

The Degree of Centralization of Candidate Selection Procedures: the Italian Case

Enrico Calossi (Istituto Universitario Europeo): enrico.calossi@eui.eu

Eugenio Pizzimenti (Università di Pisa): eugenio.pizzimenti@sp.unipi.it

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the degree of territorial centralization of the most relevant Italian parties, with regards to the procedures of Candidate Selection. In organizational theory, centralization relates to the distribution of control and effective decision-making authority among the party units. As Candidate Selection is one of the core functions carried out by political parties, the ways in which parties, belonging to different ideological families and characterized by different organizational traditions, regulate these procedures, reflect the organizational arrangements deemed more effective in a specific political context. In particular, by comparing the degree of centralisation in the Candidate Selection procedures to other relevant organizational variables, we seek to define to what extent this crucial activity had significantly followed patterns of decentralisation or, on the contrary, whether it still represents a prerogative of the national party organs.

Introduction

In recent years, a bulk of literature on party organization has focused on the relations between national and sub-national levels of party organizations (Katz, Mair 1994). In particular, the process of administrative decentralization and empowerment of sub-national governments – which concerned most of the EU Member States – posed to established State-wide parties new organizational dilemmas. Some scholars investigated to what extent the traditional organizational imperative had shifted from a *hierarchical* to a *stratarchical* paradigm (Carty 2004; Bolleyer 2011). In this perspective, as far as sub-national politics has become more attractive to parties, they had to (re)adapt their structures and their functioning by trying to find new equilibrium among party units set at different levels. Bolleyer (2011, p. 319) maintains that while «Hierarchies and federations share that one organizational layer dominates the organization [...], party stratarchies [...] establish a division of labour between two mutually dependent yet distinguishable levels to which functionally different competences are assigned, none of which is able to fully dominate the other. A functional division of labour dominates [...]». In particular, Van Biezen and Hopkin (2005, p. 3) suggest to «[...] focus on three arenas of party activity where state-wide parties have to address the tensions and contradictions emerging from multi-level electoral politics», namely 1) electoral strategies, 2) candidate selection, 3) governing strategies. Also Carty refers to the “electoral products” as the main concerns of party activities, especially in multi-level systems, where crucial decision making processes can be made at different layers (Carty 2004). What is at stake, then, in contemporary party politics, is the intra-party distribution of power among relevant party units in managing critical aspects of the electoral competition. In what follows we will focus on methods and procedures of Candidate Selection (CS).

The methods of Candidate Selection are at the hearth of the democratic system and political representation. Ranney defined the process of CS as the one «by which a political party decides which of the persons legally eligible to hold an elective office will be designated on the ballot» (Ranney 1981, p. 75). The relevance of CS methods has been stressed overtime by many scholars. Sartori maintained that CS is the core activity by which political parties differ from other political organizations (Sartori 1976). More recently, Hazan and Rahat have noted that «Whatever the electoral formula used in elections, candidate selection is one of the first things that political parties must do before they take place» (Hazan, Rahat 2006, p. 109), and Cross even got to the conclusion that «under certain circumstances, party candidate selection process may be equally or more determinative of who ends up in the legislature than are general elections» (Cross 2008, p. 615). In general, CS methods reflect and affect the power struggle within parties: consequently an in-depth study of these procedures could raise interesting indications about party’s organizational attitudes as

well as party's electoral strategies. For what concerns the former, it has been observed an apparently contradictory tendency to an increase in autonomy and powers for the party in public office and the party in central office at the expenses of the party on the ground (Mair 1994). With regards to electoral strategies, the personality or the prestige of candidates may play a major role in determining voters' choice, rather than the party itself: thus the relevance of CS may vary as the electoral competition presents more candidate-oriented/personalised rather than party-oriented/cohesive dynamics (Marsh 2007). Finally, different CS methods could drive to different degrees of party stability, both at organizational level and within the parliamentary arena (Crotty 1968).

Purpose and method

Despite the undisputed centrality of CS methods, the study of these procedures still constitutes a minor vein in political research, especially in comparative perspective (Bardi et. al. 2010; Hazan, Rahat 2010; Lemann 2009; Lundell 2004). The extreme variance in CS methods and procedures across countries and across parties has been analysed through multiple lenses (Gallagher, Marsh 1988). The present contribution deals with the distribution of power within the organizations of 12 Italian parties, i.e. with the prevailing selecting organs and the formal rules regulating CS procedures. The Italian case is particularly interesting as the Italian party system has been continuously reshuffled since 1994. None of those parties (but the Northern League) which had a parliamentary representation in 1992 election survived in the following 1994 turnout, when new political actors entered the electoral arena. More interestingly, none of the latter (but the Northern League) is currently on the scene. What we seek to verify empirically, then, is whether CS procedures have been changing as far as the organizational profiles of the Italian parties showed high levels of fluidity; or, on the contrary, whether this crucial activity has maintained a substantial stability in the employed methods. To this aim we focus on the dimension *territorial centralisation of party organization* (Lundell 2004).

In organizational theory *centralization* relates to the distribution of control and the effective decision-making authority among the party organs. CS procedures will be compared to other relevant organizational variables in order to define to what extent this specific function has significantly followed patterns of decentralisation or, on the contrary, it still represents a prerogative of national party organs. We will focus on two sub-dimensions of *territorial centralisation*: 1) the autonomy of sub-national party units from the party central offices; 2) the relevance of sub-national party representatives at the central level. For what concerns the first sub-dimension, we will explore 1a) the level of autonomy of sub-national party units in defining their own organizations and

structures; 1b) the level of autonomy of sub-national party units in selecting the leader of their own level. The relevance of sub-national party representatives at the central level will be analysed by referring to 2a) the degree of involvement of sub-national party officers in selecting the national party leader; 2b) the degree of representation of sub-national party officers in central party executive organs. The variable measuring the involvement of sub-national party units in selecting candidates to national elections is purposely isolated, to facilitate its observations. Our main hypothesis is the following:

H: while the sub-national party units progressively gained organizational autonomy and their representatives acquired an increasing relevance in the national organs, the selection of candidates to national elections still represents a prerogative of restricted national party organs.

We compare party organizations through a specific coding scheme, drawn primarily on Harmel et al.' *Party Change Project* (Harmel et al. 2004; Thorlakson 2009; Fabre 2010). For each variable parties receive a score between 1 and 5 (see Table 1)¹. The lowest level of centralisation is scored 1, while the highest receives 5. We will focus on the *official story* of the analysed parties: party statutes reflect the formal organizational structures and rules as well as the «internal conceptions of organizational power, authority and legitimacy» (Katz, Mair 1992, p. 7). Although we recognize that the “real” story of parties develops primarily outside the formalised settings, from a comparative perspective we consider party statutes a valuable source of information about the ways different parties conceive and regulate the distribution of powers among their different faces (Smith, Gauja 2010). To this aim we will proceed to a cross-comparison of the statutes adopted by 12 parties, during the 18 years covered by the research (1994-2012), for a total of 32 party statutes,.

¹ The values assigned to each modality of the variables are ordinal, thus they do not allow arithmetic operations. See Corbetta (1999).

Table 1 - Organizational variables and codes

Autonomy of sub-national party units	
Organizational regulatory autonomy of sub-national branches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exclusively demanded to bylaws and regulations adopted and approved by sub-national party units; 2. Demanded to bylaws and regulations adopted and approved by sub-national party units, according to organizational guidelines provided by the national level; 3. Demanded to bylaws and regulations adopted by sub-national party units and approved by the national level, according to organizational guidelines provided by the national level; 4. Exclusively demanded to bylaws and regulations adopted and approved by national party units, after consulting the sub-national level; 5. Exclusively demanded to bylaws and regulations adopted and approved by national party units, without consulting the sub-national level;
Selection of the sub-national party leader	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By one or more sub-national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at sub-national level; 2. By one or more sub-national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at national level; 3. By one or more sub-national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at national level, which has the power to approve/reject the selected candidate; 4. By one or more national party unit(s), which nominates/selects the sub-national party leader, after consulting a sub-national party unit; 5. By one or more national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at national level;
Candidate selection procedures	
Selection of the candidates to national elections	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By one or more sub-national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at sub-national level 2. By one or more sub-national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at national level; 3. By one or more sub-national party unit(s), within the framework of procedures and regulations adopted at national level, which has the power to approve/reject the selected candidates; 4. By one or more national party unit, which nominate/select the candidates after consulting a sub-national party unit; 5. By one or more national party unit(s), which propose(s) and approve(s) candidates;
Relevance of sub-national party units	
Involvement (<i>ex officio</i>) of sub-national party officers (regional leaders, elected personnel) in selecting the national party leader	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By a national party organ, formed exclusively by sub-national officers; 2. By a national party organ, formed partly by sub-national officers with voting rights; 3. By a national party organ, formed partly by sub-national officers without voting rights; 4. By a national party organ, after consulting sub-national officers; 5. By a national party organ, where no sub-national officers are represented;
Representation (<i>ex officio</i>) of sub-national party officers in the party executive organ at the national level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All the members of the executive organ are sub-national officers; 2. A sizeable quota of members of the executive organ are sub-national officers, with voting rights; 3. A sizeable quota of members of the executive organ are sub-national officers, without voting rights; 4. Sub-national officers may only be invited, without voting rights, to the executive organ's meetings; 5. None <i>ex officio</i> presence of sub-national officers is foreseen;

Statute Coding

Parties have been divided into four different groups, according to their spiritual family and/or the political culture they belong to (Table 2). In the *Left-wing Parties* group we included the two main parties which sprang out from the former Italian Communist Party (PCI): the Party of Democratic Left-Left Democrats (PDS-DS) and Communist Refoundation (PRC)². The second group is formed by the *Centrist Parties*, the heirs of the former Christian Democracy (DC): the Italian People's Party (PPI), the Christian Democratic Centre (CCD) and their further evolutions Democracy is

² See Baccetti (1997); Bertolino (2004); Calossi (2007); Mulé (2007).

Freedom (DL) and the Union of Centre (UDC) respectively³. The third group is represented by the *Right-wing Parties*: National Alliance (AN) – the successor of the post-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) – is clearly part of this group, while the collocation of Northern League (LN)⁴ and Forza Italia (FI)⁵ in this group is more controversial. The fourth group of parties is formed by political formations which explicitly do not refer to any of the established Italian political cultures nor to any specific party family. Despite in recent years the Italy of Values (IdV) positioned itself among leftist parties, its ideological profile still appears uncertain. The other two parties included in this group, the People of Freedom (PDL) and the Democratic Party (PD), derive from the merge process launched by the biggest parties of the opposite centre-right and centre-left coalitions, respectively AN/FI and DS/DL.

Table 2 - The analysed parties

Group	Parties
<i>Left-wing parties</i>	Rifondazione Comunista – PRC; Partito Democratico della Sinistra/Democratici di Sinistra – PDS/DS
<i>Centrist parties</i>	Partito Popolare Italiano – PPI; Democrazia è Libertà – DL; Centro Cristiano Democratico – CCD; Unione di centro – UDC
<i>Right-wing parties</i>	Alleanza Nazionale – AN; Lega Nord – LN; Forza Italia – FI
<i>New parties</i>	Italia dei Valori – IdV; Partito Democratico – PD; Popolo della Libertà – PDL;

Left-Wing Parties

The PDS and the PRC present a first petty difference for what concerns the level of *organizational autonomy of sub-national party units* (Table 3). The first national statute of the PRC precisely regulate all the organizational aspects of the sub-national branches (value: 5). Even the 1991 statute of the PDS furnishes a precise description of the sub-national bodies from the organizational and the functional point of view, but the art. 14 opens a timid possibility for the Regional Unions to choose a different organizational articulation (albeit in accordance with the National Direction – value: 4). The following statutes of the PRC continue to regulate in depth the functioning of the sub-national units: on the contrary since its second statute (1997), the PDS moves decisively towards a stratarchical organization. The Regional Unions are defined as the organizational cornerstones of the party: the regional level has regulatory autonomy in all the matters which are not specifically provided by the national statute (value: 2).

³ See Baccetti (2007); Pizzimenti (2007).

⁴ See Diamanti (1996); (2003); Passarelli, Tuorto (2012);

⁵ Paolucci (1999); Poli (2001).

Regarding the *selection of the sub-national party leader* the statutes of the PRC show no variance in time: the Regional Political Committee elects the regional secretary (value: 2). In the 1991 and 1997 statutes of the PDS the selection of the regional secretaries is a prerogative of the Regional Directions. The National Direction has the possibility to suggest a nomination, but it could not take the final decision (value: 2). The birth of the Left Democrats brings another step towards a higher degree of autonomy for the regional level. The 2000 and 2005 statutes do not regulate the organizational structures and powers of the Regional Unions, so it is possible to deduce that the selection of the regional leader is a prerogative of the regional level (value: 1).

Table 3 – Left-wing parties: organizational values

	PDS 1991	PDS 1997	DS 2000	DS 2005	PRC 1996	PRC 1999	PRC 2002	PRC 2005	PRC 2008	PRC 2011
Autonomy of sub-national party units										
Organizational Autonomy	4	2	2	2	5	5	5	5	5	5
Sub National Party Leader Selection	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Involvement of SubNatParty in Candidate Selection	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Involvement of SubNatParty in NatPartyLeader Selection	3	2	5	5	2	2	5	5	5	5
Representation of SubNatParty in NatPartyExecutiveOrgan	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Even for the key variable related to the *candidate selection procedures* intra-party variance in the PRC is very low. Since its first statute the Federations (which represent a level lower than the regional one) can propose candidates to the national election, while the ultimate list is to be approved by the National Direction. This procedure has been maintained unaltered during the whole organizational story of the PRC (value: 3). In 1991 the Regional Directions of the PDS have the possibility to put forward proposals to be approved jointly by the Regional Secretaries and the National Direction (value: 3): the latter chooses independently a not specified percentage of candidates. The 1997 Statute is more centralised: only the National Direction regulates the CS process (value: 5). Rules change again in 2000: the National Direction draws a specific regulation and nominates an *ad hoc* National Electoral Committee. Even at the regional level the Regional Directions nominate Selection Committees with the aim of selecting the candidates, within the framework of the national regulation (score: 3).

Variance (either intra-party and inter-party) is higher for the second group of variables pertaining to the *relevance of sub-national party officers at the national level*. For what regards the *Involvement of Sub-National party officers in the selection of the national party leader* we can

observe a shift towards a more hierarchical approach in both parties. In the PRC the national Party leader has been elected since 1996 by the National Political Committee: the first two statutes establish that Federal and Regional Secretaries are *ex-officio* members of this organ (score: 2). Since 2002 these latter have not been longer automatically members of the CPN. Thus the subnational officers have lost their *ex officio* presence in the selection of the leader. The 1991 PDS' statute assigns to the National Council the power to elect the national leader. Those Regional and Federal Secretaries, who are not already members of the Council, have the possibility to participate the process without voting rights (score: 3). From 1997 to 2000 the national leader has been elected by the Congress, while in 2005 directly by the party members, in local congresses. In any case none official role has been assigned *ex officio* to the sub-national party officers (value: 5).

Regarding the *ex-officio* representation of *Sub-national party officers in the National party executive organ* the PRC does not assign any role to the sub-national representatives (value: 5). According to the first PDS' statute Regional Secretaries who are not members of the National Direction can participate its works without voting rights (value: 3). In the 1997 statute sub-national officers play no role in the party Executive while in 2000 and 2005 it is stated that the national leader can choose directly the members of his Secretariat, with the sole due to receive a confirmation vote by the National Direction (in 2000) and the National Council (in 2005).

Centrist Parties

The examined statutes of CCD and UDC regulate in detail the structures and the functioning of their sub-national branches (Table 4). In both cases the sub-national party organs are explicitly listed and their composition and competences fully prescribed (value: 5). On the contrary, in the 1995 statute the PPI the Regional Committees adopt, for each Region, a Regional Chart aimed at disciplining the regional and local organizations of the party, within the general framework of the national statute: the power to ratify the Regional Charts belonged to the National Direction. In the following statute (1999), the PPI assumes an even more stratarthic configuration: the score 1 derives from the federative autonomy left to the regional statutes. When in 2002 the PPI merges into the new party, *La Margherita – Democrazia é Libertà* (DL), the central level (re)gains the power – assigned to the Federal Committee – to verify the conformity of the regional statutes with the national norms (value: 3).

A lower level of variance among all the parties is associated to the *selection of the sub-national party leader*: in almost all cases the score assigned is 2, which stands for a situation where a sub-national party organ (in general the Regional Assembly) is in charge of selecting the regional leader of the party, within the general framework of regulations and procedures set at the national

level. Only the national statute of the PPI, in 1999, does not provide for specific indications, in line with the federative autonomy guaranteed to the regional statutes (value: 1).

Table 4 – Centrist parties: organizational values

Autonomy of sub-national party units	CCD 1994	CCD 1999	UDC 2002	UDC 2007	PPI 1995	PPI 1999	DL 2002	DL 2004	DL 2006
Organizational Autonomy	5	5	5	5	3	1	3	3	3
Sub National Party Leader Selection	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Involvement of SubNatParty in Candidate Selection	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Involvement of SubNatParty in NatPartyLeader Selection	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Representation of SubNatParty in NatPartyExecutiveOrgan	5	5	5	5	2	2	5	5	5

The variance is low also with respect to the key variable related to the candidate selection procedures. With the relevant exception of DL (while 4), which shows a highly centralized profile (by assigning to an apposite national committee the relative competences), albeit its supposed federal organization, other parties are all scored 3, which indicates a medium level of centralization. Both the PPI and the CCD demand to Regional Directions to select the candidates and to form the lists, which have to be approved by the National Direction; the UDC, whose organization is more presidential-oriented, allots to the National Secretary the supervision of the candidatures proposed by the Regional Committees.

The second group of variables pertaining to the *relevance of sub-national party officers* show results which are in line with our preliminary reflections. Here also intra-party variance is consistent along the dimension *centralization-decentralization*, while inter-party variance is approximately insubstantial. In fact, for what concerns the involvement of sub-national party officers in the selection of the National party Leader almost all parties – but the UDC – are scored 2, i.e. all those situations in which there is a sizeable *ex officio* presence of sub-national officers, empowered with voting right, within the central organ in charge of the selection. In its statutes and regulations the UDC allows the Regional Counsellors and Assessors, as well as the Provincial Secretaries to participate to the National Congress, with right of speech without voting right: since 2006 also the party members who are Presidents of the Regional Councils or of the Executives are delegated *ex officio* to the Congress. The case of DL is peculiar, as the statute sets a minimum threshold (30%) to be reserved to candidates and elected personnel, at any electoral level, in the Federal Congress.

Finally all the analyzed parties, but the PPI, show a highly centralized profile with respect to the presence *ex officio* of sub-national party officers in the top party executive organ. In 1999 the

CCD abolishes the former Secretariat and empowers the Presidency Office: in none of these organs sub-national representatives are present. In 2002 the UDC introduces the Council of Regions, chaired by the (re-introduced) National Secretary and formed by sub-national top leaders and public officers: however, the organ has a mere consultative role. The statutes of the PPI do not envisage specific executive organs a part the National Direction, where sub-national party officers represent almost a half of the total members (value: 2). On the contrary, the Federal Executive of the DL is directly nominated by the Federal President and integrated by the Vice-President and the leaders of the parliamentary groups: in 2004 the role of Coordinator is introduced and other *ex officio* members added, but none of them is a direct representative of sub-national levels.

Right-Wing Parties

Contrarily to the left-wing and centrist parties, the Italian right-wing parties do not share a common political origin. Among the three analyzed parties only AN derives from a pre-existent formation (Ignazi 1998). The LN is the resultant of a merging process launched by several regional movements at the beginning of the Nineties. FI is a peculiar case: the party born a few months before its electoral success, in 1994, boosted by the entrepreneurial resources of Silvio Berlusconi. During their entire life-cycle neither FI nor AN leave any organizational freedom to their sub-national levels (value: 5). AN's statutes (1995 and 2006) define functions and organs of regional levels. Even in FI the 1997 and 2004 statutes describe precisely the regional, provincial and town party organs. In the LN the most relevant sub-national levels are defined as National Sections⁶, which are free to determine the organization of their inferior levels (the provincial and town ones) in the framework of a common regulation approved by the Federal Council (value: 3)

Table 5 – Right-wing parties: organizational values

Autonomy of sub-national party units	AN 1995	AN 2006	LN 1998	LN 2002	FI 1997	FI 2004
Organizational Autonomy	5	5	3	3	5	5
Sub National Party Leader Selection	5	3	2	2	5	5
Involvement of SubNatParty in Candidate Selection	3	3	3	3	4	4
Involvement of SubNatParty in NatPartyLeader Selection	2	2	2	2	2	2
Represeantion of SubNatParty in NatPartyExecutiveOrgan	5	5	5	5	2	2

⁶ The reason is that the LN considers itself as the federal movement that supports the independence of all the peoples (or nations) which belong to Padania, i.e. the Northern part of the Italian peninsula.

Even in the *selection of the sub-national party leader* the right-wing parties have different organizational styles. In FI either in 1997 and 2004 statutes the choice of the Regional Coordinators is given to the party President (value: 5). In the LN the National Congress (i.e. the congress of the regional level) proceeds to the election of the National Secretary (value: 2). Contrarily to the other parties AN presents some variance. In the 1995 statute the Regional Coordinator is nominated directly by the National President (value: 5). From 2006 the Regional Coordinator is directly elected by the Regional Assembly through the procedures established by the national statute (value: 3).

With respect to the key variable *candidate selection*, in AN the National Direction has the power to approve the electoral lists which have been prepared by the regional levels (value: 3). LN has a very similar procedure: the Federal Council approves or rejects the proposals coming from the National Councils (value: 3). FI is the party with the most centralised profile: the power of selection is assigned to the Presidency Committee which can consult the Regional Coordinators (value: 4).

For what regards the *involvement of Sub-National party officers in the selection of the national party leader* in AN, according to the 1995 statute, the national leader is elected directly by the Congress. Within this body, beside the elected delegates, the Regional Coordinators and also a plenty of local administrators (Presidents of Regions and and Provinces, and the mayors of cities with a population of more than 40,000 people) are *ex-officio* members (value: 2). In the following statute of 2006 the Regional Coordinators are not mentioned as *ex-officio* members of the Congress. According to the 1998 statute in LN the Federal Secretary is directly elected by the Federal Congress. This is formed, other than the *ex-officio* members, by the delegates elected by each National Congress. The same procedure has been maintained in the statute of 2002 (value: 2). The same score is assigned to FI, since the statutes assign to the National Congress – which is formed by a variety of national and subnational party officers and elected personnel – the power of electing directly the party President⁷.

Regarding the *ex-officio* representation of *Sub-national party officers in the national party Executive organ* it is important to note that the Political Executive (in AN) and the Bureau of Political Secretariat (in LN) are directly chosen by the party leader, without any *ex officio* presence accorded to the sub-national officers (value: 5). In FI the members of the Presidency Committee are chosen by the party President, but some representatives of the subnational levels have the right to be part of: the Secretary and other three members of the conference of Regional Coordinators, and the current Presidents of regional governments (value: 2).

⁷ It is important to note that none of these formal provisions were really implemented by the 3 political parties.

“New Parties”

The degree of *organizational autonomy* of both the PDL and the IdV shows a highly centralized approach to the regulation of party sub-national branches (value: 5): however, while the statutes of the PDL describe in detail competences and functioning of the sub-national party organs, the 2004 and the present statute of the IdV assign to the Presidency Office the task to draft the regional charts. In addition, it is interesting to notice that the first version of the 2009 IdV statute put the regional level in charge of defining the sub-national organizational settings, within the general framework and the general provisions of the national statute (value: 3). The national statutes of the PD entrust the Regional Unions to discipline their own organizations: however, the National Committee of Guarantors has the power to reject the regional charts and, in case of prolonged conflicts between levels, the final decision pertains to the National Assembly.

The *selection of the party sub-national leader* presents a rather diversified picture. While the PDL substantially maintains the centralized approach of FI – it is the National President, in accordance with the Presidency Office, to choose the regional party leaders – the PD and the IdV have more stratarchical attitudes. In line with the procedures for the selection of the national leader, the PD assigns to its members and voters the right to choose their representatives to the Regional Assembly, which proceeds to elect the Regional Secretary. The regional statutes of the IdV shall define the procedures for the selection of the regional level: however, as the regional statutes are based on the general model provided by the Presidency Office, they are scored 2.

Table 6- New parties: organizational values

Autonomy of sub-national party units	PDL 2009	PDL 2011	PD 2008	PD 2010	IDV 2004	IDV 2009	IDV 2009 (II)
Organizational Autonomy	5	5	3	3	5	3	5
Sub National Party Leader Selection	5	5	2	2	2	2	2
Involvement of SubNatParty in Candidate Selection	5	5	3	3	5	5	5
Involvement of SubNatParty in NatPartyLeader Selection	2	2	5	5	2	2	2
Representation of SubNatParty in NatPartyExecutiveOrgan	5	5	5	5	2	2	2

For what concerns the involvement of the sub-national units in selecting candidates to the national elections, both the PDL and the IdV show an identical centralized profile. In its first statute, the PDL assigns to the National President the right to select candidates, in accordance with the Presidency Office: the three National Coordinators ratify the selected names. This last function is successively devolved to the National Secretary, introduced in 2010. The superiority of the National President is evident also in the case of the IdV, although the three statutes analysed underwent

minor changes: the most relevant is the temporary reduction of the Presidential power in the first 2009 statute, when the role of the President is partially counter-balanced by the Presidency Office, which has the power to approve candidates. In the case of the PD, the regulation for the selection of candidates was adopted even before the national statute, as the 2008 national elections took place before the founding Assembly of the party. A national organ had the power to approve the lists drawn up at provincial and regional levels: these lists were integrated by candidates directly proposed by the National Secretary.

The *involvement of sub-national party officers in the selection of the national party leader* show an apparent homogeneity among cases: however, the analysis of the statutes reveals a prominent intra-party and inter-party variance in procedures and methods. The statute adopted in 2009 by the PDL assigns to the National Congress the power to elect the President. The National Congress is formed by the members of the National Council and the Regional Coordinators, the Province Coordinators, the City Coordinators as well as the elected personnel at sub-national levels, and all of them are *ex officio* members of the National Council. The subsequent statute of the PDL introduces the role of the National Secretary: if we consider this organ, the party receives a score of 5, as the Secretary is chosen by the National President. The case of the PD is peculiar as the party leader is selected through primary elections: here the party members have the right to vote for a National Convention, formed on the basis of competitive lists, which are associated to the different candidates to the charge of National Secretary. This organizational arrangement seems to be in line with the stratarchical principle, because the national leader has (apparently) strengthened his/her power and autonomy while ordinary party members have substituted the sub-national party units in crucial decision-making processes. The score of 5 is assigned as the National Convention is not integrated *ex officio* by officers of the sub-national levels. Intra-party variance is higher with respect to the IdV. The first statute establishes a procedure by which the National President has to be elected by the National Congress, an organ formed also by all the sub-national party public-officers. This prerogative is assigned by the first 2009 statute, to the National Executive – of which Regional Coordinators and the regional public officers are *ex officio* members – and by the second 2009 statute is returned to the Congress.

Finally, the variable *representation of sub-national party officers in party executive organ at the national level* reflects a situation in which a single regional public officer of the IdV is an *ex officio* member of the Presidency Office (on a total of 7 members), while the PDL and the PD show an identical score of 5. In both parties the organs are nominated by the national leader: the case of the PDL is more controversial, as the role of the three National Coordinators (nominated by the President) seems to collide with that of the Presidency Office. Either the PDL and the PD have

introduced a National Conference of the Regional Coordinators, which is provided with a mere consultative role.

Conclusions

The study has aimed at investigating the degree of *territorial centralization* of the most relevant Italian parties with regards to the procedures of Candidate Selection (CS), which is unanimously considered one of the core functions carried out by political parties in liberal-democracies. In particular, we have compared the procedures of candidate selection to national elections to other relevant organizational variables, to verify to what extent this specific function has significantly followed patterns of decentralization or, on the contrary, whether it still represents a prerogative of national party organs. In what follows we try to summarize our principal findings.

1. Intra-groups analysis

The fact that all the analyzed left-wing parties derive from the same political party could be a reasonable explanation of their similar distribution of powers within the party organization. The most centralized variable is the *Organizational Autonomy of sub-national branches*, even if the level of this prominence is different (higher for the PRC). In the PRC also the *representation of Sub-national party officers in National party executive organ* is scored 5 as well. On the contrary, the most decentralized variable is the *autonomy of sub-national branches in choosing their leaders* in both the two parties. The evolution of the PDS seems to be more evident. In time, while the two variables *Autonomy of sub-national party units* present lower values than in the first statute, the opposite happens with respect to the *relevance of sub-national party units* in the national structures. The recent versions of statutes of both parties share higher level of centralization for what regards the relevance of sub-national units at the national level, while they differ for what concerns the organizational autonomy and the selection of sub-national leaders, being the PDS more decentralized than the PRC. The two post-communist parties maintain the same average level of centralization in respect to the candidate selection procedure, even if in 1997 the PDS experienced a higher centralization.

With respect to *Centrist* parties, if we analyze cases by considering each variable the results of our coding show a substantial intra-party continuity, in time, and a higher (albeit not pronounced) inter-party variance. On the contrary, the profile of each party along the five dimensions reflects different levels of party centralization. Both the UDC and the DL present higher centralized organizations if compared with their founders, the CCD and the PPI. None of these parties, but the PPI, assign an *ex officio* representation to sub national representatives in the executive national

organ. Statutes of the UDC and the CCD regulate in depth the sub-national articulations of the party and, in the case of the UDC, the sub-national party officers do not play a significant role in the selection of the national party leader. Statutes of the DL leave substantial autonomy to the sub-national units in determining their own organizations and, above all, in selecting the regional leaders as well as in participating to the election of the Federal Secretary. The PPI shows the lowest centralized organizational model in almost every dimension but the Candidate Selection procedures. Almost all these parties, but the DL, are scored 3 in the selection of candidates: in general, a party organ at the regional level puts the lists of candidates in front of a national party organ, which has the right to approve or reject the proposal. However, while for both the CCD and the UDC this function is less centralized than other organizational characteristics, in the case of the PPI the value associated to CS is the highest, while it is the second highest value for the DL.

Right-wing parties do not have such an abundant statutory production as the other parties have. Thus the intra-party variance is very limited. For these three parties the involvement of sub-national party levels in the selection of the national leader has been the most decentralized variable (even if, as we have mentioned, this never happened in reality). The organizational paradigm of the LN seems to be the most decentralised one. In fact the sub-national party units seem to act in substantial independence: only the representation of sub-national branches in the national party executive organ is practically absent. FI and AN share a low level of Autonomy for their sub-national branches, but they differ for the other variables. FI allows a strong involvement of sub-national officers at the national level, while AN has a more coherent approach, conceding to its local bodies some rights in choosing the party leader but not in being represented in the national executive organ. Despite their different approach towards the autonomy of their components AN and LN share the same average score for the selection of candidatures.

The organizational profiles of the “new parties” show high degree of inter-party variance along almost all variables as well as with regards to the general dimension *centralization-decentralization*: in the case of the IdV also intra-party variance among statutes, in time, is relevant. Of the three parties, the PDL presents the highest centralized organizational structure: here the legacy of the organizational cultures of its “founding fathers” is clear, even if the party receives higher scores than its predecessors for each analyzed variable. The case of the PD is more controversial. As regards the DS and DL, the new party shows similar (albeit higher) levels of party centralization: on the organizational side, however, the legacy of the DS seems to be prevailing along almost all variables (but the *selection of the sub-national party leader*), which receive identical scores. Compared to the others, the IdV party structure appears more decentralized: however, the scores have a wavering trend, in time, and the most recent statute presents patterns of

an increasing centralization. With respect to the procedures of candidate selection, both the PDL and the IdV receive the highest score: in both cases the National President has the power to establish the lists of candidates to the national parliament. In the case of the PD, the regulation for the selection of candidates was adopted even before the national statute: a national organ had the power to approve the lists drawn up at provincial and regional level and these lists were integrated with proposals by the National Secretary.

2. Organizational autonomy of the sub-national party units and candidate selection

Here we analyse the degree of centralization of party profiles, comparing the procedures set for the selection of candidates to the organizational regulatory autonomy accorded to party sub-national branches. Contrarily to what we hypothesised, on a total of 12 cases and 9 possible positions along an ordinal scale from “Less centralized” to “More Centralized”, the candidate selection procedures receive a lower (4 cases) or an equal (5 cases) score. Those parties, whose statutes show a higher centralized profile in regulating their sub-national levels than in selecting candidates, lay on the whole left-right *continuum*, with the pre-eminence of the right-wing parties (AN and FI) and their allied centrist parties (CCD and UDC). On the opposite, on the centre-left side, with the exception of the PRC, we observe a tendency to the centralization of candidate selection (PPI, DL, PDS-DS), opposed to a higher autonomy accorded to the sub-national branches. Those parties that receive the same score in the two variables show different levels of party centralization: from an intermediate score of 3 assigned to the LN, the UDC and the PD to a score of 5 attributed to PDL and IdV, whose profiles are highly centralized.

3. Selection of the sub-national party leader and candidate selection

Our hypothesis is confirmed with regard to the degree of party centralization in the selection of the sub-national party leaders, compared to the candidate selection procedures. In fact, in 9 cases out on 12 the CS presents higher scores, thus implying a centralizing tendency in most of the analysed parties. Inter-party variance in values assigned to the selection of the regional leaders is low, as the score of 2 is the most recurrent: only the DS and the PPI are scored 1. It is particularly relevant to note that those parties which show an opposite tendency – i.e. more centralized procedures for the selection of the sub-national party leaders – are AN, FI and their political successor, the PDL. All the statutes of FI and the PDL and the 1995 statute of AN assign to the National President the power to nominate the regional leaders, thus they are scored 5. As mentioned above, the PDL receives the same score also for the procedures of candidate selections, which are more¹ centralized if compared to FI and AN, that could be read as a strategic need in the organization building process of the new party.

4. Selection of the national party leader and candidate selection

Also with respect to the comparison between candidate selection procedures and the involvement of the sub-national branches in selecting the national leader our hypothesis is confirmed. In 8 cases out of 12, candidate selection procedures are more centralized: thus the involvement of sub-national units in selecting the candidates is less relevant than in selecting the national leader. This assumption encompasses all the analyzed parties but the left-wing ones, after the end of the nineties. Up to that period, even the scores of left-wing parties show the same values or a more centralized selection of candidatures. In 1999 the PRC and in 2000 the PDS experience a centralization of the procedures for the selection of the party leader. The path followed by the PDS in its late phase can be identified as the organizational pattern successively adopted by the PD. This latter, contrarily to most of the Italian parties, presents more centralized procedures for the selection of national leadership than of candidates. PD assigns to party members and voters a key-role in the selection of the national leader through the item of the primary elections, but none role is assigned to sub-national party officers. Thus, despite a huge openness of the selection procedures, the prerogatives of sub-national levels are frustrated.

5. Party executive organs and candidate selection

The comparison between candidate selection and the presence of sub-national party officers in the national executive organ presents a higher variance than the previous variables. Contrarily to the others, candidate selection in most of the parties is less centralized. This is particularly true for both the left-wing parties and for the majority of centrist and right-wing ones. Amongst the centrist parties only the PPI presents a different organization, while in the right-wing parties the selection of candidatures of FI is decidedly centralized if compared to the presence of sub-national officers in the national executive organ. In the new parties' group, IdV shows a highly centralized candidate selection compared to the *ex officio* presence of sub-national representatives in the national party organ, while on the contrary the National Secretary of the PD is not integrated with sub-national party officers. The PDL moves away from characteristics and values of the two founders, by adopting a more centralized paradigm.

Final remarks

In Table 7 we report the values of the variable *candidate selection* compared to those of the other variables, along the scale from Less centralized (-) to More centralized (+) and all the intermediate values that, in time, the variable may have assumed for each party. By analyzing these results, our

general hypothesis seems to be partially confirmed: the procedures of CS are more centralized only with respect to the selection of the leadership, at both the national and the sub-national level.

Table 7 - Comparison between the CS variable with the other variables

	-	-/=	-/+	=	=/-	=/+	+	+/=	+/-	TOT
CANDSEL/ORG AUT	4	0	1	5	0	1	1	0	0	12
CANDSEL/SUBNAT	1	1	0	1	0	0	9	0	0	12
CANDSEL/NATLEAD	1	0	0	1	1	0	8	0	1	12
CANDSEL/EXECORG	7	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	12

On the contrary, the scores associated to the involvement of sub-national representatives in the national executive organ indicate that the relevance of the sub-national levels in the top party organ is very low. Also with respect to the organizational autonomy accorded to the sub-national branches CS procedures are less or equally regulated through a centralized approach, albeit with a higher inter-party variance.

Table 8 - Recurrent values x variable

Value	CS	ORG AUT	SUB LEAD	NAT LEAD	NAT EXEC
1	0	1	2	0	0
2	0	4	7	8	3
3	8	2	1	1	0
4	2	0	0	0	0
5	2	5	2	3	9
TOT	12	12	12	12	12

In Table 8 we summarize the most recurrent values associated to each variable: as already stressed CS procedures receive more frequently the intermediate score of 3 (8 cases), while none of the analyzed parties demand this function exclusively to its sub-national branches.

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