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# ‘Jobs for the Boys’? Patterns of Party Patronage in Post-Communist Europe

PETR KOPECKÝ and MARIA SPIROVA

*This article examines the patterns of party patronage in post-communist Europe and provides an explanation for the varying practices observed by stressing the institutional legacies of the past. Drawing on the distinction between different types of communist regimes, it formulates three hypotheses concerning the extent, underlying motivations and intra-party control of patronage which guide the empirical analysis. It then clarifies the key concepts and discusses the methodology and data used in the article. Further, the three hypotheses are probed with data collected in a large expert survey in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic. In accordance with the hypotheses, these three countries are found to differ in the pervasiveness of patronage within the state institutions, in the reasons why party politicians engage in patronage practices and, to a lesser degree, in the intra-party mechanisms of controlling and distributing patronage. It is argued that this variation can be, at least partially, attributed to the nature of the communist regimes in the countries under study.*

## Introduction

This article examines the patterns of party patronage in post-communist Europe. The misuse of the state for partisan purposes, of which patronage is a key form (van Biezen and Kopecký 2007; Kopecký and Scherlis 2008), has generally been seen as high in the context of post-communist democracies. The institutional legacies of a relatively weak state, coupled with the emergence of resource-poor and power-hungry political parties, have historically provided a fertile ground for the emergence of patronage politics in many areas of the world (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Mainwaring 1999; van de Walle 2003). The post-communist states approximate these historical conditions, making it likely that exploitative patronage politics will emerge. However, the precise nature and scale of patronage practices are also likely to differ significantly among the

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post-communist states. Although communist countries fall broadly into the same category of regimes, they did not share precisely the same institutional characteristics and, at their inception, they were not grafted on the same type of society. Consequently, state–society relations differed markedly among the communist countries. As we will show in this paper, these different institutional legacies do lead to variation in the patterns of party patronage among the post-communist states.

The issue of party patronage in post-communist countries has already been addressed in comparative research, most notably in the work of O'Dwyer (2004, 2006) and Grzymala-Busse (2003, 2007) on the relationship between party competition and state exploitation, and in the work on the politicisation of the civil service (Meyer-Sahling 2004, 2008; Peters and Pierre 2001; Dimitrov *et al.* 2006). We add to this rich literature in three ways. First, we direct attention to institutional legacies in explaining the variation in patronage practices. Second, we provide a precise conceptualisation of patronage – focusing on party appointments within the state sector. This conceptualisation, combined with an original empirical measurement of patronage, allows us to assess the relative scale and level of patronage practices among the post-communist countries. Third, related to the latter, we also provide a wider East–West comparison that allows us to appreciate the relative position of the new post-communist democracies in relation to their longer-established Western European counterparts.

The article proceeds as follows. First, drawing on the distinction between different types of communist regimes, we formulate three hypotheses concerning the extent, underlying motivations and intra-party control of patronage which guide our empirical analysis. We then clarify the key concepts and discuss the methodology and data used in the article. In the third section, we probe our three hypotheses with data collected in a large expert survey in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic.<sup>1</sup> We show that, in accordance with our hypotheses, these three countries differ in the pervasiveness of patronage within the state institutions, in the reasons why party politicians engage in patronage practices and, to a lesser degree, in the intra-party mechanisms of controlling and distributing patronage.

### **How is Party Patronage Likely to Develop in the Post-communist Democracies?**

There is a wealth of literature that examines the origins and consequences of patronage politics in democratic settings (see e.g. Eisenstadt and Lemarchand 1981; Piattoni 2001b; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). One of the most influential theories concerning the origins of patronage and clientelistic politics in modern democracies is Shefter's (1994) theory about the relative timing of bureaucratisation and the emergence of party competition. Whether parties will adopt patronage strategies, according to Shefter, depends on both the organisational origins of the party, and the character of

bureaucracy at the inception of party competition. Externally created parties, i.e. those that first mobilised their voters and supporters without being part of the institutional apparatus of the state, lacked the opportunity to exploit the state for the purposes of party-building and electoral mobilisation. These parties tended to rely on programmatic appeals and mass organisation to overcome barriers for entry into the state arena. In contrast, for the internally created parties, i.e. those with organisational origins within the institutions, patronage was a viable option due to their easy access to the state and its resources. As a result, these parties tended to distribute divisible goods to benefit their activists and supporters instead of, or in addition to, focusing on programmatic appeals and on building extensive electoral organisations. Importantly, however, Shefter also argues that the opportunities for patronage were constrained by the type of bureaucracy that existed at the inception of competitive party politics. If party competition was introduced prior to the consolidation of the state and its bureaucracy, political parties, irrespective of their origin, were inclined to adopt patronage strategies. In contrast, when the state and bureaucracy already enjoyed autonomy at the time of democratisation (i.e. introduction of universal suffrage), they prevented the large scale selective distribution of spoils by party leaders to their supporters.

Shefter's theory was of course designed to shed light on the differences in parties' mobilisation strategies during the first wave of democratisation in Europe; in addition, his understanding of patronage was much broader, say clientelistic (see discussion below), than our focus on politically motivated distribution of state jobs in this article. However, we can apply an extended version of Shefter's theory to the post-communist countries, at least for two reasons. Firstly, following the transition to democracy in the early 1990s, party competition was introduced in those countries in the situation of severe state reconstruction. Although communist states are generally seen to be large and over-endowed, rather than weak and unconsolidated, their administrative structures were severely challenged during the period of post-communist transformation (Cirtautas 1995; Ganev 2001). Indeed, state bureaucracy in particular was, and continues to be, largely discredited, in no small part because of the political nature of many appointments in the past and the close association between the state and the communist parties. Secondly, most political parties in the region originated, and continue to originate even presently, as elite groups within parliaments and governments, rather than as social movements outside the establishment. Post-communist parties are in that sense internally-created parties, whose life has revolved around the institutions of the state from the outset of democratisation (van Biezen 2003; Kopecký 2006; Spirova 2007). This particular combination of state-(re)building on the one hand, and the inside organisational origin of political parties on the other hand, would generally lead us to expect party patronage or, as some other scholars term it, politicisation of the state (Meyer-Sahling 2004) or state exploitation

(Grzymala-Busse 2007), to be very high in post-communist Europe. It would certainly be the logical extension of Shefter's theory about the origins of patronage politics.

This having been said, many scholars have also pointed out that not all communist regimes and their administrative structures were the same during the authoritarian period; the Eastern European communist regimes were also not crafted on the same type of societies and same type of institutional structures that preceded them. In that sense, it is better to speak about a *plurality of communist regimes*, rather than *the communist regime*. Our key argument is that, as a result of these different configurations of communist administrative and institutional arrangements, we are also likely to see diverse patterns of patronage politics in the post-communist period. It would be wrong to expect long-established political routines and administrative practices to have disappeared with the regime at the end of the 1980s, and it would be as mistaken to assume that the post-communist dynamics follow a similar pattern. Much like the transformation of, for example, the institutions of the market economy (see Stark and Bruszt 1998), patronage politics is also likely to be at least partly shaped by particularistic practices under the old regime. This, of course, does not mean that the observed patterns of patronage politics are inevitable or irreversible, nor does it imply that all observed variation is solely attributable to legacies of the past. Rather, in line with the recent neo-institutional literature (see e.g. Olsen 2009), our analysis takes extant institutions of communist regimes as a point of departure that allows us to formulate hypotheses about the likely configuration of patronage politics in the post-communist period.

What are the different types of communist regimes and how are they likely to shape patronage politics? For a coherent and sufficiently general formulation of the crucial differences among the communist regime types, we draw here on the works of Kitschelt *et al.* (1999), and Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong (2002). Kitschelt and his co-authors have linked different variants of communist rule to the patterns of party competition in the post-communist period. Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong have made a connection between institutions inherited from the communist regime and the patterns of state-building processes following the collapse of communist rule. Both groups of scholars share our basic premise that post-communist dynamics are shaped and constrained by unique institutional legacies.

Kitschelt *et al.* (1999: 21–8) make a distinction between three types of communist regimes: patrimonial communism, national-accommodative communism and bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. One of the key dimensions that sets these types of communist regimes apart, and which is of high relevance to our analysis of party patronage, is the operating principle of the state apparatus. The administrative and bureaucratic structures in patrimonial communism are poorly developed. The operation of the state is to a large extent based on individual politicians' patronage networks, small nepotistic cliques and corrupt circles of power holders. In contrast, the

bureaucratic communism is characterised by a high degree of rational-bureaucratic institutionalisation and a great adherence to impersonal rules; it is also marked by the existence of a technocratic administrative machine relatively impervious to the interference of competing interests. National-accommodative communism has elements of both. Like the bureaucratic-authoritarian type, it displays highly developed bureaucratic structures. However, in contrast to it, patronage politics plays a more significant role as a *modus operandi* within the state, principally as the means by which the regime accommodates competing interests from within the ruling party and the dissent coming from outside of it.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in their work Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong (2002: 539–41) point to the distinction between codified and depersonalised, or discretionary and personalised, structures through which post-communist political elites channel their competition. The former are characterised by a great degree of procedural predictability and impersonality, the latter by informal practices and the lack of official codification. According to Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, the distinction between formal and informal rules and procedures constitutes one of the crucial dimensions that help to explain different patterns of state-building in the post-communist period. Importantly, and much in the same vein as Kitschelt *et al.*, they argue that whether the formal or informal mechanisms of elite competition dominate as the *modus operandi* in the post-communist period depends, to a very large extent, on whether a well-developed central state apparatus was inherited and available at the point of communist collapse.

We build on these distinctions concerning the different institutional legacies of communism to shed light on the practices of patronage in post-communist Europe. There are at least three direct implications of extant institutional settings of the post-communist period for the type of patronage politics that we should observe. The first one concerns the relative scope and range of patronage politics. Democracies emerging from the patrimonial communist types are likely to display the highest levels of patronage. The reason is that extensive patronage networks already exist at the outset of democratisation; in addition, poorly developed administrative structures inherited from patrimonial communism will lack autonomy to resist colonisation by such new office-holders. In contrast, democracies emerging from the bureaucratic-authoritarian type are likely to display the lowest levels of patronage. This is so because the distinction between the ruling party and the technical state apparatus was already stronger under communism and hence it is likely that the state bureaucracy will enjoy a greater degree of autonomy and power to resist colonisation by political actors after the transition. Democracies emerging from the national-accommodative communist types should show levels of patronage substantially higher than these of the previously bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, but still lower than those of the ex-patrimonial ones. On the one hand, the state will be sufficiently well-developed to contain large islands of

institutional autonomy and technocratic bureaucracy. On the other hand, because of the inherited culture of ‘accommodative patronage’, these well-developed governance structures will be subject to frequent interference from politicians keen to use the state and its institutions for political purposes. These arguments yield the following hypothesis:

*H1: The level of patronage practices will be highest in post-communist democracies emerging from patrimonial communism, lower in the previously national-accommodative regimes, and lowest in the former bureaucratic-authoritarian ones.*

The second implication concerns the motivations for patronage politics. Since, as we shall see below, our principal empirical concern with patronage in this article is the distribution of state jobs, the question here is why do (party) politicians engage in appointments within the state apparatus. In general, one can draw a distinction between two different motivations: a desire to control state institutions, by appointing like-minded individuals to them, usually in order to ensure formulation and implementation of policies compatible with politicians’ aims; and a desire to reward party or politicians’ supporters, activists or even friends and family (i.e. nepotism) (Kopecký and Scherlis 2008). Where official channels and formal power structures dominate decision-making within the state, as in the bureaucratic-authoritarian communist type, it is likely that patronage politics will primarily be motivated by the desire to control state institutions in the post-communist period as well. The state apparatus is also quite large in this type, which means that party politicians will face a need to exert control over a large set of institutions. In contrast, traditional spoils politics – use of the state institutions for rewards of all kinds – is likely to be the chief motivation for patronage politics within the highly informal decision-making structures characterising democracies emerging from patrimonial communism.

Democracies emerging from national-accommodative communism to some extent follow the logic applicable to the bureaucratic-authoritarian type. However, as indicated above, while national-accommodative communism is also marked by the existence of technocratic and professional administrative elites, the separation between the state apparatus and the ruling elite is frequently breached in order to satisfy the needs of competing political actors. Therefore, cognitively and culturally, patronage politics will be seen as more acceptable and legitimate in those democracies than in democracies emerging from bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. As a result, a mix of control and reward is likely to be the chief motivating factor for patronage politics in governance structures of democracies emerging from national-accommodative communism. We should expect that:

*H2: Patronage politics in post-communist democracies emerging from patrimonial communism will be driven by a desire to reward party*



*supporters, that in former bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes by a desire to control the state institutions, and that in former national-accommodative regimes by a mixture of both.*

The third implication of different institutional legacies concerns the intra-party mechanisms of party patronage. In general, the term party patronage is fraught with difficulties because in practice it is hard to distinguish whether a patronage exchange is made by the party, or by an individual politician. Indeed, given our concern with state jobs in this article, it is clear that the vast majority of appointments within modern states are officially done by individual politicians (the ministers) and, in that sense at least, party patronage rarely exists. The key question therefore becomes to what extent is the party involved when the minister makes the appointment; i.e. is it the party that is the principal and the minister that is the agent or the other way around? In some cases, the party possesses such strong internal mechanisms of co-ordination and control that politicians who are in office in the name of the party merely appoint whoever the central office proposes. In other cases, individual politicians appoint from within their own networks of candidates with parties being basically empty organisational shells, a pattern eloquently analysed in a recent work on Argentina (Scherlis 2010).

It is likely that such highly personalised patterns of patronage politics within party organisations will dominate in countries emerging from patrimonial communism. In contrast, bureaucratic communist types will have already provided a wealth of experience with operation in rigid party organisations, conduct of regularised party congresses and organisation of other such events, which is likely to result in the greater propensity for building stronger party organisations that will constrain the freedom of individual politicians in the post-communist period. The national-accommodative type of communism is unlikely to differ very much from the bureaucratic communist type in this respect. Therefore, we should expect a difference between democracies emerging from patrimonial communism on the one hand, and democracies emerging from both the bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative type of communism on the other hand. Therefore:

*H3: In post-communist democracies emerging from patrimonial communism, the party is likely to play a minor role in controlling patronage in comparison to that of individual politicians. The reverse is expected in democracies emerging from the bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative types of communism.*

As a final caveat to these empirical expectations, it is important to point out again that our claim is not that party patronage (or politicisation of the state apparatus) is going to be altogether absent in post-communist democracies emerging from the bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. Just like Kitschelt



*et al.*, and Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, we are well aware of the fact that communist states and bureaucracies were all to some degree subjected to the ruling parties' political control; in addition, even the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes displayed a mix of formal and informal rules, including some patronage and nepotistic networks, for example the grey economy. Indeed, *pace* Shefter, we do expect post-communist countries in general to belong to a middle zone of patronage politics and display levels of state politicisation higher than the consolidated states and bureaucracies in Western Europe. This is in fact the first general comparison which we are going to make in the subsequent empirical part of this paper. But we start with a note on method, data and concepts.

### **Method, Data and Concepts**

In order to probe our theoretical expectations, we use a comparative analysis of three post-communist countries – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Bulgaria is an example of a post-communist democracy emerging from the patrimonial communist regime while the Czech Republic is a case of bureaucratic-authoritarian communist legacy (see Kitschelt *et al.* 1999). Hungary, together with for example Poland, is often seen as classic case of national-accommodative communist regime.<sup>3</sup> The three cases are also useful because they share similarities with one another, mainly institutional variables that might influence party patronage. These include the type of executive–legislative relations (all are parliamentary system of government), the electoral system (Bulgaria and the Czech Republic both use PR electoral systems with open lists; Hungary uses a mixed system whereby half of the parliaments is elected by PR with open lists and half in single-member districts), and the format of their party system (all are multi-party systems with moderate fragmentation).

At the time of research (2006–08), all three countries were governed by coalition cabinets. In Bulgaria, an oversized majority coalition of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), National Movement Simeon the Second (NDSV) and the Movement for Rights and Freedom (DPS) had been in power since 2005. In the Czech Republic, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), the Christian Democratic Union – the People's Party (KDU–ČSL), and the Greens (SZ) formed a narrow majority coalition in early 2007, while in Hungary, the Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Union of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) had been in power since 2006.<sup>4</sup> These governments represent major parties in the political systems in the three countries; none of them represent a break with the past (such as, for example, the 2001–05 cabinet in Bulgaria). In addition, our data indicate that there were no major changes in the practice of patronage over the last decade or so, thus giving us more confidence in arguing that the practices we observe during the study period represent the general trends in the countries.

The data that we use to test our hypotheses come from an expert survey conducted by country teams in 18 old and new democracies.<sup>5</sup> Here we use detailed data for Bulgaria, Hungary and Czech Republic, and aggregate comparative data for them and 12 other European democracies.<sup>6</sup> Experts were chosen from within four major groups: academia, the non-governmental sector, media and the civil service, using the expertise of the researchers complemented in some cases by a limited use of the snowball technique.<sup>7</sup> The potential bias inherent in using data from a small group of experts was prevented in several ways. First, we stressed the variety in the background of the experts and on their expertise and experience in the policy area. Furthermore, surveys were conducted face-to-face by country teams who invested about two months in the fieldwork for each country and were themselves familiar with the formal regulation of patronage. Last, the interviews had both open- and closed-ended questions and allowed for detailed discussion of the issues investigated in addition to the categorical assessment.

Our respondents were chosen as experts knowledgeable about appointments to institutions in nine different policy areas (judiciary, economy, finance, foreign affairs, welfare, media, military and police, culture and education, and regional/local government). To obtain as accurate and detailed information about patronage practices as possible, each of those nine different policy areas were also divided into three types of institutions: ministries; NDACs – non-departmental agencies and commissions; and executing institutions – policy delivering and commercial institutions, such as, for example, state-owned enterprises (economy), hospitals (welfare) or foreign embassies (foreign affairs). The experts responded to a uniform questionnaire in face-to-face interviews, with five closed-ended and six open-ended questions probing into the pervasiveness, persistence and several other aspects of the party patronage practices within their policy area of expertise.

One important conceptual caveat concerns the definition of patronage. In contrast to most studies of particularistic exchanges and state exploitation, we use a relatively narrow but also more precise concept of party patronage, limiting the phenomenon to its most widespread form: appointments (Kopecký *et al.* 2012; Müller 2006; Sorauf 1959; Wilson 1973). Unlike many other studies in the field of patronage politics, which include various personal rewards and gifts, allocation of public service projects, contracts or licences, pork-barrel legislation etc. as the forms of patronage, this article is only concerned with the ability of political parties to appoint their own members and other individuals to positions in the public and semi public sector and the practical exercise of this ability. In other words, our major empirical concern is to establish how far political parties in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Hungary control the allocation of jobs and other important public positions.

We therefore see patronage as related but conceptually and empirically distinct from both clientelism (i.e. exchange of benefits in order to secure

votes) and from corruption (i.e. illegal exchange of money for favourable public decisions).<sup>8</sup> Patronage appointments are not inherently clientelistic, since jobs can be handed out in order to control policy formulation and implementation, and not just to buy votes or reward organisational loyalty, the point we already raised in the formulation of our second hypothesis. Patronage appointments are not inherently corrupt because many jobs at the gift of party politicians are legally sanctioned. This of course does not mean that jobs cannot be used in a clientelistic way, for example as a way of appeasing and accommodating various competing interests within the state. Similarly, obtaining a high-profile job in state administration can merely be the first step for illegal personal enrichment of party politicians or their supporters; controlling key state positions, for example in the police apparatus, can also be used by parties to prevent criminal investigations into their questionable funding. In these cases, patronage becomes perilously close to corruption. In that sense, though distinct, patronage is a necessary condition for both clientelism and corruption. Without the ability to control the state via appointments, parties would not be in the position to provide targeted selective benefits to their constituencies, or have something to offer in order to secure illicit party funding.

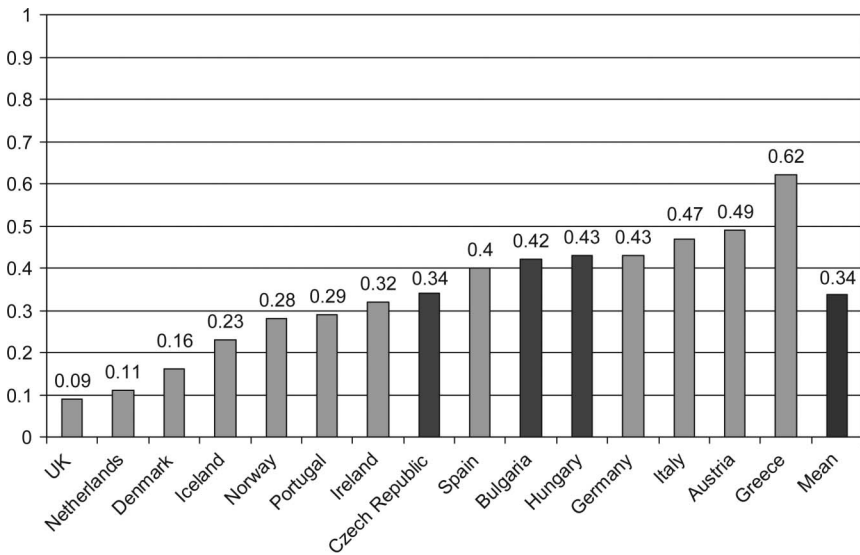
## **Empirical Analysis**

### *Patronage in the Post-communist World*

As indicated above, we first try to locate the post-communist countries within the larger pool of European democracies. We specifically investigate whether the level of patronage in the post-communist countries is higher than in Western Europe. We present some aggregate comparative data for the level of patronage practices in our 15 European democracies (Figure 1). For this purpose we report the values of the Index of Patronage, which we have composed based on the survey answers. It is a standardised score with a value of 1 indicating that patronage practices approximate a full overlap of party and the state and a value of 0 indicating no party politicisation of the state. However, in order to interpret the actual values of the index reported in the figure, it might be useful to clarify that a value of around 0.65 should be interpreted to mean that parties appoint in most institutions at all levels of the administration, a value of around 0.4 that parties appoint in most institutions at top and middle level, and a value of 0.1 that parties appoint in a limited number of institutions at only the top level. In other words, index values of around 0.4 represent quite pervasive patronage practices.

In our sample of countries, the United Kingdom displayed the lowest level of patronage with an index of 0.09 and Greece leads with a score of 0.62. The three post-communist countries included in the sample appear to be grouped in the higher end and are at or above the mean for the group.

FIGURE 1  
INDEX OF PATRONAGE, EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES



However, they are also not displaying the highest level of patronage practices, which seem to be located in Greece, Austria and Italy, long considered traditional patronage countries in Europe (Müller 2007). Interestingly, however, the more established democracies in Europe also do not display a uniform trend in the level of patronage. While party appointments in the state institutions seem to be quite low in the Northern European countries such as the UK and the Netherlands, they seem to pick up substantially as we move south. This makes us question the standard of non-politicised bureaucracy that scholars often attribute to the ‘established democracies in Western Europe’. Our analysis suggests that this benchmark for ‘normality’ is derived from observing state structures in Northern European countries which, in the face of the data, may be more an exception than a rule in the general European context.

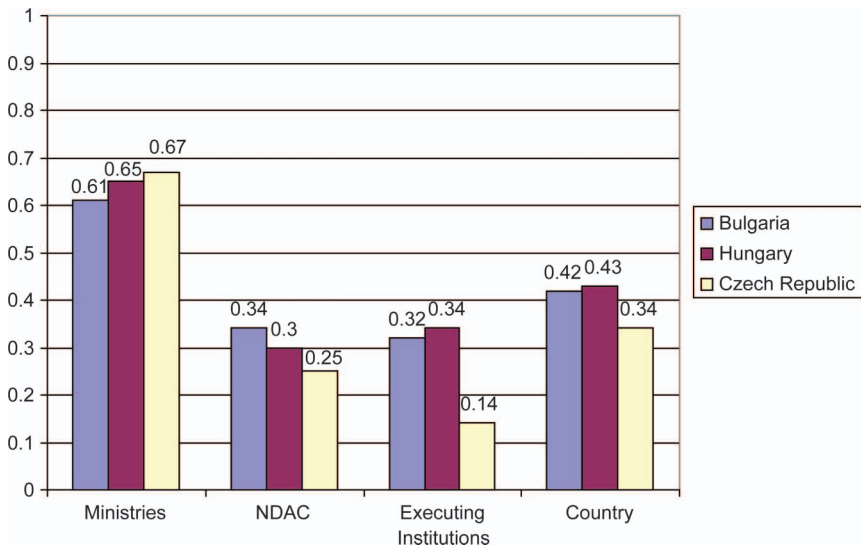
#### *Levels of Patronage in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic*

Focusing on the three post-communist countries, we expect to find the level of patronage practices in Bulgaria higher than those in the Czech Republic, and also higher than those in Hungary, in line with our Hypothesis 1. Figure 2 presents the comparative trends in the three countries, but the data are disaggregated to present the trends along the three institutional types that we have specified: ministries, non-departmental agencies and commissions (NDACs) and executing institutions (EIs).

The index of patronage for the three countries displays more extensive patronage practices in Bulgaria and Hungary than in the Czech Republic, offering support for our hypothesis that the legacy of bureaucratic authoritarianism will lead to the most constraints on patronage practices. The value of the index is 0.42 for Bulgaria, indicating a medium to high level of patronage, while the one for the Czech Republic at 0.34 points to weak to medium patronage practices. The value of the index for Hungary is 0.43, suggesting that patronage is at least as pervasive in Hungary’s political system as it is in Bulgaria, a finding that is not quite in line with our expectations.

The overall value of the index, however, hides some finer differences between the practices of patronage in the three countries which we will examine below. If we look at the disaggregated data, several distinctions emerge. First, while the extent of patronage appears very much the same in the core civil service in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic, this changes as we move away from the ministerial bureaucracy. The index of patronage in the ministries is consistently high for all three countries – 0.61, 0.65 and 0.67, respectively. It indicates that in all three countries party appointments follow relatively similar logic. Parties appoint to positions that are legally political, such as ministers, deputy ministers and their political cabinets, and regularly also reach into the top levels of the civil service that should not be political to replace people in positions such as

FIGURE 2  
BULGARIA, HUNGARY AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC: INDEX OF PATRONAGE,  
BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE AND OVERALL



general secretaries of the ministries. In all three countries, parties are also very likely to reach into the middle levels of the civil service and replace the heads of ministerial sections/departments (although the practice might vary from one ministry to another). In exceptional cases lower civil service positions such as experts and administrative personnel would also become subjects of patronage appointments. This common trend we take as an illustration of the shared tendency to engage in patronage appointments in the post-communist world.

The values of the index for the other two institutional types reveal more divergent practices and it is here that we, in fact, see the legacies of the differing logics of the previous regimes. For all three countries, patronage is more limited in the NDACs than for the core ministerial bureaucracy. However, in Bulgaria the practice is still more common, as the index of patronage (0.34) illustrates, substantially higher than that in the Czech Republic (0.25), and slightly higher than in Hungary (0.30). What this implies is that in the agencies, Bulgarian parties replace the top level management consistently across the majority of these organisations, while in the Czech Republic this practice is more irregular. Just as in ministries, the index value for the practice in the Hungarian agencies is between the values for the other two countries.

The difference among the levels of patronage practices in the executing institutions in the three countries is even more substantial; indeed it is here that we see a clear difference between Bulgaria and Hungary on the one hand, and the Czech Republic on the other. In the former two countries, patronage remains at moderate levels (at 0.32–0.34) while in the Czech Republic it reaches minimal levels (0.14). The higher scores for both Bulgaria and Hungary seem to indicate that parties in these two countries uniformly appoint at the top levels of the executing institutions – to positions such as managers of state-owned companies or directors of schools. However, in both cases, a closer examination of the data reveals that the overall score is driven by the extremely high level of patronage practices in the executing institutions of several of the policy areas – the media and economy in Hungary and foreign service in Bulgaria – while in others, patronage is non-existent at any level (culture and education in Hungary and the judiciary in both countries) (Meyer-Sahling and Jager 2012).

This leads us to the second specific distinction in the practices of patronage in the Czech Republic, on the one hand, and Bulgaria and Hungary, on the other: variation among policy areas. In the Czech Republic, the policy area influences the extent of patronage much less than it does in Bulgaria and in Hungary. The index (not reported here because of space limitations) shows very small variation among the different areas in the Czech Republic – and in the ministerial bureaucracy we actually observe a very consistent pattern (see Kopecký 2012 for more details). In other words, the practice of patronage in the culture and education area, for example, is very similar to that in the economy. In Bulgaria, we observe

higher variation along substantive lines, but most of the policy areas still fall within moderate to high levels of patronage. In contrast, in Hungary we can clearly see policy areas that are ‘partially insulated’ from patronage and areas that can be called ‘captured’ by the parties (Meyer-Sahling and Jager 2012; see also Meyer-Sahling 2008). What this suggests, we believe, is that parties in Bulgaria and Hungary are in general much more willing to engage in patronage practices than in the Czech Republic, and that it is only the particular constraints in some policy areas that prevent higher actual levels of patronage appointments.

For example, the ministries that appear to be least prone to suffer from party sweeps after every election in Bulgaria are the Ministry of Finance and the Ministries of Defence and Internal Affairs. There, our evidence suggests, appointments happen exclusively at the top level. In the case of the Ministry of Finance, parties have been constrained in their attempt to appoint people to positions in them by two related factors. One is the centrality of financial reforms in the country and the risks involved in failing at them. Parties have been unwilling to be exclusively associated with control of the financial sector and have sought to share this with others. In fact, in the 2005–09 Bulgarian government, the finance minister himself was not a party appointment, but a choice of the three coalition partners. Second, since the late 1990s, as a result of the loans extended to the country, the Bulgarian financial sector has been under the close supervision of the International Monetary Fund, which has scrutinised all major decisions taken and policies implemented. As a result, even if parties displayed a desire to replace personnel beyond the legally sanctioned positions, they have had to account for these to this external body, making sweeping party patronage virtually impossible.

In contrast, the ministries that are the most patronage-ridden are those of Culture and Education. There, party influence often reaches to the bottom levels to replace technical and service personnel such as secretaries, drivers and cleaners. The explanation for this is, of course, partially the flip side of the one above. These ministries are of little interests to any actors outside Bulgaria – the European Union, for example, has little regulation on social policy or culture policy – and, as a consequence, parties are left free to fill these ministries with their own appointees. Even domestically, they are not of such high policy relevance, making domestic scrutiny of party patronage within them less likely.

In Hungary, the difference in the level of patronage practices also seems to depend on the institutional constraints in each policy area. For example, the somewhat limited patronage practices in the agencies of the finance and economy sector are arguably attributable to high exposure to the private sector and the importance of the international financial institutions (Meyer-Sahling and Jager 2012). In contrast, the media sector is highly subject to political party appointments because of both party interests and unregulated practices, leading to few institutional constraints on party appointments.



Even though we do not observe anything like this great variation in the Czech Republic, we still have reasons to believe that some policy areas are considered ‘islands of excellence’ and are thus freer of patronage practices. Just as in Bulgaria and Hungary, the financial sector is probably the best example here. In all three types of institutions of the finance sector, we observe a very limited scope of patronage appointments largely due the high professional demands on the job. The finance ministry has more personnel continuity than any other ministries; in fact the Finance Minister in Fischer’s caretaker cabinet (2009–10) was one of the longest-serving, non-political deputy ministers in the country. Further, in only one of the financial NDACs – the now defunct Czech Consolidation Agency – were appointments political. Finally, in the absence of state banks, the Czech National Bank is the only place where political parties could try to influence appointments, especially appointments of the governors. However, these appointments are solely the responsibility of the Czech President.

Overall, the data on the scope and depth of patronage appointments in Bulgaria, Hungary and the Czech Republic offer support for our hypothesis and its expectation of more extensive patronage in the Bulgarian political system and its legacy of paternalistic communist regime than in the Czech case where the bureaucracy has been seen as more powerful prior to 1989. Hungary, somewhat against our expectations, displays extent and logic of patronage practices very similar to those of Bulgaria. Party appointments seem to be very consistent in the ministries in the three countries – they reach far and deep into the core ministerial bureaucracy. As we move away from the ministries – where in reality party power is concentrated – party appointments decrease both in terms of the number of institutions where they are made and in terms of the depth at which they are made. Patronage becomes both narrower and shallower as we move into the regulatory and advisory institutions in all three countries, and, in the Czech Republic, even more so as we move into the executing institutions. In Bulgaria and Hungary, the only substantial difference is between the ministries and the rest of our institutional types. Thus, parties in these two countries seem to reach further and deeper into the structures of the non-ministerial state institutions than do their Czech counterparts (Meyer-Sahling and Jager 2012). This shared trend is particularly visible in policy areas without external political constraints.

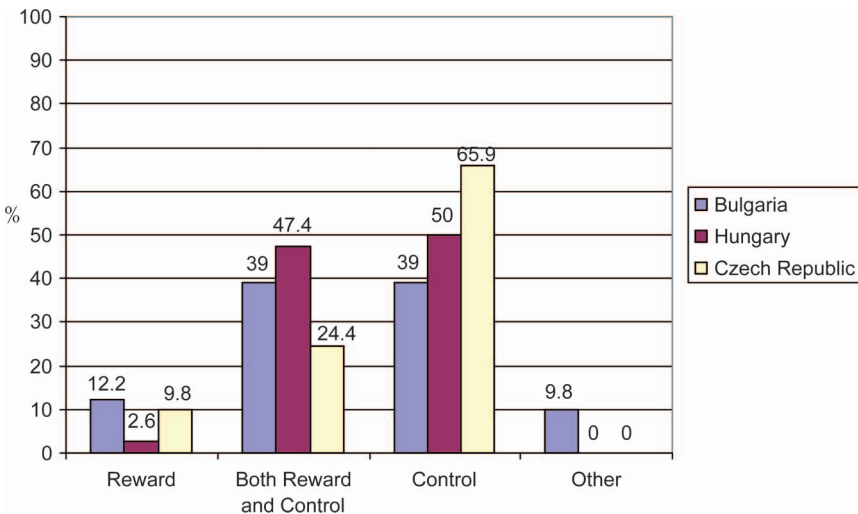
### *The Motivations of Patronage*

Our second hypothesis is related to the motivations behind the practice of patronage in the two countries. Consistent with our argument stressing legacies of the past, we expect to find reward as a more dominant motivation of party appointments in Bulgaria, control as the more prevalent one in the Czech Republic, and Hungary displaying a mixture of both. To test this hypothesis, we report simpler statistics based on our expert survey. Our

respondents were asked to identify the dominant motivation of patronage appointments by choosing among four options, 'reward', 'control', 'both' or 'other' and explaining their choice. Figure 3 reports the percentage of respondents that gave each answer in the three countries.

The data suggest that patronage in the Czech Republic is mostly motivated by a desire to 'control' the state institutions. Over 65 per cent of our respondents identify it as the dominant motivation in the Czech Republic. Less than 10 per cent think rewarding members and activists drives the practice of patronage, while about a quarter of the respondents believe both rewards and control are reasons behind the parties' appointments. The situation is different in Bulgaria, where the motivations behind patronage appointments include, clearly, both the desire to reward loyal members and activists and to control the state institutions. Overall, 39 per cent of our respondents pointed to 'control' as the single dominant motivation in Bulgaria, while the same proportion thought parties appointed both to reward and control, and about 12 per cent attributed the desire to appoint exclusively to rewarding members. About 8 per cent saw a different motivation as guiding parties in appointing people. In Hungary, reward by itself plays an insignificant role (only 2.6 per cent of our respondents chose it as a single answer), but control is also not the single most important driving motivation. Thus, while patronage pursued only for the sake of reward is unusual, rewarding activists with high-level jobs in certain policy and institutional loci is also a reality.

FIGURE 3  
THE MOTIVATIONS OF PATRONAGE, BULGARIA, HUNGARY  
AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC (%)



This overall picture supports our second hypothesis, but it is also interesting to investigate what precisely control and reward means in the three settings. The trends in these interpretations also reveal important differences between the countries. While a lot of the patronage that happens in the Bulgarian and Czech state institutions is motivated by a desire to control them, the precise interpretation of what control entails is not as clear-cut. There are at least three motivations discernible under the broad label of control: control of policy-making process, control of the political content/media coverage and control of corruption.

Parties like to have people that they can trust in positions of authority in the state institutions so that they can rely on them to carry out the policies formulated by the government. This is the case in all three countries. In Bulgaria, this was particularly strong during the late 1990s, when the reformist government of 1997–2001 was faced with the need to carry out sweeping reforms in most of the policy areas of the state. For these purposes, they also ‘need[ed] their own people’. Patronage thus became part of the democratisation reform in the country. While the incumbent governments in the three countries were not faced with such major reforms during 2006–08, we find that the need to situate people in the top positions of the state administration in order to ensure quick and effective policy implementation was a common motivation behind the patronage appointments in all three countries.

In addition, parties often want to control the direct outputs of the state sector. What is being taught in the high schools in the country, for example, is of interest to the political parties because it has a direct impact on the political dynamics, one of our Bulgarian interviewees argued. Similarly, the outputs of the state-owned media could be of great consequence for the parties at election times. While this trend might be somewhat stronger in Bulgaria and Hungary, having loyal people in the leadership and controlling agencies of national television and radio is seen as a political benefit by the parties in all three countries.

Finally, some patronage appointments in various higher level positions are openly linked to controlling corrupt practices. This seems to be more common in Bulgaria and in Hungary than in the Czech Republic. For example, membership in the Drug Board, or the commission that distributes radio frequencies in Bulgaria, is seen as a lucrative position because it allows control of the access and thus opens the way to corrupt schemes of various kinds. Similarly, in Hungary, the allocation of licences, permits, contracts and subsidies in all sectors, but particularly in the media and culture, is carried out by political appointees, opening the door to risk of corruption in the private sector (Meyer-Sahling and Jager 2012). Although more limited, this practice is also present in the Czech Republic. There, our respondents suggest, parties have established questionable links to institutions such as the consolidation agency and the energy regulators in order to solicit party funding, as well as to the police secret services and anti-corruption units which control the penalisation of illegal activities.

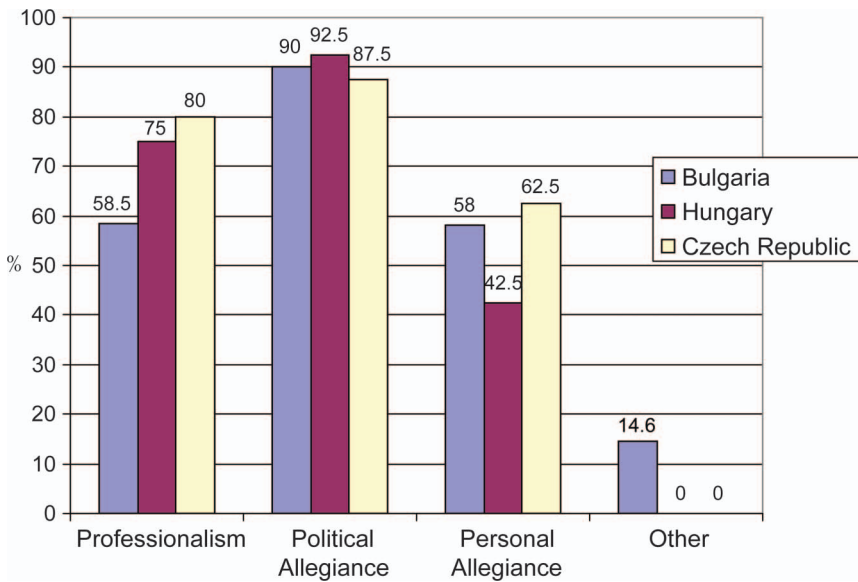
In contrast to the numerous interpretations of the control function of patronage, the reward one is relatively clear: individuals want positions in the state institutions because they guarantee money and/or prestige and parties are willing to reward their party members and activists by providing them with these positions. This process is rare in the Czech Republic and isolated in Hungary, but common in Bulgaria; there parties often face a strong demand for patronage from their members, especially in the areas outside the capital where incomes are substantially lower. This was particularly so for the Bulgarian Socialist Party (one of the incumbent parties in the 2006–07 period) for several reasons. To begin with, the party inherited a strong tradition of patronage from the communist times. In addition, when the Socialists came to power in 2005, they had been in opposition for about eight years, which further whetted their appetite for patronage appointments. Finally, as they tend to appeal more to the lower income, rural electorate, their supporters and members also tend to be more likely to desire a position in the regional administration or other state institutions.

However, this is not to say that low-level positions are the only ones given out as rewards. In fact, in all three countries some high-level ones – such as board membership in the state-owned companies, certain ambassadorships and other positions in the Foreign Service – are also subject to party appointments. In these cases, naturally, the appointees are usually higher ranking party leaders rather than rank and file members. In both cases, however, party loyalists are being rewarded for their past services with certain – higher or lower paying, or simply prestigious – jobs.

Overall, the data on the motivations of patronage in the three countries support our expectations of more reward-driven patronage in Bulgaria, more control-dominated patronage in the Czech Republic, and mixed in Hungary. This trend transpires when we look at our aggregate indicators but is particularly solidified when we look at the different interpretations of the control and reward function in the three political systems. We finally supplement this argument by presenting some data on the nature of the actual people who get appointed to patronage positions. In our survey, we asked the respondents to identify why certain people are chosen to be party appointees by listing all that apply of three possible reasons: professionalism, political allegiance or individual allegiance, or provide an alternative one. We expect to find that if the motivation to control prevails in the patronage practice in the country, then professional qualifications should be at least as important as ‘appointee characteristics’ as political links, let alone personal links. Figure 4 presents the percentage of respondents giving each of the answers.

The data support our expectations: while the political allegiance as a required characteristic for patronage appointees is similar in all three countries, professionalism is clearly more so in the Czech Republic and Hungary than in Bulgaria; 80 per cent of our Czech respondents and 75 per

FIGURE 4  
 QUALIFICATIONS OF APPOINTEES, BULGARIA, HUNGARY  
 AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC (%)



cent of our Hungarian respondents listed it as a necessary condition to be appointed, while less than 60 per cent did so in Bulgaria.

This complements the picture of the most reward-oriented pattern of patronage appointments in Bulgaria, less so in Hungary and least so and most control-oriented in the Czech Republic, and provides further support for our second hypothesis. It appears that the legacy of patrimonial communism is associated with higher likelihood of parties to distribute patronage as a reward, while the tradition of bureaucratic autonomy in the Czech Republic has been reflected in a more policy-oriented patronage. In this regard, our expectations regarding the legacy of Hungary's national accommodative regime are also confirmed.

#### *The Party Mechanics of Patronage Appointments*

Our last hypothesis suggested that in countries emerging from patrimonial communism such as Bulgaria individual politicians rather than parties as organised entities are more likely to play the leading role in controlling patronage, while the reverse is expected in the countries of the other two types. To investigate this hypothesis, we use the open-ended question that asked our respondents to identify the mechanisms through which parties choose people to be appointed to the state positions. The data are only analysed qualitatively.

There seems to be no – or at least only indirect evidence – to support this final hypothesis. The patterns of patronage appointments are not more personalised in Bulgaria compared to the Czech Republic or Hungary. In fact, it seems that politicians in executive positions (such as ministers) are the most important centres of appointing power in all three countries. Against this common background, however, we do observe some differences on two main features: the presence (or lack of) of an established mechanism for keeping track and recruiting appointees within the party; and the extent to which the party in public office is free from pressures from the party in central office or the party on the ground when making the patronage appointments. The variation that we observe, however, seems to be driven more by party-level factors such as organisational origins and evolution, rather than by system-level factors such as the legacy of the previous regime.

The variation that we do observe seems to be related to the organisational nature of the political parties. Some parties display well coordinated mechanisms for patronage appointments. These are either the older parties which have longer and uninterrupted histories, clear constituencies and established structures, such as the BSP and the KDU-ČSL in the Czech Republic, or parties that have evolved organisationally since 1990s and for which building these mechanisms has become part of organisational maturity. The latter include the DPS in Bulgaria, FIDESZ (Hungarian Civic Union) in Hungary and the ODS and the Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) in the Czech Republic. FIDESZ, for example, was able to carry out much better coordinated personnel appointments once it had developed the networks and built its organisation by the early 2000s (Meyer-Sahling 2008: 41). In contrast, newer parties such as the NDSV in Bulgaria, or less cohesive parties such as the SZDSZ in Hungary, the Bulgarian Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) and the SZ in the Czech Republic do not have these mechanisms. In these parties patronage appointments are made in an ad hoc manner and based almost exclusively on the individual preferences of the leaders.

On the second dimension, for some parties patronage is also used as a link with the constituency, which necessitates higher coordination and control of this process by the party as an organisation. In parties such as the BSP in Bulgaria and the KDU-ČSL in the Czech Republic, the party on the ground (and in central office) plays much greater and more autonomous role in the patronage process. In these parties, appointments are sometimes made under the pressure of various regional or factional organisational units. While Meyer-Sahling (2008: 39–40) describes similar processes in the Hungarian MDF in the early to mid 1990s, none of the Hungarian parties examined displayed these features. Instead, all of the Hungarian parties and most of the parties that we studied in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic allow the party in public office to be the dominant actor in making the patronage appointments.

While the patterns that we observe do not support our expectation of a country-level correspondence between the type of communist regime and the

nature of intra-party mechanics of patronage, it could be argued that the different organisational logics of the individual parties under study do, in fact, reflect, among other things, the legacy of the previous regime. Parties forming in the immediate legacy of the bureaucratic communism are more likely to channel political activity via formal procedures and build stronger organisations, while parties emerging in the context of the patrimonial regimes are more likely to maintain a particularistic approach to the political process.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this article was to examine the patterns of party patronage, understood as party appointments within the state institutions, in post-communist Europe and to look for the influence of the legacy of the communist regimes on these contemporary patterns. Our evidence provided support for our starting assumption and the first two hypotheses that we formulated at the outset of the article, but only indirect support for our third one. The post-communist countries included in a sample of 15 European democracies for which we present data do cluster in the higher-patronage end of the group, although they do not display the highest levels of patronage in the sample. Further, patronage is more extensive in Bulgaria, an example of a country that has emerged from patrimonial communism, than in the Czech Republic, which was bureaucratic-authoritarian; the differences become especially telling once we disaggregate the data and look at practices of patronage in different types of institutions and policy areas. Similarly, the data support our expectation that patronage will be used more for the purposes of controlling the policy-making and implementation process than for rewarding party loyalists in the Czech Republic while the reverse will be true in Bulgaria. This finding was further corroborated by the detailed interpretation of these motivations provided by our individual answers, and data on the individual characteristics of the party appointees.

However, we found no evidence to argue that the party, as opposed to individual politicians, will play a more prominent role in intra-party mechanisms of patronage in democracies emerging from bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. Instead, patterns that we observed seem to be driven by party-related factors (i.e. organisational longevity) rather than the regime-related factors. Even so, there might be an indirect effect of regime legacies on organisational characteristics of parties, and hence also on patterns of patronage. Importantly, we found only weak support for placing democracies with a national-accommodative type of *ancien régime* between the other two post-communist types: Hungary, an example of a country that has emerged from national-accommodative communism, displays patterns of patronage that are quite similar to Bulgaria, especially in terms of the scope and range of party appointments within the state. Thus, it could be



that the particularly “accommodative” features of the “goulash communism” have, in fact, bred stronger preconditions for high level of state politicisation than the original typology had suggested.

Crucially, however, the issue might not be the relatively high level of Hungarian patronage, but rather a relatively low level of Bulgarian politicisation of the state. As suggested in our analysis, patronage might have been at least partly constrained by externally imposed conditions for state reforms in Bulgaria. All Eastern European countries that we analysed in this article have of course been subjected to external conditionality, most notably from the European Union during the accession negotiations (e.g. Dimitrova 2002, 2010; Meyer-Sahling 2004). However, as the front-runners of reform at the time of EU accession, the Czech Republic and Hungary were in a position to close their eyes to some of the EU demands. Not so Bulgaria, the late reformer and second-wave EU candidate among the post-communist states. The country was not only under strong pressure from the EU to reform its state and economy, but it had also been under financial supervision by the IMF for 10 years by the time of our research. Shefter (1994) argued that institutional reforms preventing parties from raiding the state for patronage purposes get implemented if a strong coalition for bureaucratic autonomy emerges among the domestic political actors. Our explanation for patronage patterns stressing institutional legacies would suggest that such a coalition is unlikely to emerge in post-communist Bulgaria. However, precisely because contemporary democratising countries tend to be under far stronger external conditionality than new democracies analysed by Shefter (see e.g. Levitsky and Way 2005), international organisations should be seen as potentially as powerful source of state reforms as any domestic actor.

## Notes

1. We are grateful to Jan-Hinrik Meyer-Sahling and Krisztina Jäger for making the data on Hungary available to us prior to its publication.
2. Interestingly, Kitschelt and his co-authors also argue that the extent to which any of these principles of the state develops under communism is to a large extent a reflection of patterns of state formation and economic modernisation prior to the advent of communism.
3. There are numerous country-specific accounts concerning the nature and legacies of the communist regimes that will support classification of our cases. On Bulgaria, see e.g. Kitschelt *et al.* (1995), Ganev (2001) and Georgiev (2008). On the Czech Republic see e.g. Williams (1997) and Innes (2001); good general as well as Hungarian assessment can be found in Kornai (1992).
4. While the MSZP–SZDSZ government was replaced by a minority MSZP government in May 2008, the research reflects the practices of the coalition government.
5. The method is described in detail in Kopecký *et al.* (2008) and Kopecký *et al.* (2012).
6. The expert surveys were conducted during 2006–09. In Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, the data were collected in 2006–07 and included over 80 respondents; in Hungary, the survey was conducted in 2008 and included 40 respondents (see Meyer-Sahling and Jäger 2012).

7. The guiding idea for selecting the pool of experts was to avoid, as much as possible, respondents who were either active politicians or themselves political appointees.
8. For a more detailed discussion on the differences between patronage, clientelism and corruption see Piattoni (2001a) and Kopecný and Scherlis (2008).

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