STANDING OUT
FROM THE CROWD

POLITICAL PARTIES' CANDIDATE (S)ELECTION IN THE TRANSATLANTIC WORLD
SUMMARY REPORT OF FULL PUBLICATION

By the International Republican Institute
Edited by Thibault Muzergues and Dan Scaduto

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FOREWORD

This briefing explores thematic findings derived from a study entitled "Standing Out from the Crowd: Political Parties' Candidate (S)election in the Transatlantic World." The publication explores candidate selection processes and practices across a dozen countries in Europe, as well as the United States to better understand how political parties navigate the challenges and opportunities of promoting democratic representation and supporting strong contenders to win elected offices.

Commissioned by the International Republican Institute (IRI), with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the publication reflects the insights of a diverse group of political operatives and experts, elected officials, academics, and professionals with experiences in working with political parties.

The following overview was written by members of IRI staff including Andras Braun, David Kagan, Breanna Kerr, Romain Le Quiniou, and edited by Thibault Muzergues, and Dan Scaduto. The overview was developed following a gathering of the full publication's case study authors in Rome, Italy in July 2021. This overview references several of the chapters from the full publication, which will be published in the beginning of 2022.

GERMANY POLAND LITHUANIA UNITED KINGDOM UKRAINE FRANCE MOLDOVA GEORGIA UNITED STATES ITALY ROMANIA GREECE
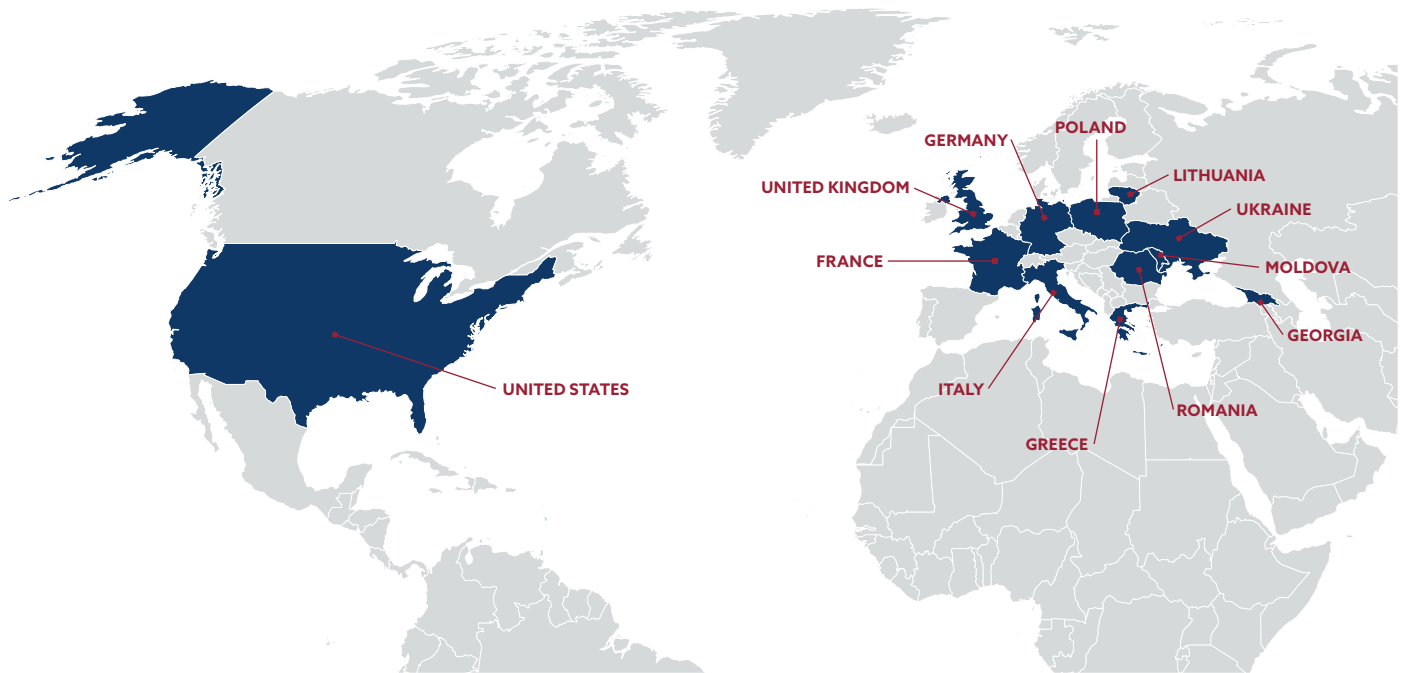
MAIN FINDINGS

- Political parties cannot rely on one-size-fits-all or silver bullet solutions to improve candidate (s) election processes. Parties must explore context-specific options to determine the best solutions for each circumstance.

- While the past 30 years have witnessed the democratization of candidate (s)election processes across the Transatlantic space, a new trend is now developing towards more technocratic solutions that view candidate (s)election processes as a technical issue that necessitates a professional, HR-based approach.

- Centralized processes of party candidate (s)election allow greater control, but often leave parties vulnerable to dynamic outside contenders. Voters may grow disinterested in parties that exercise opaque candidate (s)election processes.

- Increasing competition for voters in congested fields of political parties necessitates candidate (s) election innovations, leveraging both technological applications and new technocratic recruitment processes.

- Candidate (s)election methods reflect historical experiences and can be difficult to reform. Knowledge of other parties' reform experiences in comparable countries empowers party leaders with clearer perspectives in devising successful reform plans. This includes the timing of reforms, which are usually most successful following an electoral defeat.

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

When it comes to selecting candidates for elections, political parties generally follow the David Bowie principle: "All you've got to do is win." That is to say, the primary goal in any candidate (s)election process is to choose a candidate who has the best chance of winning the election, perhaps regardless of their connection and dedication to party values. The truth, however, is that despite that intrinsic reality of "to the winner goes the spoils," there are other factors at play beyond picking the most popular candidate(s).

Party Objectives

The candidate (s)election process is often shaped as much by intra-party politics as by a party's long-term objectives. This could mean selecting the candidate who has the best chance of winning, but it could also mean selecting candidates who better represent the party and the values for which it stands. Parties may choose the most democratic process for selecting candidates, or they may choose to exercise greater control. Some parties may opt for a bottom-up approach, allowing everyday citizens a greater voice in determining candidates, while others may prefer a top-down, technocratic approach, sacrificing party democracy in the name of ideological stability. In all cases, however, the candidate (s)election process and the objectives of the party – both ideologically and representationally – are inherently connected, for better or worse.

As the case studies included in this publication show, the diversity of party systems throughout Europe reveals both the varied objectives of parties as well as the very different histories that European countries have experienced. In Europe, a multitude of different candidate (s)election processes are practiced, representing the full range of the relationship between party objectives and the commitment to true democratic candidate (s)election. While Western Europe has enjoyed a relatively long history of democratic order, much of Eastern and Central Europe has only recently begun to develop democratic institutions.

It has become clear in recent years that within the Western European political sphere, traditional parties seeking a larger voter base have been losing power and influence to smaller parties that are more restrictive in their appeal and more ideologically coherent. In Germany, power has seeped from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) to smaller parties like The Greens and Alternative for Germany (AfD). In France, the parties that made up France's pseudo-two-party system have weakened. At first, this permitted the victory of someone outside the two-party system, like Emmanuel Macron, but that in turn has opened the door for anti-systemic parties to emerge and gain fluidity in terms of their appeal.

The objective of Western European democracies is to uphold an election process that (even at the primary level) is as democratic as possible. Yet in systems that feature large parties– and to an extent, parties that are drained of their ideological content and no longer inspire loyalty – the democratic process takes control away from party leadership, leaving it in the hands of the people to pick a candidate who better suits their personal interests, not necessarily the interests of the party (at least as seen from the perspective of party leadership).

In Central and Eastern Europe, many countries and their parties are dealing with an entirely different problem, but one that is nevertheless directly tied to their candidate (s)election processes. These countries are typically less attached to the practice of open primaries. As much younger democracies,

they tend to have weaker democratic institutions and party structures tend to use a top-down approach to candidate (s)election. This approach is more closely aligned with the 'just win' strategy. For example, in case of local elections in Ukraine, where parties often cannot field enough candidates to fill local positions, parties in the past have chosen candidates who are most popular in a local area, regardless of their political agenda.

The New Democracy (ND) party in Greece, however, used a different top-down candidate (s)election process to meet its own unique set of objectives. The party had great visions of a rebirth, one that would bring new, youthful perspectives to the forefront of the Greek legislature. Naturally they chose to handpick these candidates so they could ensure a similar vision for a new Greece. The technocratic approach that was used by the party to scout its new young candidates was seen as the most efficient way to successfully rebrand the party. It was an in-house undertaking, one that required strong oversight from the head of the party. This surely brought a breath of fresh air, but at the time of writing there is not yet enough hindsight to confirm whether this addition will translate into a consolidation of new electorates or if voters attracted by the new candidates will ultimately disappear.

In any democratic system, choosing between the ideological coherence of a party or appealing to the broadest possible constituency has always been a difficult balance for parties to navigate. It is certainly the case that having a strong party base doesn't necessarily yield strong democratic institutions, but it is also true that, at the party level, more democracy often limits the strength or the cohesion (sometimes both) of the party. The goal in any election is to win, but the question that remains is: what is the party willing to give up in order to achieve a victory that may remain elusive, if not for the many external factors that come in the campaign? As the case studies presented in this publication show, the candidate (s)election process for any given democracy does much to explain and exemplify a given party's true objectives.

Scenarios and Metrics: Taxonomy of (S)election Methods

To fully grasp the impact of candidate (s)election processes on various countries and political systems, we must first delve into the typology of different (s)election methods. There are four methods to elaborate on: open primaries, closed primaries, closed party decisions and the technocratic method. This section will explain each type in its pure form and use examples from the larger country chapters to explore various scenarios of candidate (s)election. Additionally, evidence shows that many of these systems cannot, in fact, be categorized purely into one specific taxonomy. The examples presented in this section reveal that most parties adopt an amalgam of practices that lead to a wide variety of mixed (s)election systems.

The various pros and cons of each system of candidate (s)election will be discussed further in this section, as there are many benefits and drawbacks for each method. The first scenario for candidate (s)election is an open primary, where in most cases the candidate is chosen through registered party supporters. This method can be seen in certain instances in Italy, Lithuania, and France. For example, primaries have been instituted in Italy on a national scale since 2005, leading to the victory of Prime Minister Romano Prodi (Bovenzi) in 2006.

The method for registering citizens for participation in a primary is similar in Italy and France and is used to garner support, which then leads to candidate (s)election at the party level. In 2011 in France, the Socialist party implemented the "Citizens' Primary," open to all registered citizens on the electoral list who were ready to pay at least one euro of participation fee (legally, a gift/donation). This led to the participation of 2.6 million voters in the first round and 2.8 million in the second (Muzergues 6). On the

surface, this huge increase in voter participation appears to lean towards a more inclusionary system, therefore making the country's system appear more democratic. But just a few years later, the primary cycle failed. The candidates selected for the first round did not even make it past the second round in the 2016-17 election cycle, and the party system collapsed with the election of Emmanuel Macron (Muzergues).

Before moving on to the pros and cons of each candidate (s)election method, we move to the stand-alone U.S. example. It should be noted that what are called "open primaries" in the U.S. differ from those in the rest of the world. Outside the U.S., open primaries are a candidate (s)election method in which non-members can participate. In American open primaries, however, voters in a limited number of states can participate without publicly exposing their party affiliation.

On the axis of inclusivity/exclusivity, the U.S. appears extremely open, as nearly every voter can stand in as party candidate. "This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that state laws, rather than party rules, regulate the candidate selection process."[1] Moreover, politics in the U.S. could be described as candidate-centered, with strong personalities sometimes disconnected from the party doxa or elites gaining the nomination, which is what occurred in the 2016 Republican Party primary, but also in the 2008 Democratic Party primary.[2] The 'openness' in the U.S. example is perhaps just an appearance, because without an incredible amount of campaign finance and at least some semblance of name recognition, a candidate cannot go very far. This raises an important question: who is the typical candidate? What do they look like, and how does it differ across the Atlantic? These questions will be explored at greater length in the conclusion of this chapter.

The caucus system that takes place in states like Iowa is a peculiar example of (s)election through a closed primary. This process, defined as a type of direct primary, is limited to registered primary members (who must declare their affiliation before voting). The caucus is closed to the public until the (s)election has been made, making the process very closed, at least until the choice of candidate has been made. In this case, the caucus serves to encourage party unity and prevent members of other parties from infiltrating and voting to nominate weak candidates (compared to an open primary). Dan Scaduto, author of "Candidate (S)election in the United States: From Backroom Deals to Public Forums" writes that "Iowans retain an outsized role in shaping the strategies and trajectories of nominee-hopefuls in both parties. And yet the closed (s)election process proves difficult to change so it continues, for better or for worse.

Sliding onto the side of the 'exclusivity' scale is the closed party decision. This type of (s)election is fairly rule-bound and constitutes the stereotypical 'shady backroom' decisions made by American political parties until the process became more transparent in the middle of the 20th century. Though the U.S. example has largely moved past this (s)election method, many countries maintain similar practices in one way or another.

In Germany, for example, selectors handle candidate selection in the first round, and electors weigh in in the second round. This allows for a mix between party decisions in the first round and internal democracy in the second round, but reality is generally skewed in favor of selection, rather than election. Electors follow selectors' judgment and outside influence is uncommon, leaving the selectors as the most influential bodies (Höhne). For the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom, there is also a clear set of rules and a structure in place for candidates to stand for a constituency. First, one must join the party and remain an active member before applying to be considered as a candidate. Then the potential

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1 Hazan and Rahat, "Candidate Selection, Political Parties, and Democracy." 2010.

2 Wattenberg, Martin P. "The Rise of Candidate Centered Polities." 1991. Harvard University Press.

candidate must go through an application and interview process for constituency candidacy (Bowie).

Another interesting and emerging (s)election type that must be discussed is the technocratic method, where the candidate (s)election process is delegated to an external professional. One remarkable example of success through the technocratic method is provided by ND in Greece. This party, a pillar of Greek democracy since 1974, had become static and antiquated in a country gripped by an intense and exhausting economic crisis after 2011. Following a change in party leadership a new strategy was developed, with an ambitious target: to win, ND had to at least double the number of its elected members to parliament. Party leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis hired a human resources professional, Rebecca Pitsika of People for Business, to 'breathe oxygen' into the ND party. After a rigorous candidate search conducted like a private sector recruitment drive, ND succeeded in targeting new and fresh candidates. The result was an increase in party membership and, ultimately, the electoral success of the party in the 2019 elections.

Another example of the technocratic method for candidate (s)election could be found in the Brand New Bundestag group, a copy of the Brand New Congress movement born in the U.S. The Brand New Bundestag is a grassroots organization with progressive political goals and seeks to support candidates with platforms similar to those of various mainstream German political parties, typically the SPD or the Greens. The Brand New Bundestag has specific criteria that it is searching for in all its potential candidates. This is a more experimental method of choosing candidates than any other used in Germany. Most importantly, it pushes externalization even further, as it proposes in fine to take candidate selection out of the hands of political parties, who only remain as vehicles of legitimization for candidates pre-selected by outside organizations such as the Brand New Bundestag. Some (at least in Europe) might associate this process with lobbying, and might also see this as dangerous, as it further weakens political parties.

Trying to categorize parties' (s)election processes and make them fit into neat boxes proves challenging and raises an important question: is there such a thing as a pure open primary? Many countries, for example Poland, may believe that they have an open primary system with constituency lists, full transparency, and proportional representation. But in fact, Poland's method for choosing candidates is extremely centralized, and the decision on candidate (s)election lies with the party leadership. Milosz Hodun writes in his chapter "Behind Closed Doors: Candidate (s)election in Poland" that well-established Polish parties are very suspicious of primaries and therefore avoid them. "The electoral system is fully open only on paper. In reality, it is largely inaccessible except to those who already are in and benefit from parties" (Hodun). Since the majority of countries described in this publication use mixed methods, it's important to tease out the benefits and drawbacks of each method, using the primary experience in each country.

Good Practices and Benefits

Now that we have detailed our taxonomy of (s)election methods, we can review the benefits and drawbacks of each method.

Open Primaries

The open primary described in the previous section has many benefits, as it falls the furthest on the inclusionary scale and appears to be the most democratic. Examples can be seen in Lithuania, France, and Poland. In Lithuania, the Homeland Union Party used open primaries as a revolutionary and controversial approach to candidate (s)election starting with the 2019 presidential election (Adomenas and Fuks). In an open primary more people can be involved in decision making. In the example of primaries, this (s)election can be done far in advance of an election, making the process seem more open and transparent. As we have seen in the Polish example, this is not always the case. But this tension will be described more in the section on drawbacks.

In Italy, the first use of primaries was quite exciting. Open primaries have shown that, when the rules of the game are known, this process can expand the electoral base, bringing in first time voters and recruiting new and exciting candidates. For example, the Partito Democratico open primaries in 2007 garnered a lot of attention for being the first of their kind (Bovenzi). They were peculiar, however, in that the process aimed at selecting the party leader and not the official candidate for that round of local or national elections. Moreover, every citizen on any side of the political spectrum was able to join. This was also an occasion to expand the party's database, although European data protection rules, being much stronger than those in America rather restricted the potential bonus that parties could take from this expanded database.

On one final positive note, nationwide elections like this one can also garner more media attention and foster greater public engagement in the democratic process - the adoption of an open primary process in France by the Socialist Party in 2011 undoubtedly gave a sizeable media advantage to its candidate François Hollande, setting the stage for his eventual victory in the presidential election a year later (Muzergues).

Closed Primaries

For political parties, the benefits of closed primaries are largely internal. The experience in Italy, Lithuania, and Germany shows that they make party members feel like they have more of a stake in the outcome. In Germany, candidates are elected either by general meetings or delegate assemblies. The parties with the larger membership prefer delegate assemblies, while the smaller parties almost invariably prefer general meetings. The trend is toward the more inclusive general meetings, which allow all members eligible to vote in the Bundestag election to participate in the party's internal selection process. The right-wing populist AfD, founded in 2013, goes particularly far in its intra-party democracy. Compared to the other parties in the Bundestag, it is characterized by the most inclusive and intensive internal competition. Its high level of "competitive-oriented intra-party democracy"[3] functions internally as a mechanism to counter its members' high level of dissatisfaction with representative democracy. Externally, it helps distinguish it from the other parties, which populists refer to as "old parties" or "cartel parties."

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3 Höhne, B, "How Democracy Works within a Populist Party: Candidate Selection in the Alternative for Germany," *Government and Opposition,* first view, 2021, pp. 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2021.33.

The Italian closed model includes party members or local party enrollment. These party members register candidates, and this process is sometimes reserved for specific members who have been in the party for a certain number of years, so it can be dependent on seniority (Bovenzi). In Lithuania, closed primaries for candidate (s)election typically include party conferences and party leaders choosing their preferred candidates and who are later confirmed at the party's conference (Adomenas and Fuks). Through these methods, candidate (s)election remains a private affair and allows parties to "wash their dirty laundry inside." Ultimately though, the major benefit of this system is that internal compromise between members can mean better representation in the end.

Closed Party Decision

While this method can have many benefits for those in charge of pulling strings within the party, its exclusionary aspect can befuddle the electorate and make it feel out of touch with the process. Despite these drawbacks, this method is still very popular among parties in Europe. It is used by the UK Conservative Party in the first round of election of its party leaders, with voting limited to the parliamentary fraction. The second round is in a closed primary. The system was designed to leave the parliamentary party as a gatekeeper for leadership selection. This model is also used in Germany, where the CDU leader is elected in a convention of party representatives. Lists are also made through closed party decisions in Poland, allowing coalitions to manage their internal, intra-party jockeying far from the press. A closed party decision does not preclude voting, guaranteeing at least some form of collegiality, and limiting the franchise means that the chosen candidate will ultimately come out of party ranks – thus ensuring some elite continuity.

For more collective candidate (s)election, for example for parliamentary candidates, hand-selecting candidates with a certain profile in mind can be highly strategic and can help retarget or reorient the candidate pool, which is ultimately a benefit. This, however, requires a high level of organization inside party headquarters and a clear sense of direction of where the party's electoral appeal should be headed in the long-term, which has become an exception rather than a norm in the past decade.

Technocratic Model

The technocratic model shares some of the same benefits of the closed party decision method. At least on the surface, it is efficient, standardized, transparent, and includes specific criteria that can be targeted in potential candidates. This process can be less political and mitigates political jockeying, which is both a pro and a con. Ultimately, the technocratic (s)election method is also controlled from the top down. Take the Greek example: HR specialist Rebecca Pitsika delivered results for the ND party, which ultimately won the 2019 elections. But these tactics had, in the end, to be confirmed by the leader of the party - a big responsibility that needs to be performed by one person at the top. This, of course, raises questions about whether this process is more democratic, although the end result (a more diverse representation in parliament, for example) can be a better overall representation of the country's diversity.

Caveats and Dangers

Despite clear individual advantages, each mode of candidate (s)election also carries challenges for any party leadership. There is no such thing as a 'free lunch,' and so there is a price attached to each (s) election method.

To a large extent, holding primary elections offers the opportunity to democratize internal party processes by using more open, participatory, and inclusive forms of candidate (s)election. However, the degree of political organization and the involvement of multiple stakeholders required to hold successful primaries may bring logistical challenges for parties, particularly for the first primary.

While turning political competition toward a more inclusive process, primaries can inadvertently contribute to the creation of conflicts within political parties, allowing intra-party strife to spill over into public.

Open Primaries

Opening the candidate (s)election process to multiple actors is not without its advantages – but one should also be aware of its drawbacks, in particular for party leaders who may be losing a lot of power in the process. As the electorate has a bigger say in the (s)election process, candidates could feel more loyalty to the voters than to party elites. Furthermore, once the effect of novelty has passed, primaries can quickly lose their leverage. This could be seen most spectacularly in France in 2017, just five years after the first open primary took place in the country: the two main center-right and center-left primaries relied on this method to select their candidates, and yet none of them made it to the second round during the 2017 presidential elections (Muzergues).

One of the main reasons for holding open primaries is to allow political parties to reach out to non-affiliated voters. In this situation, however, turnout and the participation of the electorate is a key criterion for success. If the electorate does not show support for the primaries, low turnout may open the risk for public criticism as well as manipulation, as the party elite will have the opportunity to make an impact on the outcome of the vote.[4] Furthermore, even with mass participation (4 million voters during the 2016 primaries of the center-right in France, for example), an open primary remains restrictive compared to the whole electorate (47 million voters, in the case of France). An open primary system may mitigate the risk of narrowing a party's appeal to an activist base, but uncertainties over participation can produce unexpected results, which can in turn be detrimental to party unity.

In some extreme cases, suspicions that members of another party may participate en masse in a primary, hoping to contribute to the (s)election of the weakest candidate, can fuel a climate of suspicion around the candidate. Whether this has ever happened is subject to controversy among scholars, - but the fact that the suspicion continues to exist, even in countries where the open primary system is well-established, shows the limits of the process in terms of trust.

Visibility and campaigning are additional crucial aspects to consider. Although competitive primaries can attract the media, this attention might decrease after a couple of primary cycles, particularly if real competition or intra-party pluralism is missing. In the opposite case, where the party leadership is directly challenged, the absence of formalities or preparedness can prove deadly for some parties, as the party's associational capacity and the transparency of its nomination process may be directly

4 Wattenberg, Martin P. "The Rise of Candidate Centered Politics." 1991.

challenged.[5] This situation of unpredictability could create internal tensions in the party.

Closed Primaries

Closed primaries require a voter to be formally affiliated with a party to be able to cast a vote. This type of primary offers an opportunity for party elites to keep some control over the process, as the franchise is often much smaller. In addition, closed primaries are more likely to produce candidates who feel responsible to their party base, rather than to the broader electorate. This can be a double-edged sword, preserving the party's cohesion but limiting its appeal to the electorate.

The limited number of participants can also lead to accusations of a non-transparent process or even fraud in the event of competitive contests, especially if the result is either too close or too wide to be true. This is what happened in France for the then center-right party UMP's leadership elections in 2012, and the party never really recovered (Muzergues).

More generally, it should be noted that to work, the closed primary process must offer genuine opportunities for competition and must appear to be fair and open to party members and the general public. Failing to provide this fair competition framework means party leaders expose themselves to criticism for manipulating a narrow loyal membership and stunting intra-party competition.[6] In some cases, party leadership may end up supporting a candidate who is less able to motivate the electorate.

This unbalanced competition creates a situation of winners and losers within the party, which can turn into a zero-sum game, negatively impacting members' attitudes toward the leadership or the organization. This provides an opportunity for the elite to use this competition as a tool to legitimize their leadership (which often backfires on election day). The fact that they decide when primaries are to be organized and how to allocate party resources further increases the elites' control over the process. Therefore, primaries may not necessarily guarantee the improvement of electoral processes but may actually deepen the conflicts between leaders and other members while calcifying the incumbent party elites' power.

Closed Party Decision

In the case of closed party decision, rule bound (s)election processes play a major role, when specified committees or the party leadership manage the (s)election. This also means that "ordinary party members" may not feel they have a say in selecting future candidates. Furthermore, the backroom deals that sometimes arise from this method of candidate (s)election often means that it will be attacked for being non-transparent, even corrupt in some instances, and certainly not democratic. This is why, to be successful, closed party decisions are often bound by very clear rules. For example, in the first round of the party leader (s)election process in the UK's Conservative Party, the franchise is limited to MPs who are members of the parliamentary faction, and there are clear public rules of the game.

In this type of system, and when it comes to making party lists when there is proportional representation, the leader's role is key and more pronounced. If the leader has a solid legitimacy to make decisions and bargain with party elites, the system may work just fine. If, on the other hand, the leadership suffers from a deficit of legitimacy, this can lead to chaos and accusations of fraud. Closed and sometimes non-transparent (s)election encourages the reproduction of party elites and

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5   Close, C., Kelbel, C., "Whose primaries? Grassroots' views on candidate selection procedures," *Acta Polit*, no 54, 2019, pp. 268–294.

6 Guillermo Cordero & Xavier Coller, "Lights and shadows of democratizing candidate selection", in Democratizing candidate selection, *Palgrave Macmillan*, London, 2018, pp. 3-24.

can entrench internal patronage and clientelist structures. Asymmetric intra-party relations may have a strong impact in deciding who is included on the party list.[7]

Technocratic Model

The technocratic model offers an opportunity for parties to outsource the (s)election process to a specific and more or less professional structure or committee. This type of system combines various forms of nomination systems. The main question is who decides in the end and at which level other actors can be involved. If the decision is made by a smaller group, or perhaps unrelated party "technocrats," professionalization prohibits the democratic participation of members (Pitsika). Decentralization of candidate (s)election methods or combining nominations with a vote to choose from a pool of pre-selected candidates can allow parties to overcome the democratic deficit, but these may in turn go against the professionalization of the (s)election mechanisms.

Mixed, or Hybrid forms of candidate (s)election

These models try to reconcile the positive and negative outputs by combining the different methods of candidate (s)election, usually by providing several steps in the candidate (s)election method. Thus, the UK Conservative Party leadership contest starts with a first round of closed party decisions (with MPs and Lords making up the parliamentary group taking the contest down to two individuals) before a closed primary decides who will be the party leader. These systems can mitigate the democratic deficit while still capitalizing on innovative and inclusive formulas. The separation of different processes into smaller actions eventually favors a multiple-step (s)election process. Party leaders can keep some control over the (s)election, but this flexibility also provides an opportunity to nurture and train more competent candidates. The price to pay, however, is managing a more complex process, which can make it less comprehensible and sometimes less attractive to the voters at large.

It is important to keep in mind that a non-expected outcome in a primary can impact a party's discipline and cohesion. A possible solution is to remain open to new and more inclusive ideas and to make additional efforts to involve the electorate so the legitimacy of the (s)election would not be questioned. In this respect, e-voting and other technologies may provide useful tools for the future.[8]

The existing dissimilarities and practices in holding primaries in European countries and the U.S. suggest that it is essential to take into consideration different aspects of organizational procedures. Primaries differ from each other not only in terms of the voting system used but in other elements such as the party's electorate, candidacy requirements, or decisions over party-list composition.[9] When analyzing primary systems, one must consider the importance of historical factors that led to a system's adoption, as well as specific circumstances resulting from compromises within a party. Over time, such compromises that seemed reasonable at the time may no longer be relevant and so a particular primary system may not be responding to the current needs of a party.

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7 Bernard Grofman, Orestis Troumpounis, and Dimitrios Xefteris, "Electoral Competition with Primaries and Quality Asymmetries," *The Journal of Politics*, vol 81, no 1, November 2018.

8 *Op. Cit.*, Cordero G., Coller X.

9 *Ibid.*

Type	Actors		
	Input	**Positive Output (outcome)**	**Negative Output (outcome)**
Open primaries	Open to public. Participation/turnout is a key factor for legitimacy.	Transparent process Democratic. Provides opportunities for publicity, giving an advantage in the campaign.	Candidate more loyal towards the electorate than the party leadership. Voting base remains much smaller than the electorate. Possible non-desired outcomes, unpredictability.
Closed primaries	The electoral outcome may be influenced by the party leader's control. Participation is linked to a formal party affiliation.	Makes party members stakeholders in the process.	Candidates more loyal to their party base than the electorate. Entrenches the base Possible non-desired outcome.
Closed party decision	Leadership, or a closed committee's role is key in the (s)election. Personalization of politics.	Keeps the process under control of the leadership.	Elite reproduction. Political patronage / clientelist structures.
Technocratic	Outsourcing of the process to a professional structure, with recruitment rules taken from the private sector (HR, show-business).	Transparent. Introduces some predictability.	Undemocratic. Membership is completely absent.
Hybrid / Mixed	Involvement of multiple actors (professionals, party, electorate), with a (s)election in different stages.	When done well, mitigates negative outputs while enhancing positive outputs.	Elimination (or watering down) of democratic processes. Complexity can make the process unreadable and, ultimately, suspicious.

The Impacts of Location, Scale and Timing on Primary Contests

When thinking through the implementation of a new candidate (s)election process, party leadership needs to ask itself some basic questions: some may be logistical, particularly in the case of open primaries, where the scale of the operation necessitates major organizational capacities. For example, how to welcome a massive influx of voters on election day? In many places such as France or the US, this requires agreement with local or state authorities to use public buildings such as schools or other municipal buildings for the party to use on polling day. But the most important question is probably that of timing, for two different purposes: when should reform to the (s)election process take place, and when should the (s)election occur?

The answer to the first question is very much dependent on timing. Typically, debates about candidate (s)election reform come either in the early stages of party building (for emerging parties) or after a heavy defeat, in the case of established parties. Debates and decision making over candidate (s)election reform will be much easier and carry more legitimacy, if they take place early, while the salt of defeat and/or enthusiasm for innovation is still there. The more delayed the reform process is, the more difficult it will be to implement change, as opposition will crystallize and ossification in the party structure will take place.

Parties must also consider the impact of timing within the (s)election process. This is especially the case in an open primary, where dates should reasonably accommodate an electorate's ability to participate. Timing will also often reflect which issues come to the forefront in a primary contest.

Furthermore, parties must also consider the length of time between a primary and the eventual election. Early primaries, particularly those with a long duration, often allow space for more extreme political candidates to infiltrate the system by sowing division among the electorate and capturing media attention through inflammatory rhetoric. They may also lead to a degree of party in-fighting if personalities clash or candidates differ on key policy issues – even though the long time between the primary and the election itself can help heal some wounds and divisions. Extensively long primaries come with the added burden of incurring greater monetary cost. This not only mandates high spending for political parties but may also limit the field of contenders to those with deep pockets or lucrative relationships with wealthy fundraisers.

Finally, an early primary may produce an electoral outcome that might seem inspirational at the time of the election but look like a mistake after months of campaigning where other, less glorious aspects of the candidate's personality will have appeared (or simply, when the electorate's attention has shifted to other issues, making the candidacy of a certain individual look much less potent).

Late primaries, occurring closer to election, can allow successful candidates to carry momentum through to election day and are often less costly to the political party. But a late primary may also encourage more contenders to join the field and form factions among voters, leaving some of the electorate disillusioned if their preferred candidate loses – and this can in turn make them less likely to support the party's candidate on election day.

The scale at which primaries occur varies based on the intentions of a given political party, as well as the office for which a primary is undertaken. Participation in open primaries at a regional level ebb from cycle to cycle depending on a variety of factors which may include the breadth of offices included on the ballot and the relevance of timely issues to the electorate. For example, in the U.S., state-level primaries have poor participation during non-general election years or when a popular incumbent is deemed likely to win the eventual election. Furthermore, if no pressing issue is capturing the engagement of the

electorate, citizens may feel less inclined to cast a vote, leading to a candidate who may be less than representative of the wider party.

Throughout the 2000s and 2010s the Italian Democratic Party, and later a center-right coalition, held primary contests predominantly at the regional level, particularly for the presidencies of regions or the mayorship of cities. Evidence indicates that implementing primaries at this scale not only engendered high voter turnout, but also allowed space for new politicians to break into the field of being candidates previously dominated by long-standing party politicians. While embattled inter-party conflict between contenders often manifest in these open primary contests, parties frequently enjoyed a refreshed pool of candidates, which invigorated the electorate.

The location of primaries can also be an important factor in how parties select candidates. In the U.S. general elections, a cadence of state primaries over the course of several months maintains significant influence in determining the eventual nominees, who must navigate a host of different issues and demographics varying across geographies. Contenders who fail to win primaries in early states may find their political aspirations dashed well before most American citizens have a say in the candidate (s) election process. While this is a process unique to the American system, other political parties looking for a means of expanding their voter base and gaining more support from regions outside of densely populated urban areas may be interested in exploring such an option.

The timing, scale, and location of candidate (s)election processes vary across nations and requires parties to consider a vast breadth of factors when determining their approach. While they may seem like basic considerations, these decisions can have wide-reaching impacts on who might emerge as a party's nominee and what issues may rise to the forefront of an election debate.

New Tools and Technological Innovations

Candidate (s)election does not imply uniform practices. Political parties across the Transatlantic space have been using very different methods and tools to select their candidates for elections, thus illustrating different approaches to fulfill a common political objective: achieve the best possible electoral result. At the same time, after experiencing both successes and failures, candidate (s)election processes tend to evolve over time. Generally, the past few decades have been characterized by a trend of democratization in intra-party politics, which has affected the functioning of the candidate (s)election process. Whether this trend will start to get reversed by the introduction of more technocratic means of party management, sometimes favored by new technological options, remains to be seen.

Emerging technological developments have greatly influenced politics. Technology is one of the most important aspects of modern politics and will remain so in the coming years, leading the academic sphere to debate the implications and the perspectives of "technopolitics."[10] Seen initially as unmissable opportunities to revive democracy, technological innovations are now viewed much more cautiously, as they can obviously produce downsides in addition to benefits.[11] As such, in order to make gains from technology applications, politicians and political parties must understand not only the opportunities presented by technology, but also the emerging evolution of how technology can be applied to the candidate (s)election process.

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10 Can Kurban, Ismael Pena-Lopez & Maria Haberer, "What is technopolitics? A conceptual schema for understanding politics on the digital age," *Derecho y Politica*, no 24, 2017, pp. 3-20.

11 European Parliamentary Research Service, "Polarisation and the use of technology in political campaigns ird communication," *European Parliament*, 2019, p-1.

In contemporary politics, there is still hope that new tools and technological innovations will help tackle current challenges. Among these challenges, two stand out as particularly dangerous for political parties. The first is citizens' growing skepticism, if not disinterest, toward politics – and, in particular, distrust toward political parties. And the second is the polarization of both inter and intra-party political systems.

In the past two decades, Western liberal democracies have experienced a period of serious turbulence with the development of anti-establishment and populist political movements. These new political actors – which have proven successful several times – symbolize the growing disaffection of many citizens toward traditional politics. More than disaffection, citizens seem more and more disinterested in politics and, as a direct consequence, political participation has sharply declined in numerous countries. Due to these developments, political parties are suffering from both a decline in party membership as well as lower turnouts during elections.[12]

To answer this specific challenge, technology and, in particular, the use of the internet and digitalization processes have been identified as potential solutions. When it comes specifically to candidate (s) election processes, no matter which specific method a political party uses, one of its main objectives is to attract the attention of its (perceived) target voters to legitimize its internal (s)election process. Here, digital tools have often been used with the hope of boosting the success of such processes. On one hand, technology aims to make a candidate (s)election process more participative and – at least on paper – more transparent. Undeniably, the internet allows parties to reach out more easily to a larger number of potentially interested citizens and, at the same time, can reduce organizational costs.[13]

One illustrative example comes from Italy's Five Star Movement (M5S), which organized online primaries as early as 2012 (for the 2013 general elections). On this occasion, more than 30,000 members of M5S (membership was the only condition of participation) cast their ballots to select candidates among a pool of almost 1,500 individuals. Another example comes from the New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS) party, which organized the first open and online-based primaries in Austria ahead of the 2013 national legislative elections. NEOS implemented a three-stage primary, based on participative and transparent characteristics, increasing its visibility as a newly established and non-traditional party. Its process included multi-step (s)election using three different electorates: citizens (1,355 ordinary citizens), party executives (11 individuals) and party members (236 party members) With some updates, NEOS repeated this in 2017, increasing participation from ordinary citizens by 160 percent.

If the success of elections is to be relativized, such initiatives represent considerable innovation in candidate (s)election processes. On the other hand, a good use of internet and digital tools may help a party increase the visibility – and hopefully – the popularity of a candidate (s)election process. The ability to develop communication skills in online media and social networks has proved particularly important in the past two years, as COVID-19 pandemic-era restrictions placed limitations on physical political campaigning.

A second major challenge for political parties today is polarization. If polarization within national political systems seems obvious, given the multitude of examples that could be mentioned, intra-party polarization has also been an issue for several parties in recent years. Indeed, in the case of a leadership crisis or of a lack of ideological cohesion, candidate (s)election might be disastrous. In France, the 2017 open primaries from both traditional mainstream parties were an occasion to open these divisions very

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12   Alain Siaroff, "The decline of political participation: an empirical overview of voter turnout and party membership," in J DeBardeleben & J.H. Pammett, Activating the Citizen, *Palgrave Macmillan*, London, 2009, pp. 41-59.

13   Op. Cit., Cordero G., Coller X.

wide, and it paved the way for Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen (among others) to pick up the parts of the parties they needed in their respective coalitions as the party system exploded in (and after) the presidential elections.[14]

Could new technologies or simple techniques reduce the perils of polarization and internal fracture during a candidate (s)election process? Reducing the politicization of candidate (s)election processes can lead to more professional (but less democratic) approaches. Again, it's worthwhile to note the aforementioned Greek example of the ND party, which itself echoed the methodology used by En Marche in France to select its candidates for the legislative elections. Using this method, rivalries between political candidates from the same party were mostly muted, and candidates were selected through a technical process which aimed at finding the best possible candidates for the party's electoral objectives. With the rapid development of data science and the possibility of using more accurate computerized data to match citizens' expectations and politicians' profiles, technocratic experiences will likely develop and may even become an ascendent form of candidate (s)election in the future.[15] On the other hand, other solutions have been more specifically developed to reduce polarization - specifically by attacking plurality voting, also known as 'winner-takes-all' voting, which is perceived as more and more problematic.[16] Such possibilities have already been theorized under the names of "ranked choice voting" and through a more detailed methodology called "majority judgement," developed by the French researchers Balinski and Laraki.[17] Such methods are believed to increase representativeness towards the center (rather than polarizing fringes) as the party elects candidates who are the most consensual and are supposed to decrease intra-party tensions during the campaign.

Like other tools, technology should not be taken as a silver bullet as it carries its own risks. Using predominantly technological tools in a candidate (s)election process exposes a political party to a number of risks, and they do not necessarily bring more transparency or participation. First, using technology and digital tools may make a political party more vulnerable, as they automatically reduce its capacity to control the process itself. A communications strategy based on communication through media and social networks might produce a significant backlash if it is not sufficiently coordinated by the party itself. For example, one problem might be caused by the development of conflicting internal communications strategies from different candidates – and rivals – from the party. A second important issue is the fight against disinformation, which can occur both in media and on social networks and which comes from political adversaries, whether national or international (i.e., state-sponsored disinformation).

Secondly, using technology as a central tool of candidate (s)election raises security questions in two different ways. On the one hand, such processes can affect the security of citizens and the protection of their personal data – in Europe, the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is now a central issue. In this context, are the controversial operations led by the data analysis company Cambridge Analytica.[18] On the other hand, there are important cybersecurity challenges for the parties and their data. Since the mid-2000s, several events across the Transatlantic space have exemplified the notable risk of cyberattacks and outside election meddling. In this regard, candidate (s)election processes are an easy target as political parties might not pay sufficient attention, nor devote sufficient resources, to the

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14 Jennifer Stromer-Galley, "Amid pandemic, campaigning turns to the internet," *The Conversation*, 2020.

15 Katharine Dommett, "Data-driven political campaigns in practice: understanding and regulating diverse data-driven campaigns," *Internet Policy Review*, vol 8, no 4, 2019.

16 Anne-Marie Slaughter, "How to fix polarization? Ranked choice voting," *Politico*, 2020.

17 Michel Balinski & Rida Laraki, "Jugement majoritaire versus vote majoritaire," *Revue française d'éconoie*, vol 27, no 4, 2012, pp. 11-44.

18 *Op. Cit.*, Katharine Dommett, 2019.

security of their processes. Moreover, the more tech-dependent processes are, the more vulnerabilities exist, particularly in an environment where party operatives are seldom aware of data security. Their inclination to arbitrate budgetary decisions between voter outreach and security investments that have little impact on turnout typically means weak cybersecurity.

Legislating the Political Ecosystem and Protecting Democratic Representation

Whether one likes it or deplores it, political parties remain at the center of political life in our representative democracies, and ultimately set the rules for candidate (s)election. But their options are often constrained by legal parameters within constitutions or other laws that set the rules for participation in an institutionalized democratic system.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, political parties operated largely beyond the scope of state regulation (which was mostly absent) and often without internal self-governance rules. Unchecked by regulation, common practice allowed parties to conduct candidate (s)election completely removed from citizens. Instead, parties often brokered backroom deals, which frequently led to corrupt practices aimed at amassing political and financial power, thereby tightening control over institutions and limiting representative governance. Without legislation as a precondition to ensuring a fair and equitable political ecosystem, many bad actors continue to impede democratic progress. These hurdles remain acutely present across some emerging and transitioning democracies particularly in Central and Eastern Europe.

We know from practices in other democracies that the transition from backroom deals to a more open, transparent, and/or professional model of candidate selection is not easy. Experience also shows that a sound legislative environment favors this type of transition. The question, therefore, is how can parliaments legislate to favor a more transparent environment? The initial step could include reinforcing existing legislation to protect freedom of participation and association for all citizens, particularly as they relate to political parties or groups. Such laws provide guarantees for citizens to exercise their political autonomy in supporting the individuals and/or parties that best reflect their personal beliefs and motivations. This protection is fundamental for ensuring that all people retain the capacity to express themselves politically without fear of reprisal. Furthermore, such legislation should also eliminate barriers that inhibit the ability of individuals to stand for election. For example, legislation should curtail or restrict practices that aim to exclude certain individuals from running for office or parties from breaking into the electoral theater, such as unfair district drawing (gerrymandering in the U.S.) and high electoral thresholds for party participation (several examples in Central and East Europe).

Next, across nearly all democracies, issues with campaign and party financing consistently emerge during election cycles. Undoubtedly, capital resources play an essential role in empowering an individual or political party to gain public visibility and broaden the reach of their messaging. These funds can enable parties to compete in contentious districts, embolden a candidate's policy platforms, and help encourage more voters to participate. However, unregulated campaign financing can have detrimental impacts on the internal functioning of individual parties, as well as the collective political ecosystem of a given country. Without internal self-governance, parties run the risk of corruption within their own ranks, particularly if one or a handful of individuals amass power over the party's capital resources. A lack of legal parameters at the party- and state-level also leaves the door open for wealthy individuals or corporations to ingratiate themselves with party leaders and, in severe cases, affect policy agendas.

While less discussed and infrequently implemented in Europe, legislation outlining how political parties may select candidates remains undefined. These processes are often left to the discretion of political

parties. However, at the very least, political parties should adopt formal internal rules, agreed upon by party members, to clearly define the processes of candidate (s)election in order to avoid corruption and ensure transparency for party members and the public. In addition, internal party rules and state laws should adopt prescriptions mandating rules about party transparency. These laws may require that political parties share sources of public and private funding and spending – subject to an audit by third-party organizations from civil society, as well as independent regulatory bodies. For parties that choose to engage closed primary systems, the opportunity to legislate more transparent processes may, in turn, promote the party's commitment to democratic processes within the electorate.

As core components of democracies, political parties must actively advocate for framing legislation both at the state and internal levels to address a variety of obstacles debasing democracy. Understandably, some parties may oppose the notion of state regulation as an infringement on their ability to freely conduct affairs such as candidate (s)election. However, predictable frameworks for transparency and accountability can provide a mutually acceptable foundation for parties to enhance democracy, without encroaching on parties' rights to organize freely. This can sometimes be achieved through benchmarking and the adoption of best practices from rival or outside parties.

Conclusion: Implications for Future Party Structure

Every party experience is unique – and as a result, each party has developed a unique way of (s)electing its own candidates and suiting its own needs and identity. In this regard, this publication cannot be seen as a guidebook for the ideal candidate (s)election process - such a process does not exist. But circumstances change, and political parties often find themselves in crisis, or rather a need to re-invent themselves, and candidate (s)election is often at the heart of it. Thus, while the comparative method used in this publication may not deliver an absolute answer to a party's needs, examples from across the Transatlantic space may provide party leaders with the inspiration they need to reform their candidate (s) election process in a way that suits them.

Of course, the primary purpose of candidate (s)election in a party is to get the candidate (or set of candidates) that will help win the next election, but we learned from case studies that multiple other aspects need to be considered when reforming the candidate (s)election process. The party's long-term objectives definitely matter, and options might be constrained by timing, location, capacity, and the choice of political goals for the party. Candidate (s)election is a highly strategic matter and can sometimes even mean the life or death of a party. The importance of candidate (s)election cannot be overstated.

Over the past twenty years, primaries – and especially open primaries – have often been presented as the ideal mode of candidate (s)election that all parties should aspire to. And yet, the examples provided by the countries studied in this project also show that primaries have their own dangers. To mitigate the risks and amplify the benefits, parties need to rely on existing best practices, but they should also remain open to new ideas, especially in a rapidly evolving political system which is evermore influenced by technological tools.

Success in candidate (s)election depends on multiple factors. Those factors can be internal and come from the party itself, depending on its structure and statutes, on ideological cohesion and intra-party relations, or on the potential evolutions of targeted constituencies. Factors can also be external and emerge from the political environment. Parties must constantly contend with shifting legislative requirements, political competition with other parties (that also take decisions in real time), and the evolution of voter demands. On top of that, it is also important to remember why certain primary

systems are used, and we must consider the historical factors at the time the system was adopted (and how the selected systems are often the result of some form of compromise within a party).

Considering this variety of factors, political parties should avoid the trap of focusing only on the next election and base their choices to build their candidate (s)election processes for the long-term. Very often, events spark reform, and political leaders have very little choice but to "catch" the moment for reform rather than just create a movement for it. But at the same time, those reforms need to be thought out, because they will carry long-term consequences for the future of the party.

Candidate (s)election processes are an important feature of political party life. Choosing a specific system may affect the identity of a party and its internal structures. However, the evolution of party structures is a long-term process, and therefore depends not only on the outcome of a single election but must also be considered as a culmination of electoral experiences gathered over multiple voting cycles. In many cases, as demonstrated, primaries do not offer a definitive solution for candidate (s) election, rather they open the possibility to wider political debates. This, in turn, offers a lesson in differences and similarities experienced by various parties in the Transatlantic space.