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## *Patronage in Asian Political Systems A Framework for Research*

B. GUY PETERS

Most scholars thinking and writing about employment in the public sector begin with a normative model based on a career, nonpartisan civil service (Dahlström and Lapuente, 2017). The same bias toward civil service is shared by international organizations, and their commitment is perhaps even stronger as they make grants contingent on administrative reforms. This notion of the career civil servant is a very old one, going back to the mandarins in China, but despite its antiquity, it remains the model for the public bureaucracy today, even though the degree to which countries have achieved this ideal varies markedly (Kopecký et al., 2016).

The model of the career civil service is justified by the assumption that a career civil service will serve any government with loyalty and expertise. A good civil servant is expected to be able to serve any political “master” and to be loyal to the government of the day, as well as to the State. Likewise, civil servants are hired for their abilities, as demonstrated by formal testing and qualifications, and expected to be knowledgeable in specific policy domains, as well as in the processes of governing more generally. Being a civil servant is a career, and over time in that career, the individual civil servant gains experience and greater knowledge, and a greater capacity to assist political leaders in governing.

The above is the textbook justification for the existence of a career in civil service, and in many cases, this idealized vision of the civil servant is a reasonably accurate depiction of practice. But many politicians in industrialized democracies do not consider the civil service in quite such positive terms (see Bauer and Becker, 2020). These politicians see the civil service as an entrenched elite that has its own views on policy and attempts to thwart the policy initiatives of the elected government. For contemporary populist politicians, such as Donald Trump, the civil service is the “Deep State” that prevents them from governing as they would like (Moynihan, 2021; Swan, 2022).

In other types of political systems that fundamental assumption about the civil service may not have been valid for some time, if ever. In many countries, the civil service, even if selected by merit system, may not be the “best and brightest” that are assumed to be recruited to positions in the civil service system. When civil service salaries are low and not competitive with comparable positions in the private sector, then the government is unlikely to be able to recruit the type of talent required for effective governance (Brans and Peters, 2012; Hood, Peters and Lee, 2003). That the absence of adequate rewards for public office is also likely to de-motivate members of the civil service so that they are not the active, committed workers envisioned by the advocates of the civil service.

Given the concerns that politicians may have about the quality and loyalty of civil servants, whether those concerns are justified or not, all governments make political appointments in the public bureaucracy. Even those countries with well-functioning civil services do find it desirable to permit political executives to make some appointments in the bureaucracy. There are marked differences in the number of appointments that are made. For example, in the United States, the president and his colleagues in government can make over 4,000 appointments in the executive branch, while the prime minister in Canada has only several hundred positions at his or her disposal. Many governments in less-developed countries will have thousands of patronage positions available to the political leaders, and even if there is a civil service, its impact on public policy and governance may be minimal (see Brierly, 2020; Panizza et al., 2023).

By patronage appointments we mean the power of political actors to appoint individuals, using their own discretion, to nonelective positions in the public sector, irrespective of the legality of the decision (Kopecký et al., 2012; Panizza et al., 2019). This definition does not make assumptions about the motivations for the appointments, the roles played by appointees, their professional capabilities, the legality of their appointments, or about the impact of patronage appointments on the quality of public administration. Those characteristics of appointments differ across countries, or even among different appointments within the same country, and will be the subject of our comparative analysis. We are interested first in the number of appointments that are made and then concerned about their characteristics.

We are not, however, using patronage to mean political leaders using their powers to distribute benefits to voters or local brokers in order to win elections (see Kenny, 2017). This form of linkage is better described as clientelism (Stokes et al., 2013), or more generally “distributive politics” (Golden and Min, 2013). In this study, we are more concerned with the recruitment of individuals into posts within the government, many of which may be directly involved with making public policy.

This book is about patronage appointments in the bureaucracy in Asian countries. In the sample of countries included in the book, there are several countries with very well-developed civil service systems, with minimal levels of patronage (Japan, Singapore, and South Korea). There are also some countries that have a career civil service system but use patronage to assign employees to more or less desirable positions within the bureaucracy (Bangladesh and India). And in between those extremes are several countries with formal civil service systems that are heavily influenced by political parties and by social ties to society (Vietnam, Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia). Thus, within these countries, we have a wide range of cases, and we can use these cases to understand better the causes and consequences of patronage in the public sector. And in addition, patronage in these Asian countries can be compared with that found in other areas of the world.

## 1.1 The Nature of Contemporary Patronage

Before discussing the cases of patronage in Asian bureaucracies more specifically, we will make several more general comparative and theoretical points about patronage in contemporary governments. Asian governments reflect most of these characteristics but also have their own distinctive features that will be discussed later in this chapter. As is true for any study of comparative public administration and governance, we need to be concerned about both similarities and differences among the cases.

The first point to make here is the relationship between the concepts of patronage and politicization of the public service. As already noted, patronage refers specifically to the appointment of public officials by political leaders. Politicization is a more encompassing concept, referring to all attempts to impose political control over the public bureaucracy (Cooper, 2020; Peters and Pierre, 2004). Patronage is

clearly one such method for gaining control, but it is not the only one. For example, political leaders may employ methods such as moving perceived opponents out of key positions within agencies, or demotions of perceived enemies, to impose more control. And for countries such as China and Vietnam with a hegemonic political party, the link between politics and the bureaucracy is very direct and pervasive so that the bureaucracy is almost inherently politicized.

We should also differentiate patronage from clientelism, although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Like politicization, clientelism is a general concept concerning the relationship between political leaders – the patron – and his or her followers – the clients (Müller, 2017). In a clientelistic relationship, the patron exchanges favors, which could be jobs, for votes. But the favors distributed by the patron also may be more collective than personal, for example, public infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> Also, clientelism is generally not concerned with hiring people for upper-level jobs in government in order to improve governance, while patronage tends to focus on these managerial and advisory positions (but see Grindle, 2012). To the extent that clientelism is associated with patronage employment, it is generally for lower-level jobs in local governments.

The third point of reference for this research is that the level of patronage, and politicization, has been increasing in governments (Kopecký et al., 2012, 2016). The increases may be most noticeable in consolidated democracies where levels of patronage have been lower (Japan), but there has been some increase in many other countries as well. This increase has occurred despite attempts by some governments (see Dussauge-Laguna, 2022) to limit the amount of patronage, and the continuing pressures of international donor organizations that stress the importance of a career in civil service for effective governance and the rule of law. Governing is always political, but the process is more political and less expert in the early 2020s than it has been for some time.

Increasing levels of patronage have been driven by several factors. One has been the reaction to *New Public Management (NPM)*, and

<sup>1</sup> Ruhil and Camones (2003) argued that political machines that distributed public jobs in the United States died out when the politicians understood that it was less expensive and easier to distribute “pork barrel” projects than to distribute the jobs.

the sense among some political leaders that the public bureaucracy was becoming too autonomous from political control (Bach et al., 2018). The “presidentialization” of politics, with prime ministers consolidating their powers vis-à-vis cabinet and parliament (Poguntke and Webb, 2007), has been associated with those prime ministers building larger personal staffs through patronage appointments. Likewise, the increased partisanship of governments has led to attempts on the part of political parties to ensure their control over policy while in office, and with that the appointment of larger staffs. And finally, populism (Peters and Pierre, 2019) has been associated with distrust in the existing employees of government and a desire to replace them with more loyal representatives of “the people.”

These causes for increased patronage may not be as powerful in Asia as they have been in other parts of the world. For example, although NPM did spread to Asia it was not taken up with the intensity or success as in many other countries (Kim and Han, 2015). Also, populism has not been an important political force in most of Asia, with the exception of India, the Philippines, and Indonesia (Kenny, 2017). And having strong political leaders is not particularly new in many Asian countries, although in some cases there has been an increasing centralization of power. Still, patronage is important in Asian governments and we will need to examine what factors differentiate Asian systems from other countries.

## **1.2 Why Do Governments Make Patronage Appointments?**

The first question we need to answer is why do governments want to make patronage appointments? We have already implied the answer to that question, noting that political elites may question both the loyalty and the competence of the career civil service and will want to have their own people occupy key positions in government. That is the basic answer, but we need to consider more carefully the reasons that governments choose to go outside the civil service in order to fill positions in the public sector. And again the answers may vary across political systems, across policy domains, and across time.

The first reason for political leaders to want to make patronage appointments is that they want to be able to influence public policy and to ensure that the policies being adopted and implemented by the government correspond to their preferences. If those political leaders

do not believe that the career civil service is willing to take policy direction, or that the civil servants may have a policy agenda of their own, then making patronage appointments may be perceived as crucial for controlling policy.

In addition to controlling the direction of policy, patronage may be important for the quality of policymaking, especially in domains such as economic policy. Governments with low rates of compensation for the civil service, and especially those at the top of the civil service,<sup>2</sup> may not be able to hire the talented individuals they require to make good policies. However, individuals who would not accept a career in government may be willing to accept short-term positions, especially when they agree with the policy preferences of the incumbent leadership. Thus, patronage becomes a means of improving the quality of governance.

The second major reason for using patronage is political, or personal, loyalty. Most if not all political leaders want to be surrounded by staff who agree with their policies and politics. Patronage is the way to ensure that loyalty, as opposed to the willingness of career civil servants to serve any political master. In the eyes of politicians that willingness to serve may come with an absence of enthusiasm and at times even a tendency to shirk or sabotage the actions of a government (Brehm and Gates, 1999; Guedes-Neto and Peters, 2021). Therefore, a more committed employee is better for the politician. Further, that appointed individual may be able to do things that a member of a career public service cannot do legally.

### 1.3 A Typology of Patronage

Those two reasons for patronage appointments themselves have dimensions. First, the choice of a public servant for policy reasons may be matched by the selection of non-civil servants to perform other tasks. Those tasks may in some instances be illegal for a career public servant to perform, given their partisan political nature. These non-policy jobs still require skills, and they may be skills that are not found

<sup>2</sup> In most civil service systems, compensation at the bottom of the system is better relative to that in the private market than it is in the top-level positions. It therefore may be more difficult to recruit good senior officials for a long career, although many such employees remain in office because of “Public Service Motivation” (Vandenabeele et al., 2014).

in great abundance in the career of public service. Thus, politicians are seeking different skill sets at times, but they are still seeking skills that they cannot readily acquire within the career bureaucracy.

Within the loyalty justification of making patronage appointments, there are three subsets of reasons for making appointments. One subset reflects the loyalty that a public employee may have to a political party. A good deal of patronage within government involves giving jobs to individuals because they are members of the political party in office. In coalition governments, this will mean distributing positions among members of all the parties in the coalition. These people may have substantive policy skills or they may have more political skills, but the reason they have a job is their membership in, or at least loyalty to, a party. In one-party states, this partisan reason for appointments is crucial, and at times may make distinguishing merit and patronage appointments difficult (Jiang, 2018).

Another variety of loyalty that may be involved in patronage appointments is personal loyalty to a politician. A political leader may want his or her “cronies” in an office with him or her. Some political systems facilitate the use of personal loyalty by permitting ministers to appoint *cabinets* of advisors paid for by public funds (Eymeri-Douzans and Bioy, 2015). These appointees may be members of the political party but many will be personally committed to the political leader. Or the appointment of the friends of the political leader may be less systematized, with appointment opportunities created more on an ad hoc basis.

The third foundation for loyalty is to a social group. In societies where familial groupings, such as clans, tribes, ethnic groups, or even just extended families, are important in society and in politics then individuals may be appointed to government on the basis of that affiliation (Berenschot, 2018; Wedel, 2003). Still, in other cases, socioeconomic groups such as labor unions may be important in making appointments. When ethnicity or family is the foundation for an appointment, this may be done to reinforce the dominance of one group in government, or it could also be done to attempt to make the government more representative of the society as a whole.<sup>3</sup> In either case, the individuals appointed to office will be expected to defend

<sup>3</sup> In post-conflict societies, the elite pacts used to terminate the conflict often involve this type of representativeness in government.

the interests of their group, and also ensure that the public policies adopted also respect those interests.

There are also two subsets within the types of tasks being performed by patronage appointees in government. As mentioned earlier, we have emphasized the policy-making role of appointees, and those functions are certainly important. But some patronage appointments may be in public office to perform more political roles, whether for the political party or for the individual leader. When there are strong, programmatic political parties, patronage appointments can be made to ensure that the government is implementing the policy preferences of the party. And appointees who are loyal to the individual leader may be there to provide direction to other employees in government (especially career civil servants).

Having these two dimensions and their subsets in mind, we can construct a typology of patronage positions (see Panizza et al., 2019 for the original version of this typology). One dimension of this  $2 \times 3$  typology is the role played by the appointee – policy or political. The other dimension is the basis of the loyalty of the appointee – personal, partisan, or group. Each of these six cells then contains particular types of public employees. Not every country with a patronage system of a certain variety will necessarily have all of these types of appointees, but these do provide some idea of the range of patronage officials that can be operating in those governments.

Cell A of our typology contains patronage appointees who have been put into office because of their policy skills and their loyalty to a political party. We can refer to those appointees as “party professionals.” They not only have strong professional skills but also are committed to a political party, and will only use those skills in government when their party is in power. They are thus similar to the participants in the “government of strangers” in the United States described by Hugh Hecl (1977). When their party is out of office they typically will work in the private sector, in universities, or in think tanks, and may come in and out of government several times during their career. When working in one-party dominant political systems their time in office may be linked to a faction of the party, and they may be in more lucrative jobs in the private sector for most of their career.



Table 1.1 *Typology of types of patronage*

		Major role of appointees	
		Policy	Politics
Basis of Trust	Party	A	B
		Party professionals	Apparatchiks
	Personal	C	D
		Programmatic technocrats	Political agents
	Group	E	F
		Group experts	Social liaisons

Based on Panizza et al. (2019).

In Cell B of our typology, we find “apparatchiks.” There are individuals appointed because of their loyalty to the party, and who are responsible for political tasks within the public sector. There are various subtypes of this group mentioned in Cell B, but there are two basic functions that they perform. One of these functions is to enforce control by the party over the lower echelons of government, and in some cases (especially one-party states) even over ministers. Their other job, especially in coalition governments, is to make political deals with other ministries and other parties. These deals may be done to produce better, more coordinated governance but they may also be just about maintaining political power.

Rather than being loyal to a political party, patronage appointees in Cells C and D are loyal to, and trusted by, individuals within the government, usually a minister or the chief executive. Some of these, the “programmatic technocrats” found in Cell C, are experts in a policy domain who are willing to join the government to assist their friends in making better policies. Given their level of expertise and their opportunities in the private sector, they tend to remain in government for relatively short periods of time, but also may come and go many times depending upon changes in government. The “political agents” occupying Cell D provide political support to the political leader in a variety of ways, as mentioned in Table 1.1 (see the case of occupants of positions such as ministerial *cabinets* (Eymeri-Douzans et al., 2015), it may be difficult to distinguish the political from the professional roles of these appointees.

The occupants of Cells E and F are somewhat more difficult to specify than those found in the other four cells. They are all related to social actors in some ways, but those linkages and their role in shaping appointments may vary substantially. Our research in Latin America (Panizza et al., 2019, 2023) has identified relatively few patronage appointments of this type, but they do appear to be more prevalent in some Asian countries, especially in Central Asia. If these positions within government are granted by virtue of membership in social groups such as ethnic groups, families, or clans, then this version of patronage can be seen as enhancing the representative nature of bureaucracy.

In Cell E, we may find experts in policy domains, such as labor market policy who have been appointed at the suggestion of unions. There might also be individuals in these positions working to protect the rights and interests of traditional segments of society, or as means of co-opting members of ethnic groups into supporting the existing government.<sup>4</sup> These officials may, for example, be employed in cultural or educational organizations to foster minority group cultures. In other cases these appointments may not be so technocratic, but rather lower-level professional jobs,<sup>5</sup> or even menial jobs, given to members because of their membership in a group, whether an organization or a segment of society.

Cell F may be occupied by individuals whose appointments might be more similar to clientelism than the type of patronage discussed in the remainder of this paper. They too will be representing the interests of their group, and be somewhat like the appointees in Cell D who are providing political services to the leaders, albeit for social rather than partisan reasons. In political systems in which group membership is defining attribute, the opportunity, or virtual necessity, for a leader to employ members of his or her group will explain the importance of employment in Cell F. Hutchcroft (2014) refers to these relationships

<sup>4</sup> This Cell E comes close to being an analog of “representative bureaucracy,” in which individuals are selected for government positions on the basis of gender or ethnicity. In the active conception of representative bureaucracy those individuals are expected to use their position to advance the interest of the group being represented (Selden, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> One example of this type of employment in our research in Latin America was the control of employment as teachers by the teachers union in Mexico (see Dussauge-Laguna, forthcoming).

as “micro-particularistic,” and discusses them in relationship to more traditional forms of clientelism.

In summary, this typology provides a set of categories for understanding how patronage can be used in different political systems. The categories developed for Cells A–D have been found to exist in Latin American administrative systems (Panizza et al., 2023), and although not identified with the same labels some also appeared in both eastern and western European systems (Kopecký et al., 2012, 2016). The categories in Cells E and F have been added to take into account the characteristics of administrative systems in some Asian countries, but they would also be applicable in other parts of the world (see Eriksen, 2017).

The types of patronage identified in the typology appear in the Asian countries studied in this book, but the variations in political systems and in social systems tend to concentrate on one or a limited number of the types in a country. Some countries do have a variety of types of patronage, and there are changes over time. The authors of the country chapters contained in this volume have pointed to the utility of the patronage typology, and the presence of employment of the types contained within it, in their countries.

#### **1.4 Explaining the Types of Patronage**

As already noted by the discussion of the types of patronage, different countries will have different patterns of patronage. This was clearly demonstrated in our earlier study of patronage in Latin America (Panizza et al., 2023). For example, Uruguay had patronage that was based primarily on political parties, while Peru and Ecuador, as “non-party systems” have patronage that is based mostly on loyalty to individual leaders. Likewise, most patronage appointments in Uruguay are based on professional skills, while those in Peru and Ecuador are primarily using a political skill set. Mexico’s patronage is primarily personal but has both sets of roles being played by the appointees.

We expect the same sorts of variations in Asian countries, but need to consider what factors may explain the differences in the level of patronage, but more importantly in the types of patronage. These factors have been demonstrated to have some effect on patronage, and on public personnel systems more generally, in a number of

countries. Many of these factors will be structural or institutional but will need also to consider more individual factors such as the nature of political leaders.

### 1.5 Social Factors

One important determinant of styles of patronage is the nature of society. While all societies have some internal differences, some are more fragmented than are others. And further societies vary in the extent to which those social differences are politicized. It may not matter whether the source of difference within society is ethnicity, religion, language, or clan, these differences matter and can impact the ways in which individuals are hired within the public sector. In our “sample” of countries in Asia, there is clear variation between relatively homogenous societies such as Korea, Japan, China, and Taiwan, and more diverse societies such as Singapore and especially India (see Fearon, 2003).

While the absolute level of division within the society is important, the extent to which those differences are politicized and the extent to which there is a sense of a nation-state are also important. Another way of saying this is, what is the object of the primary loyalty of individuals within the society? Is the state, or is the family, or the clan, or the ethnic group? In countries such as Afghanistan and other countries in Central Asia the family and the clan constitute crucial building blocks for the society and therefore for governance, so that conventional ways of thinking about the public service may not be viable (Murtazashvili, 2016; see also Müller, 2016).

Public employment, whether through patronage or through a merit system, can be used to ameliorate divisions within societies, but can also reinforce those divisions. If the administrative system is perceived to be open to all groups and there is something approaching a representative bureaucracy, then the divisions within a society may be softened. On the other hand, if one or a few groups dominate public employment, the public sector will tend to solidify the differences. Patronage appointments may be used to produce either result. For groups who have been historically disadvantaged patronage can be used to create opportunities that a merit system might not (see Arriola, 2009; Peters, 2015). On the other hand, patronage can, especially in non-statist societies, reinforce the dominance of one or another group having a disproportionate share of the positions in government.

## 1.6 Party Systems

The second factor to consider when attempting to explain patronage is the nature of the party system. As already mentioned there may be some political systems, even functioning democracies, that do not have political parties in the usual sense of the term. In these cases what may be called political parties are loose, and temporary, electoral organizations often concerned only with electing the chief executive.<sup>6</sup> They are not able, therefore, to function as a source of talent to fill positions in the public bureaucracy. Thus, in these cases, almost all recruitment of patronage employees has to be done personally by the chief executive, by individual ministers, or perhaps even by lower-level officials.

In addition to the existence of parties, we should also consider the institutionalization of the party system (Mainwaring and Torcal, 2006). Some party systems come and go very quickly, for example in central and eastern Europe (Tavits, 2013) and every election may have a different group of parties. Those parties may be rather like the temporary coalitions in the “no-party” states, albeit having some representation in the legislature also.<sup>7</sup> Other party systems are stable and will run candidates in election after election – the Democrats and Republicans have been the major parties in the United States since 1856.

More institutionalized parties may be expected to be more effective in organizing patronage on a partisan basis. They have clearly defined systems of recruitment, so that taking a patronage position may be a stepping stone to a seat in the legislature, and then perhaps to higher executive positions. These parties have a pool of talent and can mobilize it to attempt to control the government. On the other hand, less institutionalized parties may be extremely interested in using patronage for party-building (Shefter, 1994). The ability of a party in government to hand out government jobs can be used as a way to reward their adherents and to demonstrate that it is worthwhile to be a supporter of the party.

The classic distinction between majoritarian and consensus political systems may also be related to the use of patronage (Lijphart, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Members of the legislature may be elected by local coalitions of activists, again without any continuity or level of organization.

<sup>7</sup> Several of the CEE countries are semi-presidential so having a party functioning in the parliament may be important in electing and supporting a prime minister, and for governing.

In a majoritarian, winner takes all system there may be more incentive to utilize patronage appointments in government. A chief executive in such a system will be assessed on what s/he accomplishes in a relatively brief period and needs to control government as thoroughly as possible to push a program through. In consensus systems, on the other hand, the need to control government may be less immediate given that the variation in policy may be expected to be less pronounced. Parties may still want to reward their supporters, but control of government is less problematic.

In the Asian countries considered here, we can identify a variety of party systems. There are several cases, for example, China and Vietnam, with one-party systems, or a single dominant party as in Bangladesh. Japan and South Korea have institutionalized systems with a limited number of parties. The Philippines, Mongolia, and India have multi-party systems that have some institutionalized parties, as well as some movement in and out. The party systems, especially in the one-party states do appear to influence patterns of patronage.

We also need to consider political culture, and more general social culture, and the extent to which corruption and nepotism are accepted, or even expected, when filling positions whether in government or the private sector (O'Dwyer, 2006; Robertson-Snape, 1996). If it is considered at least moderately acceptable, and perhaps even desirable, to allocate positions in government to party members, or family members, then rather naturally the rate of patronage should be expected to be higher. This link between attitudes toward corruption and patronage should, however, be studied in a more nuanced manner.

## 1.7 Political Regime Types

Although the nature of the party system discussed above may reflect a good deal about regime type, we should also consider other aspects of political regimes as well. Some countries included in this sample are consolidated democracies, others have varying degrees of democracy, and still, others are autocratic. As implied above, consolidated democracies tend to have strong merit systems, although there are notable cases that also have high levels of patronage, for example, Italy, Greece, and to some extent the United States. However, with the increasing populism in democratic politics, there appears to be some erosion of the

commitment to professional public service, and more interest in political appointments and control (Bauer et al., 2021).

The level of personalism in the political system may be especially important for explaining the type of patronage found in these systems (see Rhodes-Purdy and Madrid, 2020). If the political system is controlled by a single leader or by a small clique of leaders then we would expect personal trust to be the dominant factor in the selection of individuals to fill government jobs. This reliance on personal trust will be true even if there is a party structure that is used to support the individual leader(s). The distinction between personalistic and non-personalistic systems is not, however, clear and simple. Powerful leaders within otherwise democratic systems may play, or attempt to play, the personalistic controller of political appointments.

Finally, we should be concerned with the ambitions of the political system. Hiring individuals with strong policy skills (Cells A, C, and E) is important if the political system is seeking to make major policy interventions in society. If, however, the government is interested primarily in maintaining its hold on office and minimizing political opposition, it will be more interested in hiring individuals with political skills and strong political commitments to the regime. The policy aspirations of government may differ across policy areas as well, with great concern for hiring technocrats for some areas (often economic policy) but less concern about others.

The organization of the country chapters that follow will be based on political regime types. Many of these are clear, but several may require some justification. We have placed India as a one-party dominant system. While the country does have open elections one party has tended to be dominant over much of its history, first Congress and now the BJP. Also, we have placed the Philippines in the multi-party democratic group. Although there have been periods of autocratic rule, and the recent President Duterte had authoritarian tendencies, there is a functioning party system and relatively free elections.

## 1.8 Strength of the Civil Service

It appears almost tautological to say that patronage should be expected to be strong when the civil service is weak, but that is not necessarily the case. In some instances, the two personnel systems co-exist and do so relatively comfortably. For example, the United States government

has substantially more patronage appointments than those of other consolidated democracies, but beneath the roughly 4,500 political appointments there is a strong and professional civil service. Some political leaders (Bur, 2020) attempt to politicize the civil service, but so far that has been unsuccessful. In Asia, Hutchcroft (2014) argues that Thailand has been characterized by a strong bureaucracy combined with significant patronage.

The above said, however, political systems with weak bureaucracies, especially when weak in major technocratic areas such as economic policy, will tend to rely more on patronage appointments—especially those falling into Cells A, C, and E. In order to be able to govern with inadequate levels of expertise available from permanent officials, governments will have to use trusted experts, whether that trust is based on party, personal or social ties. In some cases, a strong and highly professionalized bureaucracy may actually encourage the recruitment of political appointments such as those found in Cells B, D, and F. The politicians may want the personal “minders” or party apparatchiks that can help with tasks that professional public servants may be forbidden from doing, or unwilling, to do.

## 1.9 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter is intended to be a framework for the analysis of patronage in Asia, although it could also be used in a variety of other settings. Indeed, much of the typology used here was originally based on the experience of Latin American countries. The chapter argues that not all patronage is the same and that what is important for classifying types of patronage is the tasks being performed by the appointees, and the nature of the trust relationship that brought them their position. The six classifications of patronage appointments used here may have internal variations, but they are useful for understanding what roles are being played by patronage appointees in governments.

The differences we observe among countries may be the product of a number of factors. The party system is often a crucial element in shaping patronage, with the level of institutionalization of the party system and the strength of individual parties playing a significant role. And the extent to which the political system is dominated by one or a few leaders influences the style of patronage, as does the fragmentation of society and the strength of groups within the society. And



finally, the presence of a strong and professional civil service may be a major deterrent to the use of patronage appointments, especially for policymaking purposes.

The nature of patronage systems appears to reflect the reality of contemporary governments, but in Asian cases remains conjectural. Likewise, the causes of differences in patronage systems that have been discussed here are in essence hypotheses. We will be examining those hypotheses through the case studies of a number of countries in Asia. That research will be able to refine the hypotheses presented here, as well as provide the detail needed for a more complete understanding of the ways in which governments choose who will be working for them.

Given the wide variety of political systems, reflected in the availability of data and access, the individual country chapters are structured somewhat differently and depend upon different types of information. Given the sensitivity of the topic in particular countries, some authors in the edited collection rely almost entirely on secondary data sources while others have been able to collect primary data. Some also focus on particular forms of patronage that are prevalent within that system, although they do note the existence of other forms. Patronage has also been explored at different levels of government. In China, for example, the authors focus on patronage appointments in the selection of ministers and vice ministers, whereas in Singapore because of the formal meritocratic appointments process, the chapter focus is at the level of urban governance. While the lack of symmetry in the national chapters might be considered problematic, it does demonstrate the many ways in which governments approach the task of finding people to fill important public positions. The cases further demonstrate that the typology upon which the study is based does work and does help to identify the fundamental task of managing public personnel.

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