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Patronage and party organization in Argentina : the emergence of the patronage-based network party

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**PATRONAGE AND PARTY ORGANIZATION IN ARGENTINA:
THE EMERGENCE OF THE PATRONAGE-BASED NETWORK PARTY**

PROEFSCHRIFT

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PREFACE

Studies on party organizations in the last 15 years have consistently underlined a process of erosion of the linkages between parties and society and a concomitant strengthening of the linkages between parties and states. Scholars have shown that parties have tried to compensate for the sharp process of decline in their representative capacities by reinforcing their institutional and procedural roles. After being for decades primarily conceived as agents of political socialization and channels of expression of society, parties are now often described as state or semi-state institutions of government. Hence understanding what party organizations are presently requires, as Peter Mair has observed, paying “at least as much attention, if not more so, to the linkage between party and state as ... to the linkage between parties and civil society” (1997:139). This dissertation intends to take up Mair’s call in regards to the study of Argentine party organizations. Hence it is primarily concerned with examining the extent to which and modes by which parties penetrate state structures in Argentina.

In order to do so, this dissertation consists of an empirical study on the scope, the workings, and the rationale of party patronage in Argentina. It attempts to assess the degree to which parties effectively appoint people to public positions, who is in effect responsible for patronage within parties, what motivates parties to appoint in different sectors and at different levels of the state, and what criteria they follow to select the appointees. Because what party organizations are presently has so much to do with the modes in which they relate to state structures, the answers to those questions provide crucial insight into the nature and functioning of current party organizations in Argentina. Additionally, I also hope this study on party patronage in Argentina will contribute to the understanding of party organizational change more generally.

From a broader perspective, this research also intends to take up what Helmke and Levitsky (2006:2) defined as *Guillermo O'Donnell's call* to explain Latin American democracies by observing “the actual rules that are being followed” (O'Donnell:1996b:10). After two decades in which studies on new democracies focused on issues of institutional engineering and on the functioning of formal political institutions, there is now an increasing awareness of the importance of informal political institutions, those “rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced outside the officially sanctioned channels” (Helmke and Levistky, 2006:1). I would like this research to be seen as a contribution that helps understand “what games are really being played” (O'Donnell, 1996a:43) in these new Latin American democratic regimes. In that sense, this work is intended to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of party patronage as a crucial informal institution of Argentine party politics. The long tradition of political manipulation of public bureaucracies that characterizes this country, along with the more recent process of party de-institutionalization, make a study on party organizations and patronage particularly relevant for the understanding of current Argentine party politics.

The main argument of this work is that patronage has become the primary resource employed in order to build contemporary party organizations in Argentina. I contend that Argentine party organizations are shaped and sustained on the basis of the capacity of an elected leader to get control over state offices. In fact, the research shows that contemporary parties are composed by networks of two types. On the one hand are networks dedicated to the management of the state on behalf of a political project. On the other hand are those networks aimed to mobilize voters on the basis of clientelistic exchanges. Party statutes notwithstanding, those two types of networks compose what I

call the “really existing party organizations”. Both of them are dependant on the distribution of patronage.

Viewed from another perspective, patronage has emerged as a fundamental resource for party leaders who seek autonomy to develop electoral strategies but at the same time need a loyal and competent organization to mobilize voters and to get tight control over the state machinery. Patronage is thus the indispensable resource to recruit and sustain the two types of networks which make up the only type of party organization that has proved successful in contemporary Argentina. I call that type of party organization the “patronage-based network party”.

Plan of the Book

The work is divided into eight chapters. The first one provides definitions of the main concepts, presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation, explains the relevance of a study about patronage and party organizations in Argentina, and outlines the main research puzzles.

Chapter 2 presents the approach adopted here to understand the phenomenon of party patronage in Argentina. It describes the four aspects, or faces, of patronage - the scope, the appointers, the motivations, and the criteria for selection - on the basis of which I measure and analyze the phenomenon. The chapter also explains why a study on party patronage in Argentina must cover both national and sub-national levels of the state. Lastly, it specifies the expectations of the research. Chapter 3 describes in detail the research design, including the selection of provincial cases. It also explains the methodology employed to measure the scope and assess the workings and rationale of party patronage. The core data for this dissertation is derived from a set of 125 semi-

structured interviews with experts on different sectors of the Argentine state, both at national and sub-national levels.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 present the data and the analysis on patronage at the national level. The former focuses on the scope of patronage, that is, how much parties appoint in nine different sectors and three different institutional types of the Argentine national state. The latter observes who effectively makes appointments, the motivations to appoint and the criteria for the selection of the appointees. Chapters 6 and 7 replicate the study at the level of the provincial states. Chapter 7 illustrates the findings with a detailed analysis of two party organizations in one specific province (PJ and UCR of Tucumán), and lastly compares the practice of party patronage at national and provincial levels. Overall Chapters 4 through 7 lead to a reassessment of the role and the importance of patronage in current Argentine party organizations. On the one hand, these chapters stress the increasing importance of patronage as a governmental resource, both for bringing new partners and allies into the governmental coalitions and for securing control over the state apparatus. At the same time, they show that patronage is the main resource through which elected leaders build and knit together the networks that compose their supportive party organizations.

Chapter 8 summarizes the main findings of the study, presenting the model of the patronage-based network party as the only type of party organization that has managed to adapt and thrive in a context of weak and fluid party identities. The model is illustrated with the most remarkable traits of the Front for Victory, the label adopted by the Peronist ruling coalition during the presidency led by Néstor Kirchner between 2003 and 2007. Appendixes I, II, III and IV provide additional information on different aspects of the research, such as state sectors' size and institutions (I), the model of the expert survey questionnaire utilized in the interviews (II), the positions in the different

sectors and institutional types of the national state (III), and a list of 194 analyzed senior appointed positions (IV). Appendix V contains the names and institutional affiliations of the experts interviewed for this dissertation.

I quote in English a good number of sources in Spanish. These include academic works, reports and articles from newspapers, legal documents, and statements from the interviews I conducted with experts. All translations from Spanish to English are mine.

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I have spent a fruitful working period at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies in Hamburg thanks to the generosity of Mariana Llanos and Ana Maria Mustapic, and to the financial support of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). I have also benefited enormously from participating in the workshops on parties and patronage in Nicosia, Florence, and Leiden, together with a group of outstanding scholars. I want to thank the participants of those meetings for their helpful contributions to my understanding of this topic.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFIP: Agencia Federal de Ingresos Públicos (Tax Collection Agency)

CBA: City of Buenos Aires

CGT: Confederación General del Trabajo (Workers General Federation)

DA: Decentralized Agencies

EI: Executing Institutions

FA: Foreign Affairs

INDEC: National Institute of Statistics and Census

PJ: Partido Justicialista

PS: Partido Socialista

SINAPA: National System of Administrative Profession

UB: Unidad Básica

UCR: Unión Cívica Radical