

# **The Unique Influence of Christian Democracy on Welfare Policy**

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Christian democratic parties help to create a distinct type of welfare state and social policy characterized by class compromise and the involvement of non-governmental societal institutions. The presence of Christian democratic parties accounts for a distinct type of policy outcomes which are unique to states influenced by this movement. Welfare policy can sometimes be simplified into a sort of zero-sum approach where either the workers win or the employers win and either the state intervenes or we leave it all up to the free market. Christian democracy steps beyond this dichotomy and offers a unique alternative point of view which, when translated into policy, has roles for various institutions and members of all classes.

Owing to the uniquely confessional nature of the movement there are multiple means through which Christian democrats are able to exert influence, specifically through ideas, social structures, and the formal political process. The welfare state Christian democracy produces is characterized by the prominence of social institutions in delivering benefits, meaning that churches, families, and other such structures are enabled to deliver services rather than the state being the primary provider. Also, inter-class dialogue is institutionalized so that class relations are handled through official channels rather than through conflict and collective bargaining. Furthermore, the overall economic system employed by Christian democrats is social capitalism, a middle way between left and right economic policies which focuses on competition and the value of labor as well as on a social safety net. These are a unique set of policies and this paper will seek to explain the forces which cause this set of policy outcomes.

It is the basis of the Christian democrats in Christian principles and doctrine which uniquely shapes the policies they advocate. Catholics in particular have the benefit of access to centuries of comprehensive thinking and writing from the church on a vast array of social issues; when developing a political platform, Christians simply step into one of the most important and well-developed streams of thinking available. This thinking is the primary force that drives the compromise between classes and societal structures, emphasizing the importance of the individual and community, work and stability. Christianity also provides social structures beyond mere political parties as evidenced by the existence not only of

churches but also of schools, hospitals, and other institutions which are able to participate in the implementation of social policy. These structures ensure that policy is implemented in a way consistent with Christian democratic thinking. Finally, as a political party Christian democrats have a unique influence because they occupy such a broad space in the center of the political spectrum, enabled by religion's ability to cut across traditional class divisions and unite otherwise disparate sets of people and interests. This centrist position both derives from and further enables Christian democratic policies of class compromise like social capitalism. As a result of these three means of influence, Christian democracy is able to conceive of and carry out a type of welfare policy which is distinct from that which is produced in the absence of such a party.

This paper will explore the areas of doctrine, social institutions, and actual political parties which influence the Christian democratic welfare state, focusing particularly on the Dutch case. An interesting distinction of the Dutch case is that it allows for internal comparison since its historically prominent confessional parties declined in influence in the postwar period, thus offering the possibility to observe the changes in welfare policy that occurred alongside the shift away from Christian democratic political power. To a lesser degree the Swedish and American cases are also referenced for the sake of further comparison because of their overall lack of a prominent Christian democratic movement as well as their adoption of quite expansive and limited welfare states, respectively.

### **The Christian Democratic Conception of Welfare Policy**

Christian Democrats impact policy through ideas and doctrine that offer a unique view of how welfare policy ought to be done. Foundational to the Christian democratic approach to social issues are the Catholic concepts of subsidiarity, solidarity, and personalism. All of these concepts are political in the sense that they deal with how people ought to live together in community. Specifically, all of these key principles emphasize both the individual and the community, which leads to the unique Christian democratic approach to welfare that emphasizes societal institutions, social programs, and work, as well as appropriate relations between all of these devices. The result of these concepts is policies that include societal institutions prominently, and economic approaches involving corporatism and social capitalism. In examining these fundamental tenets of Christian democratic thinking it will become clear that Christian democracy is not merely a political party but a movement that embodies an entirely distinctive way of looking at society. More than just a political agenda, Christianity offers a normative understanding of people and society and their appropriate roles which makes specific demands on how policy is ultimately done. The result is an emphasis on

societal institutions, inclusion, and compromise all of which is centered on the inherent dignity of the person as a creation made in God's image.

The concept of subsidiarity is clearly articulated in the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, where Pope Pius XI writes, "Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of the right order to assign to a greater or higher association what a lesser and subordinate organization can do." Two aspects of this principle are important to note for their impact on welfare policy. First is the belief that society has a right order which can be disturbed if tasks are taken on by the wrong institution. The principle of subsidiarity establishes that certain societal institutions have proper tasks which would be inappropriate if performed by a different institution. Not only does this serve as a way of restraining which roles can properly be taken on by the state or other organizations, but it also means positively that there are certain tasks for which these institutions are responsible. In other words, not only is the community not to take on the task which belongs to the individual, but in fact the individual has a responsibility to this task as their own proper assigned task within the right order. In discussing welfare policy this means that the questions of institutional differentiation and responsibility are very important for Christian democrats. For example, a school cannot take on the task of raising a child since that is a task appropriate for the family and to some degree the church. Subsidiarity demands that careful thought be given when determining how social benefits will be delivered since it is very important that proper tasks be assigned to their appropriate societal organizations.

The second important aspect of the principle of subsidiarity adds on to this idea by actually prescribing a particular role for the state as subsidiary to the other intermediary institutions of society. The implication of this notion of a subsidiary state envisions simultaneously negative and positive roles for government. Negatively, the state is not to interfere with the ability of intermediary institutions to do their tasks and it must not take on for itself tasks which are actually proper to other institutions. Positively, the state has an obligation not only to allow societal institutions to perform their tasks but also to actively enable those institutions to do so. This has clear implications for welfare policy, as the state can neither be the sole actor (or even the major one) nor can it completely step back into a hands-off position. Furthermore, the specific role for the state envisioned in Catholic social thought requires care for the common good, as described in Pope Leo XIII's influential encyclical *Rerum Novarum*,

"It is altogether necessary that there be some who dedicate themselves to the service of the State, who make laws, who dispense justice, and finally, by

whose counsel and authority civil and military affairs are administered. These men, as is clear, play the chief role in the State, and among every people are to be regarded as occupying first place, because they work for the common good most directly and pre-eminently” (Sec. 50).

The common good is multi-faceted, and includes both enabling and ensuring that community organizations perform their proper roles and intervening to correct or even to actively supplement when an institution fails to perform its proper task. In conjunction with subsidiarity, the goal of the state is never to actively take on more roles for itself but instead to ensure that institutions are properly performing their proper roles and to enable this when necessary.

For the purpose of welfare, this essentially means that the state should not be the main actor in the provision of social assistance but rather play a role in assisting other organizations like churches and schools to take on that task for itself. Only when other organizations are failing to care for the poor does the state need to become involved, and even then it should only be to reinforce the institutions which are failing, never to take away the authority of those institutions. Practically, the principle of subsidiarity means that intermediary institutions in society take on a much greater role in the provision of services than in any other welfare model. A more social democratic model has a larger, more redistributive state, and a more liberal model would have a state which was not empowered to correct failures, especially from the market. The Christian democratic model, by comparison, has a state which intervenes in the interest of the common good, helping to build up community organizations.

Furthermore, subsidiarity results in the Christian democratic economic policy known as social capitalism, which is a system that incorporates both market forces and state intervention. Essentially, the market’s efficiency and competition is utilized, but the state is empowered to intervene and correct market failures, both in the form of excessive wealth and in the form of poverty (van Kersbergen 1994, 40). Again, this is a clear demonstration of the Christian democratic principle of subsidiarity as it allows no one institution sweeping control over policy or society. The market is given a place, but the state is again present as a check to make sure that market forces do not interfere with the common good. This approach is unique to Christian democracy and comes as a direct result of the Catholic social thought which underlies the movement.

Solidarity as a principle in Catholic social thought implies unity between all members of society. In *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II speaks to the Catholic understanding of the class struggle,

“Even if in controversial questions the struggle takes on a character of opposition towards others, this is because it aims at the good of social justice, not for the sake of “struggle” or in order to eliminate the opponent. It is characteristic of work that it first and foremost unites people. In this consists its social power: the power to build a community. In the final analysis, both those who work and those who manage the means of production or who own them must in some way be united in this community” (Sec. 20).

The concept of solidarity means that it is not just the state but all members of society that have a responsibility to the common good. There ought not to be any antagonism between members of society because all have a mutual investment in the common good. Furthermore, beyond just a lack of enmity there ought to be real community and cooperation between members of society. This is true both in general and specifically in terms of economics, where the principle of solidarity requires class compromise and cooperation. This is unique from the approach in other welfare states where conflict is fought along class lines. The policy result of the application of solidarity is what is called corporatism, where collective bargaining on the part of labor is replaced with formal negotiations between representatives of labor, business, and the state to facilitate cooperation and compromise between these factions so that an end result might be beneficial for all involved.

The concept of solidarity is closely tied to that of personalism, which is “the idea that one becomes a person through one’s relationship to others” (Stjerno 74). While Christians believe that all people have dignity and value as individuals by virtue of their creation in God’s image, it is equally important to realize that God also created people as innately social beings who are only able to fully flourish in community. An inherent part of humanity in the Catholic conception is participation in society and its institutions. This complements the idea of solidarity by reminding us that while we are to participate in society, institutions are ultimately for the sake of uplifting the individual. While belonging to a community is necessary for human fulfillment, ultimately communities exist for the sake of people and not vice versa; the individual and their inherent dignity must take precedence over the ends of any particular group. Again this results in the limiting of both the state and the market because the dignity of the person acts as a check on the power of each. The individual cannot be allowed to fall into poverty through a market failure, so the state must intervene, but each person must also be given a dignified role in society which comes largely through work. Personalism is another principle which leads to the outcome of social capitalism.

The combination of these three principles defines the unique Christian democratic approach to social policy. Subsidiarity spells out the importance of both the state as an actor for the common good and of intermediary institutions in carrying out the tasks that promote the common good. Solidarity shows that these institutions must work only to promote social cohesion and never to divide people or to carry out destructive conflict, instead always working toward compromise. Finally, personalism emphasizes the necessity of social participation for individual flourishing while also cautioning that the action of intermediary institutions and the compromises reached must never come at the expense of individual dignity and in fact must actively promote and uplift people. Practically, this means that welfare policy for Christian democrats looks vastly different from traditional left and right approaches with its corporatism and social capitalism. Perhaps most importantly, neither the state nor the market is a primary actor but the intermediary institutions take on the responsibility for implementing social policy.

Looking to the Dutch and Swedish cases we can see how these differences in doctrine begin to apply to policy approaches. One clear example is the passive nature of the Dutch welfare state as opposed to the active nature of the Swedish welfare state. The transfer of benefits in the Netherlands is based on a traditional family model which funnels benefits through male breadwinners rather than through universal citizen benefits like those found in Sweden (van Kersbergen 2009, 137). Furthermore, and most clearly in keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, institutions like hospitals and schools in the Netherlands are publicly funded but kept largely private which allows them to be confessional as well as closely tied to the particular needs of the community. This also is a demonstration of the state playing a subsidiary role by funding institutions without heavy regulation. This stands opposed to Swedish health care policy, for example, which is largely state-run and universalistic, granting government a much more expansive role. Christian democratic thinking translates into the incorporation of intermediary institutions in a prominent role. Furthermore, the mere formation of confessional parties which are not class-based is a marked change along the lines suggested by the principle of solidarity, as the Swedish welfare debate has largely been framed in terms of class struggle and even in Marxist language (Stjerno 129). In offering a distinct way of looking at society and its proper order, Christian democracy naturally moves into ways of implementing and envisioning social policy which are unique from other parties. By virtue of the specific nature of Christian teaching it follows that the Christian democratic approach must be characterized not by free-market liberalism or statist interventionism but instead by an important role for intermediary institutions and class compromise.

## **The Christian Democratic Creation and Use of Social Structures**

Christian democracy influences social policy through its creation of comprehensive social structures and bonds. Another unique feature of Christian democracy is that, by virtue of its broad underlying doctrine, it is not only a political party but a comprehensive social movement. Societies with strong Christian democratic presence also have strong confessional intermediary institutions. These institutions are not only a result of Christian democratic doctrine but are also a contributing factor to how welfare policy is implemented. Visser and Hemerijck write that “substantive policy ideals only become effective in institutional environments which are able to translate them into concrete decisions and feasible strategies of implementation” (54). The existence of social organizations means that they can be relied upon to play an important role in the delivery of benefits. It also means that they are able to impact the way in which policy is interpreted and services are delivered through their role as service providers.

The existence of confessional civil society institutions is extremely prominent in the Netherlands. Pillarization characterizes the structure of Dutch society and it refers to the segmentation of society according to confession. Catholic and Calvinists, the two most prominent Dutch religious denominations, have developed strong subcultures, infrastructures, and networks of institutions. These pillars comprise of not only churches, schools, and hospitals but even radio stations and soccer teams. In short, the pillars are “self-contained life worlds” (Ertman 46). In addition to the Christian pillars, Socialists and Liberals have developed matching pillars so that Dutch society is comprised not of public institutions which compete with confessional institutions but instead almost exclusively of ideologically-based institutions.

A clear effect of these pillars on social policy is that Christian democrats, hesitant to be joined into one state in areas like public schools, instead adopted the policy of publicly funding all schools. Another telling example is the area of health care, where very social democratic states like Sweden rely heavily on public insurance and hospitals. The obvious opposite of such an approach might look something like the current US approach which relies almost exclusively on private insurance. In the Dutch case, however, there is a mix of public and private insurance and public funding of confessional hospitals. These examples demonstrate the positive approach of Christian democracy to religion. Rather than taking an approach which simply seeks not to interfere with confessional institutions while favoring secular ones with resources, the Dutch state actively supports the public expression of religion through funding. Of course the Dutch government does not exclusively fund Christian schools or hospitals, but it also does not exclude such organizations from funding. This approach still avoids the imposition of a religion on citizens, but it also avoids the forced, artificial

neutrality which is favored by the exclusive funding of secular institutions. In this way Christian democrats allow for the public development of religious convictions in a way consistent with the ideals of subsidiarity and personalism (Lamberts 124).

An interesting testament to the practical impact of these Dutch societal institutions comes from examining the effects of the process of depillarization which has occurred somewhat steadily since the 1960's. Two primary effects can be seen as the results of the depillarization process: first, it seems that the decline of pillars actually correlates to the decline of the political power of Christian democrats and, second, there remains social segregation along ideological lines and a continued use of the pillarized institutions even as they secularized (van Kersbergen 2009, 140).

On the correlation between depillarization and the decline in Christian democratic prominence in government, Manow and van Kersbergen observe that in the face of the secularization of "the Confessional parties could no longer rely on the 'automatic vote' of their pillar members" (140). It is unclear, they warn, whether it is the case that the decline in Christian democracy is a result of depillarization or whether depillarization is a result of the decline of Christian democratic power. Likely both means of analysis hold some truth, but even so it is fairly realistic to conclude that there is a causal relationship between the two phenomena. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the pillars derive some of their importance and usefulness from acting as a tool for Christian democratic parties, showing another way in which societal institutions do in fact play a unique and important role for Christian democracy.

Beyond the way in which societal institutions play into formal political power for Christian democratic parties, it is also significant to note their continuing informal impact even in times when Christian democrats were no longer in power. It might seem that when the Christian democrats were not in the position to actively pursue policies which favored these institutions that the institutions would lose their impact. Gill and Lundsgaarde argue that "religious social mobilization and political involvement are more likely in countries with less extensive welfare systems and, conversely, that the expansion of state-sponsored social welfare will diminish, though not eliminate, the role religion will play in politics" (401). It follows logically that the size of the welfare state would correlate to the level of religious involvement in politics. Though this seems problematic for the idea that Christian democrats can create a unique welfare state because their very involvement is somehow inversely related to the presence of social provisions, this approach neglects the importance of informal political power which is inherent to the Christian democratic approach. While one embodiment of Christian democracy is in the use of the state for the common good, at least as important is the creation and use of intermediary institutions.



In fact, the very existence of societal institutions and the depth of their entrenchment in society mean that they are able to play a primary role in the implementation of policy even with Christian democrats sidelined from government. For example, to this day nearly 100% of Catholic students still attend Catholic schools, which remain publicly funded, while Socialist parents also still send children to secular schools. Furthermore, "inter-pillar socialization, including intermarriage, is still relatively rare" (Evans 243). The persistence of this social segregation despite depillarization reflects the unique character of Christian democracy as a social movement whose influence does not depend only on a political party. In fact, even in the face of depillarization and the decline in Christian democratic political power the intermediary institutions developed within the pillars are still largely relied upon to provide welfare state services (Manow & van Kersbergen 141). It is this emphasis on the development of nongovernmental, community-based organizations for the implementation of social benefits that characterizes the unique nature of Christian democratic politics.

### **The Christian Democratic Creation of Welfare Policy**

Christian Democratic parties are uniquely positioned to exert influence over social policy because they occupy the center of the spectrum. While I have stressed the importance of informal political power in the forms of ideological offerings and intermediary institutions, of course formal political status is also of primary importance for Christian democrats and their policy influence. Contrary to traditional parties of the left and the right, Christian democracy is uniquely equipped and inclined to make a cross-class appeal for political support. This owes both to the fact that members of all classes are religious but also to some of the policies which Christian democrats espouse, specifically corporatism and social capitalism. The ideals of personalism, solidarity, and subsidiarity mean that the welfare policies of Christian democrats involve both interclass dialogue and social capitalism. Social capitalism, as described earlier is a sort of middle way between socialism and capitalism, utilizing the market for the allocation of resources but also allowing the state to intervene to correct market failures and to protect those who fall behind economically (van Kersbergen 1994, 40). These policies which incorporate some ideas from the left and right along with the Christian principles discussed earlier are unique to Christian democracy and relate to its strong centrist appeal. This constitutes both a distinctive tool for Christian democratic parties and a defining feature of their policy platform which emphasizes class compromise in accordance with the doctrine of solidarity.

Iverson and Soskice write about the influence of political parties and their relationship to class divisions on welfare policy (166). They find that two-party systems result in smaller welfare states than systems with proportional

representation. This owes to the fact that two-party systems embody only the left-right class divide, and so the middle class faces a choice between higher taxes and redistribution on the left or lower taxes on the right. Thus, in the two-party system the middle class tends to side with the right, creating liberal, limited welfare policies. The US exemplifies the limited size of the welfare state produced by two-party systems. In PR, however, the center is either able to be represented by some party of its own or at least along some lines more nuanced than the simple left-right divide. PR creates a tendency for the middle class to side more with the left because it is less fearful of redistribution, believing it can have more influence over the level of taxation, and so the welfare state is more expansive in these systems. Overall, the middle class tends to play a very decisive role in granting power, so it is the opportunity of whatever party captures the middle class to influence what sort of welfare policy will be adopted (Manow & van Kersbergen 16).

In the Swedish case, the social democratic party has been able to motivate the working class through the use of Marxist, class-based rhetoric. As a result of this success, the main influences on Swedish social policy have been “liberalism, agrarian interests, and social democracy,” which in turn drives social policy toward redistribution and an active role for the state (Anderson 232). In the Netherlands, however, Christian Democrats exercised control of the center for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during which time “the Catholic People’s Party had taken the lead in cabinet formation and played the role of mediator between other coalition members of the left and right; it had been the governing party par excellence” (Evans 241). Not only does this mean that Christian democracy was able to take on a major role in shaping welfare policy, but it was also able to usurp the secular point of view which, “though probably shared by a majority [in the Netherlands], has been divided by the permanent center occupied by the religiously-based CDA” (Evans 244). This observation demonstrates the success of Dutch Christian democrats in not only capturing the support of the middle class but in fact of uniting several classes via the cross-cutting cleavage of religion. This owes largely to the presence of a real conflict along religious lines around the time of the formation of the Christian democratic parties because of anticlericalism which did not exist in the Swedish case as it has long had an established state church. However, it also owes to the nature of Christian democratic parties as seekers of social inclusion and class compromise.

Part of what makes Christian democracy appealing across class lines is not only its religious appeal but also its distinct economic approach, social capitalism, which is based in the doctrines of subsidiarity, solidarity, and personalism. Essentially, this consists of an acknowledgement that the free market ought to be allowed its proper role in allocating resources, but that the state must also be willing to intervene to correct the injustices which are bound to occur as a result of

the market, specifically poverty and the commodification of labor in a way that does not reward the dignity of the person and their work. This doctrine appeals across classes because it rewards work but also provides protection from market forces. The result of the success of Christian democratic parties in garnering support across class lines is that they had the power to implement a corporatist welfare model in the Netherlands which concentrates on dialogue between government, employers, and labor, thus perpetuating their appeal.

As was previously mentioned, the postwar period in the Netherlands saw a decrease in the power of the Christian democrats and they were forced to create a black-red coalition with social democrats. It is interesting to observe that, in this postwar period, “the Dutch welfare state developed into a highly passive, transfer-oriented, service-lean, yet highly generous, system that was tailored to income replacement for the typical male breadwinner-female carer [*sic*] household” (van Kersbergen 129). While the inclusion of social democrats in Dutch government did result in an increase in welfare state generosity, the welfare state still remained passive in a way that clearly owes to the Christian democratic influence. This development stands in contrast to states like Sweden where the unchallenged social democrats created broadly redistributive welfare states with the state taking an extremely active role.

One question worth mentioning is what caused the loss of power for Dutch Christian democratic parties. Of course this is a difficult question to answer definitively and there are likely many contributing factors. As has been discussed, the decline in power does appear to be causally related to the process of depillarization. Both phenomena likely relate to the overall secularization of society in modern times, which may simply be a reflection of the less traditional values of current generations, but also likely owes to the lack of anticlerical persecution which united Christians at the formation of the Christian democratic movement. Whatever the cause, depillarization and the secularization of society means that votes along religious lines are no longer a guarantee, meaning that the population returns more heavily to the traditional class cleavages which Christian democrats attempt to bypass. This means that competition for the working class vote takes on a renewed intensity and Christian democrats, unwilling to use the rhetoric of class conflict to mobilize support, lose out on votes to the social democrats. This all follows the prediction that whichever party is able to command the middle class vote will hold the power, and so the division of the working class between social and Christian democratic parties necessitated the postwar red-black coalitions (van Kersbergen 2009).

During the heyday of Christian democratic parties in the Netherlands, social policy closely followed the doctrines of subsidiarity and solidarity in focusing on establishing social order and stability. This includes welfare policy done along

traditional gendered roles in an attempt to respect and utilize the institution of the family. It also includes the central role for intermediary institutions in the delivery of social services. These fundamental tenets of Christian democratic welfare policy were not compromised by cooperation with social democrats and actually helped to restrain welfare policy by coupling the expansion in the generosity of welfare programs with the maintenance of passive systems of delivery via both male breadwinners and societal institutions. Here the Swedish comparison is instructive in that it shows the type of active, interventionist state which develops under a social democratic party unrestrained by the influence of Christian democracy. The fact that the Dutch welfare state expanded in the postwar period no doubt owes to the influence of social democrats, but the fact that it remains passive is in spite of social democratic efforts. Again, Christian democracy proves uniquely able to steer welfare policy in a direction distinct from social democracy in both its underlying doctrine and its utilization of intermediary institutions.

## **Conclusion**

Christian democracy offers a distinct alternative to other political parties in ideology, policy implementation, and political strategy. Its doctrine aims not to polarize but to unite and to uplift. The delivery of services is not through the state or the market but through delegation of authority to intermediary institutions. Power is not concentrated in the formal political arena but actually consists in its strength as a social movement with institutions that deliver services. In the formal political arena, Christian democratic parties find success through the ability to unite across class lines. The ideals of compromise, inclusion, and community are not only important to the type of policy Christian democrats advocate but also to the way in which they approach politics; consistent with those underlying principles are the unique methods employed by Christian democratic parties in utilizing social structures and informal political power while refusing class-based mobilization.

The Christian democratic movement requires a particular kind of environment to flourish. Two-party systems do not support such cross-cutting party and with the increasing secularization of Europe and much of the rest of the world it seems that the social support needed for such a movement may only decrease over time. Secularization also means that there is not as much of the blatant anticlericalism which helped to motivate and enable the formation of confessional parties many years ago. Since the underlying conditions necessary for the formation of Christian democratic parties is so complex, the recommendation I believe Christian democracy can offer for the future is more in the area of the adoption of the doctrine which distinguishes the movement.

The concepts of the inclusion of intermediary institutions and of class compromise can be applied even without the presence of a Christian democratic political party, as demonstrated by the passage of the faith-based initiative in the US which allows for the delivery of certain services through social institutions which are both secular and religious. As this paper has emphasized, formal political power, while very important, is not the only feature that distinguishes Christian democracy. Those hoping to find a way for Christian democratic ideals to continue to influence welfare policy can also focus on applying the doctrine in policy and in developing social structures which are able to take on their proper tasks of uplifting people and incorporating them into society. Even as the influence of Christian democracy declines in the formal political arena its ideals and institutions continue to offer a unique influence as a movement and ideology. Christian democracy is a distinct movement and it offers a clear alternative to liberal and social democratic conceptions of social policy which must be taken seriously as a comprehensive and compassionate approach to social policy.

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