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Party patronage
An old solution for new problems?
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Introduction
Patronage presupposes a particularistic, non-commercial, asymmetric exchange between patrons and clients, the latter offering their support and loyalty in return for the benefits the patron can provide. As this definition suggests, it is not a recent phenomenon, nor is it limited to political exchanges.

In the analysis of political exchanges in the context of modern democracies, the role of the patron is generally seen as being played by the political party, which can distribute a variety of benefits, ranging from jobs to subsidies and legislation. Of these various types of patronage, jobs are generally seen as the most important, and it is this specific type of benefit that we will focus on in this chapter.

Given that political parties are empowered to act as patrons through their access to government, party patronage is closely related to party government. However, patronage has traditionally been a relatively underexplored dimension of the party government model, primarily analysed as an instrumental means of strengthening a party, be it in terms of its membership and of its wider support (Blondel 2002). Consequently, for a long time party patronage was associated (or even conflated) with clientelism, an instrument for mobilizing electoral support and rewarding the party faithful; and many scholars therefore predicted that the patronage system would eventually lose significance with political and economic modernization (see, e.g., Sorauf 1959: 119).

However, in recent years party patronage – specifically, political appointments to non-elected public offices – has been the focus of renewed interest (see, for example, the volume edited by Kopecký et al. 2012; and the volume edited by Peters and Pierre 2004). Two factors can be adduced for this re-examination of patronage. First, contrary to the expectations of much of the literature, it appears that patronage has not receded with modernization. Indeed, if anything, patronage appears to remain a feature of contemporary politics, even as governance processes are radically re-shaped. Second, although patronage has not disappeared over time, its form does seem to have changed. Indeed, a recent strand of the literature posits that patronage now functions not only as a means of ‘greasing’ party structures but also as a crucial instrument of policy control.
In this chapter, we chart the role of patronage in European democracies, drawing on the more recent research that examines the ways it interacts with parties and party government. As we will show, patronage remains a feature of European democracies (young and old), and a feature that increasingly interacts with contemporary processes of governance. On the one hand, partisan recruitment for positions in national and local public institutions is a key resource for political parties that can help entrench party organizations and cement their role as ‘public utilities’ (van Biezen 2004). But, in addition, such appointments provide parties with leverage over (and crucial information within) the increasingly fragmented and delegated processes of policy-making and governance (van Thiel and Yesilkagit 2011). As such, patronage has evolved into a relevant organizational resource for contemporary political parties and party governments – in a sense, an old instrument that allows parties to respond to the new challenges they face.

This chapter is structured as follows. We begin by analysing the concept of patronage and the extent to which the nature of patronage can interact with the goals of political parties. Then, in light of the close ties between patronage and party government, we analyse the evolving forms of patronage within the party government framework. The conceptual confusion and definitional imprecision associated with the concept of patronage have prompted several attempts to measure the extent and nature of party patronage. In the third section, we briefly consider some of the methods currently used to measure patronage and outline a recent approach based on face-to-face expert/elite interviews with respondents familiar with patronage practices. The fourth section delves into the original data employed by the various national studies in the volume edited by Kopecký et al. (2012). Specifically, we focus on the index of party patronage produced by this project, examining the patterns of patronage in 15 European democracies with regard to the extent of party patronage and the motivations behind it, as well as the criteria used in the selection of civil servants. Overall, these patterns indicate that patronage is a resource for policy control, albeit one that can also be used for rewarding supporters.

**Defining patronage in contemporary democracies: party patrons and state benefits**

The concept of patronage has a long tradition. Its origins can be traced at least as far back as Ancient Greece (Millett 1989) and Rome (e.g. Cloud 1989); indeed, the word ‘patronage’ is derived from the Latin patronus (patron, protector). The concept has been addressed by scholars from a variety of different perspectives (anthropological, historical, political), and the scope of its definition has varied over time and across spheres (social, artistic, political); however, these definitions tend to converge on characterizing patronage as a relationship between patrons and clients engaged in a particularistic, non-commercial, asymmetric exchange, with the former enjoying hierarchical superiority vis-à-vis the latter (Saller 1982: 1). Patronage thus entails a reciprocal exchange between patrons and clients, with the former assisting and protecting the latter in return for the latter’s services (ibid.).

Turning to a more political notion of patronage, we can describe it as a relationship involving patrons who provide divisible benefits to clients in exchange for the latter’s loyalty and support (see Shefter 1994: 21). Of course, the potential scope of such benefits is virtually limitless, and may well include benefits and goods directly procured by the political patron (e.g. money) in exchange for the client’s support (e.g. vote). However, we are interested here more specifically in the benefits that political patrons can provide as a result of their access to political power. This is an important aspect of contemporary definitions of political patronage, reflected in Kopecký and Mair’s (2012a: 4) definition of patronage as a relationship in which support is obtained in ‘exchange of various public goods’. A broad range of benefits is at the political
patron’s disposal, such as jobs, titles, contracts and licences, subsidies, grants and legislation (Müller 2000: 142–3). In the context of modern party democracies, these patrons are generally understood to be political parties (Shefter 1994), able to act as patrons through their access to government – either because they form part of the government or through their influence over governmental decisions. However, an individual politician may also serve as a patron, especially in systems involving weaker or less cohesive parties (Golden 2003).

Naturally, the implications of patronage – and the type and number of clients – will vary, depending on the kind of benefits that are provided. For instance, when we compare patronage of jobs and of contracts, we can see that they will have different clienteles, both in terms of their nature – that of jobs being comprised of individuals, while for contracts it also encompasses, perhaps primarily, firms and corporations – and of their extension, with jobs engendering a numerically larger clientele.

This is not to say that other forms of patronage do not exist; indeed, they are relevant and have merited examination (e.g. the role of patronage in Malaysian firms, Gomez and Sundaram 1999; in Chinese firms, Goetzmann and Koll 2005; and in the political economy of Africa, Tangri 1999). Moreover, recent research suggests that exchanges between parties and firms might be far less unidirectional than the conventional definition of patronage suggests, with businesses financing parties in exchange for at least a modicum of influence in defining public policy goods (McMenamin 2013). In such cases, businesses are not only the clients of parties but also their patrons. However, insofar as it directly mobilizes a larger cohort of clients and potentially impacts most substantially on public-sector resources,1 studies of patronage tend to focus primarily on the distribution of jobs. Of the various types of patronage, the appointment to jobs is generally seen as the most important (Müller 2006: 190). Thus, for the purposes of this chapter, we define party patronage as party-driven appointments to positions in public and semi-public administrations.

Why do parties resort to patronage? In order to answer this question, an initial distinction must be drawn between ‘service patronage’ and ‘power patronage’. Service patronage refers to the employment or promotion of the client in exchange for loyalty outside the sphere of the job involved (Müller 2006: 190). In this case, because it is related to rewards for services previously rendered or in anticipation of services to be rendered in the future, patronage is a non-simultaneous exchange (Landé 1983) that seeks to maintain or obtain political and electoral support (Piattoni 2001). This represents the clientelistic dimension of patronage, which functions as a means of distributing selective incentives in a dyadic and vertical relationship between patrons and clients. A typical service patronage exchange would be the exchange of jobs for votes – a type of patronage that is commonly associated with the notion of clientelism (Kopecký and Mair 2012a: 8–12). Since service patronage entails rewards for supporting patrons, it creates expectations regarding the profile of the appointees, with party affiliation or (when parties are weaker) a personal relationship with the politician central to the process.

In contrast, power patronage appointments are instrumental to attain policy goals. Power patronage thus occurs when the client is expected to render services to the party within the remit of the position to which he or she was appointed. In this context, the distribution of positions in public administration can become an instrument through which a party can reinforce its role in governance structures and processes. To borrow Kopecký and Mair’s (2012a: 8) apt phraseology, in service patronage the patron tells the client, ‘I give you this job so you will vote for me’; in power patronage, the patron tells the client, ‘I give you this job so you will work for me.’

The distinction between service and power patronage is reflected in the types of jobs supplied to clients. Power patronage presupposes that the client’s job will be of consequence and interest
to the patron. In the context of public administration, such jobs would tend to be positions that can influence policy orientation and implementation. As such, power patronage appointments will generally occur at higher hierarchical levels of the civil service, positions capable of generating leverage over governance for the patron. On the other hand, service patronage, employed as a method of attracting ‘voters, contributors, and activists’ (Shefter 1994: 21), will tend to involve appointments at the lower hierarchical levels, a potentially more effective way of increasing electoral support in a context of universal and equal suffrage.2

**Partisan patrons, state resources and the (evolving) nature of party patronage**

As noted in the previous section, the role of political parties as patrons in modern democracies stems from their access to government, either direct (by forming part of the government) or indirect (through their influence over governmental decisions). As such, patronage clearly interacts with the notion of party government. Indeed, patronage has been identified as an important dimension of the party government model, being considered as a crucial dimension of the analysis of the relationship between political parties and the government (Blondel 2002). However, the literature on the party government model has focused on the service dimension of patronage (Blondel 2002). Thus, the conventional conception of patronage refers to the distribution of jobs in public administrations in exchange for services rendered to the ruling party, or as a compensation mechanism should the governing party fail to convert its political preferences into political decisions (Blondel 2002; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

Patronage is thus viewed as a constitutive element of the relationship between the government and supporting parties, albeit an element that is separate from policy decision-making processes and the selection of the governments’ highest officials (Blondel 1995: 131). From this perspective, patronage serves as a compensatory factor, offsetting the inability of the parties in government to convert political preferences into public policy (Blondel 2002: 242). The party government literature has thus associated patronage with the distribution of particularized state resources among the supporters of governing parties (Blondel 2002), a view that regards patronage as an ‘alternative’ to the ability to control public policy (Cotta 2000: 214) and as a ‘palliative’ (Blondel 2002: 253), mitigating any potential negative effects of government incapacity in the eyes of the electorate.

This perspective is consistent with traditional understandings of patronage. Patronage, as a means of distributing selective incentives in a dyadic and vertical relationship between patrons and clients, has been linked to clientelistic politics (Kitschelt et al. 1999; Piattoni 2001). According to this view, patrons who are in power provide clients with desired goods, protection and support; in return, patrons are furnished with other kinds of goods and services. Patronage is also seen as a personalized exchange between politicians and clients involving mutual calculable transactions (Kitschelt et al. 1999: 48), entailing votes and support in exchange for jobs and other benefits (Roniger 2004). In this sense, party patronage was initially associated with the occupation of bureaucratic posts as a form of rewarding supporters and servicing party organizations.

In this perspective, patronage is viewed in a negative light; critics of the system echo the arguments raised against patronage in ancient Athens, where it was seen as inimical to a properly functioning democracy because of the constraints it placed on individuals (Millett 1989). The extent of patronage was also expected to diminish with modernization: in theory, as individuals become economically more prosperous, protected by a universal welfare state and given access to educational resources, the supply of willing clients will decline. In a context featuring
competitive politics and a free and independent media, opportunities to exchange jobs for votes will be further limited.

However, the recent literature suggests that this perspective on patronage is incomplete. In particular, a different motivation for patronage can be identified, which suggests at least a partial reconfiguration of contemporary patronage in Europe away from service patronage towards power patronage. Thus, a more recent strand of literature has linked patronage to parties’ policy-seeking objectives (e.g. Andeweg 2000; Bearfield 2009; Meyer-Sahling 2006).

Although the logic underlying patronage may have been transformed, the notion of patronage is still closely linked to party government. In this case, the implicit departure point is the idea (highlighted in empirical research on party government) that the main raison d’être of government activity is control over public policy (Blondel and Nousiainen 2000: 161). In such a context, parties will use appointments as an instrument to control the bureaucracy, in order to facilitate the implementation of their policy goals (Kopecký and Mair 2012a; Meyer-Sahling 2006). Patronage thus becomes a governing instrument (Meyer-Sahling 2006: 275), with parties concerned not only with the allocation of ministerial positions, but also with appointments to key positions in public administration departments that will allow them a degree of control over these and ensure that their policy goals will be implemented (Andeweg 2000). As Müller (2002) asserts, control over policy requires political executives who are both loyal to party goals and effective administrators. This policy-seeking rationale suggests that patronage may in fact serve to reinforce vertical accountability by facilitating the implementation of parties’ manifestos once they are in power. As such, it helps reduce agency losses in the principal–agent relationship between party government (principal) and the bureaucracy (agent), as well as in the relationship between voters (principal) and party (agent), to the extent that this latter relationship is predicated on policy platforms chosen by voters.

This type of patronage may be seen as a consequence of the growing complexity and fragmentation of governance processes, together with the increasing influence of the upper echelons of the civil service in policy-making. These appointments provide parties and political actors with leverage over the policy process, be it in its conception, implementation or coordination. In fact, the growing complexity of governance processes and the creation of highly fragmented public sectors with the establishment of autonomous public bodies and enterprises may have compelled parties to exert greater influence over state institutions in order to reduce agency losses.

At a time when governance systems tend to be fragmented, making appointments to the upper levels of the civil service may allow parties to reduce risks by gaining greater control over the agencies, non-departmental organizations and enterprises that have assumed a growing importance in both the formulation and implementation of policies. This allows parties to access an important territory of policy-making power (Montricher 2003), allowing them to have ‘a voice in, and gain feedback from, the various policy-making fora that characterise modern multi-level governance systems’ (Kopecký and Mair 2006: 8). Indeed, the formal discretion of bureaucrats is certainly not unencumbered by input from elected officials (Calvert et al. 1989); on the contrary, bureaucratic choice seems to be ‘embedded in a game’ in which the appointment power ‘provides potentially decisive influence over policy’ (ibid.).

As Mair (2008) notes, party governments face increasing challenges, due (inter alia) to transformations in governance; this trend leads him to herald the ‘waning of party government’. Patronage – in the sense of power patronage designed to gain leverage over policy processes – can thus become an instrument through which party governments respond to this challenge. In this way, patronage becomes a key resource for political parties dealing with a fundamental issue: how to retain their role in modern democratic governance. This also signifies that the
normative evaluation of patronage is not necessarily negative. Patronage can enhance parties’ control of policy processes, as parties in government attempt to obtain a more responsible and accountable public and semi-public administration, and this can potentially have positive consequences for the pursuit of their policy goals (Andeweg 2000).

At the same time, parties’ policy-seeking behaviour may coexist with less high-minded goals. However, while service patronage still exists, research on patronage suggests that it has evolved somewhat from the ‘jobs for votes’ exchanges traditionally associated with patronage. Notably, patronage has emerged as an organizational resource that can be used to bolster party organizations facing weakening social anchorage in older democracies (Katz and Mair 1995); in newer democracies, it may function as a mechanism to anchor nascent parties within the emerging political system (Kopecký and Mair 2006). As Ware (1996: 349) concludes, placing ‘party supporters in administrative or quasi administrative positions over which the government has influence’ provides the party in government with the means to strengthen the party itself. Such patronage can fulfil specific organizational goals, such as rewarding party members and generating cohesive parties. Focusing on the European setting, several authors have identified an increase in patronage practices, generating a ‘state-centered party’ (Blondel 2002) or ‘public utilities parties’ (van Biezen 2004). This trend is particularly evident in more recent democracies, with emerging parties prioritizing institutional resources above the anchoring of a mass following. Following Shefter (1994), there may well be path-dependencies for such parties; once in office, they may continue to rely on public resources and patronage practices to sustain their party organizations. Although the underlying logic of this patronage involves service, its goal is no longer obtaining votes – at least, not directly – but rather ensuring the organizational survival of the political party.

Overall, we can identify two broad accounts of patronage in the contemporary literature. One identifies patronage – the appointment to positions in public or semi-public administration – as an instrument that governing parties employ to attain their policy goals. This description refers to power patronage, with parties using appointments to control the policy process across departments, institutions and levels. The other perspective views this use of public posts as a method of servicing and sustaining party organizations. In a sense, this type of patronage functions as another form of access to the state resources that can help maintain parties, echoing Katz and Mair’s (1995) influential analysis. Here we have a pattern of service patronage. In both cases, patronage presupposes the instrumental usage of appointment power; however, although the process may be similar, the motivations and nature of the two types of patronage differ considerably.

Methodological approach

Empirically analysing patronage patterns is not an easy task. Two factors can explain this difficulty; one is largely exogenous to the research, while the other is endogenous. The exogenous dimension concerns the nature of patronage: the exchange that it presupposes is not formalized, and as such can be difficult to measure. This problem is compounded by the fact that patronage is a phenomenon that tends to carry a negative connotation in public discourse, meaning that those engaged in patronage are less willing to discuss it. This exogenous difficulty is not unique to the study of patronage, but it is aggravated by a more endogenous issue related to the conceptual confusion and definitional imprecision of the concept of patronage outlined above.

As a result of the difficulties in obtaining data, in combination with distinct definitional assumptions, we find several different approaches to the operationalization and measurement of patronage in specific contexts and in comparative perspective. In general, these approaches
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rely on proxies. Thus, the level of party patronage has been estimated via the percentage of total expenditures allocated by the central government and its ministries to spending on personnel (see, inter alia, Calvo and Murillo 2004; Gordin 2002), the increase in the absolute number of positions in the state administration³ (Grzymala-Busse 2003; O’Dwyer 2006), the analysis of biographical data⁴ (Meyer-Sahling 2008) and the use of corruption indices to estimate the extent of partisan rent-seeking behaviour, including patronage (Müller 2007).

While these proxies can give us an approximation of the patterns of patronage, they do not fully reflect the extent and nature of patronage practices, as they fail to gras the ability and likelihood of parties to make appointments or the motives behind patronage practices. One method of circumventing these difficulties involves a systematic quantitative analysis of the actual patterns of the distribution of jobs in the upper and middle administrative ranks of public and quasi-public administrations, triangulated with interviews and analysis of legislation. This method allows a more detailed investigation of the main drivers and rationales for the politicization of the civil service, taking into account the considerable differences that exist between hierarchical levels. However, such studies require a very time-consuming process of data gathering on the patterns of job distribution, rendering large-scale comparative studies impractical.⁵

The most thorough comparative examination of patronage in Europe has been the project coordinated by Petr Kopecký and Peter Mair, which scrutinized patronage practices using structured face-to-face interviews with (former and current) ministers and state secretaries and (former and current) top civil servants from public and quasi-public administrations, as well as experts on specific policy areas and those with privileged knowledge on the relationship between parties and bureaucracy. This methodological research framework involved mapping out the state by policy area and institutional type; the former aspect is of particular interest. By dividing each of the nine policy areas into their different institutional settings – ministerial departments (e.g. core civil service), non-departmental agencies and commissions (e.g. regulatory and policy advising and devising agencies) and executing institutions (e.g. institutions involved in delivering services or in production) – the project was able to identify the precise institutional location of patronage appointments within each political system.

Kopecký and Mair’s project conducted a total of 641 interviews across 15 European countries. These included closed-ended questions concerning the formal legal opportunity structures for patronage appointments. Interviewees were also asked to assess the range and depth of patronage appointments in each institutional type and the motivations behind party patronage. Based on this wealth of data on the practice of patronage, the project generated indicators for the extent, motivations and character of patronage.

The extent of patronage was assessed through an index of party patronage. This is a composite measure reflecting the range of patronage (the extent to which it occurs across institutions) and its depth, as evaluated by interviewees on the hierarchical levels at which party-driven appointments occur. This index was standardized to range from 0 to 1. High values on the index indicate that parties appoint across institutions and levels of the state administration, suggesting relatively pervasive patronage practices. Low aggregate levels imply a relative absence of party politicization of the state. In the following section, we analyse the results of this project, which provide an empirical overview of patronage in Europe.

**Party patronage in contemporary Europe**

The data from Kopecký and Mair’s comparative study presents a nuanced picture of patronage in contemporary Europe. In this section, we provide a brief overview of the patterns of patronage
in Europe, examining not only its extent but also its motivations and character. We begin by presenting the study’s results with regard to the index of party patronage in the 15 European democracies, shown in Figure 31.1.

These results are largely consistent with findings from previous studies of patronage. The United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark exhibit the lowest aggregate levels of party patronage, with values less than half of the European average. These countries are generally considered ‘islands of excellence’ (Jensen 2001) with virtually no evidence of party patronage; the countries’ bureaucracies are strong and independent and are detached from the political elite (Müller 2000, 2006). In these cases, the professionalization of the bureaucracy tends to resist political interference.

It is interesting to situate these results within the context of the literature, which suggests a relatively greater politicization of the bureaucratic machinery in these countries. For instance, for the UK Sausman and Locke (2004) note the expansion of the political staff in the government, a trend involving the appointment of advisers to provide ministers with expertise and enhance responsiveness. The same pattern has been identified in Denmark, potentially serving as a mechanism to circumvent the neutrality of civil servants, perceived by the political elites as insufficiently responsive to the priorities of new parties in government (Jensen 2001: 71). The results presented in Figure 31.1 suggest that although such appointments do occur, they have not resulted in fundamental changes in the way the civil service is appointed in the UK and Denmark, as these countries (along with the Netherlands) maintain comparatively low levels of patronage.

Five countries display medium levels of party patronage, values that are less than the European mean but more than half of this mean. Three of these countries – Portugal, Ireland and Iceland – were considered patronage-ridden countries in the past; this suggests that patronage may be losing relevance to some extent, as the data from Portugal in particular indicate. The prevailing narrative concerning Portugal describes the politicization of personnel as widespread (Lopes 1997). Portugal, like its Southern European counterparts, has been widely perceived as a country whose appointments reach deep into the administrative hierarchy, largely motivated by partisan considerations (Diamandouros et al. 2006). The level of the index of patronage for Portugal suggests that the nature of Portuguese patronage is considerably more
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nuanced than previous accounts have suggested, with parties primarily interested in the top levels of public administration as a means of gaining leverage over fragmented governance processes; the result is a more moderate level of patronage than previously reported (Jalali et al. 2012).

Substantial changes appear to have taken place in Ireland and Iceland, two countries also associated with pervasive practices of party patronage; this has been due in large part to a decrease in the demand side of patronage on the part of political parties (Kristinsson 2012; O’Malley et al. 2012). The same pattern can be identified in the Czech Republic, where (against the conventional narrative) patronage does not seem to be particularly pervasive (Kopecký 2012). The relatively restricted use of party patronage results from the parties’ limited capacity to recruit candidates for appointed positions, due to their weak organizational presence on the ground. Overall, reductions in citizens’ trust in political parties and the declining levels of party membership have diminished the demand side of patronage.

Conversely, the Norwegian case illustrates a tendency towards increasing politicization of top management structures. Conventionally, patronage was thought to be virtually non-existent in Norway, given its strong, professionalized administrative structures (Müller 2006: 189). However, as Allern (2012) argues, governmental actors have sought to politicize the Norwegian bureaucracy as a way to constrain its autonomy. This tendency seems to stem from the growing political staff surrounding ministerial private offices. Unlike in the UK and Denmark, this trend does appear to have resulted in a relatively high (although not excessive) level of politicization in the Norwegian civil service.

Seven of the 15 countries analysed exhibit high levels of patronage, which we define here as a value above the European mean. Of these, three are ‘second-wave’ democracies: Germany, Italy and Austria. In the German case, while patronage is not generally considered to be a salient feature at the federal level (Müller 2000: 145), it is of paramount importance at sub-national levels (Länder), where party political considerations play a significant role and ‘the practice of party patronage frequently goes beyond the legal scope’ (John and Poguntke 2012: 132), including as a result of middle-ranking civil servants who seek to use party membership as a strategy to advance their careers. For Austria and Italy, the results are not surprising. Austria has long been considered the ‘heart’ of patronage in Europe (Müller 2007: 252); the importance of patronage is a reflection of the Proporz system and its role in allocating positions across the civil service. Italy has a strong tradition of patronage and clientelism that has created a long-term dependence on particularistic benefits, resulting in an administrative system with low institutional capacity. This pattern seems persistent, even though patronage has become increasingly dependent on the personal loyalties of the appointees to individual politicians, a consequence of party weakening (Di Mascio 2012).

The extent of patronage is more pronounced in third-wave democracies. Of the six third-wave democracies in this study, four – Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary and Greece – are found in the high patronage category. Moreover, average values in the index of party patronage are higher among third-wave democracies (mean of 0.42, standard deviation of 0.11) than in older democracies (mean of 0.29, standard deviation of 0.15).

The literature suggests three factors as being responsible for the higher levels of patronage in new democracies. First, there is the legacy of the politicized recruitment system from the previous non-democratic regime that prioritized party loyalty above professional skills and merit. Second, in many cases this problem was compounded by the attempts of new parties in power to gain control over bureaucratic structures after transition to democracy (Goetz and Wollmann 2001: 879). As a consequence, the new administrative machinery tends to be incapable of resisting partisanship, creating favourable conditions for the large-scale use of patronage. Third, political
Parties tend to be internally mobilized (van Biezen and Kopecký 2007: 237) – that is, they assume governing functions without having first institutionalized their own organizational infrastructure – and their social anchorage is generally fragile. In such cases, state structures seem to be particularly prone to party colonization, with patronage emerging as a valuable tool for attracting and keeping members.

Even though the new democracies analysed here (particularly the more recent EU members) have been subjected to considerable pressure from the EU to reform the administrative apparatus of the state (Goetz and Wollmann 2001), adaptation to the demands of the European integration process tends to occur in terms more of changes to the legal framework than of actual practices, with parties in government demonstrating little political will to relinquish patronage (Kopecký 2012: 79). One of the ways parties have circumvented European pressure involves resorting to patronage in policy areas that are less subject to external (European Union) or domestic scrutiny, as illustrated by the Bulgarian case. In Bulgaria, parties are free to appoint in the ministries of Culture, Health care and Welfare, as the EU has little oversight in these areas, which are considered to be fields of limited policy relevance (Spirova 2012: 59). At the same time, the example of Spain suggests that the nature of patronage can change over time. Spanish patronage has become a crucial asset for governing parties, especially given the polarized setting of party competition, in which new ministers tend to distrust civil servants and have an added incentive to replace officials inherited from previous governments (Gomez and Verge 2012).

In this group of high patronage countries, Greece stands out as an outlier, its index of patronage value close to doubling the European average. Here, the lack of autonomy in the bureaucracy, which has historically been subservient to the political sphere (Pappas and Assimakopoulou 2012: 147), is compounded by characteristics that facilitate an extensive and pervasive use of patronage: specifically, a strong partyocracy, with profound polarization in a two-party system, the considerable centralization of the Greek government and an expanding public sector, which has widened the scope available for patronage at both the lower and upper echelons of the bureaucratic hierarchy. The implementation of mechanisms to curb patronage (such as the creation, in 1994, of an independent body to supervise public administration hiring) has done little to effectively change the system; Greek parties simply designed legal loopholes that would allow them to circumvent the independent commission and continue their traditional patronage practices (Pappas and Assimakopoulou 2012: 149).

Overall, we find that the extent of patronage varies considerably across European democracies. However, this index of patronage does not allow us to assess the extent to which the motivations for patronage may have changed. In Figure 31.2 we present the results on the motivations for patronage generated by the Kopecký and Mair comparative study. The figure shows the proportion of respondents who indicated the different motivations. These percentages are disaggregated across the three categories of countries defined above (low, medium and high levels of patronage), in order to assess to what extent the level of patronage correlates with the motivations across Europe.

As outlined earlier, two main motivations can underpin party patronage. Patronage may be used as a means of distributing selective goods to supporters (service patronage) or as a method of strengthening control over particular sectors of the administrative apparatus (power patronage). As Figure 31.2 indicates, control emerges as the main motivation for parties to make appointments, irrespective of the extent of patronage. Control motivations (including respondents who answered ‘both reward and control’) stand at 64.6 per cent in low patronage countries, 80.6 per cent in medium patronage countries and 89.2 per cent in their high patronage counterparts. This pattern is consistent with the theoretical expectations that posit a transformation in the rationale for patronage.
However, while control and reward often coexist in medium and high patronage countries, that is not true of the low patronage countries. Reward motivations (including respondents who answered ‘both reward and control’) stand at only 19.6 per cent in low patronage countries, considerably lower than the medium and high patronage cases, at 51.2 per cent and 56.4 per cent, respectively. Overall, the reconfiguration of patronage away from service patronage and towards power patronage appears to be only partial in medium and high patronage countries. Parties may have an interest in gaining leverage over fragmented governance processes, but these motivations can coexist with more prosaic reward motivations.

In some countries, particularly those with the lowest levels of party patronage, respondents indicated that there were motivations for patronage other than reward and control. This was particularly evident in Denmark, where the overwhelming majority of respondents (75 per cent) felt that governing parties were primarily interested in ensuring the existence of well-functioning institutions, as opposed to controlling the institutions in policy terms, reflecting the country’s enduring belief in a highly professionalized bureaucratic elite.

These findings concerning motivations are reinforced when we consider the criteria used in the appointment of top civil servants. Figure 31.3 summarizes the perspective of interviewees on the relative importance of professional qualifications and political or personal allegiances.

As Figure 31.3 shows, the most important criterion in the selection of top civil servants is their educational and professional background. This is consistent with the theoretical expectations about patronage taking on new forms – specifically, as an organizational and policy-control resource for parties, moving away from traditional clientelistic rewards. Indeed, parties’ policy-seeking objectives tend to require high levels of professional expertise. At the same time, the results suggest that professional considerations coexist with (and in many cases operate in tandem with) political and personal allegiances, particularly in countries with medium to high levels of party patronage. This reinforces the earlier conclusion that different types of patronage can coexist, with power patronage growing in importance but not entirely replacing its service counterpart.
Concluding remarks

As noted at the outset, patronage is not a recent phenomenon. The fact that it has endured across diverse contexts and historical periods suggests a further characteristic of patronage: it is highly adaptable to different circumstances. This adaptability is very much evident in the analysis in this chapter. Long predicted to disappear as a result of political and economic modernization, patronage has resisted and redefined itself.

Contemporary forms of patronage appear to interact with governance processes, which are marked by fragmentation, delegation, specialization and the proliferation of actors involved in the policy process. In this context, the power of appointment wielded by a party in government becomes an instrument that allows the party to increase its leverage over the policy process.

As noted in this chapter, patronage practices vary considerably throughout Europe. Using the index of party patronage developed by Kopecký and Spirova (2012), we found that patronage tends to be more constrained in scenarios in which the bureaucracy has historically been insulated from the political sphere. Conversely, a more pronounced use of patronage seems to stem from a lack of bureaucratic autonomy; in such cases, a wider range of opportunity structures for patronage is compounded by greater party demand for patronage (e.g. to reinforce party organizations). However, while the variation in the extent of patronage is considerable, there is a greater degree of convergence in terms of its motivations, with policy control emerging as the most salient goal. This finding is consistent with the notion of patronage as a means for parties to increase their leverage over policy, although in medium and high patronage countries this function coexists with the more traditional objective of rewarding supporters.

Recent literature has confirmed the persistence and transformation of patronage; however, certain questions remain. In particular, three dimensions emerge from the burgeoning literature on patronage. First, little empirical attention has been devoted to the impact on efficiency in
bureaucratic departments in which parties intervene by appointing top civil servants and management boards. Second, the literature has yet to fully explore the degree of latitude that appointed bureaucrats have in making policy decisions. Finally, there is the issue of how the balance between personal and political allegiances (highlighted in Figure 31.3) impacts party organization. Indeed, if personal connections prevail, patronage may ultimately serve to weaken parties organizationally (at least in terms of their organizational cohesiveness) — precisely the opposite of what the literature has suggested. Answering these questions will be crucial for the development of a thorough understanding of how patronage affects contemporary politics.

Notes
1 Indeed, analysing the data for the EU27 countries plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland for 2012, we find that in all these countries the compensation of governmental employees vastly exceeds the total for subsidies and investments combined, and is outstripped only by social benefits and social transfers in all countries except Iceland (Eurostat 2013).
2 Of course, this is not to suggest that all power patronage appointments involve hierarchically superior positions, or that all service patronage occurs at lower hierarchical levels; it is simply a statement of the general pattern.
3 The use of this proxy is problematic. For one thing, an increase in the number of civil servants may be due to administrative reforms or to the restructuring of the public sector. In addition, an increase in the absolute number of positions in the state administrative personnel would seem to imply that new parties in government will distribute more jobs in public administration, without necessarily dismissing individuals hired by the former ruling party.
4 These studies are less useful for explaining the motives and behaviour of political parties engaged in patronage practices.
5 One example of this kind of study is the ‘Political Patronage in Portugal’ project, funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (PTDC/CPO/65419/2006).

Bibliography


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Party patronage


