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To: Members of Ms. Mirna Jusić's Dissertation Committee at the Univerzita Karlova V Praze, Fakulta Socialnich Ved

From: Dr. Paula M. Pickering, Richard S. Perles Professor of Government, William & Mary,


Subj: Report on the Dissertation: *A Common Legacy, Divergent Paths: Understanding the Transformation of Post-Yugoslav Welfare States* by Ms. Mirna Jusić

I appreciate the opportunity to review Ms. Jusić's dissertation. Her dissertation studies important questions for comparative public and social policy: how and why social welfare policies of four countries of the former Yugoslavia diverged in the last 25 years and what is their impact on citizens' capabilities? Ms. Jusić's rigorous, multi-method original research to portray the nature of change in the sectors of employment and family policy in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and North Macedonia and understand why differences in welfare reform agendas came about makes a number of significant contributions. First, she employs for the first time to a comparative study of social welfare policy reform in two sectors in four countries of the former Yugoslavia several comparative public policy theoretical frameworks—the Capabilities Approach (Sen 1992) and the Multiple Streams Framework (Kingdon 2011)--to illuminate in nuanced and meaningful ways the nature of social welfare reforms in these two sectors in these countries and reasons for agenda change. This helps fill a gap in comparative public policy and political science, which too often exclude countries of the former Yugoslavia from their research. Second, applying the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) to explain agenda change in the sectors of employment and family policy in these four countries identifies the interaction of the factors in the problem stream, policy stream, politics stream, and policy entrepreneur stream which led to functional and normative recalibration in the employment policy sector but no recalibration in the family policy sector, as well as variations across countries in reform agendas in these sectors.

Ms. Jusić's dissertation meets and exceeds the content and formal requirements for a dissertation. I strongly recommend it for defense. I provide more specific comments and questions on this outstanding dissertation below.

The Theoretical Framework chapter provides a useful summary of strengths and weaknesses of existing research on comparative social welfare reforms. Building on this research, Ms. Jusić soundly justifies her decision to extend Sen's Capabilities Approach to understanding reforms of the sectors of employment and family policies by highlighting this approach's ability to understand most comprehensively the real effects of the policy on individual citizens (p. 42). Particularly important is the point that this approach allows for the consideration of inequalities along different lines. She also provides sound reasoning for choosing to apply the Multiple Streams Framework to understand how social welfare reform proposals were placed on the policy agenda of decision-makers (p. 48). MSF's advantages include its interactive component and its ability to integrate actors, ideas, and institutions. It is a bit unusual that the strongest justifications for these theoretical approaches appear in the

Methodology chapter rather than in Theoretical Framework chapter, but it is most important that Ms. Jusić clearly provides them, and she does.

The **Methodological Framework** chapter clearly describes Ms. Jusić's rigorous, multi-method approach to studying change in social welfare policies. Her research design, conceptualization, and operationalization of concepts, and application of qualitative analytical techniques are well-suited to help uncover and analyze new information to describe and explain the nature of social welfare reform. As I mentioned in my comments on the dissertation abstract, her small-n comparative case study design of four former Yugoslav states is an ambitious but well-chosen design that allows her to control for the legacy of the Socialist Yugoslavia on social welfare policies and to highlight factors in the MSF approach to explain change in reforms. However, one issue of concern that arose out of Ms. Jusić's analysis of employment and family policy reforms in Chapters Four and Five was that this four-country case study does not allow for her to control for the leverage of a powerful regional actor on reform: the EU, since these countries during the time period of study were in different stages of integration with the EU. While Ms. Jusić convincingly argues the EU played a more powerful role in reforms in family policy than in employment policy, she acknowledges throughout the dissertation that the EU did play a role. She also mentions the countries' different stages of integration into the EU and the change in the capacity of the EU integration process in facilitating reform (pp. 209-210). More specifically, the EU exerted more power while Croatia was a candidate than while Serbia and North Macedonia were candidates, and certainly when BiH was a pre-candidate. How much can the EU's power explain the more significant reforms in Croatia's family policy than in the other case study countries?

This comparative case study design, as well as the decision to look at reforms in two sub-sectors of two sectors of social welfare policy, provides the opportunities for her to collect different types of evidence over a 25-year period and to use process-tracing needed to describe and explain policy agenda change. This research design allows her research to have a good balance of depth and breadth of analysis, though she soundly recognizes the limitations of this comparative framework on depth.

Particularly strong are Ms. Jusić's clear operationalization of the concepts within the theoretical approaches she uses: the Capabilities Approach and the Multiple Streams Framework approach. The clear operationalization she provides for describing reforms (on pp. 45-47 and then at the beginning of the chapters on employment and family policies) and understanding policy agenda change (pp. 48-49) enhances the readers' confidence in the evidence she offers in Chapters Four and Five. It demonstrates the rigor and transparency of her research methods and bolsters confidence in the systematic nature of her findings.

Another powerful component of Ms. Jusić's Methodology chapter is its discussion of the general expectations from the Multiple Streams Framework of understanding how reforms should come about in the employment and family policy realms. Outlining in the method section the general expectations of the theory for how social welfare reforms play out prior to gathering and analyzing data about reform in the two sectors increases readers' assurance in the findings and improves readers' ability to assess how helpful the theory was in anticipating agenda change. I also appreciate that this decision is responsive to my suggestion on the dissertation abstract. In Chapters Four and Five, Ms. Jusić does an excellent job of referring back to these general expectations to evaluate how well the empirical evidence of reforms in the two social welfare sectors fits with MSF's general expectations.

Ms. Jusić soundly follows the best practices of social scientists to gather diverse sources of data for triangulation. This triangulation significantly enhances the power of her arguments about social welfare reforms. However, in the dissertation it appears that Ms. Jusić relies more heavily on some sources of data – particularly statistics, primary sources, and secondary analysis – than others – interviews. Other than a brief mention on p. 211, It was not clear how Ms. Jusić integrated findings from the 21 interviews she conducted with policy makers involved in social welfare reform in the case study countries. I would have anticipated that the interviews would provide important perspectives from policy community members on how the interaction between MSF’s different streams works to influence reform agendas. I am interested to hear more about what Ms. Jusić learned about reforms from these interviews.

Chapters Four and Five vividly describe reforms and how they came about in the employment and family policy sectors. Ms. Jusić provides rich evidence from a number of different sources to detail how policy reforms affect individual capabilities and to tell nuanced stories of the process of reform in these two sectors. Particularly powerful components of these empirical chapters are Ms. Jusić’s detailing of the impact of these social welfare policies on inequalities in citizens’ capabilities, the frames that problem brokers used to define the problems in each sector; and how the interaction of those frames with conditions in the policy, politics, and policy entrepreneur streams influence agenda change.

The evidence provided in Chapters Four and Five bolsters the persuasiveness of Ms. Jusić’s argument that changes in the focusing events and the extent to which they put the government’s re-election at risk significantly contributed to more opportunities for agenda change in employment policy –given the grave problem of high unemployment in the region and the impact of multiple economic crises— than in family policy, which lacked such focusing events and level of threat to ruling parties. As an example of how problem frames interacted with policy, politics, and policy entrepreneur streams, Chapter Four persuasively explains the success of the neoliberal problem frame for employment policy in shifting toward activation of workers and reduction of benefits to curb “disincentives” for work. This was championed by powerful international financial organizations who served as problem brokers and policy entrepreneurs in the face of fragmented domestic policy communities and weak interest groups, particularly trade unions. Ms. Jusić’s story helps me grasp why this agenda recalibration occurred despite sustained popular anger toward ruling parties for their failure to generate broad-based economic opportunities and to care for vulnerable citizens.

Applying MSF also helped me understand how the power of the domestic interest group of war veterans in BiH and Croatia and ruling parties’ use of clientelism to reward their bases affected how employment policies continued to influence inequalities in capabilities, even against the leverage of international actors. In the sector of family policy, Chapter Five’s application of MSF convincingly argued how international problem brokers’ framing of gender equality was generally unsuccessful in producing agenda change in leave policy and early childhood education and care in the face of lack of a focusing crisis, ruling parties’ conservative and pronatalist ideologies, and societies’ continued patriarchy.

The **Discussion & Conclusion** chapters provide important, concise comparative analysis after two rich but lengthy chapters on change in employment and family policy. They clarify how the Capabilities Approach describes change in these social welfare sectors in the capacity of individuals and the nature of change. In addition, these chapters highlight how the Multiple Problems Framework explains varying levels of recalibration in employment policy in the case studies but the lack of even

recalibration in family policy in these former Yugoslav countries. Though I found the tables and figures throughout the dissertation helpful in displaying evidence and portraying analysis, tables in the Discussion chapter were particularly powerful in conveying findings and concluding arguments. The Discussion chapter that addresses change in both social welfare policies uses comparative analysis to empower the reader to understand better the different processes of reform and outcomes of agenda change in these sectors. Ms. Jusić's analysis of failed couplings in the Discussion chapter is also powerful. The Discussion chapter also briefly addresses one of the surprising findings in family policy reform --the success of women's CSOs in Serbia in agenda change in the subsector of leave policy (p. 216). However, I would have liked to have heard a more detailed analysis, within the MSF framework, of the unusual success influencing leave policy of civil society organizations considered by scholars to be particularly weak in the former Yugoslav countries. Why were these CSOs successful in changing the way maternity benefits were distributed when the problem did not fundamentally challenge ruling parties' rule (problem stream) or ruling parties' conservative, pro-natalist ideology and society's patriarchalism (politics stream)? While the Conclusion asserts the role played by women taking advantage of a policy window in the politics stream, these specific conditions are not clear to me. I wonder if the success of the CSO activists could be partly due to their access to core decision-makers, persistence, and/or alliance with international actors (policy entrepreneur stream)? Other topics I was hoping to hear even more about in the discussion were the role played by religious groups in the politics stream in influencing the lack of recalibration in family policy and the role played by socio-economic conditions, in comparison to other conditions specified in MSF, in helping understand agenda change in both social welfare sectors.

The short Conclusion clearly articulates the significant contributions of this dissertation to comparative public policy literature on social welfare reforms and to understanding variation in the reform agenda of social welfare policies in two sectors in four former Yugoslav countries. The dissertation is innovative not just in its application of the Capabilities Approach and the Multiple Streams Framework to social welfare reforms. It is also innovative in its findings of how ideas, institutions, and actors, both domestic and international, interact to produce agenda change in social welfare policies in these understudied cases. The Conclusion anticipated my interest in learning more about policy change by suggesting that future research apply the Multiple Streams Framework to policy change, reaching beyond agenda change in social welfare policies in the region. Ms. Jusić's dissertation lays fertile ground for future research to build upon. Such research could, as she recommends, extend her approach to decision-making processes that ultimately led to policy changes in these sectors in these countries. Future research could also extend her approach to other social welfare sectors in these countries or to reform agenda change in these sectors in different countries that emerged from other communist party federations.

I appreciate the opportunity to read, learn from, and comment on Ms. Jusić's outstanding dissertation. The quality of this dissertation increases my confidence that Ms. Jusić has a bright academic career ahead. I look forward to learning from Ms. Jusić's future research.