

Party Patronage and State Politicisation in The Post-Communist Countries of Central and Eastern Europe: A Game Theory Approach

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Abstract

This article aims at offering a framework for analysing party patronage and state politicisation based on game-theoretic reasoning. It is argued that in order to reveal the main causal mechanisms behind these phenomena, one can focus on the cooperation between political parties analysis based on the model of prisoner's dilemma. The article identifies four sets of obstacles to party cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe: unstable and polarised party systems; "the rules of the game" legitimising party patronage; dense party networks and their building through patronage; and insufficient regulation and weak enforcement of the merit principle in state administrations. The influence of these causal mechanisms in the post-communist countries can be explored through historical process-tracing and other methods. Finally, the article proposes several country-specific hypotheses for the empirical study of party patronage and state politicisation in Lithuania.

1. Introduction

Although party patronage and politicisation of state administration are encountered in many democratic countries, these phenomena are particularly widespread in the post-communist liberal democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). There is no single motivation for politicisation, but rewarding the loyal members of political parties and controlling the decision-making process are the main reasons behind party patronage and state politicisation (Kopecký et al. 2008).

There is widespread agreement that politicisation is one of the most important factors reducing the competence, efficiency and effectiveness of governance (e.g. Peters and Pierre 2004) and the success of civil service developments in the CEE

countries (e.g. Verheijen and Coombes 1998). Political interference is in deep conflict with such principles of a career civil service model as merit, professionalism and neutrality. Despite some professionalisation of human-resource management in these countries as a result of their accession to the EU, the return of politicisation was observed at the level of top appointments after EU membership (World Bank 2006; Meyer-Sahling, 2009a). Persisting state politicisation in the CEE region is illustrated by the reports that having come in power, the Hungarian government of Victor Orban or the Romanian government of Victor Ponta weakened independent state institutions and placed their supporters into senior administrative positions (Economist 2012). In its 2012 report on Romania's progress under the monitoring mechanism of judicial reform and fight against corruption, the European Commission expressed its strongest doubts ever about the country's ability to comply with the EU's fundamental principles and the sustainability of reforms (EurActiv 2012).

One Lithuanian case shows that party patronage can spark a controversy leading to a political crisis. In 2011, the Minister for the Interior (from the Liberal Centre Union) dismissed two top managers of the Financial Crime Investigation Service (the agency under the Ministry of the Interior) from office amid the investigation of an information leakage to the press about the bankruptcy of the Lithuanian bank "Snoras". This dismissal prompted a government crisis, which was eventually solved by a political agreement brokered by the President. During the crisis, the Homeland Union (Lithuanian Christian Democrats), a leading coalition party, employed political means in order to return these agency heads to office in the absence of court-case results. Also, before his decision to withdraw from office the Minister for the Interior used his political authority to quickly appoint a new agency head, who was allegedly more loyal to his political party. This case illustrates that in order to achieve their political goals both coalition parties possibly employed party patronage.

In this article politicisation is defined as decision-making and public management, where professionalism and merit are replaced by political/partisan criteria (Peters and Pierre 2004), while the power of political parties to make party/partisan appointments to positions in the public/civil service stands for party patronage (Kopecký and Mair 2011). Party patronage usually materialises in the appointment and dismissal of heads of public sector organisations, as well as other public/civil servants holding managerial positions. These positions could be politicised *de jure* (by officially replacing career positions with political ones) or *de facto* (when the appointment of career servants is informally politicised). Furthermore, politicisation of the civil service is not the only outcome of party patronage – political parties can exercise political influence over other government decisions, such as the structure of individual public organisations or financial management. The concept of party patronage is intertwined with other concepts, such as clientelism (defined as releas-

ing a benefit from a political party to an individual in order to obtain electoral support) or corruption (defined as illegal public decisions taken by parties in order to obtain financial resources) (Kopecký et al. 2008).

Despite the persistence of party patronage and state politicisation in the CEE region and their importance to effective governance, there is no agreement in academic literature about the main factors influencing these phenomena and their measurement. Therefore, this article theorises about party patronage and state politicisation and calls for a shift from the logics of “communist heritage” and party competition to a more multifaceted approach based on game theory for understanding these phenomena. Also, the article explores possibilities for the further empirical study of party patronage and state politicisation in CEE, particularly in Lithuania.

The article is divided into four main sections. After the introduction, the second section discusses the main results of theoretical and empirical studies analysing party patronage in the CEE region, while the third section elaborates an alternative approach combining the main cooperation instruments in a prisoner’s dilemma and the most important factors explaining party patronage and state politicisation in the post-communist countries. Finally, the article concludes by proposing the characteristics of an in-depth empirical study of these phenomena in Lithuania, including several country-specific hypotheses.

2. Comparative studies on party patronage in Central and Eastern Europe: divergence of assessments and explanations

The phenomenon of party patronage in the post-communist countries was linked with the role of political parties in the process of re-building the CEE states (Grzymala-Busse 2007; Kopecký 2006; O’Dwyer 2006). This relation between political parties and the state was of a complex and mutual nature.

On the one hand, political parties in this region are dependent on the state. Unlike their counterparts in advanced Western democracies, parties of the post-communist countries are weakly entrenched in society. Despite some variations, in most CEE countries voters poorly identify themselves with one or another party, electoral volatility is high, turnout in elections and party membership is low, while party relations with ideologically close grass-roots organisations are poorly developed. Therefore, parties in this region usually overwhelmingly rely on the state and its resources in order to maintain and develop their activities (Kopecký 2006).

On the other hand, CEE political parties (or to be more precise, certain elite groups from the organisational core of parties) played a crucial role in building and reforming state structures. During the post-communist transformation, they were able to establish “the rules of the game” that best served their interests.

In comparison with Western Europe, where parties evolved over a long period of time in line with various cleavages in society, political parties from the CEE region had much wider possibilities to shape state structures and institutions under their control. Therefore, there was ample space for party patronage or even “state colonisation”. Under these favourable conditions, political parties managed to politicise state administration, inflate its size, create new agencies and exploit state resources through public procurement or profit from privatisation. Moreover, patronage practices that formed during the post-communist state-building process became enrooted in the political systems. Since weak state institutions or the civil society could rarely resist such party interference in an effective way, political parties (or elite groups closely related with them) were able to continue exploiting resources of the state for their benefit.

However, such patronage-based logic of state development should not be viewed as a determined process that equally affects all CEE countries. Although one can observe different trends of party patronage in the CEE region, no consensus has been reached so far regarding how to best measure this phenomenon and which CEE countries are most affected by it. Different theoretical and empirical accounts sometimes produce contradictory results. Perhaps the most illustrative example is the Czech Republic, which is treated both positively and negatively in terms of party patronage by different authors (i.e. Grzymala-Busse 2007 vs. O’Dwyer 2006; see Hanley 2008 for a detailed discussion on this issue).

There are three fundamental questions on the research agenda of party patronage in the CEE region: (1) how to measure party patronage most properly; (2) what is a variation of party patronage in this region; (3) and what factors could best explain different trends of this phenomenon. The remaining part of this section presents the main theories explaining the causes of party patronage and its variation in the post-communist countries of the CEE region. We focus on Lithuania, which provides an interesting case – similarly to the Czech Republic, the extent of party patronage in Lithuania was interpreted quite differently by different authors.

One way of analysing and explaining party patronage in the post-communist countries is to link it with the communist legacy. This is not very much surprising as the very communist rule was the extreme case of party patronage in the form of fusion between the communist party and the state. However, nowadays there is a general understanding that there was no single (ideal) model of communism. In fact, there were different types of communism that could have different impacts on the subsequent development of the post-communist state and its relations with political parties. Kitschelt and his colleagues (1999) established the well-known classification of party systems of the post-communist CEE countries, which was already employed for the study of party patronage by Kopecký and Spirova (2011). This conception puts emphasis on *the legacy of communism* and its impact on subsequent processes of state-building and the development of party systems. Three types of communism

were identified: (a) bureaucratic-authoritarian (Czech Republic, East Germany); (b) national-accommodative (Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia); and (c) patrimonial (Bulgaria, Romania and the republics of the Soviet Union, except the Baltic countries). There were also the intermediary cases of the Baltic countries, Serbia and Slovakia (mix of the national-accommodative and patrimonial communist types) and Poland (mix of the bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative communist types). The basic criterion behind this classification was timing in the introduction of communism in these countries, i.e. the level of socio-economic modernisation before the communists' coming into power. Countries that achieved modernisation before the Soviet rule managed to keep relatively effectively functioning structures of modern bureaucracy (i.e. the bureaucratic-authoritarian type of communism). In contrast, countries that were less advanced before the imposition of communism followed the path of patrimonial communism characterised by networks of personal (or even kin-based) relations. National-accommodative communist countries were "in-between", concerning both the pre-communist level of modernisation and the consequent functioning of state administration in communist times. Although this classification, first of all, serves to indicate the historical-structural reasons why in some countries the ex-communists remained an influential political force after the system change, it may also pre-suppose different prospects for the development of party patronage during the post-communist transformation.

Kopecký and Spirova (2011) sought to assess the impact of communist legacies on the spread of party patronage by analysing the Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria – three CEE cases representative of each inherited type of communism. The manifestation of party patronage was analysed on the basis of expert surveys. Their research results largely confirmed the hypothesis that party patronage in the post-communist region was affected by the type of communism these countries inherited. The least party patronage was found in the Czech Republic (as a former bureaucratic-authoritarian communist country), while the "patrimonial" Bulgarian state was the most seriously affected by this phenomenon. Meanwhile, Hungary fell in between the other two countries, but its level of party patronage was closer to the Bulgarian situation.

As was already mentioned, Kitschelt interpreted communism in the Baltic countries as a "mixed" type of the national-accommodative and patrimonial types. However, more detailed analysis showed that the Estonian and Latvian (since purges of the Latvian communist party in 1959) communist regimes most resembled the bureaucratic-authoritarian traits of communism observed in the Czech Republic or East Germany. These two Baltic countries had already been relatively advanced when the Soviets took power. In contrast, Lithuania was the least developed among the Baltic countries before the Second World War. Therefore, the communists played a far more important historical role in modernising this country, which allowed them to get more firmly embedded into the Lithuanian society (Norkus 2012).

Indeed, the Lithuanian communist regime was one of the most stable regimes among the Soviet republics. It managed to quell national resistance, while avoiding any serious political purges quite often initiated from the Kremlin.¹ Political patronage during the Soviet times was an informal network that played a crucial role in the recruitment, mobility and behaviour of communist-party members. This implied that the criterion of “personal reliability” was a key factor for career development in state or party organs. The patron-client relationship was a mutual long-term investment. A stable political environment was essential for the development of an extensive patronage network that could embrace the whole state apparatus. However, Gorbachev’s reforms and the subsequent rise of a national movement made the political environment in the republic much more volatile, allowing a new first secretary, Algirdas Brazauskas, to systematically overhaul the whole party machine by exploiting his public popularity. In fewer than eighteen months in power, he re-shuffled the top-level personnel of party and state apparatus to the extent that his predecessor Griškevičius was able to accomplish only during an entire decade (Willerton 2009, 185). Although it reflected the rapid demise of the old political-patronage machine, it also left open possibilities for patronage to regenerate in a new fashion under the conditions of open political competition.

Other authors indicate *the robustness of party competition* as a fundamental condition for the restriction of the development of party patronage in the CEE countries (Grzymala-Busse 2007; O’Dwyer 2006). In other words, when state structures are not properly developed, and societal control is weak, party patronage and politicisation of state administration can be at least partly constrained, if a significant political alternative exists. A strong opposition is capable of scrutinising the actions of its ruling political competitors. Besides, the very existence of solid oppositional forces deters governing parties from “predatory” actions against state institutions. By taking into account the real probability of change of powers, governing parties will strive to create such legal conditions that would ensure the restriction of future state exploitation by oppositional forces once they come into power.

However, there is no consensus how to measure and evaluate the robustness of party competition. Anna Grzymala-Busse indicates that robust party competition exists when opposition is (1) clearly identifiable; (2) capable of forming the government (i.e. it is not politically “ostracised” by other political forces) and (3) vociferously critical by controlling activities of government (Grzymala-Busse 2007, 11). The robustness of party competition in the CEE countries, according to Grzymala-Busse, depended largely on the fate of the communist party. Those states whose communists successfully reformed themselves had better preconditions for the development of party competition. Such communists converted into a politically

1 John P. Willerton, an American expert on Soviet patronage politics, thoroughly depicted the complex succession process, when after the unexpected death of Antanas Sniečkus (the long-standing first secretary, who ruled the country for over thirty years) in 1974 the overall patronage network was slowly transformed under the rule of incomer Petras Griškevičius (1974–1987).

influential democratic force capable of forming the government. In other countries, where the communists failed to reform themselves, they were either banned from the political arena or politically isolated in negotiations over government formation. Finally, there were countries (e.g. Bulgaria), where the ex-communists won the very first democratic elections and became a dominant political force for quite a long time.

The factor of communist conversion after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its success determined Grzymala-Busse's first two criteria of robust party competition. The third one – the vociferousness of opposition – was operationalised by assessing how many formal written questions are delivered by oppositional members of parliament for the government. The more questions the opposition raises, the more vociferous it is (Grzymala-Busse 2007, 12–13).

According to these criteria, Grzymala-Busse describes Lithuanian party competition as quite robust. The former communists successfully reformed themselves and established a real political alternative to the right-wing parties, and the government was quite closely scrutinised by the parliament (three formal questions per MP). Other CEE countries that fall into the same category are Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Estonia.² In these countries, according to the calculations of Grzymala-Busse, the exploitation of state resources by parties was not as intensive as in other CEE countries. The state apparatus expanded less, formal state-control institutions were established before the EU demanded their existence; also the financing of political parties was more transparent and more strictly regulated (see Table 1).

Table 1
State exploitation trends in Central and Eastern Europe, 1990–2002

Countries	Establishment of formal state control institutions	Increase of personnel of state apparatus (%)	Rules of party-financing	State exploitation index
Hungary	1997	138	Strict regulation	1.4
Estonia	1996	158	Strict regulation	1.6
Slovenia	1997	214	Strict regulation	2.1
Lithuania	1996	239	Strict regulation	2.4
Poland	1998	244	Strengthening	4.4
Slovakia	Initiated in 2001	300	Regulated after 2000	6.0
Czech Republic	Initiated in 1998	400	Sources unregulated	7.0
Bulgaria	Initiated in 2000	431	Sources unregulated	8.3
Latvia	Initiated in 2000	467	Sources unregulated	8.7

Source: Grzymala-Busse 2007, 5.

2 In Estonia, the ex-communist party did not survive, but the Centre Party headed by Edgar Savisaar created a formidable political alternative to right-centrist parties.

The main conclusion of this analysis is quite paradoxical. It indicates that if actors of the former regime actively participate in post-communist state-building processes, they strengthen party competition and thus contribute to the restriction of patronage and politicisation of state administration. According to this analysis, state exploitation in 1990–2002 was the smallest in Hungary and Estonia among the CEE countries. They are followed by Slovenia and Lithuania (though the expansion of state administration in the latter country was 239 % in 1990–2002). The worst results were observed in the Czech Republic, Latvia and Bulgaria.

However, in-depth single-country studies challenged the conclusions of Grzymala-Busse. In Hungary, “the rise of the partisan mode of politicisation broadly coincides with the rise of a critical opposition in the form of a polarised party competition between the MSZP and the SZDSZ, on the one side, and the Fidesz and its centre-right allies, on the other” (Meyer-Sahling 2008, 25). According to the Hungarian study, it was the structure of political competition that better explained state politicisation in post-communist Europe.

Furthermore, Grzymala-Busse’s conception of robust party competition and consequent exploitation (patronage) of the state is not the only one. In analysing the robustness of party competition other authors employed more traditional criteria of party system institutionalisation, such as electoral volatility or degree of fractionalisation. Moreover, the patronage of state institutions can be assessed by employing widely used ratings of governance effectiveness or corruption control.

For instance, O’Dwyer defined robust party competition as a situation when no party is dominating, while a party system is institutionalised, i.e. when voters can choose among a small (“manageable”) number of stable parties that have clear coalition-making preferences. If these conditions are satisfied, politicians’ accountability to voters is higher, while space for the development of patronage is smaller (O’Dwyer 2006, 7). In the evaluation of robust and institutionalised party competition, O’Dwyer considered five dimensions: level of domination, parties’ number in parliament and government, electoral volatility, closeness of party system (measured according to an index created by Mair (1997)) and internal coherence of parties (observed through centralisation, stability of leadership, programmatic cohesion and internal discipline).

According to these criteria, O’Dwyer singled out three types of party competition. It is (a) *responsible party governance*, when both government and opposition are little fragmented, have a stable electorate and strong party organisations; (b) *dominating party governance*, when government is formed by one party that is capable of maintaining its prevailing role during more than one elections, and opposition is weak and fragmented (this type also has another subtype (b2) when the dominating party loses elections, but manages to retain organisational unity, while the ruling coalition consisting of former oppositional parties is divided and

unstable); and (c) *weak governance*, when fractionalisation of both governmental and oppositional parties is high and they are poorly organised.

Only under the first type of responsible party governance can one expect effective state governance and the restriction of patronage. Meanwhile, dominating party governance usually means the runaway expansion of state administration, politicisation or even “colonisation”, when “power party” effectively penetrates into the structures of state administration and fuses with them. In the case of weak party governance, the danger of political patronage is not so acute, but fragmented and weakly coordinated government can struggle with resisting attempts of separate parties in government (and their representatives in the cabinet of ministers) to create new state agencies and in other ways to exploit state resources in their controlled policy areas. Moreover, divided government usually does not have sufficient capacities to implement essential reforms in order to increase the effectiveness of governance.

Although O'Dwyer was mostly concerned with only three CEE countries (Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia), he also attempted to apply his findings for other 52 countries in the world that have experienced transition to democracy since 1980. This sample included other CEE countries that joined the EU in 2004 or 2007. By analysing the period 1996–2002 he classified Lithuanian party governance (as well as that of Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia) as weak and, therefore, prone to some degree of party patronage. Only the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary were characterised by O'Dwyer as countries with responsible party governance, while Slovakia was classified as an example of dominant party governance due to Vladimir Meciar's political influence at that time.

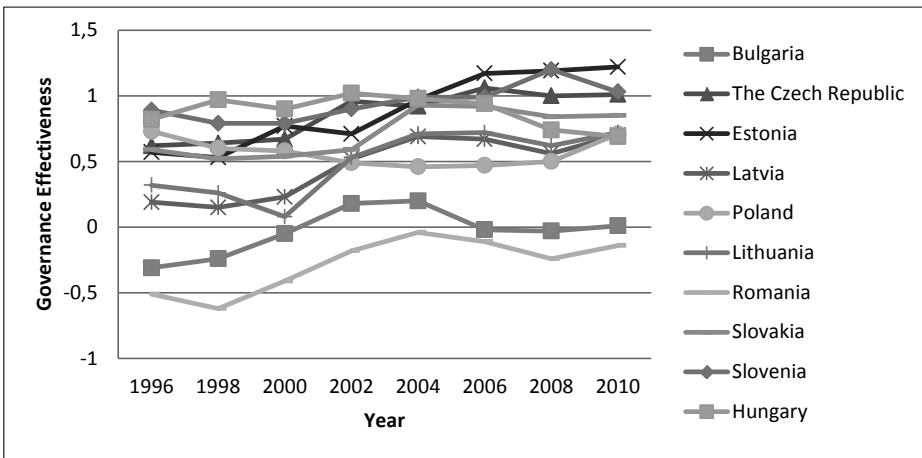
Although O'Dwyer observed Lithuanian party developments until 2002, the subsequent trends in Lithuanian politics (characteristic of one of the highest electoral volatility in the region and increased fractionalisation in parliament and government) signified the continuation of weak party governance. Such development clearly differed from Estonia, whose party system became very institutionalised (Pettai et al. 2011, 153). On the other hand, if one looks backwards at how the Lithuanian party system was developing before 1996, the landslide victory of ex-communists (i.e. pre-independence hegemonic party) in 1992 (surpassing their nearest rivals by more than 20 % of the votes) should be noted. This allows, according to O'Dwyer's criteria, qualifying the Lithuanian development of party politics in 1990–1996 as a dominant party regime, which arguably created favourable conditions for party patronage during this early period of post-communist transformation.

In the evaluation of the extent of party patronage in the aforementioned 52 countries, O'Dwyer used government effectiveness rankings published by the World Bank since 1996 (Kaufmann et al. 2011). This indicator encompasses perceptions about quality of public services, civil service and degree of its independence, as well

as quality of formulation and implementation of policies and reliability of government's commitment to enact these policies. The indicator is based on the surveys of international and national experts, such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, the Business Enterprises Environment Survey, the Economist Intelligent Unit, the Gallup World Poll, the World Economic Forum's reports and other studies.

From Figure 1 (see below) one can identify three groups of CEE countries differing in the quality of governance. Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia constitute the leading group, while Bulgaria and Romania significantly lag behind. Other countries (including Lithuania) form "the middle group". It is also important to note that for most countries (especially EU-accession latecomers, i.e. Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia) governance effectiveness increased during the process of negotiations on EU membership, while after joining the club (2004 or 2006, depending on the country) the quality of governance remained stagnant or even decreased (except Poland).

Figure 1
World Bank rankings of governance effectiveness, 1996–2010



Source: Kaufmann et al. 2011.

However, these data lend more support to the "Kitscheltian" hypothesis than to the "O'Dwyerian" one. Bulgaria and Romania, two post-communist EU member states that experienced patrimonial communism, significantly lag behind, while Estonia and the Czech Republic (as the successors of bureaucratic-authoritarian communism) are at the top. One observation that slightly differs from the research results of the three CEE countries (Kopecký and Spirova 2011) is that "national-accommodative" post-communist countries converge more with "bureaucratic-authoritarian" successors than with countries that inherited patrimonial communism.

Another way of analysing and explaining the variation of party patronage in CEE countries was recently suggested by Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012). They employed the findings of expert survey and personal interviews conducted in 2007–2008 on the politicisation of top management in CEE countries that joined the EU in 2004 (Meyer-Sahling 2009a; 2011). The collected data revealed that senior civil service was most depoliticised in the Baltic countries. The values of the overall politicisation index created by the authors (standardised to 100) ranged from 14 (Estonia) to 24 (Lithuania) and 28 (Latvia). According to the authors, even for the top level (i.e. state secretaries) the politicisation scores were rather low, especially for Estonia and Lithuania. The second group of countries includes the Czech Republic (50), Slovenia (48) and Hungary (54), where the politicisation scores are very high for the top level, while the second level below the minister (under-secretaries) is located in a grey area between politics and administration. The third group includes Poland (66) and Slovakia (66), which had almost consistently the highest politicisation scores for all four levels (i.e. including directors of departments, and deputy directors of departments and heads of units) (Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012, 10–11).

The authors explained this variation of politicisation among the eight CEE countries that joined the EU in 2004 by different patterns of government alternation. According to them, regular government alternations that are wholesale and involve changes between parties from competing ideological blocs tend to produce a wider range and more intense politicisation than partial changes in government (Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012, 12). Although such an explanation denotes the importance of competition among parties, it also contradicts the aforementioned conceptions of “robust party competition”. The latter theories point out that “open” party systems (O’Dwyer 2006), i.e. those characterised by partial government changes or lack of competing ideological blocs (Grzymala-Busse 2007), tend to increase the probability of party patronage, while Meyer-Sahling and Veen claim the opposite. These contradictions are related to both differences in the scope of the phenomenon (Meyer-Sahling and Veen focused only on the politicisation of senior civil service) and assumptions about parties’ behaviour. While both O’Dwyer and Grzymala-Busse emphasised the rent-seeking behaviour of parties, Meyer-Sahling and Veen stated that the main motive behind party patronage is the political control of bureaucracy. According to them, if government is formed after a wholesale change of the political landscape, the governing parties are most likely prone to distrusting the incumbent bureaucrats and, thus, try to gain powers to change them in order to control the policy-making process.

The imperatives of party-building and policy control were at least partially confirmed by the most recent comparative survey on party patronage in Europe (Kopecký et al. 2012). Speaking about CEE countries’ patronage was first of all associated with the need of newly created post-independence parties to replace the “old-timers” – people in various state institutions, such as ministries, schools and

hospitals. At the same time, with the allocation of decision-making powers to a “new” political appointee, party patronage could cascade downwards to the bottom of ministerial hierarchy (Kopecký and Mair 2011). However, the analysis by Kopecký and Spirova (2011), which is based on the same survey (Kopecký et al. 2012), showed that different CEE countries are characterised by different “mixes” of parties’ motives to get involved in patronage activities. According to their data, patronage in the Czech Republic (inheritor of the “bureaucratic-authoritarian” legacy of communism) is mostly motivated by a desire to “control” state institutions. Over 65 % of the respondents identify it as the dominant motivation in the country, and only 24 % thought that party patronage is exercised because of both control and reward. Meanwhile, in “patrimonial” Bulgaria only 39 % of the respondents pointed to “control” as the single dominant motivation to engage in party patronage, and the same proportion thought parties appointed loyal staff both to reward and control. In Hungary (inheritor of “national-accommodative” communism) reward by itself plays an insignificant role, but control is also not the most important driving motivation. 50 % of the respondents thought that the main motive of party patronage is control, while 47 % identified that it is both reward and control (Kopecký and Spirova 2011, 912).

To sum up, our desk research indicated not only different trends of party patronage among CEE countries, but also diverging theoretical approaches to their analysis and explanation (see Table 2). There are notable differences how this phenomenon is defined and measured, what the main explanatory factors are and which countries perform better or worse. Perhaps one of the underlying reasons for this divergence of party-patronage assessments in the region is the different time span of these studies. While Kopecký and Spirova (2011) and Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012) took snapshots of the situation in 2006–2008, O’Dwyer (2006) and Grzymala-Busse (2007) mostly analysed the first decade of post-communist CEE transformation.

The fact that studies of different time spans observed different trends of party patronage in the analysed CEE countries demonstrates that the situation is dynamic and to some extent remains open to changes. On the other hand, the results of the Kopecký and Spirova (2011) study and the long-term development of the World Bank governance effectiveness rankings (see above, Figure 1) at least partially confirms the validity of the theory of different types of communism and their impact on the post-communist development of administrative traditions. However, one has to link past legacies with current trends by introducing specific causal mechanisms and assessing other possibly important factors that unfold over time.

As Meyer-Sahling and Yesilkagit (2011) argued, the reproductive capacity of an administrative tradition (or its constraining impact on administrative changes) is likely to be weaker in CEE compared to Western Europe due to the following three differences between these two regions: (1) the long-term stability versus insta-

Table 2
Variation of party patronage in Central and Eastern European countries and its explanations

Study	Explanation	Measure of party patronage	Period of analysis	"Good" cases*	"Intermediate" and "bad" cases*
O'Dwyer 2006	Party competition: institutionalisation of party system	Growth of state's personnel; World Bank rankings of governance effectiveness	1996–2002	CZ (EE, HU)**	PL, SK (SI, LT, LV, PL, BG, RO)**
Grzymala-Busse 2007	Party competition: fate of communist successors and vociferousness of opposition	Growth of state's personnel; existence of legal institutions of parties' financing and state control	1990–2002	HU, EE, SI, LT	PL, SK, CZ, LV, BG
Kopecký and Spirova 2011	Legacy: types of communism (based on Kitschelt et al. 1999)	Expert survey on party patronage (Kopecký et al. 2012)	2006–2008	CZ	HU, BG
Meyer-Sahling and Veen 2012	Political control of bureaucracy: wholesale government changes	Expert survey on politicisation of senior civil service (Meyer-Sahling 2009a; 2011)	2007–2008	EE, LT, LV	SI, CZ, HU, PL, SK

Source: compiled by the authors. BG – Bulgaria; CZ – Czech Republic; EE – Estonia; HU – Hungary; LT – Lithuania; LV – Latvia; PL – Poland; RO – Romania; SK – Slovakia; SI – Slovenia.

* Cases are categorised according to the detailed rankings of respective authors.

** O'Dwyer (2006) analysed in detail only the cases of CZ, PL and SK. However, he also applied his framework to other CEE countries (see in parentheses).

bility of administrative traditions; (2) the internal consistency versus inconsistency of ideas, institutions and practices; and (3) the dependence versus autonomy of an administrative tradition from external pressure and influence-seeking. Therefore, this article calls for a more multifaceted approach to the study of party patronage and state politicisation in this region (see the following section). Our approach is largely in line with the suggestion to incorporate other aspects of administrative reform (including the influence of the EU, policy transfer, political parties or domestic crisis) in the CEE region besides the communist legacy (Meyer-Sahling 2009b, 525). However, it is a game theory approach that makes our approach different from the previous proposals.

3. Prisoner's dilemma, process-tracing and the measurement of state politicisation

Rational-choice approaches (including game theory) are widely used not only in economic theory, but also in other social sciences for understanding various economic, social and political phenomena (Osborne 2004). Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012) followed the principal-agent approach in explaining the proliferation of party patronage in CEE. Previously, Geddes (1996) explained state reforms in Latin America on the basis of two overlapping prisoner's dilemmas: (1) one between patrons and their clients; and (2) another one between different politicians in the legislature.³ According to her analysis, since political parties need resources in their competition for votes, they cannot offer reform strategies that could harm particular interest groups providing these resources. In this article, we follow the basic model of a prisoner's dilemma described below in order to explain party patronage, focusing on various conditions for party cooperation.

In a simple prisoner's dilemma, two players have two actions: they can either cooperate or defect. If both players cooperate, they both get the payoff of 4. This is one of the Pareto efficient outcomes, where the collective payoff is biggest (8). If one player cooperates while another player defects, the former gets the payoff of 6 and the latter gets 0. If both players defect, they both get the payoff of 2. This is called the Nash equilibrium, where the collective payoff is smallest (4), but neither actor has an incentive to take any unilateral action because it will decrease his/her payoff (from 2 to 0) (see Table 3 below giving hypothetical points for each payoff). Overall, it is in the individual interest of both players to defect, whereas it is in their collective interest to cooperate according to this model.

3 However, despite the sophisticated model, it did not uphold the assumption of symmetric power between different actors in a prisoner's dilemma type of situation.

Table 3
Prisoner's dilemma payoff matrix

	Player A cooperates	Player A defects
Player B cooperates	4/4	0/6
Player B defects	6/0	2/2

Source: the authors, based on desk research.

The logic of prisoner's dilemma can be applied to understanding party patronage and state politicisation. Although most political parties are aware of the negative effects of party patronage and publicly oppose it, as rational actors they may have no interest in discontinuing their patronage practices. If one party politicises state administration, it gets the payoff of controlling decision-making and rewarding its loyal members (6), whereas another party gets nothing (0). If both parties politicise state administration, they become collectively worse off (2/2) because such politicisation produces staff turnover and reduces professionalism in the civil service. However, no political party has an incentive to make a unilateral move from this stable situation because it entails a further reduction to its already small benefits of patronage (from 2 to 0). If both parties restrain from party patronage, they become collectively better off (4/4) because of higher stability in the civil service and access to professional advice for decision-making and implementation. However, this requires a great deal of cooperation between political parties.

Therefore, the main question is how cooperation can emerge in a prisoner's dilemma type of situation. According to Nowak and Highfield (2011), cooperation between different actors evolves through the following five main mechanisms: (1) repetition (direct reciprocity between players); (2) reputation (indirect reciprocity between players); (3) network reciprocity (networking between players); (4) group selection; and (5) kin selection. We employ the first three mechanisms in formulating our hypotheses for the study of party patronage and state politicisation. Also, game theory argues that regulation and sanctions can make cooperation possible. Cooperation can be fostered by working rules set by the governments or actors themselves to guide their actions, as well as credible sanctions for punishing those who break these rules (Ostrom 2005). Interestingly, she found that self-governance was often more effective than government-imposed rules in managing so-called "common resource pools" (e.g. pastures, fish or forest resources).

In order to elaborate causal mechanisms behind party patronage and state politicisation, we link the main factors explaining these phenomena to the main cooperation incentives from the literature of game theory. In the rest of this section, we set out four sets of factors that facilitate or constrain the exercise of party patronage by political parties and interpret them through the theoretical lenses of game theory.

The first factor is *a type of party competition*. Mair (1997) introduced three variables that allow delineating the model of party competition for government seats: alternations in government, innovation (familiarity) with the alternatives of government composition and possibilities for parties to enter the government. In closed systems, government alternations occur after elections (i.e. not between them) and wholesale. Combinations of parties for making governing coalitions are familiar and well-predicted, and outsider parties are excluded. Meanwhile, in open systems, government alternations are partial, formulas of making coalitions are “innovative”, and programmatic differences with outsider parties tend to be overlooked when forming government. However, an exact impact of closeness of party competition is not clear. According to O'Dwyer (2006), closed party systems should create less favourable conditions for party patronage, while Grzymala-Busse (2007) indicates the existence of a competitive ideological opposition bloc as a precondition for taming parties' rent-seeking behaviour. However, these observations were disputed by Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012), who claimed that wholesale government alternations (the characteristic of closed party systems), especially between different ideological blocs, trigger party patronage.

According to the cooperation mechanism of repetition (direct reciprocity) in game theory, cooperation depends on the future probability of playing more games by the same actors. The higher this probability, the more cooperation is likely to emerge (Nowak and Highfield 2011). Therefore, in explaining party patronage and state politicisation it is important to analyse the factors of electoral volatility, the number of effective electoral and parliamentary parties, vote differentials, as well as the index of party stabilisation proposed by Lewis (2006). Furthermore, reciprocity can depend on the ideological positions of actors as parties from competing ideological blocs can be more inclined to replicate opponent's previous actions, employing the so-called tit-for-tat strategy. Therefore, less cooperation between political parties could be expected in more polarised party systems.

The second factor is *actor constellations in the politico-administrative system and their beliefs*. Actor constellations could be defined as relative power positions of the main political and administrative actors (such as party leaders, presidents, prime ministers, ministers, vice-ministers and other top managers) and their core beliefs towards patronage and politicisation. Game theory argues that cooperation between actors in a prisoner's dilemma type of situation depends on reputation (indirect reciprocity): individuals are likely to cooperate if a larger group is expected to value their reputations (Nowak and Highfield 2011). Therefore, if political and administrative elites do not adhere to the democratic and professional “rules of the game” and the majority of powerful actors perceive party patronage as a legitimate behaviour in office, a good deal of state politicisation is likely to occur. In other words, the structure of actor constellations or, in terms of game theory, the relative importance of party reputation and trust determine whether or not different parties will cooperate.

The third factor is *a type of party network* (width or density). It was hypothesised that party patronage in contemporary democracies could be a supply-driven phenomenon (Kopecky et al. 2008). We take this hypothesis further by arguing that the ability of political parties to exercise party patronage depends partly on the width and density of party networks. According to the cooperation mechanism of network reciprocity in game theory, the denser the network, the less cooperation is likely to emerge between different actors (Nowak and Highfield 2011). Accordingly, the denser the party system, the more party patronage can be expected.

Therefore, one can expect that political parties with longer government experience and larger party memberships should possess longer lists of loyal candidates for filling up available positions in the public or civil service. Also, new political parties can mobilise party supporters from the private and public sectors and even employ a deliberate strategy for building a party network by recruiting the existing civil servants or making political appointments. Thus, dense party networks could be the outcome of a rational party strategy to exploit civil service positions for organisational development. However, the ability of party leaders to exercise party patronage can depend on their position in the party network. It was argued that since patronage jobs are usually distributed according to the party hierarchy, the distribution of patronage opportunities is affected by intra-party competition for party leadership (Kemahlioglu 2012). As a result, the exercise of party patronage can be more limited in those political parties where party leadership is contested.

The fourth factor is *legal regulation of public administration and civil service and its enforcement*. This is often offered as an alternative explanation of party patronage in the CEE region. For instance, in the analysis of possible conditions that could limit party patronage Gwiazda (2008) identified the legal framework and, more specifically, the existence of a special apolitical and independent agency that could oversee the formulation and implementation of public appointment legislation and scrutinise public appointments. Game theory recognises the importance of working rules and credible sanctions for cooperation between actors. Rule configurations including different types of working rules (boundary rules, position rules, scope rules, choice rules, aggregation rules, information rules and payoff rules) are important in explaining the structure of an action situation and results (Ostrom 2011). The rules of the game are set by the political parties in the parliament and government, but in the presidential or semi-presidential systems the Presidents can also be involved in the formulation and enforcement of legislation concerning public appointments.

Moreover, in the CEE region one should note the importance of external requirements from a superior jurisdiction or office on the legislation and its enforcement. It was recognised that since the end of the 1990s, CEE civil service reforms were heavily influenced by the conditionality of EU membership (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Bouckaert 2009). For instance, the EU had an important ef-

fect on the civil service reform in Lithuania, especially with regard to encouraging and informing the development of civil service programmes, as well as forcing Lithuania to adopt civil service legislation (Nakrošis and Meyer-Sahling 2009). This influence is illustrated by the decision to rush the draft Civil Service Law through the parliament before the planned announcement of the Commission's Regular Report due to a fear that slow progress to meet the EU requirements in the civil service area will delay the start of EU membership negotiations (together with the first group of more advanced applicants).

The game-theoretic approach can be combined with historical process-tracing (George and Bennet 2005). This method could empirically test the cooperation between political parties. Also, historical process-tracing was often used in the studies of post-communist countries. For instance, Bennich-Björkmann (2006) analysed the genesis of pro-independence right-centrist parties of Latvia and Estonia (that share many similarities) in order to identify the main causes of variation in political corruption within these Baltic countries. She found that these parties differed in their social roots. While the core of the Estonian National Party "Pro Patria" that took the power after the gaining of independence originated mainly from intellectual strata and academic student movements, the basis of its counterpart "Latvian Way" (the Latvian party that dominated the entire first decade of independence) was in part formed by then influential business people, who sought to use their political connections in order to shape important decisions according to their particular interests during the early period of post-communist transformation.

The longitudinal analysis should also allow explaining *partial reforms* (meaning both incompleteness and bias of reforms) that seriously obstructed or aggravated the transformation process in many post-communist countries (Hellman 1998). Perhaps the best example of partial reforms in the post-communist space is privatisation. Lithuanian large-scale privatisation was more rapid than in other Baltic countries, but this "shock therapy" was only "partial", linked with the postponement of macroeconomic stabilisation and incomplete external liberalisation. Such "mix" of policies provided opportunities for early market reform winners to seek rents by price arbitrage, receiving credits from the state banks and buying state enterprises for asset stripping (Norkus 2011, 29). Although this process was just a one-time action of state exploitation, it had significant implications for subsequent economic development and fiscal capabilities of the Lithuanian state.

Partial reforms should not be attributed only to particularities of the privatisation process. One can detect different trajectories in the reforms of public policies among the Baltic countries. One example is the reform of healthcare, which is one of the core welfare policies. While Estonia radically replaced the inherited soviet model by introducing a compulsory healthcare insurance as a main source of financing the healthcare system in 1991, other two Baltic countries significantly delayed these reforms (Lithuania) or even refused to implement them by continu-

ing to finance healthcare from the state budget (Latvia). Eventually, this led to differently structured opportunities for political interference in the health system and its finances. Whereas an autonomous health insurance fund has evolved in Estonia, leaving limited space for its politicians (and parties) to interfere into administrative affairs of the healthcare system, other two Baltic countries still run national health insurance funds susceptible to political pressure through financing directly from the state budget or administrative subordination to responsible ministries. It is important to emphasise that differently constructed institutions of stewardship and financing of the health system in the Baltic countries imply varied effectiveness in the distribution of public resources and diverging results of the entire system. According to our analysis, Estonia scored far better than other two Baltic states on many important health indicators, including restructuring the network of hospital and other healthcare institutions, financial fairness of the system, the level of corruption, mortality from amenable diseases, the satisfaction of patients and international rankings (Gudžinskas 2012).

Civil service reforms implemented by many CEE governments in the pre-accession period could also be treated as partial reforms. Academic research showed limited continuity of these reforms after gaining EU membership, with some variation across the CEE countries. While the Baltic States continued their civil service reforms, other CEE countries reversed (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovenia) or re-oriented (Hungary) their civil service paths after joining the EU (Meyer-Sahling 2009a). More specifically, changes in the Lithuanian legislation governing the executive and civil service point to the oscillation of patronage opportunities throughout the period 1990–2012. Until the end of the 1990s, the absence of effective civil service regulation regarding job security allowed political parties to make politically motivated appointments and dismissals of civil servants. In 1998–1999, the adoption of the Government Law (making a distinction between the recruitment of career civil servants and political appointees) and the Civil Service Law (establishing the career principle in the civil service and providing for the independence of civil servants from political interference) clearly constrained (but not abolished) the distribution of patronage jobs in the civil service during the pre-accession and post-accession periods. However, the increasing level of structural politicisation in the Lithuanian civil service (as illustrated by the decision to politically appoint heads of the government agencies in 2010, see below for more information) points to the re-orientation of some civil service principles in such regional reform front-runners as Lithuania.

The future research of party patronage and state politicisation could focus on the dynamics of these phenomena by seeking to explore the main causal mechanisms in the selected CEE countries. If the game-theoretic approach allows identifying the main causal mechanisms, historical process-tracing can empirically test how these mechanisms influence patronage appointments over time. Furthermore, since historical analyses risk producing quite complex causal explanations, it is pos-

sible to rank the relative importance of contributing causes on the basis of certain measurement criteria (Steinberg 2007). This strategy can help identify the most important causes within the whole causal package. When the number of cases ranges from a few countries to fewer than a dozen of them, qualitative comparative analysis could be employed to explain any variation in the levels of state politicisation and the characteristics of similar or different country sets (e.g. Ragin 1987).

Finally, there is the need for better data to measure persisting party patronage in the post-communist administrations. The turnover of staff was often used as a proxy indicator in determining the levels of politicisation in the CEE countries. The OECD/SIGMA report argued that the turnover of Lithuanian civil servants following the 1996 parliamentary elections was about 30 %, but this rate dropped to about 20 % in 2003 (OECD/SIGMA 2003, 10). The number of staff dismissed from the civil service positions declined to 8–10 % in the period 2004–2006, according to the data from the Civil Service Register (Valstybės tarnybos departamentas prie VRM 2007).

However, greater stability in the Lithuanian public administration does not automatically imply lower politicisation. Declining staff turnover may be associated with the dominance of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party in the executive power during the period 2001–2008. The 2002 reform of the Lithuanian higher civil service, under which politically-appointed vice-ministers were replaced with state secretaries and ministerial under-secretaries (all career civil servants), favoured the appointment of top managers loyal to this party. Later, the presence of this party in the Lithuanian government could have prevented other coalition partners from “cleaning up” top echelons of the Lithuanian ministries and agencies. Therefore, the small turnover of top managers within the public administration does not indicate the actual level of politicisation.

The politicisation of senior managers may be assessed both *de jure* and *de facto*. *De jure* or structural politicisation may be measured in terms of the number of top civil service positions assigned to different types. The larger the number of politically-appointed positions relative to career civil service positions, the larger the structural politicisation of the civil service. By using this measure of *de jure* politicisation Beblavý et al. (2012) estimated that in Slovakia the scope of structural politicisation grew gradually from 0 % in 1993 to 66 % in 2004 and to 90 % in 2011. In order to assess the trend of structural politicisation in other CEE countries, it is useful to gather more quantitative and qualitative data. For instance, the 2010 reform of Lithuanian government agencies, which changed the status of agency heads from career civil servants to political appointees, considerably increased the level of structural politicisation. Also, there is a risk that the introduction of fixed employment terms for heads of government agencies and agencies under the ministries (in 2010) could be politically abused by the next government in office when these four-year terms will expire in 2014.

The study of *de facto* politicisation is more challenging. The level of *de facto* politicisation can be judged according to the scope of replacements (the percentage of heads of institutions and other managers who changed over time) and the depth of replacements (in the organisational hierarchy of institutions) after changes of the ruling majority in the parliament and/or changes of government at the central level. In order to classify *de facto* politicisation, the typology of politicisation developed by Meyer-Sahling (2008) may be applied: 1) *non-politicisation* (when new governments do not replace senior civil servants and new vacancies are filled by the existing civil servants based on professional competence); 2) *bounded politicisation* (when inherited senior officials are replaced by promoting internal candidates from the civil service); 3) *open politicisation* (these officials are replaced by external candidates from various institutional settings); and 4) *partisan politicisation* (these officials are replaced by partisan candidates from various political settings, including political parties).

The majority of politicisation studies drew upon expert surveys in determining the level of *de facto* politicisation. Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012) analysed politicisation of the CEE administrations based on the expert survey from the 2009 SIGMA report, in which respondents were asked to estimate political influence within four hierarchical levels in the ministerial administration. Also, the expert survey was the main source of information in the comparative study of party patronage and party governance in European democracies (Kopecký et al. 2012). However, since the expert surveys measure the perceptions of politicisation and are often based on small samples, their data could be biased by individual characteristics of the respondents and provide only vague estimates of politicisation that do not reflect the actual situation.

In order to obtain more objective data about politicisation, one can measure the number of appointments to, and dismissals from, top civil service positions. For instance, the study of politicisation in the Hungarian senior civil service (Meyer-Sahling 2008) relied on the data collected from Hungarian Political Yearbooks and Public Administration Almanacs. It found a gradual shift from the bounded mode of politicisation to the partisan one in the Hungarian civil service. When the data about public appointments and dismissals are not available, one can use the number of acting officials as a measure of party patronage. For instance, it was found that 44 % of the senior positions in the Polish ministries were occupied by acting officials at the end of 2005 (Gwiazda 2008, 818).

Finally, politicisation is not limited to the ministerial bureaucracy. The analysis of party patronage, which was extended beyond the core of civil service to include other public institutions, found that political appointments in the ministerial bureaucracy prevail in the majority of European countries (Kopecký et al. 2012). However, this may not be true in the CEE region, where party patronage could penetrate lower levels of public administration. One Lithuanian study found a link

between the changes of government and the ministerial reorganisations on the one hand and agency-level organisational changes on the other, based on the mapping data (Nakrošis and Budraitis 2012). The first group of seven Lithuanian governments that came into power after a large change in the parliamentary majority were more active in making organisational changes compared to the second group of eight Lithuanian governments which started their terms after a small change in the parliamentary majority.⁴

4. Conclusions: the characteristics of the Lithuanian politico-administrative system and possible hypotheses for the study of party patronage and state administration in Lithuania

The explanatory factors and causal mechanisms presented in the previous section should be adapted to the context-specific study of party patronage and politicisation in individual post-communist countries. Therefore, we present the main characteristics of the Lithuanian political and administrative system that should inform the formulation of hypotheses for the study of these phenomena in this country.

The first factor is the unstable and fragmented nature of Lithuania's party system. According to the assessment of Rose and Munro (2009), Lithuania's index of volatility (i.e. sum of the arithmetic change in each party's percentage share of the list vote) between founding (in 1992) and the latest elections (in 2008) was equal to 196 points. It means that more than nine in ten votes shifted between these elections. Among the CEE countries, the higher index of volatility was registered only in Latvia (200), where all the votes shifted. Moreover, the supply side was responsible for 193 of 196 points of the Lithuanian index of volatility. It means that such high electoral volatility was caused mostly by political elites that repeatedly disrupted party competition by creating, abandoning, splitting or merging parties, thus creating the "floating" party system (Rose and Munro 2009, 50–54). While in general all CEE party systems to some extent could be classified as "floating" (especially compared to their Western European counterparts), Lithuania belongs to the group of new EU member states, where instability is particularly pronounced. This was also confirmed by Lewis' (2006) estimates of stability of CEE party systems. By calculating his index of party stabilisation (IPS; based on the proportion of votes taken by parties represented in parliament more than on one occasion), he found the evolution of two groups of CEE countries. Lithuania (IPS=53) (together with Latvia,

4 These former governments enacted the majority of organisational changes (89 out of 133 or about 67%) in the Lithuanian agency landscape. Out of 51 terminations, 32 terminations (63% of all ministerial agencies) were adopted after wholesale changes of governments, while 19 terminations (37%) occurred after partial alternations in government (Nakrošis and Budraitis 2012). However, the relationship between the changes of government and organisational changes is not straightforward – it is difficult to disentangle the political influence on organisational changes from other factors affecting these changes.

Slovakia and Poland) falls within the category of “less stable” party systems (IPS in the range of 52–57), while Hungary, Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia have more consolidated party systems (their IPS range between 77 and 95).

Finally, the Lithuanian political system is highly fragmented. The number of both effective electoral parties (EEP) and effective parliamentary parties (EPP) in Lithuania has steadily increased since 2000, and according to recent estimates (2010) both indicators are highest among the CEE countries and most EU countries (EEP = 8.96; EPP = 5.79) (Armingeon et al. 2012). In the middle of 2012, Lithuania's party system contained both old and new political parties with different sizes of party membership and government experience. While old parties, which were set up after the re-establishment of the Lithuanian independence, had a great deal of loyal supporters, new parties, which emerged during the party system evolution, were “floating above the society” (Ramonaitė 2008, 91). The first set of political parties included such parties with long government experience as the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats (which was in office in 1996–2000 and 2008–2012) or the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (in office as the former Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party in 1992–1996 and in 2001–2008 under its current name). The second set of political parties included such new parties as the Labour Party (in power in 2004–2006) or the National Resurrection Party (it joined the government in 2008, but it was absorbed by another party from the governing coalition already in 2011). The fragmented party system can be one of the main important factors explaining the proliferation of party patronage in Lithuania, whereas significant differences in terms of party age and size can affect their patronage opportunities and strategies.

Second, the Lithuanian government is one of the most unstable in the CEE region (with 14 changes of government in the period 1990–2010, making the average length in office about 16 months). More specifically, the Lithuanian party system has witnessed repeating alterations between left-wing and right-wing party blocs (especially in the period 1992–2000, when the Lithuanian government was controlled or dominated by single political parties holding the majority of parliamentary seats) and the adversarial nature of party politics since 1992, indicating high polarisation inside the party system. Since 2000, the Lithuanian government has gained more stability (with only five changes of government), and the 2008–2012 Government managed to finish its full political term. Although coalition governments have been in power since the end of 2000, the parliamentary elections continue to bring important changes in the parliamentary majority with many legislative seats going to political parties from the opposite political bloc (Nakrošis and Martinaitis 2011). This political trend in Lithuania was confirmed by the 2012 parliamentary elections, which were won by the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, a leading party of the competing bloc.

Third, there is evidence to suggest that the Lithuanian political elite perceived party patronage as legitimate behaviour in office. The 2000 survey of 53 Lithuanian ministers from the core ministries indicated that more than 80 % of them strongly agreed and agreed that it is better when ministers themselves appoint their officials. However, the breakdown of responses according to two time periods (pre-1996 and post-1996) showed that the attitude of ministers slightly changed over time (coinciding with the improving professionalism of civil servants): about 78 % of the post-1996 ministers preferred to use this authority, compared to 94 % of their pre-1996 colleagues (Drengsgaard and Hansen 2004, 26). Furthermore, historical tracking of the cases of unethical behaviour or fraud in office illustrated that members of the political and administrative elite tended to pursue their goals outside the democratic and professional “rules of the game”. A quite long list of public scandals (violations of the compatibility of public and private interests, unethical behaviour in the public service or even suspected cases of corruption and fraud) in Lithuania demonstrated not only the lack of morality and ethics in the public service, but also its acceptance by political masters (party leaders or executive politicians) and the insufficient enforcement of legislation (Palidauskaitė 2011).

Fourth, it is important to recognise that the Lithuanian legislation provides for the protection of (top) civil service jobs. The SIGMA report argued that the protection of Lithuanian top officials was highest in the whole CEE region (Meyer-Sahling 2009a, 38). The Lithuanian Civil Service Law, which was adopted in the pre-accession period and maintained after Lithuania’s accession to the EU, identifies a list of specific circumstances under which a civil service relationship may be terminated (resignation from office; retirement; an abolished position; dismissal from office as a disciplinary sanction; unwillingness to be transferred to a lower position after the unsatisfactory assessment of performance; a court sentence imposing a penalty for a major crime or a crime against the civil service). Before the 2009 reform of the Lithuanian higher civil service, the rules of dismissal for state secretaries and ministerial under-secretaries did not differ from those applied to other civil servants. However, this legal uniformity did not fully prevent politically motivated change of top civil servants. For instance, several cases of state secretaries leaving office at the request of a minister were reported in 2007 and 2008 (Meyer-Sahling 2009a, 38).

Furthermore, these legal provisions are enforced by the Lithuanian administrative courts. In its landmark ruling of 2005, the Highest Administrative Court set the main criterion for illegal dismissal of civil servants: “abolishing the position of a civil servant as a ground for dismissing a civil servant exists only when after the abolishment of the position the entire scope of specific functions assigned to a civil servant and describing the abolished position is actually not carried out” (Nakrošis and Meyer-Sahling 2009, 34). In their rulings, the administrative courts often favoured claims raised by the Lithuanian civil servants who defended their illegal dismissal from office. For instance, in 2011 the Highest Administrative Court ruled that the decision of the Minister for the Interior to dismiss a former head of

the Civil Service Department (the agency under the Ministry of the Interior) from office was illegal, returning him to office.

Taking into consideration the main politicisation variables and these country-specific characteristics, we proceed to formulating our hypotheses.

*Hypothesis No. 1:
the influence of instability and polarisation of a party system on state politicisation*

We hypothesise that the lack of stability in the party system induced party patronage and state politicisation. As it was argued above, Lithuania is distinguished by one of the highest supply-driven electoral volatility and one of the highest degree of parliamentary and government fragmentation among the European countries. In line with game theory, this is likely to inhibit party cooperation on more professional management of senior civil servants. Also, weak party discipline and lack of “responsible party government” (O’Dwyer 2006) could create serious obstacles to implementing structural reforms in various policy sectors in order to reduce the fragmentation of governance and patronage.

Moreover, *we hypothesise that polarisation in the party system stemming from the dominance of two competing party blocs* (led by the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party/the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party and the Homeland Union – Lithuanian Conservatives/Lithuanian Christian Democrats) *prompted repeated and politically motivated appointments and dismissals in the Lithuanian civil service.* Party polarisation was particularly large in the period 1991–2000 (after the break-up of parliamentary majority held by so-called *Sąjūdis*, the Independence Movement, to the 2000 parliamentary elections, which shortly brought into power the coalition of *New Politics*).

Finally, *one can expect that large changes in the parliamentary majority produced higher politicisation of the Lithuanian top civil service compared to small changes in the parliamentary majority.* The previous agencification study found a link between the government and organisational changes, with the governments appointed after a large change in the parliamentary majority adopting more organisational changes and terminations compared to the governments that started their terms after a small change in the parliamentary majority (Nakrošis and Budraitis 2012). Therefore, we expect that state politicisation was higher under the former Lithuanian governments (the Governments No. 1, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 15) compared to the latter governments (the Governments No. 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14).

Hypothesis No. 2:

political patronage as a result of “the game in town” played by political and administrative elites

We hypothesise that state politicisation is shaped by the consequences of partial reforms leaving ample room for the exploitation of public resources and by the acceptance of party patronage as a legitimate rule of the game. Both conditions are mutually reinforcing: the larger the scope for exploiting public resources, the more important party patronage becomes for political and administrative elites. Also, the more party patronage is accepted as a legitimate behaviour (without a challenge to party reputation), the more political parties are likely to use it in exploiting state resources.

If the scope of public resources could be measured on the basis of government expenditure as a percentage of GDP or the volume of public procurement, the perceptions of political and administrative actors about party patronage can be gauged according to survey or interview data, as well as historical tracking of patronage appointments involving the politicians. Moreover, repeated discussions with stakeholders are useful in order to obtain information about rules used in patronage appointments that evolved over long periods of time and are not explicitly stated (Ostrom 2011, 21).

Hypothesis No. 3:

party networks and party patronage

*We hypothesise that party patronage can differ across political parties, depending on their existing networks and their strategy for building or strengthening their organisational networks. As we argued above, the denser the network, the higher proliferation of party patronage can be expected. Therefore, it is interesting to analyse how different party networks and strategies shaped the exercise of party patronage. For instance, we expect that politicisation of the Lithuanian civil service was higher when the government was controlled by the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party, which inherited links with the soviet *nomenklatura*. Also, it is possible that such new political parties as the Labour Party or the National Resurrection Party could have used patronage as a deliberate strategy for building their party networks.*

The influence of party networks on party patronage could be analysed through social network analysis. Since this analysis assesses the patterns of interaction in relationships between people and organisations, it could be appropriate for mapping and measuring the position of state officials and civil servants in the party networks and their relationship with party leaders. Data for this analysis could be gathered from the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania (on the participation of state officials, political appointees and other civil servants in the parliamentary and municipal elections), surveys of state officials/civil servants or the analysis of appointments to, and dismissals from, top civil service positions.

*Hypothesis No. 4:**job protection, government-wide reforms and politicisation of the civil service*

Finally, we hypothesise that the principle of job security and its enforcement in administrative courts constrained the dismissal of civil servants from office. Although the media reported a number of court rulings against illegal dismissals from office, it is important to undertake a systematic review of these judgements. It is also interesting to analyse what sanctions were imposed by administrative courts and the extent to which politicians managed to eschew them. This analysis should reveal the extent to which legal regulation and enforcement actually constrained the exercise of party patronage by political parties.

Since the principle of job security reduces the ability of political parties to engage in patronage activities, it is also interesting to analyse the efforts of governments in office to impose restrictions on patronage in order to lock their preferred officials or the opposite efforts of newly appointed governments to unlock the civil service for placing their loyal supporters. These rational strategies could be pursued through such means as removing the principle of job security from the civil service legislation or bypassing it in the form of reorganising an office or cancelling a position.

Therefore, we also hypothesise that some government-wide organisational changes were adopted by governments in office in order to keep or bring their preferred officials in the state administration. Since 2000, there have been two major changes to the Lithuanian political-administrative structure implemented by different party blocs. In 2002 (during the term of government led by the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party), the structure of the Lithuanian ministries was altered by replacing vice-ministers (political appointees) with state secretaries and ministerial secretaries (career civil servants). The right-wing governing coalition adopted the opposite reform in 2009, when state and ministerial secretaries were replaced with politically-appointed vice-ministers and chancellors (career civil servants) in the Lithuanian ministries (Nakrošis and Meyer-Sahling 2009). It is interesting to explore the extent to which these government-wide reforms were politically motivated and what turnover of top management they actually produced.

Preliminary analysis of top management changes in the period 2009–2011 point to the bounded mode of politicisation in the Lithuanian ministerial administration, despite the almost wholesale change of government at the end of 2008 and important government-wide changes (including reform of the higher civil service, ministerial and agency structures) under the 2008–2012 Lithuanian Government. Out of 13 state secretaries, whose positions were abolished in 2009, the majority of them continued their service in the ministerial administrations (six former secretaries took new chancellor positions, three servants took lower positions in the ministerial hierarchy and one of them was promoted to a political position) compared to only three former secretaries who were forced out or resigned by the

middle of 2010. Of 14 new chancellors appointed to the Lithuanian administrations after the reform, the majority of them came from the civil service (four chancellors were the incumbent state secretaries and eight of them were promoted from the civil service), while only two chancellors came from political/partisan environment by the end of 2011. It is also interesting to assess the extent to which these government-wide reforms affected the politicisation of top managers in the Lithuanian agencies.

Based on the structure of Lithuanian public administration (Nakrošis and Martinaitis 2011, 61), a number of different Lithuanian public sector organisations could be included in the study of politicisation (from the ministries to state-owned companies at the central level or even public organisations at the local level). For instance, it is important to study how party patronage affects state-owned enterprises, whose low profit rate in Lithuania was associated with their unprofessional and politicised management. Political attempts to seize control over overall institutional structure and the structure of individual public sector organisations could be measured according to the nature and timing of organisational changes based on the mapping methodology (Nakrošis and Budraitis 2012).

Administrative data on the change of Lithuanian top managers may be obtained from the Register of Civil Servants managed by the Civil Service Department under the Ministry of the Interior. Since 2003 this Register has collected information about the civil service positions (including job title of civil servants/employees; legal basis and establishment date of civil service positions; and job descriptions) and civil servants (personal data; data about education and foreign languages; service length; various awards and disciplinary proceedings; training; recruitment and dismissal; remuneration and performance appraisal; etc.) that could be processed for the analysis of party patronage and state politicisation in Lithuania.

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