
Selecting the leader in Italy and Spain

La selección del líder en Italia y España

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Resumen

El objetivo preliminar del artículo es ilustrar los procedimientos de selección del liderazgo en Italia y España, que desde este punto de vista se han desarrollado de manera muy diferente. El objetivo principal es, sin embargo, evaluar si las elecciones primarias abiertas tienen más probabilidades de dar lugar a carreras divisivas hacia el liderazgo en comparación con los procedimientos menos inclusivos de selección, como las primarias cerradas o los Congresos de partido. Por esta razón comparo seis carreras para elegir el presidente del partido y/o el candidato a jefe del ejecutivo promovido por el Partido Demócrata italiano y el Partido Socialista Obrero Español durante los últimos años. El análisis empírico no proporciona evidencias de una relación positiva entre inclusividad y divisividad, ya que los candidatos que se enfrentan en las primarias abiertas generalmente mantienen actitudes moderadas durante la campaña, mientras que el principal candidato apoyado por la élite es capaz de ganar con una ventaja significativa sobre los otros contendientes.

Palabras clave: elecciones primarias, selección del liderazgo, Partido Socialista Obrero Español, Partido Demócrata italiano.

Abstract

The preliminary aim of the article is illustrating the procedures of leadership selection in Italy and Spain, which have faced quite different paths of evolution from this point of view. The main object is nonetheless trying to assess whether open primary elections are more likely to give rise to divisive leadership races compared to less inclusive procedures of selection such as closed primaries or party Congresses. To this end I compare six races to select the party chairman and/or the chief executive candidate promoted by the Italian Democratic Party and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party during the last years. The empirical analysis does not provide evidences of a positive relationship between inclusiveness and divisiveness, since the candidates who run in open primaries generally maintain moderate attitudes during the campaign, while the front-runner supported by the elite is able to succeed with a significant advantage over the other contenders.

Keywords: primary elections, leadership selection, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, Italian Democratic Party.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades most Western European countries experienced the phenomenon defined by Pogutke and Webb (2005) as “presidentialization of politics”, meaning the leader is becoming more central and powerful but also increasingly dependent on successful appeal to the mass public. As a consequence the attention towards political leadership has increased significantly (Natera and Vanaclocha, 2005; Elgie, 1995) and also the evolution of the procedures by which leaders are selected acquired visibility. Many Western parties have recently faced a process of internal democratization intended to involve a larger number of people in the procedures of leader (and candidate) selection (Caul Kittilson and Scarrow, 2006; Hazan, 2006; Astudillo, 2012). This phenomenon stimulated academic attention and produced diatribes between those underlining the importance of grassroots’ participation in the selection process (Valbruzzi, 2005; Pasquino, 2006; Fusaro, 2006) and those stressing the risk of a populist drift that could destroy the internal balance of the parties (Hopkin, 2001; Melchionda, 2005; Rahat and Hazan, 2007). The risk is indeed pushing for an “Americanization of politics”, intended as a “candidate-centred politics” where parties become empty vessels (Katz and Colodny, 1994) deprived of specificity and coherence during the elaboration of programs or the congressional votes, only serving as mediators between candidates and interest groups.

On the one hand some scholars state the democratization could represent an advantage also to the goal of party cohesion, making intra-party conflict more transparent and more easily governing (Floridaia, 2008: 102-103). On the other hand other scholars highlight that very open procedures such as primary elections are more likely to give rise to party conflicts because the candidates are inclined to satisfy the interests of their potential primaries’ voters rather than acting according to party guidelines (Boix, 1998; Hazan, 2006: 187). Far from pretending to provide a definitive answer to this question, the paper tries to assess the existence of a positive relation between inclusiveness of the procedure of selection and divisiveness of the leadership race. Accordingly I resorted to a comparative qualitative analysis of contested (at least two candidates running) leadership races — i.e. races intended to select the party chairman (PC) or the chief executive candidate (CEC)¹ — recently promoted by the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (1998 closed primaries, 2000 and 2012 party Congress) and Italian Democratic Party (2007, 2009, 2012 open primaries). While the comparison between Italy and Spain is quite a “classical” for social science, the six case studies have been selected because they are among the few examples of contested leadership races in the two countries and at the same time they guarantee a certain variability in terms of inclusiveness. Such a

1. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition the *electoral leader* is also the *leader of the organization* (Davies 1998; Scarrow *et al.* 2000; LeDuc 2001; Caul-Kittilson and Scarrow 2006), but in continental and Southern Europe these two figures do not overlap formally. We have indeed two separate strands of literature concerning candidate and leader selection, which however do not exclude each other. That’s why I decided to look both to PC and CEC selection, since the distinction here is not particularly relevant because what matters is the divisiveness of the process of selection *per se*, which means the consequences of the ballot in the medium run are not considered.

choice has a limit yet: being the foundation of the Italian PD very recent (2007), the leadership races cannot be homogeneously distributed during the time. Since the time span for Spain is much longer (fifteen years) the context has been submitted to greater changes. However if I had decided to focus only on the last six years, I would not have enough contested races for what concern the Spanish case. Conversely in case I had opted for a longer period even for the Italian case, I would not have a referential party for such a country, since the centre-left parties that existed before PD's foundation were too small to be compared to PSOE (and neither they provides examples of contested leadership races). In fact, the comparison between PSOE and PD is not only justified by their common social-democratic nature — indeed they join the same group within the European Parliament — , but also by their role of main centre-left force within the (generally) bipolar political system that characterizes the countries of origin².

THE EVOLUTION OF INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY IN ITALY AND SPAIN

Art. 49 of 1947 Italian Constitution states: “*all the citizens have the right to freely associate in parties to concur with democratic method to determine national politics*”. This article aroused a heated debate in the Constituent Assembly. Communist representatives didn't support the idea of disciplining the party internal life fearing the possible repressive intervention of the State, but other deputies (Ruggero, Mortati, Basso and Moro) interpreted the article as imposing intra-party democracy. Finally the Constituent Assembly refused all the proposals that obliged the parties to adopt a democratic internal organisation, and the “democratic method” quoted by art.49 had been interpreted as the necessity to maintain a democratic functioning with regard to the external relationship with the other parties (Gambino, 1995; Giménez, 1998; Fusaro, 2006: 47).

For decades the Italian parties selected their candidates and leaders according to very oligarchic mechanisms, such as the so-called “democratic centralism” that inspired the selection practices of the Communist Party. Also in the 1990s, when several western parties started to experiment closed primary elections, the Italian parties remained deaf to the call of democratisation.

Everything changed in 2005, when the centre-left coalition called “Unione” started to massively employ primary elections open to all citizens in order to select candidates for different public offices, included the Presidency of the Council. The aim was to provide a greater legitimation to the candidates and the entire coalition, but also to solve the eventual controversies that aroused all the times the different parties of the Unione had to agree on

2. In the last general elections in their respective countries PSOE get 28.8% and PD 26.4% (average of the votes in the Chamber and the Senate). In both cases the electoral outcome was disappointing: in the two previous elections the PSOE had reached percentages over 40%, while PD did significantly worse than its debut in 2008, when the party get 33.1%. Currently the electoral weight of the two parties appears quite similar, as they both range between 25 and 30% in vote intentions.

common candidacies. Later on, open primaries became one of the founding elements of the new-born Democratic Party, arisen as a merger between the two main parties of the Italian centre-left: Democratici di Sinistra (DS, moderate heir of the Communist Party) and Margherita (DL, arisen from a left faction of the Christian Democracy). According to PD Statute all citizens are allowed to vote for selecting candidates at the different levels but also the party Secretary, although in this case the term “primary” is not used. Beyond the three national cases here analysed, until now the party promoted countless open (coalition) primaries to select mayor-candidates, but also several Province and Region Presidents, and in December 2012 there was also the first experiment of primaries for choosing candidates to the National Parliament.

While the Italian left, despite the delay, quickly overcame all the other European forces in terms of selection procedures’ opening, the opposite camp got left behind. The twenty-year uncontested leadership of Berlusconi — who also personally used to manage the composition of the lists for national assemblies and the choice of candidates for local public offices — always blocked the few attempts to move towards greater intra-party democracy. Actually the theme of primary elections sometimes recurred in the right-wing debate during the last decade, but most of the times it was a rhetorical strategy (unsuccessfully) used by Berlusconi’s opponents in order to challenge his leadership. However in the summer 2012 Berlusconi (formally) abandoned the leadership of his party The People of Freedom (PDL). After several changes of mind, the party executives officially established the date of 16 December 2012 for the open primaries to select the candidate to 2013 elections. Nonetheless Berlusconi finally decided to personally run as CEC and the primaries’ promoters couldn’t do anything but definitively renounce. Since Berlusconi’s leadership is currently in jeopardy due to the sentence for fiscal fraud and the inability to deal with PDL internal divisions (which finally brought to the official split between MPs loyal to Berlusconi and MPs loyal to the Letta’s government, who formed two different parliamentary groups and parties), the idea of primaries to choose the new centre-right leader brought back “in fashion”, but no decision has been taken up to now.

Moving to Spain we should highlight first of all that within the European context the Spanish Constitution is the only one — together with German Basic Law of 1949 — that clearly establishes the requirement of intra-party democracy. Nonetheless, differently from the German case, the Spanish Party Law restricts itself to set out few dispositions that leave to party Statutes the task to discipline the organisation and functioning of the parties. As happened in the Italian Constituent Assembly, also in Spain those who opposed the constitutional requirement of intra-party democracy were the Communists, since the word “democratic” risked to be interpreted to the extent of prohibit the existence of those parties whose ideology did not coincide with the constitutional writs. Thus finally art.6 was approved with a very general claim that didn’t threat party autonomy: *“the political parties express political pluralism... Their creation and the exercise of their activities are free provided the respect of the Constitution and the law. Their internal structure and functioning should be democratic”* (Giménez, 1998: 58).

The situation changed after the “soft defeat” (*dulce derrota*) of 1996, when the PSOE lose the power after fourteen years of government. Just starting from that moment the discontent of the Socialist grassroots began to explode. The PSOE paid the political costs of the measures adopted in the economic and social field during the recession of the triennium 1993-1995 and the adoption of corrupt practices in some areas of the public life. Hence, the Socialists decided to promote a process of internal reforms in order to re-legitimize themselves in front of the public and living down the scandals that involved Gonzales’ government during its long permanence in power (Hopkin, 2001; Massari, 2004: 146; Valbruzzi, 2005: 223). Accordingly in June 1997 the PSOE Congressmen decided to adopt the mechanism of closed primaries for all the monocratic public offices. However the procedure to select the party chairman (General Secretary) was not changed, and the Socialist PC is still elected by Congress delegates as established in 1977. Nevertheless most of the times the organisational leader (i.e. the Secretary) coincides with the electoral leader and the candidate to become Prime Minister. Up to now the only exception to this rule happened between 1998 and 1999, when just the celebration of the first (and last) closed primary to select the electoral leader led to a short period of *cohabitation* between the party chairman and the chief executive candidate (Barberà *et al.*, 2010). At the local level the use of primaries has been more widespread, but all things considered the democratisation within PSOE looks more a “good intention” than a reality. However next year the PSOE should celebrate its first open primaries to select the CEC for 2015 general election, while the chance to modify party rules in order to choose the PC by closed primaries has been extensively debated but finally putted aside.

In any case, the procedures of leadership selection adopted by the Socialist Party are more democratic than those characterising its centre-right contender. The Popular Party has indeed always been particularly sceptical towards primary elections but apparently also towards contested leadership races, inasmuch as in the last decades all PP Congresses have seen only one candidate running.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Operationalize the independent variable — i.e. the inclusiveness of the process of leadership selection — requires focusing on two main indicators: *selectorate* and *candidacy*. The *selectorate* identifies the body that selects the PC or the CEC. It can be composed of only one person, or several or many selectors, up to the entire electorate (LeDuc, 2001; Hazan, 2006; Kenig, 2009). The more people participate to the ballot, the more the process is inclusive, assuming that the more are those entitled to vote according to the rules, the more will be those who will actually vote.

The second dimension (*candidacy*) refers to the set of people who has the right to run for the party leadership. An extreme inclusive process of selection means that every person can stand, while an exclusive process implies that candidacy is permitted only possessing specific qualifications besides party membership (Barberà *et al.*, 2010: 8). Nonetheless the empirical

analysis cannot be limited to *formal factors* but also requires focusing on the informal practices that determine the real nature of the selective procedure (*political factors*). In fact the elite's intervention in the phase of pre-selection could indirectly push potential candidates to renounce to run, especially in case they support "heretical" positions with respect to the values and ideas promoted by the party core. Accordingly I looked to the interactions occurred within the arena-elite in order to assess the level of autonomy enjoyed by the party establishment in the construction of the offer (Castaldo, 2011: 8-9). Furthermore, also the *electability/viability factor* is likely to affect the definition of the offer through the so called "spin effect" (Dolez and Laurent, 2007: 134). It suggests that a candidate could be driven to renounce just because according to the polls his/her chances to win the leadership race and/or the successive elections are scarce. Of course in the presence of a clear front-runner the impact of this factor is assumed to be stronger.

That said, the aim is to assess the influence the different factors had in determining — and constraining — the candidates' list. The softer the rules, the more (and the more ideologically diversified) the candidates and the lower the elite's influence in the phase of pre-selection, the more inclusive is the *candidacy* dimension.

Beyond a careful analysis of the literature devoted to the leadership race under consideration, such influence has been assessed by two main sources: press analysis and expert survey³. The same sources have been employed for measuring the dependent variable, i.e. the divisiveness of the leadership race. The latter had been operationalized on the basis of three different indicators: electoral campaign's negativity, competitiveness of the leadership race (Hacker, 1965; Venturino, 2009: 23), elite predisposition towards the different contenders.

According to Djupe and Peterson (2005) negativity increases once the campaign is based on criticism of the contenders' personal qualifications, issue positions, past experiences or personality. Thereby I analysed both direct (TV debates, public meetings etc.) and indirect (interviews on the media, rumours, etc.) confrontations among the candidates and the other relevant actors as reported by newspaper coverage, but I also asked party expert about their own interpretation of the campaign. Instead, the race competitiveness is calculated as the average between Kenig (2008)'s index of dispersion — that computes the votes' share obtained by each candidate — and Piereson and Smith (1975)'s index that subtract to 100 the percentage difference between first and second candidate. The more the index is close to 1, the more

3. The press analysis is based on the two main quality newspapers from Italy and Spain: "Corriere della Sera" and "La Repubblica", "El País" and "El Mundo". Covering a period of one month before the ballot the analysis includes all the articles (first and internal pages) devoted to the leadership races, with an average of three articles *per day* for each newspaper. The expert survey instead consists in a semi-structured questionnaire submitted to Italian and Spanish party experts. *Italy* - Prof. Oreste Massari (University of Rome 1), Antonio Floridia (Director of the Electoral Observatory of the Tuscan Region), Prof. Salvatore Vassallo (University of Bologna), Giovanni Bachelet (University of Rome 1); *Spain* - Prof. Miguel Jerez Mir (University of Granada), Prof. Antonio Robles Egea (University of Granada), Prof. Santiago Delgado (University of Granada), Prof. José Real Dato (University of Almería), Dr. Federico Viotti (University of Turin). A summary of the questionnaires' outcome is offered in the appendix, while some extracts of the experts' open answers are reported in the following paragraphs, with the expert name indicated within square brackets in order to be distinguished from normal references.

the race is competitive. Finally, the elite predisposition has been assessed looking to the number of endorsements obtained by each candidate in the pre-ballot period.

Thus, the harder the struggle among the candidates and their supporters during the campaign, the closer the final percentages obtained by the candidates and the more the winner is unwelcome by the party elite, the more the race is assumed to be divisive.

ASSESSING INCLUSIVENESS IN SIX LEADERSHIP RACES

Spain

a) Felipe Gonzalez announced his retirement from the PSOE leadership during the party 34th National Congress in June 1997, held shortly after losing government. The regional leaders (the so called *barones*) agreed to substitute him with Joaquín Almunia, an ex-minister very close to the former President. This oligarchic designation was strongly criticized by the grass-roots and accordingly the new Secretary decided to promote a closed primary to legitimize his candidacy to the Presidency of the Government in 2000 general election. Actually at the beginning Almunia aimed at a sort of internal referendum wherein the party organization presents a single candidacy to the membership who is called to approve it, something that has been tried years later by French UMP for the designation of Sarkozy as Presidential candidate. Nonetheless the break-in in the race of the ex-Minister of public-works José Borrell forced the Secretary to accept an open competition wherein his success was no longer guaranteed.

On April 24th 1998 about 193,000 persons (54% of the membership) took part to the vote. Being one of the first experiments in Europe it can be considered a good result. On the other hand, the *candidacy* dimension was partially inclusive, since there were only two candidates who did not present significant differences (Boix, 1998), although Borrell committed to appear more left-wing than Almunia.

The formal requirements for presenting the candidacy — support of the majority of the Executive Federal Commission, 15% of the members of the Federal Committee, majority of the Territorial Council or 7% of the members — were not so strict, but still sufficient to exclude complete outsiders. In turn, *political factors* didn't really affect the offer, since Borrell was not prevented to challenge Almunia although in the beginning the latter aimed to an uncontested race. However is possible to suspect that the discomfort in challenging the chairman could have indirectly discouraged the participation of other candidates [Vioti, Real-Dato]. In fact, Almunia was obviously the front-runner in the primaries (*viability*), but according to some observers Borrell had greater chances to succeed in the general election because of his better communicative skills (*electability*). In sum, Borrell was a serious challenger for Almunia, even because, differently from what have been asserted by Valbruzzi (2005: 227), he was not an “outsider” but rather a party-man member of two Executives who at the beginning of the 1990s was even indicated as a possible successor of Gonzales.

b) The PSOE 35th Congress was open just after the crushing defeat in 2000 election. 998 delegates were called to vote the new party Secretary. If we consider that in the 1977 Party Congress the ratio was of 66 members for each delegate while by the 2000 Party Congress each delegate represented 410 members (Barberà *et al.*, 2010: 12; Carreras and Tafunell, 2005: 140), it is clear the *selectorate* was quite constrained. But this time the *candidacy* dimension partly compensated the low level of inclusiveness, also considering that until that moment all the PSOE Congresses were basically uncontested. The *formal factors* didn't appear to have really affected the offer, even if it is possible to guess that the necessity to be backed by 10% of party delegates in order to run as candidate could have discouraged the participation of eventual *outsiders*. Nonetheless the presence of four candidates was not expected when the Congress was announced in mid-April. Accordingly in the weeks preceding the ballot there were speculations concerning possible withdrawals or alliances between the candidates, but finally no one of them renounced. Moreover the four candidates represented the different "souls" of the party, which means no other challengers were seriously prevented to run because of *political factors*.

José Bono, President of the Region Castilla-La Mancha since 17 years, was the candidate of the *reformers* representing the continuity with the recent past, and he was clearly the front-runner in the eve [Jerez, Delgado, Robles]. Luis Zapatero was a young MP who founded a new faction within the party called *Nueva Vía* (a mix of Blair's *Third Way* and Schröder's *Neue Mitte*). Though being a kind of outsider he looked to have good chances as well. Matilde Fernandez was the candidate of the *guerrista* minority, while the Basque Rosa Díez, president of the Spanish Euro-deputies, represented a kind of intermediate option. These last two contenders were probably aware to be short of *electability/viability*, but they were more than simply "attestation" candidates especially because of their coalition potential in the Congress.

c) On November 2011 the Socialist candidate Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba was widely defeated in the early election by PP leader Mariano Rajoy. After such a rout the aim of the PSOE was to renew itself and improve its image for reviving a depressed membership and try to win back the trust of the electors, strongly disappointed by Socialist government's inappropriate management of the most serious recession of Spanish economy. The issue of internal democracy immediately became one of the priorities, but the urgency to single out a new Secretary in order to substitute Zapatero — who officially kept the office also after leaving the Presidency of the Government — obliged the party to celebrate a new Congress with the old rules of delegates' vote. The 38th PSOE Congress was scheduled from 3 to 5 February 2012 in Seville. The delegates entitled to vote was 976, still a quite constrained *selectorate*. But compared to 2000 also the *candidacy* dimension was less inclusive. Actually the control of the party elite on the process of Zapatero's substitution after his decision not to re-present his candidacy in April 2011 occurred much before than the Congress, when Carme Chacón was forced to withdraw her candidacy to the announced closed primaries (that were indeed cancelled) in order to allow the direct nomination of Rubalcaba as CEC. But after Rubalcaba's

defeat in 2011 elections, the prospect to have a Congress with a single candidate was no longer acceptable. Accordingly, the elite propitiated the candidacy of Rubalcaba and Chacón because no one of the two represented a real break with the past, both having served under Zapatero's governments and presenting similar orientations [Delgado]. Compared to 2000 the formal candidacy requirements were strengthened — from 10% to 20% of delegates' support, beyond the rule regarding 10% of the endorsements from Federal Committee members — , which means that alternative candidacies without a widespread support within the organization were indirectly prevented. It means both *formal* and *political factors* had a certain impact, as much as *electability/viability*. Indeed according to some rumours also the general secretary of Basque Socialists Patxi López intended to participate, but he voluntarily renounced after realising to have just few chances to win, since a defeat would mean a significant loss of prestige within the party [Viotti].

Italy

d) The project to build the Democratic Party was defined for the first time in October 2006 during a seminar jointly promoted by the Prime Minister at that time Romano Prodi and the two secretaries of Democratici di Sinistra (DS) and Margherita (DL). In that time everybody took for granted Prodi would be the first leader of the new party. However in spring 2007 the latter struggled with the difficult handling of the fragile and conflicting majority that supported his government. Thus, the premises for PD's rise were not good, also considering the difficulties in merging two forces coming from completely different traditions: the communist and the catholic ones. Open primary election accordingly appeared the better instrument to "launch" the new party monopolizing media attention. A significant participation to the "event" was also expected to revive the centre-left government. Not only electors were allowed to vote but also regular immigrants and sixteen-years-olds, so configuring a formal *selectorate* which was even larger than the one that characterises US primaries. In fact, more than three millions and half voters took part to the ballot on October 14th.

Selectorate's inclusiveness was nonetheless partly compensated by a much less inclusive *candidacy*, since the party elite played a fundamental role in the phase of pre-selection. *Formal factors* prevented the leader of the Radical Party Marco Pannella, the journalist Furio Colombo and the leader of the Italy of Values Antonio Di Pietro. However, since the primaries represented the founding act of the new party which accordingly still lacked precise internal rules for leadership selection, the formal requirements for the candidacy were not so strict. The aim was just to exclude "disturbance candidates" with no chance to win but only interested in acquiring visibility and carrying out personal issues (Massari, 2004: 148), as the case of Pannella. Hence, the high number of candidates (five), also extraneous to the party elite, could suggest a very inclusive *candidacy*. On the contrary, the primaries were conceived as a process of confirmation, coronation and popular legitimation of a single candidate (Pasquino, 2009): in 2007 the Rome-Mayor Walter Veltroni should be for PD what Prodi was in

2005 for the *Unione* [Bachelet], as much as the former asked for a unanimous consensus within the party in order to accept to present his candidacy [Vassallo]. In fact the two *outsiders* Adinolfi and Gawronski were completely unknown, while the former DL executives Enrico Letta and Rosy Bindi only aimed at acquiring power within the party organisation. The only possible challenger of Veltroni, i.e. the former Minister Pierluigi Bersani — who also presented a more left-wing political placement —, was forced to renounce to run just to avoid threatening the success of the intended winner. Accordingly both *political factors* and *electability/viability* (Veltroni was the primaries' front-runner but also appeared the most electorally competitive leader of the centre-left in that time), differently from *formal factors*, really had an important impact on the formation of the candidates' list.

e) In February 2009, after a resounding sequence of electoral defeats at the national and local level, Veltroni resigned as PD Secretary. The party National Assembly designated the vice-Secretary Dario Franceschini to lead the party in 2009 European election. Later on, also in order to stop the internal conflicts, an extraordinary Congress and new primary election to select the new PC were called.

On October 24th 2009 popular participation maintained extraordinary levels, overcoming three millions voters. But in this case also *candidacy* inclusiveness increased, even though the number of candidates decreased from five to three.

Contrary to 2007, this time the candidacy requirements were clearly established in the Statute and all the potential candidates knew they have first of all to pass a certain threshold (quite low anyway: 5%) in pre-members' vote for go on in the race. Accordingly is possible other prospective candidates renounced because they didn't want to face the membership vote [Bachelet]. Still, two potential candidates (the populist comedian Beppe Grillo and the architect Nicolini) were finally excluded because of *formal factors*. They would hardly represented credible challengers for the other contenders, while the former clearly appeared a "disturbing candidate". In fact Grillo's exclusion (officially justified by the fact he was not a PD member) did not raise up wide attention, but it was just after that moment that the comedian decided to found the movement which in few years would have become one of the main protagonists of Italian politics.

Political factors and the *electability/viability factor* instead appeared less influential than two years before, with no candidate prevented to run even because of the lack of an intended winner. The two main candidates (Pierluigi Bersani and Dario Franceschini) supported quite different political positions, while the third contender Ignazio Marino was an *outsider* representing a kind of intermediate option. The former minister Bersani sponsored a return to a more traditional form of party organization, a more left-wing placement and a strategy of alliance with other parties, while the outgoing Secretary Franceschini continued the line of the "light party" and the "majoritarian vocation" introduced by his predecessor Veltroni.

Considering the growing loss of consensus, a change in PD leadership was widely supported and Bersani appeared favoured in terms of *electability/viability*, as also testified by his

success in the member preparatory vote. Still, his victory did not appear predictable as in the case of Veltroni in 2007, even because the new rules established that in case no one of the candidates had reached an absolute majority of the votes in the primaries, the Secretary had to be picked by the National Assembly.

f) The context in which 2012 centre-left primaries were celebrated was quite different from 2007 and 2009. The centre-right still had a large majority in the Parliament, but because of the inability to deal with the economic crisis in November 2011 Berlusconi had to leave the Premiership to Mario Monti, whose government was also supported by Bersani's PD. According to the polls and the outcome of municipal elections of May 2012 the Democrats and their allies were largely favored for the upcoming general election. Still, primary elections were no longer a novelty and a decrease in participation was expected. Moreover the *selectorate* was formally more restricted than previous coalition primaries, since a pre-registration and the inclusion in the public register of voters were required. Despite this the participation resembled that of 2009, with about 3,100,000 voters in the first ballot and 2,800,000 in the second (following the example of 2011 French primaries this time the party opted for a double-ballot). Hence, the concern of all those people who thought the new rules for voting would have discouraged popular participation revealed unwarranted. The fact remains that PD executives decided to intervene on the *selectorate* dimension in order to balance *candidacy*'s inclusiveness, i.e. aiming to hinder the success of the Florence-Mayor Renzi discouraging the participation of centre-right voters. Indeed in this case we really had a very inclusive *candidacy*, with five contenders presenting different political orientations and not a foregone conclusion. Renzi recovered some of the ideas supported by Franceschini in 2009 (though from a more right-wing perspective), also adding the motto of a radical renewal and rejuvenation of the entire PD establishment (the so-called "scrapping"). Nichi Vendola, President of the Apulia region and leader of "Left Ecology and Freedom (SEL)", was clearly the more left-wing candidate, while Tabacci represented the moderate part of the centre-left coalition. The other PD candidate Laura Puppato stayed in the middle.

The PC Bersani was clearly the front-runner (*viability*) but Renzi seemed to enjoy a larger liking in the general electorate (*electability*), especially among previous supporters of the opposite coalition. *Formal factors* revealed totally irrelevant because PD Assembly decided to provisionally suspend the rule establishing that, among PD members, only the Secretary had the right to run in coalition primaries for selecting the CEC, which allowed Renzi (and others) to participate. One potential contender (Sandro Gozi) was forced to withdraw because he couldn't get the signatures required, but he was just a minor candidate. Therefore, although most of the party executives were clearly lined up against Renzi, they accepted not to hinder his race — even because the decision would appear largely unpopular and there was the risk of a split by the area closer to the Florence-Mayor — so neither *political factors* had a strong impact on the *candidacy* dimension, although this time they indirectly affected the (formal) *selectorate*.

TABLE 1.
LEADERSHIP RACES SORTED BY INCLUSIVENESS (DESCENDING ORDER)

Leadership race	Mechanism of selection	Number of voters	NC	Formal factors	Political factors	Electability / viability
PD 2012	Open primary	2,956,296*	5	x	x	x
PD 2009	Open primary	3,102,709	3	xx	x	x
PD 2007	Open primary	3,554,169	5	x	xxx	xxx
PSOE 1998	Closed primary	192,653	2	xx	xx	xx
PSOE 2000	Party Congress	998	4	xx	x	x
PSOE 2012	Party Congress	976	2	xx	xx	x

x: the factor has a low influence on candidate offer; xx: the factor has a medium influence on candidate offer; xxx: the factor has a strong influence on candidate offer.. NC: Number of candidates. *The number reports the average of voters in the first and second ballot.

ASSESSING DIVISIVENESS IN SIX LEADERSHIP RACES

Spain

a) The 1998 PSOE primaries had been portrayed as a kind of “David against Goliath” struggle, i.e. the intended winner against a contender deprived of elite support (although Borrell was not an *outsider*). The entire party establishment was indeed line up with the PC Almunia, although the contest also hidden the internal divisions between *guerristas* and *renovadores* and national and regional executives [Viotti]. Thus, the campaign was not particularly hard in terms of direct confrontations between the two candidates, but with the approaching of the ballot (and the growing awareness that Borrell could win) it overheated because of the attacks of the party elite towards Borrell, who “dared” challenging the PC. Many party executives indeed tried to spread among the membership the idea that whether Almunia had lost it would had produced a disaster for the PSOE.

While the Spanish scholars (Boix, 1998; Benitez, 2000) highlighted the ambiguity of the candidates’ messages and the scarce differentiation in their placement, they also underlined the accentuation of more personal issues linked to the leadership capacity of each contender which are indeed indicators of negativity. Borrell criticised his opponent for having a too trivial and too little innovative manifesto, while Almunia accused his challenger for being too radical.

In the end the efforts of the party elite for favouring Almunia’s success revealed a “boomerang”, pushing the Socialist members to express a protest vote against the PC (Valbruzzi, 2005: 227). Borrell indeed slightly succeeded with 55%. Hence, the combination of a quite negative campaign and high competitiveness allow us to talk about a very divisive race. As a consequence Almunia first announced to leave the chairmanship but then agreed to keep his

office and support Borrell's campaign for 2000 election in order to maintain the party unity. It translated in a bad-organized *bicefalia*, which was solved after only one year, when Borrell was forced to resign by a scandal involving two of his former collaborators.

b) Mindful of what happened two years before, when the entire party establishment lined up for the finally defeated candidate, in the occasion of 2000 PSOE Congress most regional leaders abstained from publicly declared their preference for the struggling candidates. Still, the baron Bono largely appeared the elite's favourite candidate, although Zapatero could count on the indirect endorsements of some of the biggest federations (Catalonia, Valencia). In fact, we can even single out a certain similarity with 1998: this time the role of front-runner supported by the majoritarian part of the PSOE organization played by Almunia just two years before was taken by both Bono and Zapatero, while the part of "disturbance candidate" was entrusted to the two female challengers (Díez and Fernández). It also amounted to a more or less wanted "gender struggle": while the two men exchanged marks of respect and seemed to agree on most of the programmatic issues, the two women criticized the indefiniteness of Zapatero and Bono's proposals and their role of candidates of the establishment. Nevertheless the entire campaign developed in a climate of mutual respect among the candidates, who avoided any negative contents. Hence, although in the end Zapatero surprisingly succeeded over Bono with only 9 votes of advantage, the high competitiveness was compensated by the very moderate campaign and the contest did not reveal particularly divisive.

Thus, although the party that arrived to the 35th Congress was highly divided, the Federal Executive proposed by Zapatero just after his election — including all the different souls of the party — was massively voted by Congress delegates, including all Bono's followers. As a consequence, when two years later the party organisation called the primaries for selecting the CEC for 2004 election, no one dared challenge Zapatero for the office.

c) Although in 2011 early election Rubalcaba led the PSOE to its worst electoral defeat ever, at the moment of the 38th Congress he was still the candidate enjoying the largest share of endorsements among historical and territorial leaders. However Chacón had a majoritarian support within the most important federations (Catalonia, Madrid and maybe Andalusia), as well as Zapatero in 2000. Nevertheless the skirmishes between the two candidates during the congressional campaign were greater than in 2000, with also hidden attacks to the personal characteristics of the competitors [Delgado]. In fact, since the two candidates did not present any significant ideological difference, the struggle revolved around the dichotomy innovation/inexperience, with Rubalcaba and his supporters who accused Chacón for being unfit for leading the party in such a delicate moment because of her lack of ministerial experience, and Chacón's camp committed to attack the old-style of her competitor.

In the vote occurred February 4th Rubalcaba succeeded with a very slight margin. Thus competitiveness didn't decrease compare to 2000 but because of a harder campaign the race

appeared more divisive, though not as much as 1998 primaries. Hence, differently from 2000, this time the candidate apparently more supported within the party establishment got the better, and this is probably the reason why his first steps as new PC were much less “integrative” than those of Zapatero after the 35th Congress. Indeed the new Executive boards nominated by Rubalcaba did not include any members who supported the defeated candidate Chacón, excepting the President, José Antonio Griñán. Accordingly only 80% of the delegates approved the Executive proposed by the new PC, one of the lowest percentages in recent Congresses, while the defeated candidate refused to offer an unconditional support to the new leader.

Italy

d) There are no doubts about the candidate enjoying the largest support within the elite at the moment of 2007 PD primaries. Walter Veltroni was endorsed by almost the entire former DS elite and a big part of ex-DL executives. Accordingly any kind of conflict or misunderstanding in the days approaching the ballot should be avoided [Floridia]. To this end Veltroni refused to participate to a TV debate with the other candidates, although both Bindi and Letta asked for it. The other challengers however renounced to joining forces against the front-runner and for most of the time the campaign remained friendly. Actually there were some marginal attempts to polarize the debate by Rosy Bindi, who accused the Rome-Mayor of wanting to create a too centrist and oligarchic party [Vassallo]. Nevertheless, these skirmishes reflected the obstacles that it was easy to expect in the creation of a new party that was rather divided in its internal structure.

As largely anticipated, Veltroni triumphed with about 75% of the votes. Hence, considering the moderation of the campaign, the lack of competitiveness and the fact that the endorsements’ procedure largely rewarded the final winner Veltroni, the leadership race did not appear divisive at all. However the fact that Veltroni’s historical opponents — notably D’Alema and his followers — simply renounced to openly challenge the Rome-mayor in the primaries forcing Bersani to withdraw from the contest, did not assure the conflict between the two factions was actually solved but simply “frozen” for a while, as exemplified by all the internal problems met by the PC until his resignation in February 2009 [Massari, Bachelet].

e) Differently from 2007, in the occasion of 2009 PD primaries the orientation of the party elite towards the two main candidates was much more balanced and quite transversal with respect to the two co-founders parties. Nonetheless the elite endorsements seemed to have slightly reward Bersani rather than the outgoing PC Franceschini. The former was indeed able to create a larger coalition that involved a majority of former DS members (especially those loyal to D’Alema) but also encompassed the DL currents lead by 2007 primaries’ candidates Bindi and Letta (Fasano, 2010).

The contraposition at the elite level also reflected on the primaries' campaign, wherein we had indeed some negative contents. Being the candidate forced to chase, Franceschini opted for a more aggressive campaign, while the front-runner Bersani maintained moderate attitudes. Hard confrontations among the candidates occurred regarding eventual poll-riggings and the risks to overturn the membership vote (that rewarded Bersani) with open primaries. Still, the attacks concerning the capacities and character of the candidates were not explicit but only used behind the front line, apart the recurrent critic to Bersani for being maneuvered by D'Alema [Vassallo].

On 24th October 2009 Bersani was elected with 53.2% of the popular vote, while Franceschini stopped at 34.3%. This medium level of competitiveness together with a relatively moderate campaign (though less moderate than two years before) and the success of a candidate that appeared to be the one preferred by the party elite — but not as much as Veltroni in 2007 — , make the leadership race more divisive than 2007 primaries, but not extremely divisive in general terms. In fact from the very beginning the new PC promoted an inclusive internal politics which favoured a mixing of the party factions, insomuch as Bersani's majority *de facto* absorbed Franceschini — who was chosen to led PD parliamentary group in the Chamber — and his followers [Florida, Vassallo].

f) While in 2009 the elite endorsements were almost halved between Bersani and Franceschini, in the occasion of 2012 centre-left primaries the PD core was openly hostile to Renzi and largely lined up with the PC Bersani. Thus the campaign was not particularly hard in terms of direct confrontations between the candidates — rather the two TV debates appeared very friendly — but the tensions were mainly enhanced by the attacks of several members of the party establishment towards Renzi (it reminds of the sort of Borrell in 1998 Spanish primaries), who was accused for wanting to destroy the party and change its nature through the appeal to centre-right voters. In turn Renzi and his followers criticised the complex voting rules for having the only aim to hinder his success, particularly many controversies aroused for the impossibility to vote in the second ballot for those who didn't participate in the first.

In the first ballot held on November 25th Bersani had a lead of about 10% over Renzi but he wasn't able to reach the absolute majority. Also thanks to the endorsement of all the eliminated candidates such a lead overcome 20% in the second ballot. Bersani was accordingly elected CEC and the wish of the party elite was finally completed, while race competitiveness maintained rather low. Instead campaign's negativity increased compared to previous primaries but did not explode, which means the divisiveness marginally increased compared to 2009. Actually after the ballot a couple of prominent PD members and MPs who supported Renzi in the primaries decided to leave the party and joined the centre forces supporting Mario Monti, while others remained in the party though highlighting a dangerous shift to the left. Nonetheless, Renzi recognised the defeat and assured his full support to the new CEC, at least until the very disappointing result obtained by Bersani in 2013 February election.

TABLE 2.
LEADERSHIP RACES SORTED BY DIVISIVENESS (DECREASING ORDER)

Leadership race	NC	Campaign negativity	Elite's favourite candidate	Winner (%)	Index of competitiveness
PSOE 1998	2	xxx	Almunia	Borell (55.4)	0.941
PSOE 2012	2	xx	Rubalcaba	Rubalcaba (51.2)	0.988
PD 2012	5	xxx	Bersani	Bersani (44.9 / 60.9)	0.802
PD 2009	3	xx	Bersani	Bersani (53.0)	0.805
PSOE 2000	4	x	Bono	Zapatero (41.2)	0.841
PD 2007	5	x	Veltroni	Veltroni (75.8)	0.351

x: not negative campaign; xx: partly negative campaign; xxx: very negative campaign.

CONCLUSIONS

The empirical evidences do not confirm the hypothesis of a positive relation between inclusiveness and divisiveness of the leadership race, although the restrict number of cases analyzed do not allow for generalization.

Among the six case studies the three Italian contests are clearly those closer to the most inclusive pole, because of the huge *selectorate* involved. Nonetheless inclusiveness increased significantly from 2007 to 2012 because of the *candidacy* dimension. At the same time, as expected, also race divisiveness increased. Yet in all the three contests the negativity of electoral campaign was limited and the success of the front-runner endorsed by the majority of the party elite was large. Indeed we could suspect that in case a large set of people is called to vote for the party leader, the risk of internal conflicts is better perceived and it could push the party elite and the candidates themselves in adopting a more cautious approach during the campaign, even not to discourage popular participation. Furthermore, Kenig (2008: 242) had already demonstrated that large *selectorates* are more likely to direct their votes on the front-runner in order to guarantee to the selected leader a greater legitimation, while polls that establish a clear front-runner may also persuade the supporters of the challengers to abstain. However the lack of extreme divisiveness in the leadership race does not put under cover from future internal struggles, as exemplified by the case of 2007 and 2012 Italian primaries.

Having said that, the Spanish cases proved to be less inclusive but no less divisive than the Italian primaries. Contrary to Italy, in Spain the inclusiveness progressively decreased from 1998 to 2012. Among the six cases considered, 1998 primaries revealed the most divisive contest, as also exemplified by the unlucky fate of Borrell. On the contrary in 2000 Congress divisiveness decreased significantly, as much as *selectorate's* inclusiveness (which was only partially balanced by a more inclusive *candidacy*). It probably explains why in 2011 the PSOE decided to renounce to the already established closed primary for selecting the new

CEC. Indeed, in a period of dramatic crisis for the PSOE, the imperative was to provide an image of unity that could be seriously jeopardised by the primaries. But that decision did not help the party avoiding its worst electoral defeat ever in 2011 anticipated election, and although the following 2012 Congress was even less inclusive than the one in 2000, divisiveness actually increased. Therefore the orientation of the party elite seemed to have become again favorable to primaries, as it perhaps got to the conclusion that the advantages in terms of publicity and legitimation are larger than the risks. However in Italy the disappointing electoral performance in 2013 election and the following political events brought many PD executives to question the efficiency of primary elections. Nonetheless new open primaries for selecting the next party Secretary has been finally established for December 8th.

To conclude, there are no evidences that very inclusive procedures of selection could actually prevent intra-party conflicts as state by some “primaries’ supporters”, but at least they don’t look to be detrimental. In fact, a divisive leadership contest it is hardly the consequence of the selection process *per se*, while it is usually the reflection of pre-existent internal fractures.

Appendix: expert survey outcome⁴

	PD 2007				PD 2009			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Massari	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Florida	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	?	No
Vassallo	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	?	Yes	/
Bachelet	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No

	PSOE 1998				PSOE 2000				PSOE 2012			
Robles	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	?	Yes
Real	Yes	?	No	Yes	No	?	No	No	Yes	?	?	Yes
Jerez	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	/	/	/	/
Viotti	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	?	?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Delgado	yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	?	Yes

/: the answer is missing. ?: the answer is present but the expert is uncertain.

Q1: Do you think the party elite had a significant role in the construction of the candidate offer (i.e. some other potential candidates were prevented to run for the leadership because of formal or political factors)?

Q2: How would you define the style of the electoral campaign? Was it based on “fair play” or was it a negative campaign with critics to the personal qualifications, issue positions, past experiences or character of the challengers?

Q3: Do you think the race winner was also the candidate more supported by the party elite?

Q4: Would you define the leadership race as divisive for the party?

4. The survey has been realized before December 2012, so the answers concerning 2012 centre-left Italian primaries are missing.

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