Tomislav Marsic

Reassessing patronage in post-socialist countries

This PhD-project seeks to study how governance in post-socialist countries is affected by “reach” and “permeation” of party patronage at the elite level (Daalder, 1966). It particularly aims at specifying the main reasons, locations and nature of elite patronage relationships.

Research on patronage and specifically party patronage is diverse and does not form a coherent body of literature. According to structuralist arguments, patronage is path-dependent on economic development and mode of rule in communism (Kitschelt, 1998) or a product of the sequence of party and bureaucracy formation (Shefter, 1977). Institutional arguments see patronage largely as a consequence of deficiencies in party system institutionalization, especially insufficient party competition (Grzymala-Busse, 2007; O’Dwyer, 2006). Patronage according to this perspective is then used to extract state resources for “opportunistic reconstruction” of party organizations. Other scholars try to strike a theoretical balance between the former two approaches by proposing a historical-institutionalist perspective shifting attention to the phase of modern state building (Manow, 2002).

In an attempt to analyse the understudied connection between institutional governance systems and delegation in post-socialist countries, this PhD-project asks how high-level patronage is used in post-socialist countries. Is it used by governing parties to undercut horizontal functional autonomy of control institutions such as constitutional courts (see Merkel, 2003, Linz/ Stepan, 1996)? Or does patronage in light of weak implementation capacities become a “risk-reduction mechanism” through which control capacity for policy implementation can be manufactured (Flinders, 2009: 549)? Or is patronage rather a strategy for parties to upgrade their organizational networks (Kopecký/ Mair, 2006)? It might be further asked according to what logic patronage is carried out, is the party really its main driver or is it rather a tool used by individuals as means for personal ends such as social position, power and salary (Katz, 1986: 54)?

As a first step in addressing these questions, the formal rules of patronage in a political system will be appraised. The predominance of patronage in a given institutional subsystem provides evidence for a first hypothesis on its character: concentration of patronage activity in democratic control institutions such as constitutional courts leads arguably to different conclusions than a concentration of patronage in regulatory agencies. In order to raise concept validity the resulting hypothesis shall then be further elaborated using Barbara Geddes’ “appointment strategy index” (1994), which is based on expert interviews and secondary literature to assess the background and reason for elite patronage. Network analysis is used to identify the character of the patronage connections found. The actual patronage activity is then compared to the formal framework in order to estimate the “reach” of governing parties (Kopecký/ Mair, 2006). The problem of endogeneity in identifying agency in the relation between party and state will be addressed using the literature on party government (Castles/ Wildenmann, 1986; Blondel/ Cotta, 2000), differentiating between the government as authoritative

1 Patronage is understood here as encompassing both, legal and illegal high-level appointments as a means of controlling organizations, while at the same time excluding electoral oriented clientelism and pork-barrel politics as a form of reward to constituencies for political support.

Post-socialist countries in Southeastern Europe provide for a suitable testing ground for patronage as they are often attributed a higher prevalence of patronage than countries in Central Europe (see Kopecký, 2006). According to a preliminary measure of patronage with a proxy like the Corruption Perceptions Index, a country with a higher degree of patronage (Serbia) shall be compared to a country with a lower prevalence of patronage (Croatia) holding other factors constant in order to identify potential causes of difference. The choice of Serbia and Croatia in this respect has a number of advantages: First, these cases are understudied, especially with respect to governance. Secondly, the common Yugoslav experience as well as similar (semi-)authoritarian developments in the nineties provide the conditions for an almost perfect most-similar research design.

**Literature**


