Dimitri A. Sotiropoulos

Patronage in South European bureaucracies in the 1980s and the 1990s: The politicization of central public administrations in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain

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Abstract

The public bureaucracies of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain have for a long time shared a tradition of extended politicization of their top administrative ranks and enduring patronage patterns in recruitment to the public sector. In this paper, which mostly focuses on the central public administration, patronage or clientelism is understood as the selective distribution of high-ranking posts as well as public jobs at entry-level jobs in public bureaucracies, to a favoured political clientele. In regard with public bureaucracies, there are two types of patronage or clientelism.

‘Clientelism at the top’ means that, in contrast to Northern and Western Europe, politicisation of the bureaucracy in Southern Europe was not limited to the highest levels, such as the level of ‘cabinets ministeriels.’ At the levels of heads of general directorates, directorates, and even sections, the occupants were recruited from among eligible civil servants who were also political sympathisers of the party (or coalition of parties) in government.

The second type is ‘clientelism at the bottom’. What has distinguished the public sector in Southern Europe from the public sector in the rest of Western Europe was a different relation between the state, political parties and society. The public sector in Southern Europe used to constitute a desirable outlet for large segments of the active labour force. While all modern parties perform several roles in the context of linking society to the political system, South European parties controlled the access of individuals to public jobs. The party predominating in elections often used to proceed with a partisan penetration of the state. Both types of clientelism were visible at least until the end of the 1980s.

However, the four countries under study also differ in certain respects, such as federal state organization and the role of administrative elites. In the 1990s, South European bureaucracies started evolving towards decentralization and privatization, without completely shedding patronage. Simultaneous large-scale changes, such as democratization, modernization and Europeanization, coincided in the last decade of the twentieth in Southern Europe.
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1. Introduction: The comparative study of Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain

The study of politics in a particular geographical area does not necessarily lead to culturalist explanations, which imply that there is something inherently wrong with the culture prevailing or the people living in a certain area. The reason for studying together a few national political systems, which only at specific historical periods share some commonalities, is methodological. As it is well known, the comparative study of a few cases may be a research strategy which is alternative to studying one case in comparative perspective or to studying large data sets of cases. The comparative study of a few cases, if methodologically legitimate, may be a fruitful strategy: it may help the construction of middle-level, grounded theory.

The literature on Southern Europe, fuelled by the almost synchronized transition to democracy in Greece, Portugal and Spain in the mid-1970s, has indicated that it is methodologically legitimate to study together the political and economic systems of these countries, including Italy. The legitimacy of this area study has been substantiated by several authors working in different scientific fields such as history (Malefakis 1995, Sapelli 1995), sociology (Giner 1985), politics (O’ Donnel, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986, Gunther, Diamandouros and Puhle 1996, Morlino 1998, Diamandouros and Gunther 2001, Featherstone and Kazamias 2001), and economics (Tsoukalis 1981, Gibson 2001). Contributions to this literature have come from diverse theoretical perspectives such as the modernization approach (Linz 1979, Ziegenhagen and Koutsoukis 1992) and neo-marxist theory (Seers, Schaffer and Kiljnen 1979, Arrighi 1985, Hadjimichalis 1987, Vergopoulos 1990, Kurth and Petras 1993, Holman 1996).

Southern Europe offers an interesting area for study not because Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain are identical, but because these cases share enough historical similarities so as to make the contrast between them and the rest of West European cases fruitful. The four South European countries have followed more or less similar historical trajectories in terms of their socio-economic and political development (Malefakis 1995: 36-44, Sapelli 1995: 5-20). Scandinavian and West European states have followed different historical trajectories in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, which have resulted in different effects on state formation. Table 1, which follows, shows an example of such differences between Southern Europe, on the one hand, and North and Western Europe, on the other.
TABLE 1

Comparative evolution of government employment in Southern, Western, and Northern Europe between 1980 and 1990 (percentage share of government employment in total employment)

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>+ 1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>+ 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>+ 3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>+ 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South European average</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>+ 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>+ 2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>+ 0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>+ 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>+ 0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>- 2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West European average</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>+ 0.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Europe:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>+ 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>+ 3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>+ 6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>+ 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North European average</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>+ 3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated on the basis of Wright 1994: 137, Table 5, which was reproduced from OECD's Analytical Database (segment EOY) of March 1991. Data for other West European countries, such as Belgium, was incomplete.

Table 1, which clearly shows differences among regional averages (South, Western, and Northern European averages), should be read in the context of some political developments, which were - more or less - common to all South European countries in the late twentieth century. Developments included a break with the authoritarian past in Greece, Portugal and Spain in the mid-1970s which was crucial for the onset of institutional modernization and Europeanization in South European states and societies. In all four cases authoritarianism has probably left its mark on the distrustful relations between citizens and the public.
administration and on the limited autonomy of the administration from the political system. Around the same time the Italian conservative political class finally admitted the Communist Party (PCI) as a legitimate part of the political system, and the post-war Italian democracy became fully consolidated (Morfino 1995: 376, Sani and Segatti 2001: 166).

Later, in the 1980s, all four countries were characterized by the comparatively strong presence of the Socialist and the Communist Left in their party systems and the corresponding presence of left-wing, often radical unions in their industrial relations systems. The place of such parties and unions along the political spectrum used to be to the Left of the typical social democratic or labour parties and unions of Northern or Western Europe.

Other distinctive political patterns included the rise of majoritarian socialist or social democratic governments to power in the 1980s (or in coalition governments in Italy), whereas, by contrast, conservative parties were being returned to power in the rest of Western Europe; the permeation of many South European institutions by political parties; the importance of political symbols and traditional ideological cleavages in shaping electoral behaviour; and the polarized and partisan character of political culture at least until the mid-1980s, if not even later; several common traits which used to set South European public bureaucracies apart from the rest of West European bureaucracies (Sotiropoulos 2004).

Finally, the last but not least commonality of political development of Southern Europe is the particular trajectory which the region’s welfare states have followed and which has lead to the provision of very fragmented, clientelist and uneven social protection (Ferrera 1996, Katrgoualos and Lazaridis 2003).

2. Patronage and clientelism

In the literature of patronage and clientelism, the two concepts are recognized as forms of political exchange, denoting ‘the trade of votes and other types of partisan support in exchange for public decisions with divisive effects’ (Piattoni 2001: 4). Patronage and clientelism may end up meaning the same thing, but they are often treated as distinct concepts.

In, detail, patronage means a bias in regard with the distribution of public jobs and other state-based transfers to a certain social class, local or ethic group, but does not necessarily involve the bending of public-decision making in order to favour selected individuals (Piattoni 2001: 5). One author even talks of ‘patronage regimes’, distinguishing two periods of nineteenth century American political history. In the US, early in the nineteenth century, there was a patronage regime characterized by a pure spoils system; later, there was a machine politics patronage regime (James 2005: 40-41). In that analysis, which is done at the level of organizations, a ‘patronage regime’ stands for the regularized operations of American parties exercising patronage.

Clientelism, on the other hand, means the selective favourable treatment of individuals by the state, usually in exchange of votes for the politician or the party offering the selective treatment. Such a definition of clientelism refers to the individual level of analysis and is typical of the functional analysis of relations between clientelist parties and voters. For example, in a relatively recent article, it is claimed that clientelist parties used to base their electoral campaign activities ‘on hierarchical chains of interpersonal relationships
of quasi-feudal variety, in which relatively durable patterns of loyalty are linked with the exchange of services and obligations' (Gunther and Diamond 2003: 176).

However, the usage of the term ‘clientelism’ is not restricted to the individual level of analysis. Political clientelism can be seen as a mode of political participation of the masses in politics (Lyrintzis 1983). For the societal level, it is useful to turn to Luigi Graziano (1978: 297): ‘Clientelism may take one of two forms: the “privatisation” of politics or the “colonization” of civil society. Politics is “privatised” when groups have direct, unmediated access to political authority, which they treat as a tool for their private aims. “Colonization of society” is the opposite process. It occurs when formerly autonomous social institutions come to be regulated by the parties in power’.

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, in Southern Europe, the old person-to-person clientelism was probably replaced by party-led clientelism. The latter has assumed a more organised form and is engineered by party organisations, but its extent is debated (e.g., Lyrintzis 1984, Spanou 1995 and 1996, Christophou 1998 and Sotiropoulos 1996 on Greece; Chubb 1982 and Caciaghi and Kawata 2001 on Italy; Farelo Lopes 1997 on Portugal; Cazorla 1992 and Hopkin 2001 on Spain). Clientelism then refers also to the relations between organizations, such as parties, and society.

In other words, over the last twenty years, in the relevant literature, both ‘patronage’ and ‘clientelism’ have been employed at the individual, organizational and societal levels of analysis. It may now too late to establish a rigid distinction of the two concepts. This is the reason why in this paper the two terms are used interchangeably. Clientelism is employed with reference to distributing high-ranking posts at the top of public bureaucracies (‘clientelism at the top’) as well as public jobs at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder (entry-level jobs in public bureaucracies).

With regard to central public administration in Southern Europe, the extensive patronage or clientelism in all administrative levels makes it necessary to distinguish between two patterns. A first pattern of patronage or clientelism is extended politicisation of the managerial level of the civil service (‘clientelism at the top’). By referring to the ‘top’, we mean the higher echelons of ministries and public enterprises. After each government turnover, a large and often fluctuating number of top administrative posts are filled by appointees of the governing elite. These appointees are not necessarily civil servants. But even in the top posts reserved for career civil servants, there is apparent political party intervention.

As we will try to show below, in most South European bureaucracies, incoming governments can influence the process of promotions to the managerial level to an extent probably larger than their counterparts can do in other, West or North European bureaucracies. The distinctive aspect of South European politicization is that political intervention from above can sometimes reach down to the middle ranks of the civil service hierarchy and out to a large number of public corporations. The purpose of extending the long arm of the governing party, so to speak, into the bureaucracy is to prevent the latter from obstructing the implementation of government policy. Bureaucratic obstruction is not uncommon in any state apparatus which has previously served a different regime (e.g., an authoritarian regime). On the other hand, extensive political intervention ‘from above’ may bring about demoralization of the civil service and thus hamper bureaucratic efficiency.

The second pattern of patronage or clientelism refers to the recruitment of employees at the lower levels and in-service transfers on the basis of particularistic criteria,
such as political party affiliation. These two distinct patterns are inter-linked: it is difficult to obtain a meritocratic and effective higher civil service if the members of the lower civil service are recruited and promoted on the grounds of clientelistic criteria. Nonetheless, the two patterns have a different function.

3. Political clientelism ‘at the top’: The extended politicisation of the higher civil service

Some political colonisation ‘at the top’ of the civil service is practised in liberal democracies by many incoming governments. Such a practice enhances the responsiveness of the state administration to the changing will of the electorate. By itself, political control of the bureaucracy ‘from above’ is not a distinctive South European trait. For instance, in the U.S. some 10,000 positions change hands at every presidential turnover. Given the size and international role of the U.S. administration, this is in not such a large number. However, the equivalent practice seems more exaggerated in the comparatively smaller administrations of Southern Europe.

Take the example of the smallest South European state, Portugal: It has been estimated that after the elections of October 1995 in Portugal, approximately 6,000 political appointments were made by the incoming government of the socialist party (PS) at the top of various ministries and public agencies (Oliveira Rocha 1998: 225). This was not an exceptional situation. Large-scale changes of this kind, at top hierarchical posts, had taken place in 1986-87, when the Portuguese Social Democratic party (PSD) formed a majoritarian government. Similar changes had occurred in 1974-1976, at the fall of the authoritarian regime.

Comparable phenomena took place in Spain in 1982, when the socialist party (PSOE) came to power and again in 1996, when the conservative party (Partido Popular-PP) replaced PSOE in power (Parrado 2000: 266). Such practices were very common also in Greece after each regime and government change. Moreover, in Greece changes in the posts of General and Special Secretaries of Ministries and managers of major public corporations used to occur in the 1980s and the 1990s even after each reshuffling of the Cabinet of one and the same government.

Italy seemed to be somewhat spared of this practice of recurrent massive changes of personnel of different political persuasions at the top of ministries and public corporations. Managerial-level changes involved members of the conservative political class. Career civil servants were less affected. Despite the frequent government turnover, the stability of the administrative personnel’s profile was probably owed to the ‘re-cycling’ of the same political elites and to the relative isolation of bureaucrats from politicians throughout the rule of the Christian Democratic party (DC) in the post-war period. However, surprisingly enough, Italy may have belatedly caught up with the other South European countries since a 1998 legislative decree tied the occupants of the upper echelons of the civil service with incoming governments (Battini 1998: 214-15, Lewanski 1999: 121). Also, contrary to an Italian practice dating since 1924, the same 1998 decree allowed for the appointment not only of civil servants but also of politically loyal but ‘outside’ experts to the ‘cabinet ministeriels’. These staff units were also found at the side of cabinet ministers in the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish bureaucracies.
Although such 'cabinets' originated in other European countries (e.g., in France) and top civil servants serving in the highest ranks of other bureaucracies were traditionally politicised (e.g., the Belgian ‘cabinets’, the German ‘political bureaucrats’), what is peculiar about Southern Europe is that the breadth of political appointments to the bureaucracy has been quite extended and perhaps unpredictable. Tenured bureaucratic positions could become slots for temporary political appointees and vice versa. In that respect, the aforementioned Italian change towards more politicisation was not an exception; Greece, Portugal, and Spain witnessed similar situations at different time points.

In Greece the post of directors general was abolished all together in 1982, a little after the arrival of the socialist party (PASOK) in power. The functions of the abolished posts were assumed by appointed 'cabinets ministeriels' and Special Secretariats. In 1990, the abolished post was re-instituted with the return of the conservative party (ND) to power (Spanou 1996: 107 and 109, Sotiropoulos 1999: 16). In Portugal in 1989, a law specified that the two highest among the four top civil service posts (i.e., the posts of directors general and deputy directors general) were to be filled by the government among candidates from outside the civil service. The lower two posts (directors of service and heads of division) were to be filled by civil servants again selected by the government. However, in the late 1990s in Portugal there were efforts to decrease the extent of politicisation. A new law passed in 1997 specified that the two lower posts were to be filled by civil servants through competitive entrance examinations (Oliveira Rocha 1998: 225-26).

In Spain, the top civil service had been politicised under Franco in the sense that many bureaucrats probably identified with the Franco regime. Yet they were not dramatically affected by the rather consensual transition to democracy in 1975-77. However, at the first government turnover, in 1982, when PSOE came to power, two hundred top posts changed hands. Between 1982 and 1991 90 per cent of all occupants of top posts had never served in a post of similar level before (Alba 1998: 237 on the basis of research by Sebastiano Parrado). When the conservative party (PP) came to power in 1996, it replaced all civil servants from hierarchical level no. 29 (included) upwards, i.e., the occupants of the top managerial levels, and all directors of public enterprises. A relevant law passed in the late 1990s had failed to specify with precision the break-point in the top echelons of the civil service at which the discretion of the government to nominate its sympathisers ended. Similar and, in fact, more accentuated trends towards the expansion of the discretion of political power to nominate top administrators had been observed in the autonomous governments of Catalonia and the Basque Country since 1980 (Alba 1998: 239-40).

Such changes in the breadth of top political appointments and in selecting politically loyal higher civil servants were more facilitated and occurred earlier in Greece, Portugal and Spain than in Italy. This was probably owed to extended periods of submission of the legislature to the executive branch of government, i.e., periods of majoritarian party government, in the first three countries. Such periods occurred in Greece and Spain since the transition to democracy (mid-1970s) and later in Portugal (since the mid-1980s). Majoritarian governments, having no coalition partner, were not inhibited by political alliances vital to the survival of the government. Governments generally stayed in power for longer periods of time and possibly possessed a stronger political will to control the highest levels of the civil service than was the case with Italy.

So, in contrast to Northern and Western Europe, politicisation in Southern Europe was not limited to the highest levels, such as the level of 'cabinets ministeriels.' At the
levels of top civil service which were just below the level of minister and his or her 'cabinet' (i.e., at the levels of heads of general directorates, directorates, and even sections), the occupants were recruited from among eligible civil servants who were also political sympathisers of the party (or coalition of parties) in government.

The above pattern had two likely consequences at the level of attitudes and motivation of many South European civil servants. The first consequence was that competent civil servants were bypassed by their politically more agile colleagues or by outside experts. Career civil servants thus became demoralised. The second consequence was that soon, not only the top civil servants, but most civil servants became politicised. In other words, they looked for political patrons and tied their professional careers with the parties to which their patrons belonged. Hence, the reproduction of political clientelism at the top, which was - and perhaps still is - a major trait of South European bureaucracies.

4. Political clientelism ‘at the bottom’ before and after transition to democracy

The second pattern was the other side of political clientelism ‘at the top’. This trait, which can be called ‘clientelism at the bottom’ or ‘clientelism from below,’ refers to the relation between the state, political parties and society.

Through the intermediation of parties, the public sector used to fulfil a well-known social function in Southern Europe. This was the function of alleviating social pressures 'from below', from unemployed, unemployable or professionally insecure social categories of the population. Relevant examples included graduates of law, political science and humanities faculties, high-school graduates without university education and internal migrants. The function consisted in offering them job opportunities in the public sector, during periods of rising unemployment or just before the conduct of general elections. This pattern was observed more in comparatively underdeveloped regions (e.g., Southern Italy, Andalusia) or whole countries (e.g., Greece, Portugal after the 1974 Revolution) and went through high and low points over time. For instance, it seems that it was intensified in Italy in the 1970s (Morlino 1984: 62), in Portugal between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s and in Spain after 1982, probably more so in some Spanish regional governments than in the central government (Hopkin 2001: 128 and 132).

The tendency was for more recurrent massive recruitment of new personnel to the wider public sector than to the central public administration. In the public sector, recruitment was done without regard to the specific needs of public corporations. The absorption of new personnel was effected through extraordinary procedures, e.g., through by-passing competitive entrance examinations. This was the first step in a process labelled 'titularisation' which was quite common in all four countries in Southern Europe. Titularisation involves hiring personnel to meet temporary labour shortages in the public sector and then granting such temporary personnel the status of civil servant or its equivalent (i.e., permanent job contracts).

In Italy, as Sabino Cassesse writes, 'it can be estimated that, in 1973-90, about 350,000 people were recruited without entrance exams, and then had their posts made permanent by 12 special laws. In the same period, in the same administration, about 250,000 people were recruited through regular exams. It seems therefore that titularisation is the
predominant way of entry into the civil service' (Cassesse 1993a: 325). In Greece, laws passed since the transition to democracy offered tenure to successive waves of temporary employees who had been employed on the basis of renewable fixed term contracts or contracts for the duration of specific projects (Sotiropoulos 1996: 98-100).

Generally, clientelism 'at the bottom' was not a new phenomenon, first observed in the post-authoritarian period. It had affected public employment in the past. The growth of public employment did not coincide with the transition from authoritarian rule in Southern Europe. For instance, according to one estimate, between 1965 and 1978 the share of the public sector in total employment rose from 9.9 to 14.2 per cent in Italy, from to 4.8 to 8.1 per cent in Portugal, and from 6.6. to 12.3 per cent in Spain (OECD 1982: 12). This data shows that, in terms of employment, South European states used to grow over time. Nevertheless, in Portugal a sharp increase in public employment roughly coincided with the period of transition to democracy; in Greece and Spain, most probably with the transition to democracy and with the rise of socialists to power in the early 1980s in both countries; and in Italy, public employment grew throughout the more extended period of democratic consolidation.

In detail, in Portugal, in the period after the Revolution of April 1974 the public sector absorbed excess labour created by the economic crisis which followed the regime change and by the influx of refugees (the 'retornados') from the former Portuguese colonies. Many banks and other private enterprises were nationalised. As a result, public employment rose very fast (Graham 1986: 6, Bruneau and Macleod 1986: 188-89, Opello 1991: 132-33). In Italy, in the post-war period the social coalition between northern industrialists and southern landowners reproduced the earlier patronage patterns which had been suitable to their interests. They sought to fragment and to exclude the lower social classes from power (Shefter 1977: 444). This strategy of public labour supply ‘from above’ was met from a corresponding demand for work ‘from below’. Throughout the post-war period public employment rose steadily corresponding to the demand for jobs emanating mostly from the South of Italy, which was economically underdeveloped. This led to the 'Southernisation' (or 'meridionalisation') of the Italian civil service. Compared to the population of Northern Italy, the population of Southern Italy was over-represented among Italian civil servants, including the highest ranks of the civil service (Cassesse 1993a: 319 and 323, Lewanski 1999: 105-06). Approximately two-thirds of all civil servants came from the South (Arabia and Giammusso 1993: 441). In Greece, there was a net increase of 2 percent in the Greek labour force between 1981 and 1988, while, during the same years, the net increase in the civil service personnel was 12 percent (Sotiropoulos 1996: 118). In the Greek wider public sector, there was a similar discrepancy between new total employment and new public employment trends (Christodoulakis 2000: 100-01). In Spain this function of the public sector as a 'safety-valve' for unemployment was also visible. Patronage-driven recruitment followed the rise of the socialist party in power in 1982 (Beltran 1990: 347, Puhle 2001: 320).

5. Patronage and public employment in Southern Europe

As noted earlier, in terms of government employment in the 1980s on average South European states grew more than West European ones (Table 1). Similar trends had been
visible since at least the 1960s. To what extent may public employment growth be attributed to clientelism ‘at the bottom’? There may be three sources of such growth. First, as noted above, at various periods of time South European governments sought to curb unemployment by using the state as a ‘social shock absorber’. Second, growth in public employment may be also accounted by the fact that extended patronage was exercised for electoral purposes by the socialist governments which ruled in Greece and Spain in the 1980s (Gillespie 1990: 132, Puhle 2001: 320-21). Third, the rise in public employment may also be interpreted by the expansion of social policy. The welfare state, which in Southern Europe has not been as developed as in Western Europe (Ferrera 1996), expanded significantly in the period of democratic consolidation. This was evident, e.g., in the growth of expenditure on pensions and unemployment benefits in Greece and Spain (Gunther 1996, Maravall 1997); in the creation of National Health Services in Greece in 1983 and in Italy in 1978; and in the introduction of a minimum income guarantee schemes in Italy, Portugal and various Spanish regions in the early and mid-1990s (Matsaganis, Ferrera, Capucha and Moreno 2003).

Public employment in Southern Europe tended to be costly. Table 2 (in the following page) indicates that South European states used to spend relatively large shares of their state budgets in compensation (wages and salaries). Overall, compared with the 1980s, in the first half of the decade of the 1990s South European states followed the general trend towards a decrease of the share of wages and salaries in the state budget. This was a familiar trend in Western Europe, linked with the ‘retreat of the state’ (Mueller and Wright 1994). However, in two consecutive periods, 1981-1990 and 1991-1995, in Southern Europe the average share of public employee wages and salaries in the state budget was still roughly double the corresponding shares in West and North European state budgets.

How do those trends compare with the trends in public employment shown in Table 1 and discussed in the beginning of this paper? Generally, if we compare regional averages (Table 1) we see the following: South European states employed in the 1980s personnel amounting roughly to 60 per cent of the equivalent personnel of West European states and approximately 50 per cent of that of North European states. Thus, the picture in terms of public employment (Table 1) is the reverse of that of compensation of public employees (Table 2): in comparative terms, South European states used to employ relatively fewer people than North or West European states, but devoted a larger share of their state budgets to their compensation. Conversely, again in relative terms, in North and West European states public employment as a share of total employment on average was larger than in South European states. Simultaneously the share of state budgets allocated to compensation on average was smaller in West and North than in South European states (Table 2).
The fact that South European states devoted a comparatively larger share of their budgets to salaries does not mean the South European civil servants were paid better than their West or North European counterparts. The observed tendency is probably an additional indication of the different orientation, if not different functions, of South European states, on the one hand, and North and West European states, on the other. The former used to be employing agencies, i.e., ‘social shock absorbers’, in a manner different from the welfare functions fulfilled by North European states which help people at risk, such as the unemployed and the poor, in order to absorb the shocks of being poor or unemployed.

A distinctive function of South European bureaucracies was to provide income to their employees rather than welfare services to citizens at risk. In such cases, social
protection is supposed to be temporary, for the time period the risk lasts. By contrast, employment in the state apparatus is or can become permanent. In a simplified way, one could argue that traditionally South European states offered jobs, while other EU states offered social protection.

It is arguable then that South European states used to cater to the economic needs of the political clienteles of alternating governing elites, taking care of the working population safely employed in the public sector. By contrast, West and particularly North European states had developed more universalistic welfare systems. States in the Western and in the Northern part of the European continent had a longer and more enduring tradition of catering to the needs, not only of a particular segment of the active labour force, i.e., the segment which was employed by the state, but to the general population as a whole.

To recap, the purpose of over-staffing the state was to return the governing elite to power through the classic clientelistic exchange of favours for votes in general elections. Another purpose was to ease social tensions emanating from persistent local 'pockets' of underdevelopment or periodic waves of unemployment. This function of the South European public bureaucracies as 'social shock absorbers' or as 'safety valves' combined with the slow expansion of the welfare services, which in Southern Europe until the late 1970s and early 1980s lagged behind the equivalent West European services. The combined effect of the two processes explains the expansion of public employment in Southern Europe in the post-authoritarian period.

To sum up our discussion of clientelism ‘at the bottom,’ what distinguishes South European public sectors from those of the rest of Western Europe was a different relation with society. This is a well-known relation explored by many analysts of individual South European societies (e.g., Graziano 1978 on Italy, Mouzelis 1986 on Greece). Generally speaking, the public sector in Southern Europe used to constitute a desirable outlet for large segments of the active labour force, and more precisely for the petty bourgeoisie and the middle class. Such pressures 'from below' were compounded by a specific political party function. In Southern Europe the function of political parties in relation to the state was somewhat different from the corresponding functions in other European societies.

While all modern parties perform several roles in the context of linking society to the political system, South European political parties used to perform what Leonardo Morlino has called the role of 'gate-keepers' of the 'decisional area' (Morlino 1995: 350-51). South European parties did so much more than was the case with parties in other contemporary Western systems. They controlled access of individuals to the state, sometimes restricting, while more often facilitating access to state resources. The party predominating in elections often used to proceed with a partisan penetration of the state.

This role was played in variable ways in South European countries. For instance, in Greece party patronage had a more serious and lasting effect on the central public administration than in Spain. In the latter country, similar effects were observed not so much at the level of central government as in the regional levels of 'Communidades Autonomas'. Clientelism was exacerbated in some cases (e.g., in Catalonia, the Basque Country), where there was no government turnover for long periods of time.
6. Differentiation among South European bureaucracies

While South European bureaucracies used to differ and, perhaps, to an extent still differ from North and West European ones in terms of the aforementioned traits (mostly evident in the relations of bureaucracies with political parties and in the socio-economic function of the bureaucracies), two caveats are due at this point: First, there are many differences among the four Southern European cases. Second, judgments about each of the four cases may be misleading, to the extent that within each of the four cases there are specific differentiations with regard to bureaucratic structure and function.

The first caveat means that, within the South European ‘model’ of bureaucracy, there is enough variety which is owed to the vagaries of the socio-economic development and modern political history of the four countries under study. For example, in regard to high government turnover, which facilitates a relative independence of civil service from incoming governing elites, Portugal until 1987 and Italy throughout the post-war period can be treated on a par. The reason is that both countries have witnessed many short-lived coalition cabinets. In the same respect, Greece and Spain are more similar due to extended periods of socialist party government in the 1980s.

There are other examples of differentiation among the four cases. Spain has a tradition of skilful and cohesive bodies of civil servants (‘cuerpos’). There is a certain professionalism among Spanish civil servants, which can only rarely be found in Greece or Italy. Indeed, political ties to governing parties and relative lack of professionalism are two dimensions which, from time to time, have particularly characterised the core of the Greek and Italian civil service at least since the end of the Second World War. If one was pressed to say which of the four state bureaucracies looked more alike, chances are that the Greek and the Italian bureaucracies would be selected as similar cases which, as a sub-group, were different from the Portuguese and the Spanish bureaucracies. The similarity of the Greek with the Italian case has also become more visible in the kinds and the fate of administrative reforms which have been aborted. Examples include the reform of ‘dirigenza’ and the Giannini reforms in Italy and the continuously changing pay scale and grade scale of civil servants in post-authoritarian Greece.

Still, there were important differences between the Greek and the Italian cases. While Greek party governments of the second half of the twentieth century used to actively intervene in the day-to-day operations of the Greek civil service, the Italian coalition governments of the post-war period reached an arrangement with the civil servants. Except for the recruitment of new personnel, which in Italy has habitually fallen victim to quotas and exchanges agreed among the ruling political parties (‘lotizzazione’), other aspects of the functioning of the civil service were left to civil servants themselves. This trend was the result of the ‘art of arrangement’, as Sabino Cassese has called it (1993b: 335 and 339).

On the other hand, in the case of Portugal, the intervention of political parties seems to have been more extensive in the immediate post-authoritarian period and again after 1987. In regard to party-led intervention in the bureaucracy, the case of Spain seemed to be similar with that of Portugal or Greece only after 1982. In view of all these differences among the four bureaucracies, the fact that we study them together does not mean that we lump them together on all counts.

The second caveat is that there is much less administrative uniformity within each of the four states than an all pervasive ‘model’ of South European bureaucracy would imply.
To start with, between 1977 and 1983 Spain became a quasi-federal state through its division in seventeen 'Communidades Autonomas'. Given the comparatively large size of Spain, one should then speak of seventeen regional public administrations in addition to the country’s central public administration. Also since 1970 Italy has been divided into fifteen regions which have been governed by different political parties (regional governments). So the administrative system of some regions of Spain or Italy may be quite different from the rest of the country and may function in a different manner. For example, in Spain, the Basque Country seems to be nearly an independent entity, almost complete with all the typical authorities of a modern state, except for an army and a ministry of foreign affairs of its own. Less extended, but still remarkable, autonomy can be observed in the administrations of Catalonia and Galicia.

In Italy, the quality of public services obtained in some areas of the South (e.g., Naples, Calabria, Sicily) is much lower than that of the equivalent services in the North of Italy. Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti (1993) have linked this discrepancy to variable levels of institutional development and social capital. Besides, another differentiation which should be noted is the following: despite impressions to the contrary, there are quarters of the South European bureaucracies which are reliable and function reasonably well. In Italy, this holds true for the treasury, the diplomatic service, the Council of the State and the Audit Office (Meny 1993: 452-453). In Greece, the same is true for the Council of the State, the Bank of Greece and the Ombudsman.

Finally, over the 1990s large-scale changes took place in the size of public employment in Southern Europe (Table 3, below). There are quantitative differences among the four South European bureaucracies. As Table 3 shows, the four states are not of equal size; nor have they evolved in the same fashion over the last ten years or so.

### TABLE 3

Size of public administration and defense employment in South European States, 1993-2004. Number of employees (‘000) and percentage change over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employees (‘000)</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Change 1993/2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>266.3</td>
<td>354.3</td>
<td>+ 33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1,540.4</td>
<td>1,172.0</td>
<td>- 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>285.5</td>
<td>295.0</td>
<td>- 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>698.4</td>
<td>1,039.9</td>
<td>+ 49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD employment data. See [http://oecd-stats.ingenta.com/OECD/eng/TableViewer/wdsview/](http://oecd-stats.ingenta.com/OECD/eng/TableViewer/wdsview/)

The differences in the change over time may not be attributed to the same reason. In 1993-2004, the Spanish state evolved along a federalist path, and regional governments hired large numbers of employees. This does not hold for either Greece or
Portugal, which are not federal states and have taken smaller steps towards decentralization. In contrast to Greece, in 1993-2004 Italy and Portugal seem to have made progress in ‘trimming’ the size of their public employment. Such data indicate the different reactions of South European states to the challenges of administrative modernization and decentralization, privatization of the public sector and Europeanization of the public services, with which we briefly conclude our paper.

7. Conclusions: Evolving changes in South European bureaucracies

In this paper we have argued the following: South European bureaucracies should not be considered excessively large. Their alleged excess size has not been borne out of our brief cross-national comparisons of public employment or of public expenditure or of government revenue. South European states are not overgrown. However, their higher echelons of their civil service hierarchy and public management are excessively politicised. Recruitment to the public administration and the public sector is still often done on the basis of particularistic criteria. Politicisation of the higher civil service, particularistic recruitment to the public sector and particularistic provision of social protection are aspects of patronage or clientelism. Patronage has affected the way resources, including personnel, have been distributed in the public sector of South European societies. The public sector of these societies remains uneven in terms of resources and performance. It has also lacked a distinct administrative elite with the ‘esprit de corps’ and the skills encountered at the top levels of other West European bureaucracies (Sotiropoulos 2004).

There are differences among the four states under study. For instance, the Greek and Italian cases seem more similar particularly as far as lack of an administrative elite is concerned. Spain and Italy are more advanced in terms of administrative decentralization, while Greece and Portugal remain comparatively centralized. In addition, within each of the four countries there is enough variation in regard to public administration and public sector performance.

A fully developed explanation of clientelism at the top and clientelism at the bottom in South European bureaucracies would require a longer manuscript. Briefly, we would like to suggest the following: These two patterns of clientelism are long-term traits of the ‘family’ of South European bureaucracies and may be accounted for by the particular role that the state has played and continues to play in South European societies. The state has served a few specific social interests, including those of the capitalist class and the urban upper-middle classes. These vested interests have benefited from clientelistic practices and for this reason they have not mobilized in favour of a reform that would have altered the long-term characteristics of the bureaucracy. The capitalist classes have benefited from the development of ‘assisted’, i.e. state-dependent capitalism in Southern Europe. They have also benefited from the incorporation of segments of the middle and lower, urban and rural classes into the political system in a clientelistic, vertical fashion which is divisive of the interests of the latter classes.

Along with state-dependent businessmen, also liberal professionals and segments of the self-employed strata have benefited from the type of taxation and social welfare patterns prevailing in Southern Europe. Among the self-employed strata, farmers in particular have benefited from EU and state subsidies and tax exemptions. The interests of these strata were
not compatible with a reform of the bureaucracy which would have upset their mode of beneficial relations with and their particularistic access to the state. The reason was that taxation and welfare policies and their less than rigorous implementation have allowed the aforementioned strata to generate additional income.

A similar logic applies to the welfare state. Social transfers are organized in a compartmentalized fashion, privileging some social categories and groups, such as liberal professionals and public sector employees, against the rest of the population. The state in Southern Europe has often served a ‘social shock absorber’, i.e., it has offered employment outlets to members of the middle and lower strata who are out of work. There exist then strong reasons which may explain the emergence and historical endurance of the South European ‘model’ of state bureaucracy. The more recent perseverance of the ‘model’ may explained by other reasons. These include the priorities of transition to democracy, which did not emphasize administrative modernization, and the simultaneous precipitation of challenges such as democratisation and Europeanization.

Such directions of change are routes which are followed by other West and North European states. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, chances are that West, North and South European bureaucracies have started converging. They may converge even more in the future. Domestic developments, such as the passing of the post-war party system in Italy in 1992-1994, and, more importantly, international changes, such as the advancement of European integration, the end of the Cold War, the further diffusion and change of the ideas of new public management, the intensification of global competition among national economies, and the spread of new technologies, have created a new political, economic and technological environment for state bureaucracies, including those of Southern Europe. This totally new environment is very different from the historical context which was relevant for this paper, i.e., from democratisation and its aftermath. How South European bureaucracies will adapt to the new environment remains an open question.

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