

Capturing the State: Party Patronage in Hungary

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Introduction

Party patronage in Hungary has received a considerable amount of attention in debates in both comparative politics and comparative public administration. There is a general agreement that party patronage exists in Hungary but it is contested how important it is and how Hungary compares to other countries, in particular, in Central and Eastern Europe. Comparative politics research has examined party patronage in the context of studies of party formation and party-state relations in Central and Eastern Europe. Both Grzymala-Busse (2007) and O'Dwyer (2006) classify Hungary as a case of low patronage.¹ By contrast, comparative public administration research has stressed that the position of Hungary in comparison to other post-communist countries has changed over time. Initially, Hungary was classified as a frontrunner in the area of administrative reform, in particular, thanks to the passage of the 1992 Civil Service Act, which created conditions for the de-party-ization of the state after the exit from communism (Meyer-Sahling 2001, Dimitrova 2005). More recent research on the state of the civil service in Hungary after EU accession has been more sceptical. It shows that the politicisation of the civil service is higher in Hungary than in most other new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (Meyer-Sahling 2009, World Bank 2007).

This paper re-examines party patronage in Hungary. It confirms recent research that stresses the importance of party patronage for public sector governance. The paper argues that political parties reach into all institutional domains (ministerial bureaucracy, non-departmental agencies, executing institutions such as state-owned enterprises) and they reach into all policy sectors studied in this volume. For the Hungarian case, we therefore speak

¹ This classification has been contested by both Haughton (2008) and Meyer-Sahling (2006a).

about the capture of the state by political parties. Yet the paper finds important differences in the way parties intervene into the staffing of policy sectors. Three patterns of patronage are distinguished. ‘Captured sectors’ (media, health, foreign affairs, regional administration) are characterised by an overall high degree of patronage and a decline in the relative importance of patronage as the distance from the political leadership of government ministries increases. That is, patronage is most important for the ministerial bureaucracy and least important for executing institutions while non-departmental agencies take an intermediate position. Second, ‘partially disciplined sectors’ (finance, economy, military and police) are characterised by an intermediate degree of patronage but the partial insulation of non-departmental agencies from party intervention. Finally, ‘partially insulated sectors’ (judiciary, education and culture) are characterised by a low degree of patronage – by Hungarian standards – and the minimal importance of patronage for executing institutions.

Party intervention into personnel policy in public administration was of course a hallmark of the real-existing socialist administration. Party involvement remained widespread after transition to democracy despite efforts to establish a separation between politics and administration. This paper further argues that, over time, party patronage has become more important in Hungary. The stabilisation of the party system in Hungary has hence been accompanied by an increase rather than a decrease in party patronage. In fact, party patronage might have contributed to the stabilisation of the main political parties and their relation to each other. Yet the entrenchment of parties in the public sector by means of patronage cannot prevent major electoral backlashes as recently illustrated by the outcome of the 2010 parliamentary elections.

The chapter is divided in three parts. The first part outlines the main features of governments, parties and the party system in Hungary. It then discusses the Hungarian tradition of civil service governance in particular with regard to the politicisation of the civil service. The second part forms the main part of the chapter. It analyses the scope and the processes of party patronage in Hungary. The conclusion discusses the trajectory of party patronage in Hungary since transition to democracy and examines the implications of the findings for party government in Hungary.

2. Party system and civil service tradition

Hungary belongs to the first wave of post-communist countries that joined the European Union in 2004. Between 1990 and 2010, Hungary held six national elections. The elections in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2010 produced wholesale changes of government between the left and the right of the political spectrum. After the first democratic elections in 1990 a government was formed by a centre-right coalition consisting of the Christian-conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the agrarian Independent Smallholders (FKGP) and the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP).

The second election held in 1994 led to the first return of the former communist party to power. The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) as the successor of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) formed a coalition with the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ). During the period in opposition, the MSZP tried to reform itself as a modern-style social democratic party (Ágh 1997, Bozóki 1997). Yet the party retained various wings and factions under its broad roof, including neoliberal monetarists, national popular socialists, trade unionists, etc. The 1998 election produced the next pendulum swing back to the centre-right. The coalition was formed by the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz), the Smallholders and the MDF. The Fidesz was founded by university students. During the transition period it started as a radical liberal party close to the SZDSZ. After the weak showing at the 1994 elections (7 per cent) and the collapse of the MDF, the Fidesz gradually moved to the centre-right of the political spectrum to become a liberal conservative party (Batory 2002, Fowler 2004). Within a short period of time the Fidesz has become the dominant party of the centre-right, integrating smaller parties of the right or forming electoral alliances to help them cross the electoral threshold.

The fourth elections of 2002 led to the return of the socialist-liberal coalition that had already governed the country between 1994 and 1998. The MSZP/SZDSZ coalition was also the first government to win re-elections in 2006, though re-election was secured with a new Prime Minister after Gyurcsány succeeded Medgyessy in the autumn of 2004. Medgyessy was forced to resign in favour of Gyurcsány, a former leader of the communist youth organisation, KISZ, who had become a successful businessman during the post-communist period. Gyurcsány sought to emulate Tony Blair's transformation of New Labour in Hungary. Yet his position was quickly weakened after the 2006 elections. In an internal speech to his party during the preparation of the government programme, Gyurcsány admitted that his

government had lied before the elections about the true state of the economy and the public finances. The speech was leaked to the press. It triggered public protests and calls for new elections by the opposition. In the autumn of 2006 the street protests turned violent. The government did not resign but the credibility and public support of the government parties reached rock bottom. In 2008, the SZDSZ left the coalition but continued to support the minority government led by Prime Minister Gyurcsány. In 2009, Gyurcsány resigned from his post to be succeeded by the former Minister of Local Government and Regional Development, Bajnai. The subsequent parliamentary elections of 2010 led to the expected defeat of the MSZP and the return of the Fidesz to government. Victor Orbán became Prime Minister for the second time. The Fidesz formed a single-party government and gained a two-thirds majority of seats in parliament. The small parties SZDSZ and MDF did not cross the electoral threshold but two new parties, the green-liberal LMP ('Politics Can Be Different') and the extreme right-wing Jobbik ('Movement for a Better Hungary') made it into parliament with 7.5 per cent and 12.3 per cent respectively.

As should have already become clear from this short overview of governments in Hungary, the party system is best characterised as a two-bloc system (Körösenyi et al 2009). Until 2010, the left was represented by the MSZP and its small partner, SZDSZ. While the LMP has so far not formed any coalition with the MSZP, it can be located on the centre-left of the party system. The right is dominated by the Fidesz. Other small parties of the centre-right largely depend on the support of the Fidesz. Extreme right wing parties have periodically gained popular support. The Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) was represented in parliament between 1998 and 2002. It remains to be seen whether Jobbik will be able to establish itself as an additional party on the right of the political scale.

Notwithstanding the outcome of the 2010 elections, the Hungarian parties and party system are typically seen as one of the most stable in Central and Eastern Europe (Lewis 2006). Yet party organisations remain weak and trust in political parties is low, in particular, when compared to other democratic institutions. Party membership is low. In 2008, the two big parties, MSZP and Fidesz, had 36.000 and 39.932 members respectively (Hungarian Political Yearbook). Taken together, the membership of the parties with parliamentary representation made up less than 1 per cent of the population. Over time party membership has declined for the MSZP but it was also very low in the early and mid 1990s. The Fidesz by contrast has been able to increase its membership from 10.000 in 1996 to almost 40.000 in 2008. To some

extent this increase reflects the concerted effort of the Fidesz to increase its entrenchment in society by setting up so-called ‘civic circles’ across the whole country.

Membership figures across the country should not be exaggerated as indicators of party entrenchment in society. The MSZP, for instance, continues to benefit from the wide reach of the former communist party into state and society. The MSZMP used to have 800.000 members at the end of the 1980s. Not all of these members should be seen as party believers, since party membership was effectively a necessary condition for career progression in all sectors of state and society. Yet many networks of that time have persisted into the post-communist period and form a natural reservoir of supporters for the MSZP. The Fidesz approach can be seen in this light as a strategy to build popular support even without building a mass party organisation. Despite this kind of informal entrenchment in society, it is important to recognise that parties are among the least trusted political institutions in post-communist Hungary.

While the entrenchment of parties in society is informal at best, political parties in Hungary have traditionally had a much closer relationship to the state. Especially the communist tradition of public administration implies the complete subordination if not fusion of party and state (Csanádi 1997, König 1992). The communist system institutionalises the leading role of the communist party. According to the ideal communist administrative tradition, there is no separation between state and society. Ideally, there is also no separation between state and market given state-ownership of all means of production. The rule of law is subordinated to the will of the communist party and can be bent for the achievement of ideological goals. There is no autonomous civil society but interest associations function as transmission belts of the communist party and its Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Most critical in our context, there are no separations between politics and administration and between party and state (Pakulski 1986). Recruitment and career advancement are based on political and ideological reliability rather than meritocratic achievements. Promotion to higher positions requires party membership. Senior personnel policy follows the logic of the nomenclature system, that is, the communist party selects and approves appointments to senior positions of the state bureaucracy. From the perspective of patronage studies, the ideal communist system institutionalises the maximum reach of a ruling party into all sectors and corners of the state.

The communist system in Hungary had gradually moved away from the ideal type. Since the late 1960s, Hungary liberalised the communist system. Especially economic reform measures led to a communist system that is usually seen as less repressive and less tightly controlled by the communist party (Kitschelt et al 1999, Schöpflin 1994). In public administration, initiatives were taken to increase the professional capacity of the state. Meritocratic criteria gained importance in the selection and promotion of administrative personnel (Balázs 1993, György 1999). Yet the basic principles of communist public administration, in particular, the need to demonstrate basic political commitment to the communist party and its ideology remained intact until the collapse of communism in 1989.

The transition to democracy created a break with the communist tradition of organising the state. The establishment of multi-party constitutional democracy implied the elimination of the leading role of the communist party from the constitution, the introduction of free elections and multi-party competition. Administrative reform was an important element of the transformation process, for party and administration had to be disentangled and public administration had to be brought under the rule of law. In this context Hungary passed an Act on State Secretaries in 1990 shortly before the investiture of the first democratic government in order to formalise a separation between the political and the professional, permanent part of the executive. In 1992 Hungary adopted a new Civil Service Act. The Act aimed to establish a professional civil service that upholds democratic values and is politically neutral and impartial. The Civil Service Act covers employees of the state administration at central, regional and local level as well as the employees of local self-governments. It includes approximately 100.000 civil servants and has remained relatively stable over time. Additional legislation was adopted to cover employees in the public sector such as doctors, nurses and teachers. Specialist legislation was later adopted for judges and armed bureaucrats such as soldiers, police officers, customs officers, etc. Civil servants, civilian public servants and armed public servants amount to approximately 800.000 employees (ca 20 per cent of the labour force). The number was lower after the passage of the 1995 so-called Bokros package, an austerity programme for the consolidation of public finances but it increased again in subsequent years.

The effects of the legal reforms that were passed in the 1990s on the de-politicisation of public personnel policy have been contested. Most research in the area of public

administration argues that the formal-legal frameworks incorporate many possibilities for executive politicians to politicise the civil service (Szente 1999, Meyer-Sahling 2006b, Gajduschek 2007). This finding is especially relevant for the study of party patronage in Hungary. As we will see in the next section, the high degree of political discretion that is provided by formal rules governing public personnel policy provides ideal conditions for parties to make appointments to state institutions.

3. The scope of party patronage

The literature on party patronage in Central and Eastern Europe tends to assume that the mere presence of laws and regulations establish breaks on the ability of parties to make political appointments in the public sector (Grzymala-Busse 2007). This volume shows that this is assumption is not tenable and the Hungarian case is no exception to this finding. Instead, it is more appropriate to assume that the ability of parties to make political appointments depends on the degree of political discretion that is built into legislation (Meyer-Sahling 2006b). Political discretion is higher if legislation assigns the authority to make appointment to a political rather than a non-political actor. Moreover, the degree of political discretion depends on the standards and procedures such as professional qualifications that decision-makers have to follow.

From the perspective of political discretion, formal rules and regulations create only few limits for political parties to make appointments in the public sector in Hungary. Procedures differ with regard to the type of political actor who is in charge of making appointments and with regard to the entry criteria that appointees have to meet. But there are only very few institutions that eliminate political discretion over the appointment of personnel, for instance, by delegating the appointment authority to professional bodies rather than political actors. Let us first look at the ministerial bureaucracy and then at non-departmental agencies (NDAS) and executing institutions (EIS).

For the *ministerial bureaucracy*, there are no differences between ministries and hence between policy sectors. Ministers are selected by the prime minister and appointed by the president of the republic. Below the minister executive branch ministries are led by one senior state secretary and three to five specialist state secretaries who oversee distinct policy

areas within the jurisdiction of the ministry. Senior state secretaries are selected by the prime minister in cooperation with the relevant minister and appointed by the president of the republic. Specialist state secretaries are selected by the minister and appointed by the prime minister. In addition, ministers have ministerial cabinets that are staffed with political advisors. The top positions in the ministerial bureaucracy are therefore clearly classified as political appointments.

Below the top level, the Hungarian ministries distinguish heads of departments, deputy heads of departments and heads of divisions. They constitute the middle management in the ministerial bureaucracy. They are formally classified as senior civil servants covered by the Civil Service Act. They have to hold a university degree and have to pass a specialised examination within one year after their appointment unless they have a degree in law, political science or public administration. Formally, the minister assigns civil servants to the position of head of department, deputy head of department or head of division.

The lower level of the ministerial civil service can also be reached by political parties but the access is less direct. The Civil Service Act distinguishes different types of civil servants based on their level of education. Higher civil servants, for instance, must hold a university degree. Only administrators and civil servants in blue-collar positions can be appointed without having to meet specific entry criteria. The authority to make appointments rests with the specialist state secretary as the head of a branch of departments within the ministry. In practice, this authority is usually delegated to department heads. The allocation of decision-making powers to a political appointee, i.e. the specialist state secretary, implies that party patronage can cascade downwards to the bottom of the ministerial hierarchy. The general access of political parties to the ministerial bureaucracy is therefore relatively unrestricted. Political discretion is high with regard to the top of the ministries, while politicians face a range of standards and procedural constraints when seeking to make appointments below the top positions.

Most of the personnel employed to *NDAS* are also covered by the Civil Service Act, though the procedures for the appointment of top level personnel are usually specified in the statutes that establish the institutions in the first place. Like in the case of the ministerial bureaucracy, parties can make appointments to almost all of these institutions. The differences stem from the appointment procedure and hence the degree of political discretion. We identified more

than twenty different procedures, which can be lumped together in three groups. First, most appointments to central agencies are the prerogative of executive politicians. The main players are the ministers of executive branch ministries. Alternatively, the minister proposes but the prime minister makes the actual appointment as is the case for the Hungarian Energy Office. In several cases such as the Hungarian Patent Office and the Statistical Office the prime minister has unilateral authority to make appointments. In some cases such as the Hungarian Competition Office, the prime minister proposes the candidate, while the appointment is officially made by the president of the republic.

Second, parliament can be involved in a variety of ways in the appointment process. In several cases, parliament adds transparency to the process, for instance, the head of the Hungarian Tax Office is selected and appointed by the Minister of Finance but he/she needs to pass a hearing in the Budgetary Committee of Parliament before the appointment becomes valid. In other cases, the actual selection authority rests in parliament rather than the executive. For instance, the members of the National Radio and Television Commission (ORTT) are nominated by parliamentary factions and elected by an absolute majority of MPs. Parliament also elects the prosecutor general, the president of the supreme court and the president of the state audit office.

Third, interest groups and professional associations play a small role in the process of appointing heads of offices, agencies and executing institutions. In several cases, they participate in the nomination process. For instance, the head of the National Cultural Fund (NKA) and half of the members of the board are appointed by the Minister of Culture and Education, while the other half is appointed by professional associations and institutions from the cultural field. The role of non-political actors is greater in the educational sector and in the judiciary. For instance, a key body for the governance of the judiciary is the National Council of Justice (OIT). Its board consists of fifteen members but only three members, the minister of justice and two MPs, are politicians, while the others are representatives of the wider judiciary including professional bodies such as the Hungarian Bar Association.

EIS do not differ much from the appointment procedures that apply to NDAS. Personnel who are employed at institutions such as hospitals, schools, museums, state-owned enterprises, the army, police, the courts etc are usually covered by the Public Service Act or by specialised legislation such as the Act on Judges. The procedures for the appointment of top personnel

are usually specified in laws establishing the institutions. Executive politicians, in particular, ministers play an even greater role when it comes to the appointment of personnel to these kinds of institutions. Hospital directors, presidents of state owned banks and enterprises as well as members of supervisory boards, ambassadors, police and army chiefs and the heads of many institutions in the artistic sector are the prerogative of the minister of the day. The prime minister is occasionally involved, for instance, when appointing the president of the Hungarian News Agency. Parliament also has a less prominent position, though it plays the key role in the appointment of members of the boards of the television and radio corporations. Politicians have least possibilities for direct intervention into personnel policy in the judiciary and in higher education, since self-governing bodies are mainly responsible for appointments. The National Council of Justice (OIT, see above), for instance, which is a largely non-political body, appoints judges and heads of courts of appeals. Similarly, university rectors are elected by university senates and appointed by the president of the republic, thereby limiting the role of the minister in governing personnel of universities. The small formal role for parties in the appointment procedure does not mean that there is no politics in these kinds of institutions but political influence is often more subtle and more informal than in other institutions.

In sum, even if formal procedures differ, politicians have the possibility to reach all policy sectors and all institutional domains to make political appointments. The question emerges whether politicians also use the political discretion to make political appointments.

Party patronage in practice

Conceptually, we can distinguish two extreme types of party patronage. First, as discussed above, the communist party state assumes that party patronage reaches all institutions of the state and all positions from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy (Pakulski 1986, Csanádi 1997). Ideally, there are no patronage-free areas in the communist party-state. In terms of measurement, the patronage score would equal 1.00. By contrast, the Wilsonian ideal of a clear separation between politics and administration implies that administrative institutions are generally free from political appointments. Politicians engage in the business of politics and bureaucrats deal with the business of implementing public policies (Wilson 1887). In this case, the patronage score would equal 0.00.

Table 1 shows that the Hungarian case cannot be classified as neither the party-state type of patronage nor the Wilsonian type of (non-)patronage because the overall patronage score of 0.44 reported in the bottom right cell of the Table falls more or less between these two extremes. The score brings Hungary closer to the countries with a medium to high degree of party patronage such as Czech Republic and Bulgaria. It is lower than the score for most Southern European countries studied in this volume but higher than the score for most Western European countries. The relative position of Hungary notwithstanding, the score of 0.44 requires some additional interpretation. It should not be confused with the understanding that nearly one half of all public sector organisations and positions are subject to party patronage. The score reflects the aggregation of coded expert evaluations. Recalling the calculation of the patronage index outlined above by Kopecky and Spirova (Chapter X), a score of 0.4 is equivalent to the combined response that a) ‘most institutions in a sector are subject to party patronage’ and b) ‘top *and* the middle level of the institutional hierarchy are subject to political appointments’. In other words, a score of 0.4 indicates that the parties have an impressive reach into the staffing of the public sector.

Table 1: Scope and Reach of Patronage, by Policy Area and Institutional Types

Policy Area	Ministries	NDAC	Executing Institutions	Policy Area Total
Economy	0.67	0.11	0.67	0.48
Finance	0.67	0.22	0.42	0.44
Judiciary	0.67	0.11	0.00	0.26
Media	-	0.67	0.67	0.67
Military and Police	0.67	0.17	0.25	0.36
Healthcare	0.67	0.50	0.33	0.50
Culture and Education	0.50	0.33	0.03	0.29
Foreign Services	0.67	-	0.22	0.44
Regional and Local Administration	0.67	-	0.44	0.56
Total	0.65	0.30	0.34	0.44

Beyond the aggregate score, the Table shows some important variation across institutional domains and policy sectors. First, it shows that the media, the regional administration and the healthcare sector are coming out with the highest patronage scores. By contrast, party patronage is relatively least important for the judiciary, culture/education and the

military/police sectors. If culture and higher education sector were assessed separately, we would have to classify the educational sector together with the judiciary at the bottom of the patronage league. By contrast, patronage is much more common in the cultural sector. A similar division concerns the armed services of the military and the police. The police is subject to more political appointments, while the military belongs to the relatively less politicised sectors. Finally, the financial sector, the economy and the foreign services represent an intermediate group with scores between 0.48 and 0.44, just at or above the country mean of 0.44.

Second, the bottom row of Table 1 indicates that party patronage is more important for the ministerial bureaucracy than for NDAS and EIS. This indicates that the importance of party patronage increases the closer a position is located to the political leadership of executive branch ministries. The aggregate patronage score is higher for EIS than for NDAS but the differences are small. Differences are more evident between NDAS and EIS when looking at individual policy sectors. For instance, in the financial sector, the economy and the military/police sector, the patronage scores are much lower for the NDAS in comparison to the EIS and the ministerial bureaucracy. Moreover, it is evident that the judiciary and the culture/education sector have very low patronage scores for their EIS. Instead of distinguishing different degrees of patronage, we therefore suggest that it more appropriate to distinguish three patterns of patronage for the case of Hungary. We label these patterns ‘captured sectors’ (media, health, foreign affairs, regional administration), ‘partially disciplined sectors’ (finance, economy, military/police) and ‘partially insulated sectors’ (judiciary, culture/education).

Captured sectors

Captured sectors include the media, healthcare, the regional administration and the foreign services. In these sectors, the overall patronage score is higher than the national average and it decreases with increasing distance from the minister. Even if the media is the most politicised sector in Hungary, the features of a captured sector are most evident in the health sector. Like in all sectors under study, party patronage in the health sector is more important for the ministerial bureaucracy than for the NDAS and the EIS. The Ministry of Health is known as a very politicised ministry. The senior state secretary, specialist state secretaries

and cabinet members at the top of the ministry are clearly political appointments. The middle level of the ministry is also affected, in particular, heads of departments that have special responsibilities for the drafting of reform concepts and legislation. Party patronage is less relevant for the lower level of the ministry.

The politicisation of the Ministry of Health hardly differs from other ministries. The high average but minor variation among patronage scores indicates that the ministerial bureaucracy is generally captured by political parties. In most ministries, it is common that both the top and the middle management are subject to political appointments. Greater differences can often be found within the ministries rather than between them. The policy departments tend to be more frequently targeted by political appointments than departments such as legal affairs and budgetary affairs. To some extent this can be explained with regard to the specialised administrative expertise that the officials of these departments are required to demonstrate. Until recently, it was also typical to find international relations departments, in particular, EU affairs departments to be more professional and hence subject to less political appointments. This phenomenon is typically discussed under the heading of 'islands of excellence' that emerged during the EU accession process (Goetz 2001). Interestingly, our research indicates that EU affairs departments and generally policy departments with great exposure to the EU are increasingly the target of political appointments. This development could be the result of reduced adaptive pressures from Brussels after accession as well as the discovery of EU policies by national political parties. In particular, the distribution of EU funds through the regional development councils has attracted the interest of political parties and as a result political appointments to these bodies have become increasingly 'normal' over the last few years.

By contrast, our research shows that the lower level of the ministerial bureaucracy is only rarely subject to political appointments. The most typical appointment at this level concerns the driver and the secretary who join the minister from his office in parliament to his new office in the ministry. But this kind of patronage is commonly accepted. Otherwise, one can find favouritism and informalism in the recruitment process but political considerations tend to play a relatively small role at this level. There was wide consensus among our interviewees that appointees who are well connected to a political party or network are unlikely to accept jobs below the level of department leader because both the authority and the financial reward that come with the job are not sufficiently attractive (Meyer-Sahling/Vass/Vassné 2010). At

the middle level, it is therefore not surprising to find that political appointees tend to be relatively young because the job at the level of department head can work as an excellent (political) career springboard.

In comparison to the ministerial bureaucracy, the patronage scores for the healthcare sector are lower for NDAS and the EIS. Among the NDAS, there are several agencies such as the National Public Health and Medical Officer's Service (ÁNTSZ), the Health Insurance Supervisory Authority and, more recently, the Office of Authorisation and Administrative Procedures of the Ministry of Health (EEKH) that are subject to political turnover and party patronage. The difference in patronage score between the Ministry of Health and the NDAS in the health sector are mainly the result of the greater depth of politicisation in the ministerial structure. In the agencies, most observers agreed that political appointments are limited to the top of the institutions. The patronage score for the healthcare sector is marginally lower for the EIS such as state hospitals, the National Health Insurance Fund Administration (OEP), various services such as the National Blood Transfusion Service and the National Emergency and Ambulance Service, and a considerable number of research institutes in the periphery of the Ministry of Health. For the EIS, the minister has far-reaching appointment powers which are also used in practice. Yet again the appointments are concentrated at the top of the institutions. The new appointees may initiate further personnel changes but the political leadership of the ministry would usually not get involved in these decisions.

In comparison to the health sector, party capture differs for the media, the regional administration and the foreign services because only two of the three institutional domains were subject to investigation. For the media, we covered only NDAS and EIS, since there is no specific line ministry responsible for the management of the media. Yet it is fair to argue that parties have also captured the equivalent of ministerial structures. The press offices and media relations units that work for the prime minister and for individual ministers are usually among the most politicised units of the ministerial bureaucracy. The overall patronage score for the media must hence be seen as under-estimated.

Looking more closely at the NDAS and the EIS in the media sector, we find that similar to the health sector there are no NDAS in the media sector that can be regarded as free from party patronage. Appointments to the national Radio and Television Commission (ORTT)

and to the Public Broadcasting Fund are inherently political. It is mainly politicians or media experts of the parties that take jobs in these bodies. Political parties developed an interest in the media right after transition to democracy. The proportional representation of seats on the relevant media bodies goes back to the transition period when the then government and opposition parties agreed on a power-sharing deal. The first president of the public broadcasting agency was affiliated to the SZDSZ, which at that time was the largest opposition party. Perennial conflict between the government, then led by MDF politician Antall, and the public media was the consequence and certainly nurtured the understanding among political elites that political control of the media is of utmost importance.

The media also comes out with the highest patronage score for the EIS. The media sector presents a special case among EIS because parliament plays a central role in the appointment process. The radio and TV corporations are each governed by two bodies, the presidency and a board of trustees. The presidency is nominated by the factions represented in parliament and the chair is nominated by the senior governing party. The first deputy president is nominated by the main opposition party. The board of trustees also includes delegates of civic organisations such as the churches, the national cultural and educational organisations, the social partners, the organisations of journalists, etc. It is widely known that the civic organisations have been co-opted by political parties, leading yet to more opportunities for party patronage. Moreover, the politicisation of the public media has well spilled over into the private sector, which makes it increasingly difficult to access information that is not politically biased in one way or the other.

Party patronage in both the regional administration and the foreign services follows the general pattern of captured sectors but it also displays sectoral particularities that set them apart from the media and health sectors. For instance, in the area of foreign affairs, the patronage score is much higher for the ministerial bureaucracy than for EIS such as embassies and missions to international organisations such as the UN, NATO, the EU etc. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has traditionally experienced a larger degree of personnel turnover than other ministries due to *inter alia* the regular posting of officials to embassies and missions abroad. Political affiliation also plays a very important role in landing promotions and postings to attractive locations. Yet appointees have usually come from within the diplomatic corps or they are part of a wider corps of foreign and security policy experts. In many respects it appears that both political camps, the left and the right, have

developed their own reservoir of diplomats and foreign policy experts. As a result, political appointments by the political leadership may reach deep into the ministerial hierarchy and they certainly reach embassies and missions but the politicisation of the foreign services has remained largely bounded within the foreign policy sector.

Recently this pattern was challenged by the Gyurcsány government which appointed several successful businessmen, usually with close affiliation to the Prime Minister and the MSZP, to important ambassadorial posts. There is hence a sense that party capture of the foreign services increased during the Gyurcsány years. The influx of private sector managers who have close contacts to the MSZP and the SZDSZ is a recent trend that can also be observed in several other sectors such as healthcare and culture, while it has been traditionally important for the finance and economy sectors. The growing importance of private sector managers as a category of political appointees is closely related to the ascendance of successful businessmen such as Ferenc Gyurcsány and János Koka to senior positions in political parties and government.

Partially disciplined sectors

The partially disciplined sectors differ from captured sectors in two respects. First, the average patronage score is at an intermediate level. Second, and more important, patronage is lower in the NDAS in comparison to both the ministerial bureaucracy and the EIS. The partially disciplined sectors include the economy, the financial sector and the military/police. With regard to the ministerial bureaucracy, the three sectors do not differ much from the other sectors discussed so far. By contrast, they differ to a considerable extent from the captured sectors with regard to the much larger proportion of patronage-free NDAS. In the finance sector, our interviewees identified above all the State Audit Office (ÁSZ), as one of the least politicised NDAS in Hungary. Agencies such as the State Debt Management Agency (ÁKK) and the State Treasury (ÁK) are also seen as less political, while there is less agreement on the role of political appointments to the Financial Supervisory Agency (PSZÁF) and the Tax Office (ÁPEH). Yet even the financial sector includes several offices that have traditionally been subject to tight political control by means of appointments, for example, the Statistical Office (KSH) and the Government Control Office (KEHI), which is the government's instrument for internal financial control.

The less politicised agencies of the financial sector share the feature that they operate at the interface with the private sector. Policy failures in this area, it is widely understood, would be extremely costly for the Hungarian government. The exposure to the private sector and the integration into the international financial markets seems to reduce the willingness and/or the ability of parties to make political appointments to these agencies. A similar pattern can be found for the economy sector. The Competition Office, for instance, stands out as a largely de-politicised agency. By contrast, political appointments have traditionally been important with regard to the Energy Office.

At first glance, the military/police sector is unexpected in the group of NDAS with a low patronage score. Both the army and the police are large bureaucracies that do not face private sector competition. Moreover, there have regularly been scandals in Hungary that concern the leaking of classified material and the use of intelligence information to discredit the political opponent. Most recently, the Minister for National Security during the Gyurcsány government, Szilvássy, had to resign because he was accused of ordering the surveillance of telephone conversations related to a firm that was close to the Fidesz. Ironically, the respective firm comes itself from the security sector and rumour has it that it sought to gain information from the security services on behalf of the Fidesz. Offices and agencies dealing with national security aspects and secret intelligence are therefore among the most important appointments that political parties make. Unsurprisingly, the National Security Office (NBH) is a very politicised body. Yet several other relevant offices that we surveyed for the police and military such as the Protective Service of Law Enforcement Agencies (RSZVSZ), the National Disaster Recovery Directorate and the Office of Immigration and Nationality are much less affected by party patronage.

The three partially disciplined sectors are also similar with regard to the relatively high importance of party patronage for EIS. In the public sector economy and in the financial sector there are a large number of state-owned banks and other state-owned companies that are under tight control of governing parties thanks to political appointments. The Hungarian Development Bank (MFB), the Hungarian Railways (MÁV) and the Lottery serve as prime examples of party patronage. Even the Hungarian National Bank (MNB) is not free from political appointments despite the international norm that central bank independence is required in order to gain credibility in the eyes of international investors and to keep inflation

low (McNamara 2002). During the last eight to ten years the government has used the discretion to appoint the governor of the central bank and several members of the monetary policy committee. These appointments have had spill-over effects leading to yet more political appointments inside the bank.

The bureaucracies of the police and military are less politicised than the state-owned companies and banks of the finance and economy sectors. The differences are largely a result of the kind of institutions that constitute the EIS in this sector. State-owned companies in the defence sector are typically subject to as much party patronage as companies in the finance and economy sector. Moreover, political appointments to the top of the national police organisation have traditionally been important but political influence is said to have increased significantly after the violent street protests of 2006. By contrast, party patronage plays a smaller role in the Hungarian army. Moreover, both the police and the defence sector include several institutions that are relatively free from party patronage such as the national defence university and the police college. Party patronage in the military/police sector is therefore very diverse. It includes some institutions that are largely free from political appointments and others that are subject to deep politicisation.

Partially insulated sectors

The third pattern of patronage concerns partially insulated sectors. They are distinguished from the former two patterns in that the overall patronage score is relatively low and the EIS are, by and large, free from party patronage. This pattern is relevant for the judiciary and, with qualifications, for the culture and education sector. The judiciary comes out as the sector with the lowest patronage score for its NDAS and for its EIS. In particular, the National Council of Justice, OIT, stands out as a relatively apolitical body. The OIT, as outlined above, is headed by the president of the supreme courts. It includes judges, representatives of the bar association, the minister of justice and a few MPs. The limited political influence on the OIT and its office is also reflected in the practice of personnel selection.

The patronage score for the judiciary is especially lowered by the minor importance of political appointments to the EIS of the sector, in particular, the court system. Senior judges are selected and appointed by the OIT. The personnel system for judges largely follows the

logic of a closed career system, which implies that senior judges have already served for many years before gaining an appointment to the top of the hierarchy. This is not to say that there is no politics involved in the judicial sector. Interviewees pointed out that the system of promotions and appointments for judges is far from transparent leading to problems of nepotism and risks of capture by parties and even organised crime. Moreover, the prosecutor's office has been subject to political pressure since the period of the Orbán government. The status of the courts and prosecutor general as a largely patronage-free zone in the future can therefore not be taken for granted.

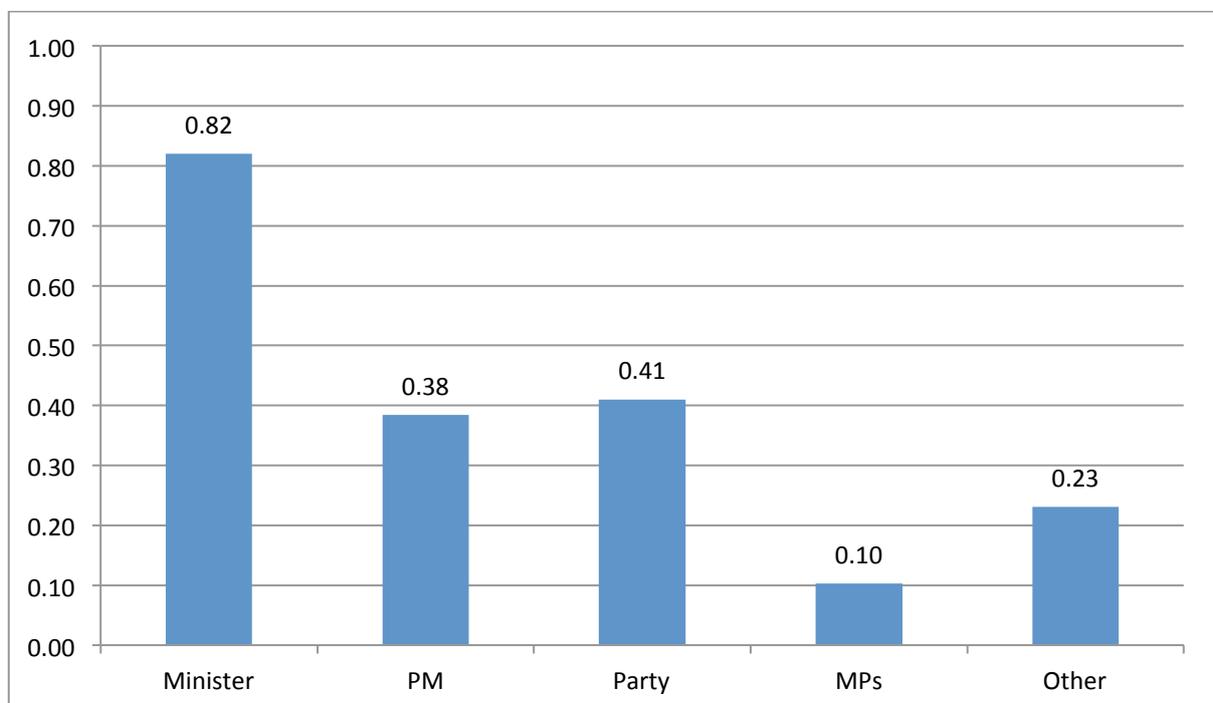
The culture/education sector fits the label of partial insulation from party patronage much less than the judiciary. As mentioned already above, party patronage differs for the two subsectors. Differences can be identified for both the NDAS and the EIS. Especially the National Cultural Fund (NKA) is seen as subject to many political appointments among the NDAS in this sector. The staffing of the administrative office of the Fund is very much influenced by the Minister of Culture and Education. The minister and the president of the fund as the trustee of the minister have also great influence over composition of the board of the Fund. Cultural institutions can delegate their members but the minister can veto the appointments. Moreover, membership is limited to three years. Bearing in mind that the MSZP/SZDSZ coalition had been in office for six years at the time of research, our observers explained that the NKA had become a politically fairly homogeneous body close to the centre-left. The relatively lower patronage score for this culture/education sector is therefore mainly the result of offices in the higher education sector such as the national accreditation office and the rectors' conference, both of which are relatively unaffected by party patronage.

The main reason to classify the culture/education sector as a partially insulated sector stems from the curiously low degree of party patronage in higher education institutions as part of the EIS in this sector. University rectors, for instance, are elected by the university senates and appointed by the President of the Republic. Appointments to these posts are largely free from meddling by Education Ministers. Yet good relations to the ministry are important for the universities so that the political arithmetic cannot be fully ignored during the selection process. Moreover, universities are one of the most important parking grounds for political appointees who have lost their position after their party has been voted out of office. In other words, the governance of the higher education sector has retained a remarkable degree of political independence while the views of its personnel are much less so.

Selection of political appointees

The party patronage literature does not pay particular attention to the mechanisms through which political appointees are selected. Müller (2000) is therefore justified in asking whether appointments are taken by the party in central office or the party in public office, that is, politicians in government positions. Figure 1 shows that the party in central office plays only a secondary role in the selection of political appointees in Hungary because ministers are seen as the dominant decision-makers. The prime minister and the wider political party play only a secondary role in the process of selecting appointees. Members of parliament are least influential in the appointment process, though in the interviews it seemed difficult to clearly distinguish their role from that of the wider party. The category of ‘others’ refers primarily to mayors at local and regional level and to semi-professional bodies such as the National Council of Justice (OIT, see above), which appoints judges.

Figure 1. Selectors of political appointees



The dominant role of ministers requires qualifications. First, ministers take primarily appointment decisions at the top of the ministerial bureaucracy, NDAS and EIS. This reflects the legal basis and their dual role as political and administrative head of executive branch ministries. Below the top level, ministers are not necessarily the main decision-makers. In the ministerial bureaucracy, the appointment authority is mainly delegated to specialist state secretaries and heads of departments. In NDAS and EIS, the authority is delegated to the heads and deputy heads of the respective institutions. Second, ministers are not alone in taking appointment decisions. It is more common that the minister together with his or her close advisors agrees on the minister's appointees. In fact, the advisors in the background of a minister tend to play a very important role in the search and identification of suitable appointees.

Third, the roles of ministers, the prime minister, the party and MPs in the selection of appointees should not be seen as mutually exclusive because in many cases ministers have to share their appointment authority with the prime minister, the party or both. The prime minister for instance has important formal powers over the appointment of state secretaries and specialist state secretaries. But there are also important sectoral differences, which are rooted in politics rather than in formal rules. In sectors such as foreign affairs, finance, economy, military and the police, it is common to observe the intervention of the prime minister. For instance, finance ministers have traditionally been weak in Hungary, which has facilitated prime ministerial influence (Greskovits 2001). By contrast, in foreign affairs, prime ministerial influence has fluctuated over time. During the first socialist-liberal government, Prime Minister Horn kept a close eye on personnel policy in the foreign services. He knew the sector very well, as he was the foreign minister of the last socialist government before transition to democracy. During the second socialist-liberal government, the pendulum swung to the foreign minister. Prime Minister Medgyessy was not a party member, while Foreign Minister Kovács was the leader of the MSZP. Kovács was known for his very proactive approach to personnel policy. Often he intervened down to the level of head of division. During the Gyurcsány years it was again the prime minister who was seen as more influential in personnel policy than the foreign minister.

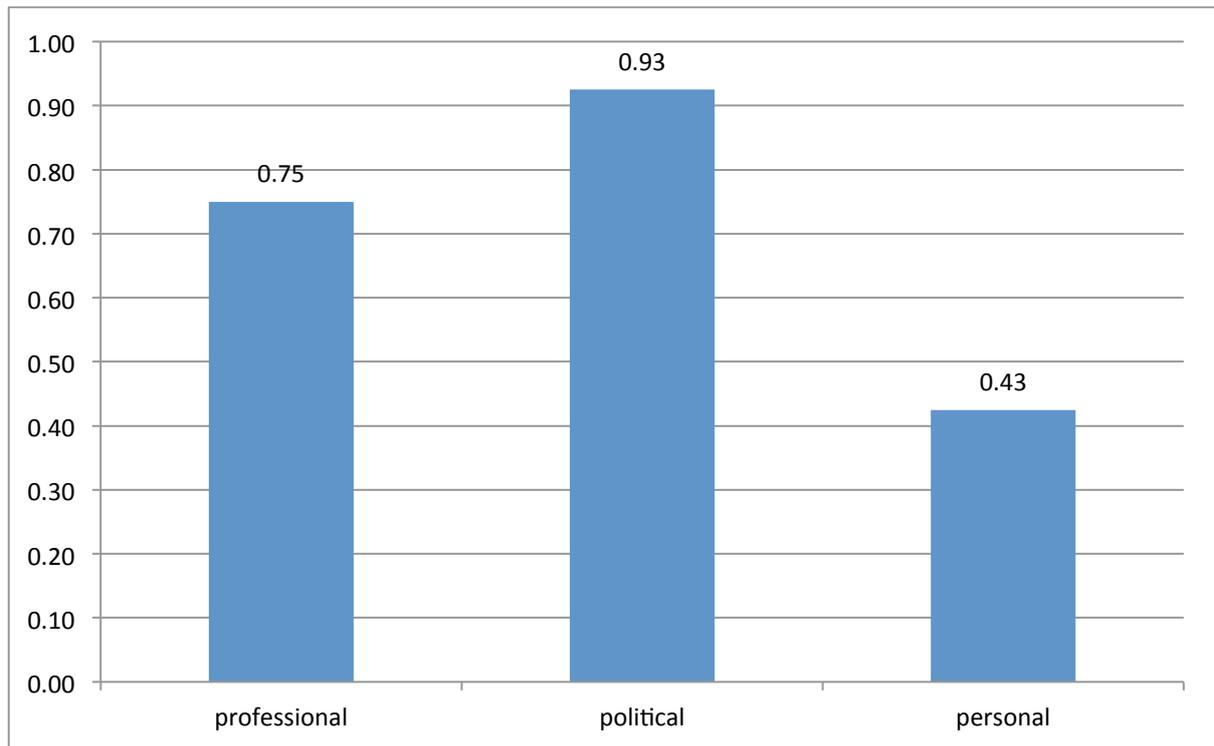
MPs and the party tend to play a background role in relation to both ministers and the prime minister. They are often involved in 'proposing' appointees to ministers and their advisors. Yet their influence remains limited because the authority of the minister and, in some areas

the prime minister, to take appointment decisions is largely uncontested. An important exception is the media. In this sector, senior figures within the governing and opposition parties are the main decision-makers when it comes to the selection of appointees. The role of parties is reinforced by formal institutions, which delegate appointment powers to the parliamentary factions.

Selection criteria

Having identified ministers as the key actors when it comes to appointment decision, the question emerges what criteria are used to discriminate between candidates. Figure 2 shows that there is no dominant criterion but it is more suitable to speak about a combination of criteria that matters for the selection of appointees. In particular, professional skills and political loyalty tend to go together. Political loyalty was mentioned by almost all interviewees as a key selection criterion. It is comparable to a necessary condition that all appointees need to meet before they can be considered eligible for selection. By contrast, candidates without an identifiable political affiliation struggle to advance beyond the middle ranks of the ministerial bureaucracy, NDAS and EIS insofar as they are subject to party patronage.

Figure 2. Selection criteria



Professional skills were also mentioned as a selection criterion for the large majority of policy sectors. The importance of professional expertise indicates that political loyalty alone is usually not enough for landing a job as a political appointee. Ministers do not like to appoint officials who lack subject expertise unless they can be sure that the work of the appointee is largely inconsequential for policy-making and implementation. The interviews suggest that professional knowledge is relatively more important in sectors that rely on specific skills such as finance, the economy, health and the judiciary.

Personal connections are secondary selection criteria relative to professional expertise and political loyalty. The major exception is the regional and local administration. At the regional and local level personal networks and relations tend to be more relevant than party connections and professional skills. Moreover, the judiciary has been identified by our interviewees as an area that is subject to relatively little political influence but professional expertise is often paired with personal connections and even accusations of nepotism. Yet the distinction between political and personal connections is not always clear-cut. The selection of political appointees is usually not filtered by a central institution such as the prime

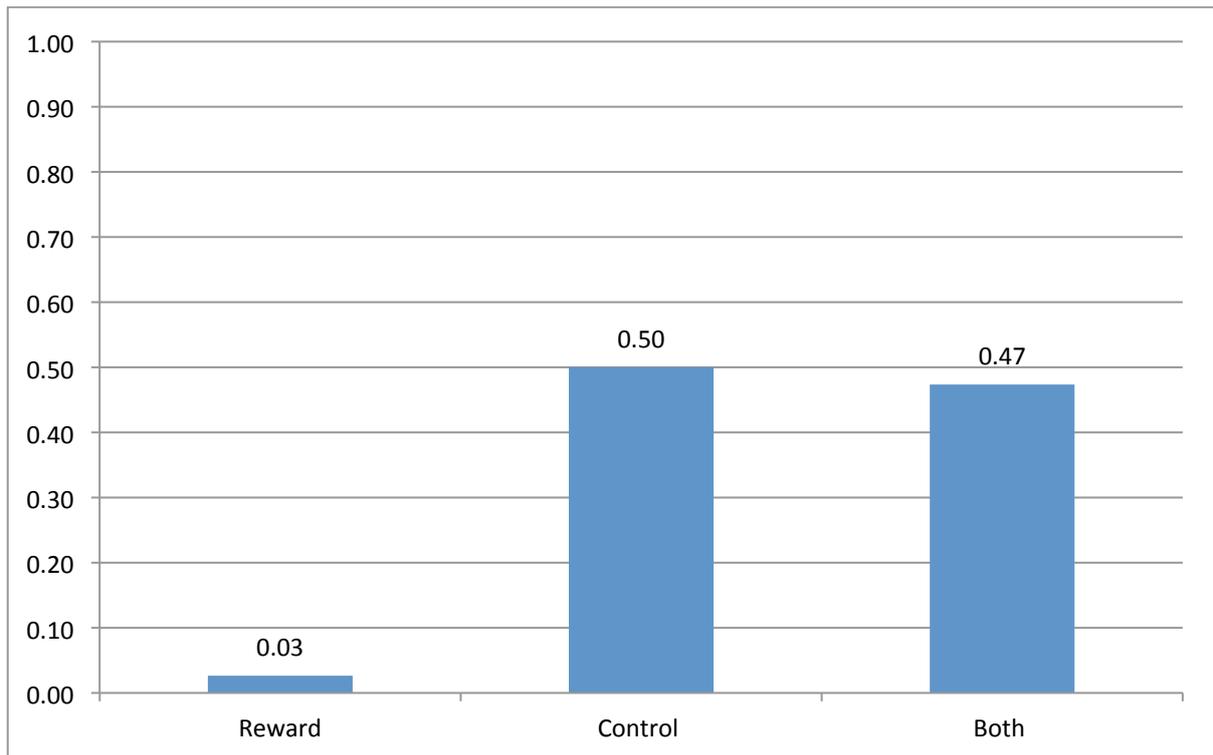
minister's office or the central party organisation so that informal relations between appointer and appointee prior to the actual appointment are very common.

The purpose of appointments

As mentioned above, the classic literature on party patronage assumes that political parties offer political appointments in exchange for services rendered to the party (Shefter 1977). The appointment is then seen as a reward for a service that has already been delivered by the appointee. By contrast, comparative public administration research tends to focus on the control function of political appointments (Page/Wright 1999). Especially principal-agency theory assumes that political appointments can reduce a principal's problem of controlling a bureaucratic agent (Calvert/Moran/Weingast 1987).

Figure 3 shows that political appointments in Hungary are primarily made for the sake of political control. Political control can take various forms. First, political appointees are specifically responsible for the coordination and control of the policy-making process. In particular, the preparatory stage of the policy process allows political appointees to influence the contents of legislation in accordance with the programme of the party or more specifically the minister. Second, political appointees are specifically charged with the control of policy implementation. According to our interviewees, in almost all sectors political appointees influence the allocation of licences, permits, contracts and financial subsidies. In the media, broadcasting licences would be handed out. In the cultural sector, funding for the organisation of exhibitions, competitions, festivals etc would be provided. In the area of EU fund management, contracts and financial support are granted by regional development councils. The list of examples quickly indicates that political appointments have created considerable risks of corruption in the public sector.

Figure 3. Purpose of appointments



Third, we learned that political appointees are specifically dealing with the control of information flows. In the area of foreign policy for instance prime ministers can benefit from the appointment of loyal supporters in order to stay in the loop and to pre-empt the activities of the foreign minister if they desire so. Fourth, control can take the form of co-optation when political opponents are given appointments in order to buy their silence or even their collaboration in selected areas. We found that cooption occurs frequently in the financial sector when financial experts from competing wings within the governing parties as well as experts close to the opposition parties are silenced with an appointment to the managing boards of state-owned banks and enterprises.

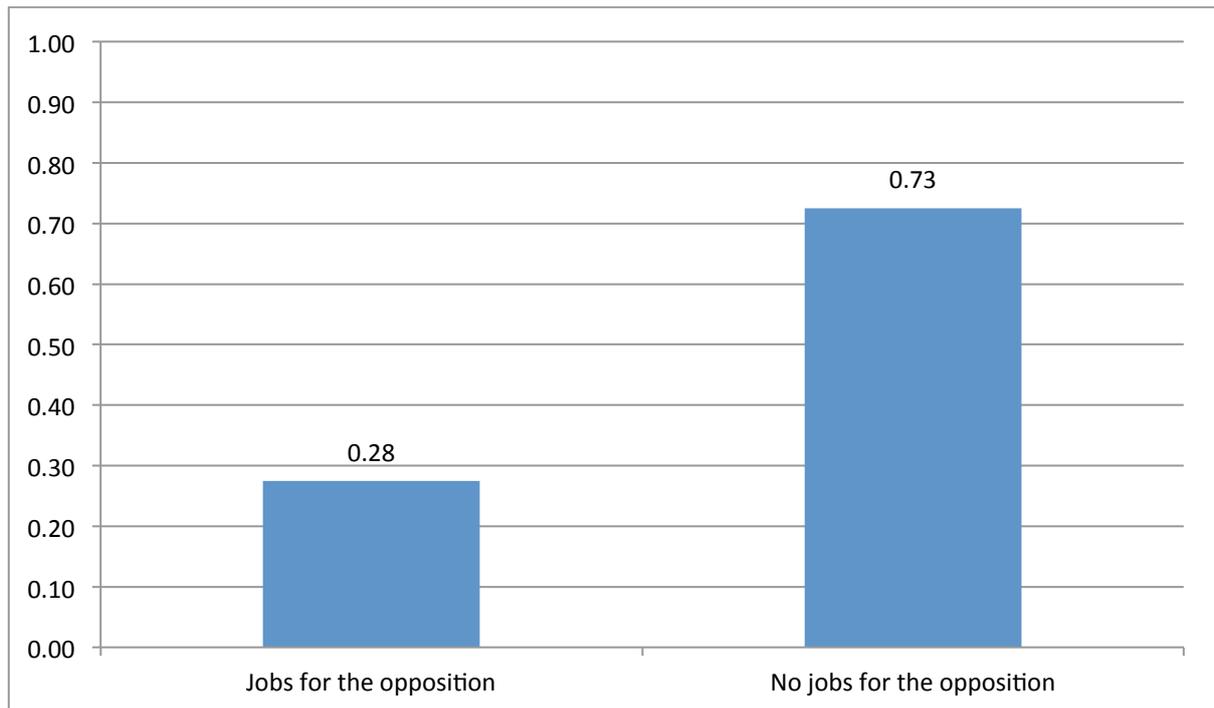
Even if control comes out as the most important motivation behind political appointments, we have to recognise that appointments also have a reward function in many sectors. Several sectors such as foreign affairs, finance, the economy and the media provide islands of reward in the EIS. In foreign affairs, for instance, it is possible to earn an appointment to an ambassadorial post. Appointments for the sake of reward are also regularly made to boards of state-owned banks and enterprises. The assumption in these cases is typically that the

appointee has a less strategic role to play in the process of policy-making and implementation.

Jobs for the opposition

Finally, Figure 4 shows that party patronage in Hungary follows largely a majoritarian, winner-takes-all principle. Governing parties typically reserve the spoils for themselves. Opposition parties only have access to a small number of policy sectors and only under specific conditions. In the media, the proportional representation of government and opposition parties is ensured by law. The president of the Hungarian broadcasting commission, ORTT, is an affiliate of the senior governing party, while the first deputy president is a delegate of the largest opposition party. Proportion representation is also ensured with regard to nomination to the governing boards of television and radio corporations. In a few other sectors such as foreign affairs, finance and the economy, affiliates of the opposition have areas in which they can ‘survive’ while their party is out of office. Strategically less important embassies and the boards of state owned companies provide settings in which opposition affiliates may be kept in their posts but their influence on decision-making is minimal. These kinds of EIS were also mentioned above as islands of reward, in that the control of policy-making and implementation was not necessarily the main purpose of political appointments.

Figure 4. Distribution of jobs between government and opposition parties



Conclusion

This chapter has examined party patronage in Hungary. It has shown that parties reach all sectors of the state but the degree and the patterns of patronage vary across policy sectors. In particular, we identified ‘captured sectors’ with a high degree of party patronage such as the media, healthcare, the regional administration and foreign affairs; ‘partially disciplined sectors’ such as finance, the economy and the military/police which maintain patronage-free areas among NDAS; and ‘partially insulated sectors’ such as the judiciary and culture/education that are characterised by a relatively lower degree of patronage and by keeping their EIS largely free from political appointments. The chapter has further found that political appointments are primarily made by the party in public office, in particular, ministers of executive branch ministries. Appointments are made for the sake of politically controlling policy-making and policy implementation rather than rewarding loyal party supporters. Yet political loyalty is a near-necessary condition for promotion and appointment to senior positions in the state, while professional skills are an important complementary criterion for the choice of appointees. Political appointments are largely reserved for

governing parties unless formal rules institutionalise a share of positions for the opposition parties, for instance, in the media sector.

Over time, party patronage has increased in Hungary though it has always been at a high level. During transition and shortly after the formation of the first democratic government, efforts were made to de-politicise public administration and hence to reduce the influence of parties on appointments. These attempts did not succeed. The Antall/Boross government (1990 – 1994) started to re-politicise the appointment and selection of public sector managers during the second half of its term in office. The election victory of the socialists in 1994 led to the dismissal of appointees associated with the Antall/Boross government and the return of many officials from late-communist governments. At this point, patronage politics in Hungary had adapted to democratic conditions and it had regenerated itself. Subsequent government alternations followed the same script. Appointees of the departing government were dismissed. Then the vacancies were taken by appointees close to the incoming governing parties. Over time, the scope of political appointments has increased in width by including more and more institutions and in depth by slowly creeping down the institutional hierarchies.

Party patronage has hence become a key feature of political life in Hungary. The two main political camps have created their own reservoirs of experts and activists who are ready to move into public office when their bloc of parties comes to government. Patronage plays an important role with regard to the political control of the policy process in a competitive and polarised political environment. It has also been important for the stability of the main parties on the left and the right. Parties have acted as gate-keepers for careers in the public sector and for the provision of public goods thanks to their control of the policy process by means of political appointees. The stabilisation has come at a price, as patronage increases corruption risks in the public sector and hence more popular distrust in political parties. In fact, patronage strategies run the risk of being self-defeating because they further decrease the legitimacy and trust of the public in political parties and as a result nurture populist challenges of the establishment. The outcome of the most recent elections in 2010 provides a good illustration of this dynamic. Yet party patronage is deeply entrenched in Hungary and it is unlikely to disappear regardless of the parties that are present.

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