

ไม่ค่อยเห็นด้วย = 98 (32.5%)

$\chi^2 = 37.21^{**}$

(Mostly materialists)

25. ในสังคมรอบ ๆ ตัวท่าน คนที่มีสถานภาพทางสังคม-เศรษฐกิจใกล้เคียงกัน มักรวมกลุ่มอยู่

ด้วยกัน

คิดว่าจริง = 264 (87.4%)

ไม่น่าจะจริง = 38 (12.6%)

$\chi^2 = 169.13^{**}$

(Perceiving stratification)

27. ท่านบริจาคเงิน-สิ่งของ บ่อยแค่ไหน

บ่อย = 112 (37.1%)

ไม่ค่อยบ่อย = 190 (62.9%)

$\chi^2 = 20.15^{**}$

(Mostly non-altruistic)

Note: ** $p < .01$ ^{ns} $p > .05$

There are totally 29 items in the actual survey.

Since no datum exists for this response category, chi square is computed based on two response categories (เห็นด้วย & เห็นว่าจริง). This is unlike the other two items regarding social equality (items 19 and 20), where the proportions of three response categories are computed for chi square values.

Table 6 presents sampled chi square test results, particularly indicating the attitude toward social welfare policy and three kinds of equality, materialistic and altruistic attitude, as well as the perception of social stratification. Among twenty-eight chi square tests, only two do not yield significant results of $p < .01$. In fact, chi square values are mostly very large, reflecting strong attitude in a particular direction. For items used to assess attitude on state intervention, nine from sixteen (9/16) items reveal strong inclination toward social welfare policy, while five from sixteen (5/16) items show attitude of non-favoring state intervention. Students' disposition toward equality before the law is the most positive of all

three types of equality, while equal opportunity attracts somewhat fewer students. The proportion of pro-equal outcome attitude is the smallest, resulting in a smaller chi square, despite its high significance, still. The results should be concluded as surprising, particularly when over half of students agree with equal outcome as social goal, requiring social welfare policy, despite its radical nature in income distribution. For the extent of materialism, two from three (2/3) items show non-materialism, while one out of three (1/3) item indicates materialism. Students perceive high stratification within Thai society, indicated by large chi square results in all three items assessing the perception of social

stratification. Lastly, most students confess to be non-altruistic, with infrequent prosocial behaviors. In summary, students tend to favor government's intervention in social welfare, express pro-equality attitude, claim themselves as non-materialists,

perceive their society as stratified, and reveal themselves to be non-altruistic. Table 7 presents composite scores of each kind of attitude as a summary result of questionnaire items.

Table 7 Composite scores of questionnaire items forming separate kinds of students' attitude

Attitude variables	Items	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Meanings
Attitude toward social welfare policy	1-17 ¹	23.14	2.14	16	32	Minimum = pro-policy Maximum = Not pro-policy
Attitude toward progressive tax	14	7.05	8.08	0	100	Minimum = Against tax Maximum = Pro-tax
Attitude toward equality	18-20	3.84	.96	3	9	Minimum = Pro-equality Maximum = Not pro-equality
Materialism	21-23 ²	4.78	.83	3	6	Minimum = Materialistic Maximum = Non-materialistic
Perception of social stratification	24-26	3.52	.71	3	6	Minimum = Stratified Maximum = Non-stratified
Altruism	27-29	5.20	.88	3	6	Minimum = Altruistic Maximum = Non-altruistic

¹ Item 14 is excluded, due to its different measurement.

² Scores for item 21 are reversed, so that responses are in the similar direction with that of items 22 and 23.

In response to the second objective, for social welfare policy making, a higher extent of public spending on the policy, as well as an increase in social equality may be more welcomed by the public than one might have expected. In spite of the necessary relocation of resources, if social welfare policy and equality are to be pursued, these students from middle to

upper income families still call for such policies. With the available data on the assessment of materialism, altruism, and perception of social stratification, how these factors relate to the attitude toward social welfare policy and equality is further examined by simple correlation analyses, shown in Table 8, using composite, quantitative scores of these variables from Table 7.

Table 8 Significant results of simple correlation analyses among the scores of students' attitude

Variables (pairs)	r	Meanings
Welfare, Tax	- .21**	Those with pro-social welfare policy attitude are willing to pay progressive tax.
Welfare, Materialism	- .13*	Those with pro-social welfare policy attitude are self-proclaimed non-materialists
Welfare, Equality	.32**	Those preferring state's social welfare policy like to see social equality.
Materialism,	.12*	Materialistic students tend to perceive their societies as highly Stratification stratified.

* p < .05** p < .01

Discussion

This study reveals interesting results with respect to the two objectives. For one thing, it is clear that policy does matter in terms of social well-being. Shown in Tables 3 and 5, health policy determines almost all positive policy outcomes, except those that should be associated with education policy, such as primary and secondary school enrollment. The more public health spending is, the higher income distribution, the longer life expectancy, the less child and infant mortality rates, and also the less illiteracy rate. Education policy, albeit determining some essential outcomes, such as secondary school enrollment and lower illiteracy rate, is less powerful. This might be due to more similar treatment of education policy among countries in the study. It is one of the less contentious areas in public policy, as there is a broad agreement in most societies and among policy actors that the state has a necessary and legitimate role in ensuring that education of

acceptable quality is provided in an adequate level. It is a policy sector which exhibits the greatest similarity among Southeast Asian nations (Ramesh & Asher, 2000, p. 119 & 180). Most countries and cultures view children as very important to society. If well-raised and well-educated, they become productive citizens, contributing to economic prosperity. However, when education and health policies are tested in separate regression equations to delineate each effect as shown in Tables 4 and 5, the stronger power of education policy in affecting positive policy outcomes emerges. It is shown to influence school enrollment as well as decreased illiteracy rate. In the U.S., for example, education helps ensure the capacity to participate in democracy and also serves as a partial substitute for a formal social welfare program. Health policy, also when considered alone, positively affects all social outcomes, as shown in Table 5. Both health and education increase

the general welfare of the whole society, because they are essential services that create life opportunity and, hence, equal opportunity among citizens. The healthy have no excuse not to put in more effort that brings quality of life. Similarly, those with education have means to depend on the selves, not on others and the state (Lustig & Stern, 2000, p. 3). Health and education are public goods, in that they comprise a source of external effect, rendering a healthy society, fewer contagious diseases, and quality, sophisticated population (Stiglitz, 2000, p. 215).

Politics, wealth, and religion are not as powerful as the policy in determining social well-being. However, when each of these factors is analyzed by paring with each indicator of social well-being, through simple correlation analyses, almost all results show significant relationship in logical directions. High degrees of democracy significantly associate well with low rate of child and infant mortality, long life expectancy, large primary and secondary school enrollment, and low illiteracy. Also, in these analyses, wealthy countries relate strongly and positively to social well-being and income distribution. The little connection between wealth and well-being, when the former is compared to the policy factors could result from the varying amplitude of social welfare policy and spending, even among the wealthy countries and among poorer ones themselves. Hong Kong and Singapore are examples of high income countries with small social welfare spending (Ramesh, 1992; Yu, 1996). Other high income countries are

categorized as different types of welfare states. Social Democratic states, such as most Scandinavian countries, have a high level of welfare spending (Twine, 1994, pp. 145-146). Also, most continental European countries have more universalist policies, with welfare services provided as entitlement or social rights than the U.S. and Japan, heavily using means-testing measures. As of 1998, the U.S. does not provide child allowance benefits, while many other welfare states do. States with universalist policy tend to have lower poverty rate (Adolino & Blake, 2001, pp. 271-272). This, along with the present study discovering a strong connection between social welfare policy and well-being, helps fortify the contention of policy effect. In addition, although the U.S. has had the Liberal Welfare Regime (Twine, 1994, p. 145), it always places a high level of public spending on education, resulting in impressive indicators, such as high enrollment rate, especially in the higher education (Adolino & Blake, 2001, pp. 312-313). Again, this helps prove the policy and social welfare connection.

Urbanization is found in this present study to exert equally strong effect as the health policy factor does. Except for income distribution, urbanization tends to determine the rest of social outcome measures, as suggested by Table 3. This finding is in accordance with the Convergence Thesis or the Industrial Society Perspective, positing that the state's role in social affairs increases with social needs generated by industrialization and economic development, using urbanization as a proxy. With

the change from an agrarian society to modern, industrialized society follows a relocation of labor from local, rural areas to cities, decreasing the family size (Tang, 1996, p. 378). The need for more institutional welfare, such as child care and elderly care, emerges, hence, the convergence of the agrarian, rural societies of the East and South to the industrialized North and West.

Ramesh & Asher (2000, p. 5) nevertheless, could identify a few Asian exceptions to the Industrial Society Perspective. Singapore is industrialized and urbanized with the highest living standards in Southeast Asia; but it does not have the most developed social policies. On the other hand, the Philippines experiences heavy state involvement in social affairs at an early stage of economic development and then went backward, despite the industrial progress. Along this line of argument, there might be additional factors interacting somehow with urbanization and industrialization. One commonality shared by urbanization and industrialization would be modernity. In urbanized, industrialized, and modernized societies possibly emerges the sense of morality and obligation to members of such societies, where negative social conditions or unsound quality of life could be regarded as immoral (Theodoulou, 2002, p. 102). Also within these societies are concepts of social justice, human rights, and social rights of citizenship. Chatterjee (2002, p. 374) regards resource distribution as one tail of social justice. At times, distributive justice may call for taxing the wealthy to pay the destitute. For a group or society to

retain its integrity, its members cannot be allowed to starve or become destitute. This is the feature of social rights, which are resource-dependent and operate outside the market (Twine, 1994, pp. 102-112; Heywood, 1994, pp. 141-147). The social well-being empirically found in the present study to relate significantly to urbanization could be due to such feature of modern societies associated with urbanization. Aside from social rights, as a source of justice, modern societies generally have high regards to human rights defined by Thomas Jefferson to be the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Included are the rights to the basics, such as food, medicine and health care, shelter, and education, all leading to equal opportunity. As a step beyond these rights, the concept of animal rights has developed in popularity since the 1960s, as a result of the growth of environmentalism. Also, the concept of animal welfare is somewhat less radical than that of animal rights and calls for altruistic concern for the well-being of not only humans, but also other species (Heywood, 1994, pp. 145-146).

Perhaps the above argument regarding the intermingling of urbanization, modernity, and morality could explain the positive attitude among the Thai students in the present study toward state intervention and social equality. Being from the middle class families or above, mostly with family's monthly income of greater than 50,000 baht, they represent the more wealthy, whose resources would be taken away by the redistribution policy. Also perhaps their self-proclaimed non-materialism contributes to their

willingness and obligation to care for the destitute, the disabled, and the elderly living in the same society, as indicated by the survey result. The correlation analysis in Table 8 reveals that those who claim themselves to be non-materialistic have significantly more favorable attitude toward state welfare policy than do materialists. The significantly larger number of non-materialists than materialists, according to the empirical result, helps strengthen the pro-welfare policy attitude. Also, even though a larger number of students perceive social stratification, as opposed to non-stratification, this attitude bears no significant relationship to that of social welfare policy and equality. Hence, the perceived social stratification does not negatively affect the social welfare and equality attitude. These empirical results point to the premise that the pro-social welfare policy attitude is in line with the sense of morality and modernity associated with urbanization.

The New Convergence Thesis

Along the line of the Convergence Thesis (Tang, 1996, pp. 377-379; Ramesh & Asher, 2000, pp. 5-6), this research, in combining the empirical findings and social welfare literature, proposes another way of looking at social welfare policy. The New Convergence Thesis has three main aspects:

- 1) The convergence of countries with less social welfare spending to those with more social welfare spending

The positive, empirical effect of social

welfare policy on social well-being and income distribution should point to the increased social welfare spending, despite the controversy regarding resource redistribution within the social welfare policy. All the contradicting political and economic ideologies, such as Individualism versus Collectivism, have defensible logic behind them; and only the most supreme being can distinguish the rights from the wrongs. But the positive empirical effect of social welfare should help policy makers see the worthiness of state intervention.

Added to such empirical effect is the evident of inadequate social welfare coverage in the less-developed countries (Beattie, 2000, p. 131; Gillion, 1994, p. 29; Tang, 1999, p. 101). In Wintersteen and Wintersteen's study (1997, pp. 191-198), families in Malaysia and Zimbabwe with members who have mental illness reveal financial and psychological burden in caring for them. The survey in the study shows that friends and families are willing to accept partial responsibility; but there is a desire for a half-way assistance from a fortified social service. In general, families with disabled members would appreciate a certain level of social services as those provided in the developed world. In Hong Kong, there is a subordination of social policy to economic policy prior to the transfer to China, as the Government saw social services as charitable, non-productive burden borne on the back of productive institutions of the economy. Moreover, the Government is pragmatic, while creating social services not as an end in itself, but as a means for the undemocratic regime to survive.

In other words, social welfare services in Hong Kong is primarily used for the maintaining of government's legitimacy by providing enough welfare services for the purpose of appeasing citizens (Yu, 1996, pp. 416-418). Similarly in Singapore, the low public spending on social security has permitted low tax, being conducive to attracting foreign investment and promoting economic growth. The Finance Minister, Richard Hu, in the early 1990s, stated bluntly: The Government does not believe in a crutch economy, where the rich were heavily taxed to support the poor. In contrast to the limited state involvement in programs for the aged, the disabled, the sick, and the dependents of the injured and diseased, the programs for families with children are extremely generous. But they are also entirely unrelated to need and, in fact, are designed to reward the high income. There is generous children's allowance program directed to mothers who are young, educated, and wealthy. Since 1990, women having their second child have been eligible for a tax rebate of \$10,000 if she is 30; and \$5,000 if she is 31. Children's allowance, unlike its counterparts in other countries, are not designed to promote social security, but to encourage child bearing by the educated, well-off families. In some other social programs, for instance, private health and social security schemes are used. Public hospitals are expected to recover a greater part of their costs from user fees, while a smaller portion of operational costs should come from general revenues (Ramesh, 1992, pp. 1093-1099). The insufficient state's role is usually

argued to result from traditional believes, particularly of Asian countries; and these perhaps stymie social welfare policy. For example, according to Confucian values, the responsibility for the welfare of individuals falls on the family and clans (Midgley & Tang, 2002, p. 72).

Ramesh and Asher (2000, p. 195) argue that the private sector and families are ill-suited for providing social welfare services in adequate quantity. It is simply not possible for family, community, and market to replace the state as the main source of social protection in the modern world. The family's capacity to provide social security is limited, sometimes because some people are without a family or because relatives and families are themselves indigent. More importantly, the proportion of the aged is increasing, while, at the same time, the family size is shrinking, hence, eroding the family's caring capacity. The increasing participation of women in labor market further reduces the number of family members available to provide care. In Ramesh and Asher's further argument, it is erroneous to believe that Asian societies are inherently more communitarian than their Western counterpart. A larger percentage of population in the individualistic, Western countries participates in volunteer work than in supposedly communitarian Singapore: 39 percent in the U.S., compared to only 6 percent in Singapore.

The low amplitude of state intervention makes social welfare services unsystematic. Operating under the Ministry of Social

Development and Human Security, the shelter for males at Thanyaburi in Thailand, for instance, receives the funding for food of 40 baht per resident per day, making it dependent on altruism, usually in the form of private donation, which cannot always be guaranteed. Charity lunches are only brought in on special occasions, such as on someone's birthday and Father's Day. During 2003, there were only 5 such lunches (Tangyarit, 2003, December 5, p. 22). Also, without formal welfare system given by the state, private services are sometimes based on reciprocity. But not everyone is able to reciprocate (Chatterjee, 2002, p. 374). Along the line of Ramesh and Asher's argument, state intervention will be more able to assure that such basic needs as meals are met. Services to mentally and physically disabled are also unsystematic and, most of the time, nonexistent (Charoenying, 2003, June 8, pp. 13-14; With love .. Chaiyan Ratchagoon ..., 2004, February, 3, p. 26).

Along the argument for the increase of state welfare, the present research finds a significantly higher proportion of students who agree with state intervention. For example, most people state their willingness to pay tax for relocation to the disabled. Most believe in state's responsibility toward children in poverty. Most perceive poverty as social injustice. Most see the justice for the state to place a high tax rate on wealth, such as heritage and land. And most believe it appropriate, in case of divorce, for the state to enforce child support payment, which may prevent poverty in children. Also, the

survey finds a strong support for all three kinds of equality. A much higher proportion supports the idea of equal outcome, the most radical form of equality, than that opposing it. The extent of agreement, however, is lower than that of the other two less radical types of equality. But such high level of positive attitude toward social equality was not expected. All these findings of favorable attitude toward social welfare policy and equality point toward the convergence of a country with low level of social welfare policy spending to those with higher spending. Again, such attitude may be due to the larger proportion of self-proclaimed non-materialists than that of materialists. Also, besides the positive policy effect on social well-being found in this study, the social welfare literature reveals a strong linkage between social spending and its favorable consequences, such as human development, income distribution, and poverty reduction (Li, 2000; Hutchinson & Schumacher, 1995; Adolino & Blake, 2001).

2) The convergence of both countries with low and high levels of social welfare policy to privatization

Although the welfare states have protected their citizens against hardship and poverty, criticisms abound, mostly from the Conservative and the New Right regarding the expenses involved with too high a role of the state (Atkinson & Hills, 1991, pp. 81-82). The New Right relates the fiscal crisis to the notion of government overload, in that governments over-stretch their resources by attempting too much. A gap, then,

possibly develops between public expenditure and revenues. In maintaining social welfare services, the budget deficit may result (Johnson, 1987, pp. 38-39).

The welfare services offered informally especially in the less developed, non-welfare states, such as in Asia are perceived as a possibility in the eye of the more developed, welfare states. Welfare pluralism emerged as an alternative arrangement of welfare service provision, contending that social services and health care may be obtained from four different sectors – the statutory, the voluntary, the commercial, and the informal. Thus, it implies a less dominant role of the state, seeing it as not the only possible instrument of the collective provision of welfare. The informal sector and voluntary sector comprise community care, family care, friends, neighbors, neighborhood organizations, and self-help or mutual aid groups (Johnson, 1987, pp. 55-57). Neighborhood groups, for instance, try to create the neighborliness, which approximates that of traditional communities. All these are possibly supported and cultivated by the Individualist, Conservative end of the welfare ideological spectrum, as they could lessen the welfare burden on the state, while maintaining the services by other means. This is, henceforth proposed by the present study as an aspect of the New Convergence Thesis, in which there is a coming together or a convergence between the family and neighborly values, such as those in Asia and the toning down of the Western, institutionalized system of statutory provision.

Within this aspect, the Western, developed welfare states refine their welfare policy to come to terms with the East, developing countries in the use of other sectors.

In fact, welfare pluralism already exists within the so-called mixed economy (Danziger, 1996, pp. 234-236). Savas (1987, pp. 62-82), according to his progressive idea of privatization, offers an extensive description of a wide range of possible privatization activities and methods, from contracting to vouchers and self-service, to name a few. In order to mitigate the market failure of insufficient and low service quality, the state becomes a service arranger, instead of service provider. In contracting, the government enters into an agreement with the private sector, authorizing and paying the latter through government's revenues to provide social welfare services. In government vending, it is one service provider among the private sector's services, such as schools, universities, and hospitals. The state, albeit continuing its services, encourages the private sector's involvement, hence, introducing alternatives to social services. Since competition is introduced, the state's role is reduced and balanced by the increasing private sector's roles. The state can also encourage private provision of welfare by subsidizing the latter. In voluntary services, the state can encourage the involvement of charitable, religious, or civil society organizations by introducing incentives, such as tax exemption.

Voluntary social welfare provision given by the civil society organizations in the form of

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is more extensive in developing countries than in developed ones, mainly due to the insufficient services in the former. With the Residual Model of social welfare (Titmuss, 1974, pp. 30-31), the NGOs, naturally and by necessity, must compensate for such inadequacy. Through democratization, NGOs in developing countries like Thailand have grown both in strength and role, not only in the area of social welfare services, but also throughout the political system and the public policy process. With both conflict and cooperation between the state and NGOs, Sangiampongsa (2003, pp. 118-124) finds a much higher degree of cooperation in social welfare policy than in environmental policy, which is bogged down with confrontation, due to the clashes in perspectives, social goals, ideologies, as well as styles of organizational operation. In social welfare policy, on the other hand, many NGOs tend to take the complementary role, better compensating for the Thai State's Residual Model of welfare structure. In Sangiampongsa's argument, this is possibly due to the Asian welfare value of low expectation of state's welfare. The Thai have no objection to the existing miniscule state's services, while welcoming supplementary services from the non-state sector. Along the line of Pisanu and Savas' discussion, such cooperation in service delivery at the policy implementation phase is called co-production – a public administration concept (Brudney & England, 1983, p. 59).

Different opinions, however, exist regarding such public-private cooperation and

partnership. Ramesh (2002, p. 154) argues against privatization in Southeast Asia, contending that direct provision of health care by the state is the vital reason behind the tremendous improvement in health condition of the region. State's provision directly through its own general revenue is the only way for a comprehensive and equitable service. Jones (2002, pp. 63-68), on the other hand, discusses social welfare in Singapore in a more positive manner. In his argument, the Confucianist culture pushes the country toward growth-orientation, rejecting a welfare-dependent society. Voluntary services by charitable organizations; community associations; ethnically-based, self-help groups; and religious bodies are arranged by the state, playing the role of regulator and facilitator. Subsidies from the State are provided by fully offsetting important hidden costs, the most important of which is rental of premises. Nearly all voluntary welfare organizations occupy land and buildings leased by the State. Vehicle tax, which may treble the vehicle price, is exempted. There is also a waiver of the charge for employing foreign workers. The Malaysian health care system has undergone the privatization process destined by the Vision 2020, yet not without opposition. Malaysians have grown accustomed to the State's low cost services; hence, UMNO must take great care particularly not to alienate its principal constituency – the rural Malays – by appearing to diminish the State's welfare role. The privatization policy also does not receive support from powerful interest groups that generally would

welcome the idea – the Malaysian Medical Association and the Malaysian Trade Union Congress. They asked that the Government reconsider the policy. The Government, as a result, resorted to a lower amplitude of privatization scheme, in trying to tone down the contention. For example, the actual privatization has taken place in limited areas. Haemodialysis clinics, known for their expensive service, in public hospitals were contracted out, but with Government's subsidization of dialysis treatment for the poor. The privatization scheme has also moved to other low-profile, hospital support services, such as maintenance and laundry (Barraclough, 2000, pp. 340-351).

Despite the contradicting opinions regarding privatization, it is argued in this study to be one likely aspect of the New Convergence Thesis. Savas (1987, pp. 62-82) suggests many forms and features with varying degrees of private involvement from which to be chosen. One form could be one step away from a particular level of state's role, which still could be maintained as service arranger. State's role in partial funding private services in certain forms, such as subsidies or tax relieve of some kinds, as discussed above, could well preserve the positive social welfare effect found in the present study. In addition, the empirical support of state's spending is revealed in this study.

3) The convergence of social welfare ideologies

The last aspect of the New Convergence Thesis is argued in this study to be the coming

together of polar ends of welfare ideologies – Collectivism on the one hand and the New Right / Individualism on the other. Hyde and Dixon (2002, pp. 20-24) refer to such poles as the Communist Collectivism and the Radical Right, with some gray area in between. Within such gray area, one ideology is Social Reformism, which is similar to the welfare state or Social Democracy with the goal of free, equal, and more secure society. In the fear of state failure, Reluctant Individualism questions social security provision by the state. Its emergence is in response to the growing financial burden on the welfare states. Moving more closely to the Radical Right, Reluctant Collectivism encourages individuals to be responsible for their own voluntary social security through competitive but regulated private and occupational savings and insurance plan. Midgley and Tang (2002, p. 77) also argue that the Individualist-Collectivist dichotomy is too crude to capture the complexity of social welfare of the modern time. MacGregor (1999, p. 101) refers to the gray area as the Third Way or New Paternalism between the polar ends of the welfare state and Neo-Liberalism. This study in surveying the attitude of Thai students finds that among sixteen survey items, nine items reveal the pro-social welfare policy attitude and five shows the non-favoring attitude. Such empirical result also suggests the subtlety of social welfare attitude, since both kinds of attitude are found. With the subtlety of social welfare ideology and attitude, the reason for the movement to the gray area from the welfare state is usually due to the costs and burden on the part

of the state as well as criticisms concerning too high a level of state's role. On the other hand, the movement away from the Right is usually defended, using the social rights as the argument. But in any case, the ideological convergence results.

Most countries are probably located within the gray area, with the elements of both Individualist and Collectivist ideologies. Chile and China, for instance, introduced marketization of social security, reducing the long statist stance, with differing strategies and policy details. In Chile, the workforce is encouraged to put aside part of income for social security funds. Contributions are both from the employers and employees, with the state assuming the minimalist role. However, it is forced marketization of social welfare, where all workers in regular wage employment are required to participate, suggesting the State's role as service arranger. The Collectivist, communist China has changed, in that the formerly guaranteed safety net is eroded. The system of assured employment is removed. The stricture of collective agriculture was relaxed to permit family farms, rural markets, privately-owned agricultural industries, and trading enterprises to flourish. The Government's primary objective is to relieve enterprises of their responsibilities to provide income protection to their workers, while transferring social security obligation to the centralized Bureau of Social Insurance, where individual workers assume a heavier responsibility in contributing to the social security cost, with State's partial subsidization.

This is the Reformist or Economic Efficiency Model, as opposed to the Socialist Model. The Chinese Government seeks to use social security as a positive instrument of economic development or state developmentalism. Like some other developing countries, the Chinese Government formulates social policies that are compatible with the economic development goal (Midgley & Tang, 2002, pp. 67-75). In both countries, therefore, the ideological movement is away from the state's role toward Individualism while the states maintain their function as service arrangers.

Post-materialism provides another major argument in support of ideological alteration among welfare states nowadays. Aside from the cost issue of social welfare spending, creating the welfare backlash among the middle and upper-middle class in the welfare states, the materialist goals have declined in importance since the late 1960s. Such goals involve resource relocation and redistribution of income. On the other hand, post-materialist goals are more intangible, asking for, for instance, women's equality and equal treatment of minorities (Roller, 1995, pp. 171-172). This, henceforth, illustrates the ideological movement somewhat away from the Social Democratic, Collectivist pole.

Conclusion

The justification for this research is the controversy in the nature of social welfare policy, since it is not only resource-dependent, but also value laden, based on ideological stances. But

the effect of social welfare policy as well as attitude on the issue is more empirical. This research finds a strong positive effect of policy, operationally defined to be public expenditure on health and education, upon social well-being, namely infant and child mortality, life expectancy, primary and secondary school enrollment, and literacy rate, albeit a lower effect on equality or income distribution. The political and economic factors exhibit a weaker effect, as compared to the policy factors. But urbanization, as a social factor, also has a strong effect on the social well-being, which is in line with the Convergence Thesis. In the survey of the attitude of a group of Thai university students, it shows a higher extent of favorable attitude than non-favorable attitude toward state intervention as well as social equality. There is a larger proportion of self-reported non-materialists than that of materialists. The former is more inclined to show the pro-social welfare policy attitude, hence, a rather positive prospect for the state's function in social welfare policy in Thailand, in particular.

The empirical results along with the welfare literature lead this research to propose the New Convergence Thesis having three aspects. The first aspect is the conformance of the less developed, non-welfare states to the more developed, welfare states, with respect to a higher level of social welfare policy spending, due to the positive effect of social welfare policy, along with the favorable attitude toward the policy and social equality. The second aspect is the coming together of the welfare and non-welfare

states on privatization, as an alternative to state's provision. As Savas (1987) suggests various forms of privatization, some more radical than others, the lesser degree of privatization could be chosen to avoid controversy and opposition. The third aspect is the ideological convergence from the two polar opposites of the Radical Right and Collectivism to the middle ground, possibly catching some ideological components of both ends of the welfare ideological spectrum. The main thesis of the present research and its finding still stands – the continuity of government's role in social welfare, especially the social welfare spending. Possibly delegating some service delivery function to the private sector of some form, the state is to maintain its role as overseer or service arranger, ensuring the existence, adequacy, and certain quality of service. Subsidy to private provision is usually needed from the state – a possible feature of privatization suggested by Savas (1987). This research by no means asserts that money is everything; but it argues that money spent on welfare does matter, as indicated by the study's empirical findings, along with favorable attitude toward such spending. On the other hand, the administration of policy requires the modern days' governance in order to avoid implementation failure, since it ensures efficiency and effectiveness. It also includes proper institutional structure; management; methods of operation, especially the rules of the system; as well as properly trained personnel. The administration, in particular, requires reliable record keeping over a long period. Also, rules and regulation

must be followed and seriously upheld; 1994, pp. 26-28; Ramesh, 2000, pp. 541).
otherwise, corruption probably will occur (Gillion,

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