

Party Patronage in Kazakhstan

Janenova Saltanat

University of Bristol, School for Policy Studies, Bristol, United Kingdom

Knox Colin

Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Abstract: Patronage is a broad concept that can be used to describe such practices as clientelism and corruption. More specifically, this research considers party patronage where political parties ‘appoint individuals to (non-elective) positions in the public and semi-public sector’ (Kopecky et al, 2016). The research builds on the widening global database that measures the scope and depth of party patronage by examining public sector appointments in Central Asian countries. Of specific interest is why authoritarian states engage in patronage appointment practices when the dominant parties are already inextricably linked to the political elite. The study uses Kazakhstan as the site of enquiry and, through proxy indicators, extends the geography to consider Central Asia as a whole. We find the scope and depth of party patronage crosses all key policy sectors and reaches from the top to the lower tiers of governance. Looking at the trends for Central Asian countries since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, party patronage shows no signs of abating.