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(Article begins on next page)

REBEL REBEL.

DO PRIMARY ELECTIONS AFFECT LEGISLATORS' BEHAVIOR? INSIGHTS FROM ITALY

Abstract. MPs elected in 2013 Italian parliamentary elections have been selected through three main procedures: open primaries, closed primaries and exclusive methods, meaning that they have been appointed directly by the party élites or party leaders. This peculiar layout of the Italian Parliament offers the opportunity to analyse the impact on the parliamentary behavior of different selection methods within the same political context. Drawing from a large and original dataset including parliamentary behavior of all the Italian MPs elected in 2013 parliamentary elections, this article addresses the impact of candidate selection methods by focusing on the dimension of party unity. Our hypothesis is that inclusive procedures for selecting candidates may entail a low party unity degree, namely a higher MPs propensity to rebellion from party line. The analysis shows that the selection methods affect only marginally MPs parliamentary behavior and not always in the expected direction.

Keywords: Legislative primary elections; Parliamentary behavior; Political parties; Party unity; Italian politics; Candidate selection.

1. Introduction

This article moves from the assumption that the process by which MPs are elected may determine their representational style (Carey and Shugart 1995; Shomer 2009; Hazan and Rahat 2010). Literature on electoral systems has clearly pointed out how rules relating to the process of getting elected could affect nominees' strategies in their electoral campaigns and, even more so, their legislative behavior once elected. Similarly, other scholars have argued that the method by which candidates are selected should also be considered as a relevant factor affecting the relationship between the party in central office and the party in public office (Depauw and Martin 2009, Pemstein *et al.* 2015; Gallagher and Marsh, 1988) in terms of party unity, namely the MPs parliamentary behavior supporting or opposing the party line (Hazan and Rahat 2010; 2006; Rahat 2007a; Hazan 2003).

The purpose of this article is therefore to investigate the consequences of candidate selection methods by focusing on the legislative behavior of Italian MPs elected in 2013. In the light of the recent

(and increasingly frequent) resort to practices of intra-party democracy (IPD) for the selection of candidates and party leaders (Sandri, Seddone and Venturino, 2015), it is important to clarify how the enlargement of selectorates may influence the representation dynamics as well as the relationships between nominees and their own party. The decision to adopt inclusive procedures - even beyond the mere party membership as in the case of an open primary - is not without consequences for political parties. As argued by Hazan and Rahat (2010) in their seminal volume, the candidate selection methods could have a quite deep impact on nominees' parliamentary behavior. Italy represents a privileged point of view for scholars interested in primary elections and their impact at organizational and systemic level. In the last 13 years, more than 1,000 primaries have been organized at a local level; and several parties have adopted similar inclusive procedures to select their party leaders (both through closed and open primaries), furthermore two primaries have been organized (2005 and 2012) to select the center-left's chief-executive candidates for the ensuing parliamentary elections (Gelli, Mannarini, Talò 2013; Lanzone and Rombi 2014; Musella 2014; Pala and Rombi 2014; Pasquino 2009; Pasquino and Venturino 2014; 2010; 2009; Seddone and Valbruzzi 2013; 2012; 2010; Venturino 2007). Thanks to the contagion effect (Rahat 2007b; Barnea and Rahat 2007), primaries are becoming quite a common instrument of participation for Italian political parties, despite their organizational or ideological differences. At the end of 2012 - for the first time - four political parties selected their candidates through primary elections in order to establish the composition of the closed list for the 2013 parliamentary election. Two of them resorted to open primaries (Democratic Party - PD, and Left, Ecology and Freedom - SEL), while the other two opted for a system of closed primaries (Five Star Movement - M5S, and South-Tyrolean People's Party - SVP).¹ As a consequence, serving in the current Italian Parliament there are MPs who were selected through methods that are very different as regards the level of inclusiveness, ranging from very exclusive procedures (party leader and/or small party élite appointing candidates) to open primaries (where all Italian citizens could participate in the

¹ To be more precise, the PD and SEL primaries might better be defined as semi-open, since the selectorate only comprised all those citizens who participated in the primary of 25 November 2012 to select the centre-left candidate for the premiership. Moreover, the M5S primaries could also be defined as hyperclosed, given that the selectorate consisted just of M5S members (registered by 30 September 2012) who were able to upload a valid identification document by 2 November 2012.

primary elections selecting candidates) and closed primaries (party members allowed to select candidates). This allows to perform analyses able to test the different role of partisan and systemic factors in affecting MPs parliamentary behavior in terms of party unity by comparing different methods simultaneously. Furthermore, since not all PD and SEL candidates were selected through the primaries it is possible to investigate different dynamics within the same party. As regard PD and SEL, indeed, candidates at the top of the lists were appointed by the national leadership, on the basis of the party regional élites preferences; translated into number, this means that among 917 singular PD candidates 672 were selected through primaries, while the remaining quota was selected by exclusive methods. In the case of SEL, among 889 singular candidates, just 418 resulted selected through primaries.² As a result, for the sake of our analysis, candidates from the same party have been coded as selected through different methods: open primaries vs exclusive methods, whereas appointed by party leadership.

In this article we take advantage of this variety of selection mechanisms used by Italian parties for 2013 parliamentary elections in order to assess how candidate selection processes could affect party unity. Drawing on a large dataset focusing on MPs sociopolitical details, their legislative activity and the methods by which the MPs were selected, we investigate by inferential analyses the relationship between selection methods and party unity. We begin by presenting the theoretical background on the relationship between candidate selection methods and MPs parliamentary behavior by shedding light on the dimension of party unity. The following sections move on to a description of the case study, giving details about contextual and political factors concerning the candidate selection procedures adopted in Italy. We then give an account of the data, methods and analytical approach adopted in this article. Finally, the main results of our analysis are described.

² We referred to singular candidates because our count did not consider multiple candidatures. For instance, in the case of PD, although he has been candidate in 3 districts, Pierluigi Bersani has been counted just one time. The same goes for Nichi Vendola (leader of SEL): although he has been candidate in 19 districts, he has been counted only one time.

2. Candidate selection methods, consequences on party unity

Our investigation starts from this research question: *Do inclusive candidate selection methods induce MPs to adopt more personal and less unitary parliamentary attitudes?* We consider candidate selection methods by referring to the dimension of exclusiveness (Hazan and Rahat 2010), namely the size of the selectorate – the body selecting candidates – ranging from large (all citizens) to small (party leaders). Following Hazan and Rahat (2010; 2006), we argue that different candidate selection methods imply different selectorates to whom delegates will be responsive: *‘Candidate selection methods impact on the balance of influence between party and nonparty actors on the selection process, and also within the party between the party leadership and other actors, and [...] they have an impact on the relationship between the representatives and each of these.’* (Hazan and Rahat 2010: 145-147).

The candidate selection method – and especially its exclusiveness or inclusiveness dimension – may significantly determine ‘and create incentives as well as constraints on the way by which legislators cater to prospective supporters’ (Shomer 2009: 945). When appointed through inclusive procedures, indeed, MPs owe their candidacy from a large selectorate (in case of open primaries this selectorate could be composed by external supporters not enrolled within the party); thus the weaker control played by party leaders or party élites may encourage MPs to cultivate a personal reputation in order to distinguish themselves from others competitors within the party’s parliamentary group. In other words, since MPs unitary attitude will be affected by whom they were dependent on for their nomination (and their position in parliament), inclusive procedures provide opportunities and stronger incentives to emphasize personal over party reputation.

We analyze the impact of candidate selection methods on MPs parliamentary behavior by focusing on the unity within parliamentary groups, that is all members voting in the same way and producing voting blocs (Cordero and Coller 2015). Dealing with this issue, quite different analytical labels have been adopted: “party unity”, “party cohesion” or “party discipline”. Even though these terms have been often used interchangeably – and they are actually interrelated – it is needed to keep in mind their conceptual difference. As underlined by Sieberer (2006) ‘party unity’ is meant as the observable degree to which members of a parliamentary group act in unison. Unity may be achieved through two

distinct paths: cohesion or discipline. When the unison MPs behavior derives by shared preferences we can refer to party cohesion; while, when unity results from constraints, namely sanctions or positive incentives (despite MPs preferences might differ), we can talk of party discipline.

In this article we resort to the concept of party unity meant as 'the extent to which, in a given situation, group members can be observed to work together for the group's goal in one and the same way' (Özbudun 1970: 305). Parliamentary behavior in general and party unity in particular can be interpreted according to two main approaches: the sociological and the institutional (Hazan 2003). As regards the sociological approach, legislators are inclined to adopt the same parliamentary behavior for 'normative reasons including ideological convictions, socialization, party solidarity, and so on' (Hazan *Ibidem*: 3). In other words, MPs act as a unitary group chiefly because belonging to the same party implies the sharing of similar values and interests; they will thus be inclined to support similar position on policy issues. In short, acting in unison is the result of collective incentives and a sense of belonging (Clark and Wilson 1961). The second approach is the institutional one, which relates to strategic incentives and constraints. From this angle, legislators are understood as self-interested actors aiming for utility maximization. According to the former approach, MPs behavior is affected by an informal authority based on implicit norms of loyalty and solidarity (Hazan 2003). By contrast, the institutional approach views legislators as rational, strategic actors pursuing policies, offices and votes (Strøm 2000; Müller and Strøm 1999). These two approaches are interrelated, and they may affect MPs behavior at different levels, in different stages of their political career or in different moments of a legislature, depending on contextual factors (Hazan 2003). Nonetheless, the unity of the party's parliamentary group, namely the party functioning in unison and adopting a cohesive approach in decision making, lasts as long as there are non-institutional incentives. When party unity begins to crumble, the institutional mechanism kicks in, keeping the party together and prompting MPs to be disciplined. To improve the explanatory power of this model in which the two approaches – sociological and institutional – are mutually reinforcing, Hazan (2003) introduces another analytical dimension focused on the role of intra- and inter-party elections, suggesting to consider the electoral arena – starting from the candidate selection method – as relevant factor able to impact on MPs

incentives to carry out a higher or lower degree of rebellion to party line. In particular, a change towards more inclusive candidate selection methods could weaken the power of the party leader over MPs deriving their nomination from a wide electorate. On the contrary, in case of exclusive method, in particular within a closed-list electoral system such as the Italian one, MPs will tend to support the party line and the party leaders with the aim to obtain (again) a place in the list. In this latter case, the parliamentary group has to take into account party leadership directives in order to avoid sanctions (i.e. being excluded from list in following elections) or to get rewarded (i.e. guarantee to be included into the list). In other words, as argued by Depauw and Martin (2009), the degree of party leaders control exerted over the candidate re-selection is a quite relevant factor in determining MPs attitudes towards party unity.

As regards the analytical goal of this article, since our aim is to assess the impact of candidate selection methods, rather than explore the set of positive or negative incentives (material or immaterial) behind MPs parliamentary behavior, we rely to the concept of party unity. In particular, we take into account the frequency of MPs voting against the line of the parliamentary group.

The goal of this article is to clarify the relationship between candidate selection methods and MPs parliamentary behavior. In particular, our research question relates to the impact of candidate selection methods on party in public office (Katz and Mair 1995). The main argument guiding our analysis is that the candidate selection method may affect MPs behavior in terms of party unity (H1):

H1: The higher the level of inclusiveness in the candidate selection method, the lower the level of party unity.

We expect that candidates selected by an inclusive mechanism, such as a primary, do not feel compelled to adopt a party-centered behavior, since their re-selection (and re-election) is dependent on an external body; they are encouraged to cater to diverse voters and cultivate a personal vote (Shomer 2009). By contrast, we expect that legislators selected by small selectorates – the party leader, a few local leaders, or a small party agency – show a high level of party loyalty in legislative behavior and, as a result, party unity will be greater. Candidates selected by the exclusive method aim

to endorse the political line established by the party élite to which they owe their reselection (Hazan and Rahat 2006).

According to Bowler *et al.* (1999) if candidate's place on the party list is determined by party leaders, his/her parliamentary behavior will be likely to be much more concentrated on loyalty to the party line. As a consequence, centralized nomination procedures should lead to greater party unity. If the behavior of legislators is shaped by the aim to be re-selected, then they will be responsive to the demands of their selectorates. As argued by Carey and Shugart (2005), we expect that an inclusive selection mechanism will lead nominees to cultivate a personal vote. In other words, they will emphasize their personal record and reputation by stressing their engagement in activities aimed at satisfying their own district, solving problems of their selectors rather than following the party line (Shomer 2009).

The following sections offer a much more detailed description of the case study, data, indicators and methods.

4. Case study, data and methods

Explaining primaries for parliamentarians in Italy

The rapid diffusion of primary elections both at local and national level (Pasquino and Venturino, 2009a; 2009b; 2012; 2014) made Italy a laboratory where it is possible to address the study of IPD through very different point of views. As regards our article the so-called contagion effect (Hazan and Rahat 2010; Sandri, Seddone and Venturino 2015) resulted into a parliament where MPs have been selected through very different selection methods – even within the same party – allowing for analyses that could better explain – by taking into account a set of partisan and systemic control variables - whether and to what extent inclusive procedure may impact on party unity.

The use of primaries for the selection of parliamentary candidates for 2013 parliamentary elections can be attributed to three important facts. Firstly, a growing public hostility to an electoral system that makes no provision for preferential voting. Secondly, the emergence of the M5S: an anti-establishment party led by the famous Italian comedian Beppe Grillo. Thirdly, the existence, and widespread use, of

primaries as a tool for the selection of candidates for monocratic political offices (Mayor, President of the Region, Premier).

Although it is also typical of other countries (Spain and Portugal, for example), the absence of preferential voting – ruled by L. 270/2005 – has been a source of scandal in Italy, where citizens were used from the so called First Republic (1946-1992) to be entitled to cast preferential votes and, from 1994 to 2001, to elect candidates within single-member districts. Indeed, closed lists have been interpreted as a deliberately designed ploy by political parties to limit citizens' electoral power, with the aim of controlling the composition of the lists and consequently the composition of parliament. So far, in Italy, three parliamentary elections have been held without preferential voting: 2006, 2008 and 2013. However, while in 2006 and 2008 candidates were selected through an exclusive and more or less decentralized procedure, in 2013 some political parties introduced a major innovation: primary elections.

In order to understand why primaries were introduced in 2013, we need to refer to the two remaining reasons. First, 2009 saw the official formation of the M5S party, which emerged as a direct result of the deep dissatisfaction with the traditional parties complained by a substantial segment of the Italian electorate. The birth of the M5S has certainly led the other parties to be more attentive to the demands for greater involvement by the electorate. And, specifically, Grillo's party (Corbetta and Gualmini 2013) first had the idea of selecting candidates for the Italian parliamentary elections of 2013 through online primaries (Lanzone and Rombi 2014).

As mentioned, there is one further reason that induced parties to employ primaries as a response to dissatisfaction stemming from the absence of preferential voting: their diffusion in the Italian political system since 2005. Although asymmetrical – that is, typically promoted only by the center-left parties and, in particular, the PD – and private – i.e., not publicly regulated –, primary elections have become a hallmark of the Italian political system. At the municipal (Pasquino and Venturino 2009; Seddone and Valbruzzi 2013; 2012), regional (Pala and Rombi 2014) and national (Pasquino 2009; Pasquino and Venturino 2014; 2010) level, since 2005 the Italian center-left had used this political instrument on more than 1,000 occasions, showing that it is now part of its participative repertoire.

A few months before the Italian parliamentary elections of 2013, four political parties resorted to primaries for parliamentarians: M5S, PD, SEL and SVP.

The M5S was the first Italian party to use primaries, albeit through an online platform, to select its parliamentary candidates. Between 3 and 6 December 2012, M5S held (hyper)closed primaries (Hazan and Rahat 2010), which were limited to a relatively small number of potential selectors. Eligible voters could express up to three preferences. There were 31,612 eligible voters, 64.1% of whom actually took part in the vote (20,252); 57,252 valid votes were cast. Therefore, very few chose to indicate less than three preferences (Lanzone and Rombi 2014).

A few weeks later, on 29 and 30 December 2012, it was the turn of the main parties of the center-left coalition: the PD and SEL. Both influenced by M5S, they chose to select a large proportion of their parliamentary candidates through (semi)open primary elections, in which the right to vote was granted to all members of the PD (or SEL) and to all selectors of the center-left that had previously participated in primary elections for the premiership held on 25 November 2012 (approximately, 3,100,000 people). The selectors could express up to two preferential votes; in the event of two preferences being made, they were to be attributed to candidates of different genders.

Finally, we have the SVP. On 6 January 2013, the South Tyrolean minority party called its 50,668 members to participate in the primaries for the selection of parliamentary candidates. Given that the potential selectorate consisted only of party members, the primaries of the SVP, like those of the M5S, can certainly be considered as closed.

While in the four cases just mentioned, the parties opted for a more or less inclusive selection of candidates, all the other Italian parties standing in the 2013 parliamentary elections selected their candidates by means of totally exclusive procedures. Neither members nor the electorate were given the opportunity to intervene in the candidates' selection process.

Our case study is particularly interesting because it permits a comparison of MPs selected by very different procedures within the same political and institutional frame. To better compare Italian MPs selected through such different mechanisms, we may divide them into three main groups on the basis of their political parties (Table 1).

Table 1. Italian MPs and the candidate selection method – Chamber of Deputies and Senate

Selection method	Open primaries		Closed primaries		Exclusive method	
Democratic Party	296	69.3%	0	-	131	26.5%
Five Star Movement	0	-	165	97.1%	0	-
Ecology Left Freedom	30	30.7%	0	-	18	5.2%
South Tyrolean V.P.	0	-	5	2.9%	0	-
Others party	0	-	0	-	346	68.3%
<i>Total</i> ³	<i>326</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>495</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: own elaboration on Openpolis data (www.openparlamento.it).

- Those who got their nomination through open primary elections (part of PD and SEL MPs) represent the first group. We argue that they forge a more direct relationship with their represented, since the latter are at the same time electors and selectors. Our argument is that the coincidence between represented and selectors will affect MPs legislative attitudes by inducing a less party-loyal and partisan parliamentary behavior. Since MPs owe their nomination (and consequently their election) to a large selectorate external to the party organization, their legislative activity will be less party-oriented than others MPs.
- Those who have been selected through closed primaries (M5S and SVP MPs) represent a second group of MPs. In this case the selectorate is made up of party members and it only partially overlaps with the wider electoral base that elected them. Their relationship with the represented is thus articulated into two levels: the first one pertains to their own party members, the second to their voters. We expect that their parliamentary activity will be aimed at consolidating party unity.
- Those who have been selected directly by the party leader or a small party élite (Go Italy, New Centre Right, part of PD and SEL MPs, and smaller parties) represent the third group of MPs. Since the candidate selection method is characterized by a high level of exclusiveness, selectors and electors are two radically different groups. MPs owe their selection to the party oligarchy, which

³ The number of MPs is higher because our dataset includes all parliamentarians elected in the 2013 parliamentary election, including resigned MPs and their substitutes.

entails a high level of party loyalty and cohesive behavior in parliamentary activities in order to be rewarded with a reselection.

Data

The analysis of party unity is very challenging for scholars. To begin with, this concept is not so simple, and theoretical discussion about it is still on-going, which might also make it difficult to find an effective empirical definition. How can party unity be measured? Literature on this issue offers several suggestions of empirical indicators able to assess the level of party unity. The Rice index (1925), for example, is recognized as an effective tool for investigating party unity at the parliamentary party group level. However, we cannot resort to that, as, within the same party in some cases, for instance PD or SEL, MPs were selected by different candidate selection methods. This article drew on a data collection on the parliamentary activities of MPs elected in 2013. We considered all the parliamentarians elected in the 2013 parliamentary election, including all those MPs who resigned and their substitutes.⁴ Data were collected at the individual level. In short, we built a dataset comprising data on:

- The political profile of MPs⁵ (seniority in parliament, incumbency, political role within the executive board of the party; being in government or in opposition, ideological dimension, having switched parliamentary group⁶).

⁴ The rules of the Italian parliament make provision for the so-called *Gruppo Misto* (mixed parliamentary group), in which all those MPs who are not members of any other group are automatically placed. Typically, it embraces all the MPs from minor parties that did not get a sufficient number of seats to form their own group, as well as individual MPs who choose not to join any group. Following Curini *et al.* (2011) we excluded from our analyses MPs belonging to *Gruppo Misto*. For the same reason – that is their mixed composition – we excluded also: *Gruppo Autonomie* (which included the five members of SPP); *Gruppo GAL* (which included various centre-right parliamentarians); *Gruppo Per l'Italia – Centro Democratico* (composed by centrists parliamentarians). In addition we excluded: Andrea Gibelli (Northern League) because he resigned one day after the beginning of the term; Pietro Grasso (PD) and Laura Boldrini (SEL) because they are, respectively, president of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

⁵ Data on MPs' political profiles were collected from the website of the Italian parliament and from the archive provided by the Openpolis association. Openpolis is an independent association engaged in monitoring the political activities of elected representatives at a local, regional, national and European level.

⁶ MPs switching parliamentary groups represent a quite serious analytical problem for our research question (Russo, Tronconi and Verzichelli 2014). How to evaluate party unity for MPs having changed party? We addressed this issue by adopting the solution provided by Curini *et al.* (2011): for each MP changing party

- MPs activity, taking into account the number of votes in dissent with the party line in roll call votes, the number of presences in parliament. We considered all the activities in parliament as well as in commissions.⁷
- Selection method through which MPs were appointed, taking into account the exclusiveness and inclusiveness dimension.

Methods

We explored our research question through inferential analysis designed to assess the extent to which MPs parliamentary behavior, in terms of party unity, can be explained by the candidate selection methods adopted for the 2013 parliamentary elections.

Our model is aimed at assessing the impact of candidate selection methods on party unity. Our dependent variable is represented by the rate of REBEL VOTES, calculated as the ratio between the number of ‘rebel votes’ in roll call votes cast by each MP and the number of roll call votes in which each MP participated.⁸ The party line is defined as the voting behavior of the majority of members of the party’s parliamentary group. It is a proxy variable serving as a quantitative indicator of an MP’s degree of rebellion against party discipline. It permits assessment at the individual level of the extent to which MPs are independent from the party élite.

Our main independent variable is represented – in the regression model – by the kind of candidate selection method by which MPs were selected. We organized this dimension as a set of three dichotomous variables: a) OPEN PRIMARY ELECTIONS (1 = candidate selected through open primaries; 0 = candidate selected through other mechanism); b) CLOSED PRIMARY ELECTIONS (1 = candidate selected through closed primaries; 0 = candidate selected through other mechanism); c) EXCLUSIVE METHOD (1 = candidate selected through exclusive method; 0 = candidate selected through other mechanism).

affiliation we duplicated the set of observations and measures (one for each different party joined). Among 104 MPs changing partisan affiliation, 24 switched from opposition to government parties.

⁷ Even these data were collected by Openpolis.

⁸ We considered as REBEL VOTES also all those case whereas the MP opted for abstention.

Moreover, beside the three main independent variables (that is, the type of candidate selection method as summarized by the three groups presented in Table 1), in the analysis we considered a set of control variables identified as relevant in determining the MPs attitudes towards a rebel or non-rebel parliamentary behavior.⁹ According to literature, indeed, beside candidate selection methods there are several factors which may affect the unity in parliamentary behavior (Owens 2003; Hazan 2003; Bowler *et al.* 1999; Depauw and Martin 2009). In particular, as argued by Pemstein *et al.* (2015) as well as by Bowler *et al.* (1999) MPs parliamentary experience could have a significant impact on their relationship with the parliamentary group. They pointed out that MPs with a longer parliamentary career are usually more inclined to act at unison with the party line. On the contrary, as stressed by Curini *et al.* (2011) less experienced MPs – especially newcomers at their first mandate – lack the political influence to challenge the party leadership as a consequence they will be more prone to follow leadership instructions and perform party unity. In our model, we considered this dimension through two variables: MP's length of PARLIAMENTARY EXPERIENCE, namely a continuous variable relating to the number of days spent in parliament as an MP; and the MP's INCUMBENCY, namely a dichotomous variable where code 1 corresponds to incumbent and code 0 refers to newly elected MP. Another dimension that could impact on party unity concerns the MPs individual role played within the party in central and public office. Parliamentarians holding executive offices within the party organization or acting as party whip would have higher incentives to perform a unitary behavior. We controlled this issue by considering if the MP plays as a PARTY WHIP (dichotomous variable where code 1 means that the MP is party whip while code 0 identifies all the cases where the MP is not whip) and if the MP has an PARTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE at the leadership of his/her party (coded as 1 when the MP is a member of the executive board of the party, and as 0 when the MP does not hold any office within the party). A further factor taken into account within our model relates to the government or opposition role played by MPs. Several scholars underlined that the being in government or in opposition could influence the level of MPs rebellion and, consequently, the unity of the party's

⁹ See Tables I in the annex.

parliamentary group. According to Depauw and Martin (2009) those parliamentarians supporting the government would be more inclined to perform unitary voting behavior. MPs would be, indeed, motivated to not dissent from the party leadership in legislative votes since the government position provides more opportunities for promotion. We addressed this issue through the variable CABINET (0 = opposition; 1 = government). We also consider in our model the variable PARTY SIZE (coded as a continuous variable referring to the number of seats obtained by the party at the 2013 parliamentary election). Sieberer (2006) argues on this regard that larger parties are usually characterized by more heterogeneous stances with regard to MPs policy preferences so that unity based on agreement is less likely. Similarly, Bowler *et al.* (1999) referring to party competition and factionalism underlined that larger parliamentary groups are more likely to suffer higher level of internal dissent, struggling for party unity. Finally, we included in our model the variable IDEOLOGY that is recognized as significant in affecting MPs behavior towards party unity. In particular, several studies underlined that a higher level of unity is found among left wing parties, rather than right wing parties (Owens 2003; Curini *et al.* 2011), and Newell (2000) confirms this patterns also for Italian MPs. Resorting to Chapell Hill data (Bakker *et al.* 2015) we coded MPs ideology by referring to ideology of their own political party through a variable ranging from 0, meaning extreme left, to 10, meaning extreme right.

5. Results and discussion

In this section we address the core of our analysis, proposing empirical tests of the hypothesis formulated. With this aim, we will employ standard OLS models in which the predictor consists of the selection method and the dependent variable is the rate of parliamentary rebellion, that is, the percentage of votes in contrast to the opinion of MP's parliamentary group. In addition, we will consider the control variables already discussed in previous sections.¹⁰

Table 2 presents four models composed by different blocks of variables. The first model includes the candidate selection method operationalized through three dummy variables. More precisely, the variable CLOSED PRIMARIES distinguishes between candidates selected through closed primaries and

¹⁰ Table II in the annex shows the matrix of correlations among the rate of rebellion and three methods of candidate selection.

all others; while the variable OPEN PRIMARIES makes a distinction between candidates selected through open primaries and all others. As regards the selection methods, the reference group is EXCLUSIVE METHODS: a dummy variable in which the value 1 is attributed to candidates selected by the party élite and 0 to all others.

The second and third models introduce, respectively, four and three control variables. As previously stated, the first four relate to specific political features of MPs; while the remaining three point out some relevant characteristics of the MPs political party. Besides the independent variables, the fourth model includes simultaneously the seven control variables previously introduced. To begin with the first model, as can be easily understood, candidates selected through inclusive procedure have relatively lower propensity to vote differently to their group compared to MPs selected by exclusive methods. The β coefficient is negative and statistically significant for both closed ($\beta = -0.239$; $p \leq 0.01$) and open primaries ($\beta = -0.313$; $p \leq 0.01$). This result is totally counterintuitive and, most importantly, contrary to our hypothesis. By considering control variables, some different patterns emerge.

Table 2. Multivariate linear regression: rate of parliamentary rebellion

Dependent variable: % of parliamentary voting in contrast with the parliamentary group				
	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>	<i>III</i>	<i>IV</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Closed primaries	-0.239 (0.230)***	-0.149 (0.273)***	-0.257 (0.257)***	-0.235 (0.292)***
Open primaries	-0.313 (0.172)***	-0.287 (0.180)***	-0.043 (0.214)	-0.039 (0.220)
<i>Control variables</i>				
Parliamentary experience		0.074 (0.000)**		0.053 (0.000)
Incumbency		0.109 (0.205)***		0.022 (0.204)
Party's office		-0.003 (0.188)		-0.031 (0.181)
Whip		-0.035 (0.433)		-0.038 (0.412)
Cabinet			-0.136 (0.243)***	-0.135 (0.244)***
Party size			-0.112 (0.001)**	-0.128 (0.001)**
Party ideology			0.242 (0.064)***	0.214 (0.069)***
<i>Model information</i>				
Observations	893	893	893	893
Adjusted R ²	0.11	0.12	0.20	0.20

Notes: entries are standardized beta coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. ***p ≤ 0.01; **p ≤ 0.05; *p ≤ 0.1. Selection methods' coefficients.

Source: own elaboration.

Looking at the second model, two out of four control variables are statistically significant: the MP's parliamentary seniority and the MP's incumbency. However, the β coefficients are very weak, especially in the case of parliamentary seniority. Generally speaking, it is worth noting that the MP's political features do not affect extensively the relationship between the selection method and the rate of rebellion. There is only a slight impact on the dummy CLOSED PRIMARIES: compared to those selected by exclusive methods, MPs selected by closed primaries remain less rebellious, but the coefficient is weaker than before ($\beta = -0.149$; $p \leq 0.01$). Even considering the adjusted R², it must be stressed that the inclusion of the political variables does not increase notably the explanatory power of the second model compared to the first one: the explained variance goes up from 11% to 12%. The scenario changes with the third model which is based on control variables on MPs political party. All these variables are statistically significant, although their β coefficients diverge. In particular, it seems that belonging to a party in opposition (slightly) increase the chance of MPs rebelling against their parliamentary group ($\beta = -0.136$; $p \leq 0.01$). The same result occurs when the size of the party – measured in terms of the number of parliamentary seats – increase ($\beta = -0.112$; $p \leq 0.05$). Considering the party ideology, we find that an MP's belonging to right wing parties is more rebel than others ($\beta = 0.242$; $p \leq 0.01$). By including these significant control variables, the dummy OPEN PRIMARIES lose its

significance and the β coefficient decreases dramatically. The opposite occurs to the CLOSED PRIMARIES which, compared to the exclusive methods of selection, strengthen its negative relationship with the rate of rebellion ($\beta = -0.257$; $p \leq 0.01$). The loss of significance of the open primaries method occurs when including the party ideology into the model. In other words, if we had considered only the government vs opposition and party size variable the OPEN PRIMARIES dummy variable would have remained statistically significant¹¹. As Table 2 shows, when variables on political parties are considered the explanatory power of the model increases considerably: the adjusted R^2 goes from 0.13 to 0.20. The fourth model, which includes all the variables, clearly shows that control variables on MPs political party's characteristic are the most relevant. The scenario is basically the same of the third model.

In the light of the above findings, we can provide two general considerations. Firstly, compared to exclusive selection methods, the inclusive ones do not lead to rebel behaviors. This counterintuitive finding could be partially explained by the fact that primaries are not yet institutionalized as a tool of parliamentary candidate selection. It seems that Italian inclusively selected MPs are uncertain about what kind of selection method their party will adopt for the next parliamentary elections. They do not know whether their re-selection will depend on a decision by the party élite or the support of their electoral constituency.¹²This might have limited their propensity to parliamentary rebellion.

Secondly, as illustrated by including the second set of control variables, the rate of parliamentary rebellion seems depending on the characteristics of the MPs political party rather than the selection method or micro-level political variables.

In order to control for the impact of the MPs political party on parliamentary behavior, we provide an additional analysis based exclusively on MPs belonging to the Democratic Party, a party which resorted to two method of candidate of selection.¹³ Even this analysis suggests that there is no

¹¹ Data available upon request.

¹² It is worth noting that, as already emphasized, this article analyses votes in a two-year timespan in the 17th Legislature (15 March 2013 – 19 April 2015), before the promulgation of the new electoral law which partially reintroduced the preferential voting. This means that, in addition to being uncertain about the selection method, during the two year under analysis, MPs expect to compete under a closed-list electoral system.

¹³ We do not run a model limited to SEL MPs because of their very scarce number.

relationship between the candidate's selection method and parliamentary behavior. Although indirectly, this seems to confirm the evidences of the previous analysis (see Table 2): the level of parliamentary rebellion depends more on partisan factors (government/opposition position, ideology) than on the selection method through which candidates have been selected.¹⁴

6. Conclusions

The spread of primary elections and procedures of intra-party democracy have awakened scholars' interest in organizational changes to parties. Following the lesson from Katz and Mair (1995), in this article we focused on one specific dimension of party organization: the party in public office. In particular, we investigated the impact of candidate selection procedures on MPs parliamentary behavior, by looking at party unity, namely MPs unitary attitude towards party line. Drawing from a dataset including data at an individual level about Italian MPs elected in the 2013 parliamentary elections we developed analyses designed to test our hypothesis. The relevance of the Italian case is found in the contagion effect of IPD procedures among (very) different parties both at local and national level. In particular, MPs elected in 2013 parliamentary elections derive their nomination by quite diverse selection methods in terms of inclusiveness of the selectorates. This peculiar context provides a challenging opportunity to address the impact of selection methods on MPs parliamentary behavior.

We postulated that a higher level of inclusiveness in candidate selection mechanisms would result in a lower level of party unity. In other words, the expectation was that MPs selected by party élites tend to would supported the party line and, on the contrary, MPs selected by a wider selectorate, such as through the mechanism of primary election, would be inclined to a parliamentary behavior based on the prevailing preferences within their (s)electoral constituency, even if this means vote against their own party.

Although contradicting the expectations and limited to only one case-study, our results are quite interesting. It seems that inclusive candidate selection methods do not incentivize MPs to behave in

¹⁴ See Table III in the annex.

ways at odds with their own party. More precisely the parliamentary behavior of Italian MPs is principally related to the characteristics of their political party rather than to the selection method. These results should not be considered as inconclusive. Being totally unreasonable to argue that open primaries produce greater party unity than exclusive selection methods, our results – based on the Italian case – suggests that candidate selection methods do not directly affect MPs parliamentary behavior, neither positively nor negatively.

Clearly more research is need on this issue. In particular it has to be assessed whether and to what extent the impact of candidates performances in primary may have on their parliamentary behavior assuming that higher consensus in primary elections may induce to cultivate personal vote in parliament. Waiting for longitudinal analysis on the Italian case that may contribute to better understand the long term effects of selection methods, from a broad and more theoretical perspective, it seems that, at least in the Italian case, the method of candidate selection does not affect the relationship of accountability between the elected and the élite of their party. Besides the characteristics of the party, that relationship is affected also by the electoral system (Colomer 2011). To better understand the interaction among the method of candidate selection, the electoral system and the MPs parliamentary behavior there is a need of comparative research.

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Annex

Table I. Descriptive statistics on variables included in inferential analysis

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Rebel votes (%) ^a	1.23	2.47	0.00	35.70	893
Exclusive methods ^b	.48	.50	0	1	893
Closed primaries ^c	.15	.36	0	1	893
Open primaries ^d	.37	.48	0	1	893
Parliamentary experience ^e	1,934	1,887	8	13,073	893
Incumbency ^f	.61	.49	0	1	893
Party's executive office ^g	.24	.43	0	1	893
Party whip ^h	.03	.18	0	1	893
Cabinet ⁱ	.61	.49	0	1	893
Party size ^l	267.03	175.52	9	442	893
Ideological Position ^m	4.64	1.64	1.29	8.86	893

Notes: ^a Percentage of rebel votes, measured as follow: (number of votes in dissent to party line/total number of roll call votes)*100; ^b 1=exclusive method and 0=other selection method; ^c 1=closed primaries and 0=other selection method; ^d 1=open primaries and 0=other selection method; ^e MP's number of days in Parliament; ^f 1=incumbent MP and 0=newly elected MP; ^g 1=MP has executive role within the party and 0=MP has no executive role within the party; ^h 1=MP is party whip and 0=MP is not party whip; ⁱ 1=MP is member of a government party and 0= MP is member of an opposition party; ^l Number of MPs for each party; ^m ranging from 0 to 10 (where 0 means extreme left and 10 extreme right).

Table II. Correlation matrix: rebel votes (%) and methods of candidates selection (n = 893)

	Rebel votes (%)	Open primaries	Closed primaries	Exclusive methods
Rebel votes (%)	1	-0.236***	-0.137***	0.326***
Open primaries	-0.236***	1	-0.325***	-0.731***
Closed primaries	-0.137***	-0.325***	1	-0.407***
Exclusive methods	0.326***	-0.731***	-0.407***	1

Notes: entries are Pearson correlation coefficients. ***p ≤ 0.01.

Source: own elaboration.

Table III. Multivariate linear regression: rate of parliamentary rebellion (only PD group)

Dependent variable: % of parliamentary voting in contrast with the parliamentary group (only PD group)

	<i>I</i>	<i>II</i>
<i>Independent variables</i>		
Closed primaries	-0.034 (0.414)	-0.035 (0.416)
Open primaries	-0.032 (0.060)	-0.047 (0.065)
<i>Control variables</i>		
Parliamentary experience		-0.009 (0.000)
Incumbency		0.070 (0.067)
Party's office		-0.011 (0.067)
Whip		-0.010 (0.294)
<i>Model information</i>		
Observations	440	440
Adjusted R ²	-0.003	-0.007

Notes: entries are standardized beta coefficients; standard errors in parentheses. *** $p \leq 0.01$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$. Selection methods' coefficients. Being constants, the following independent variables have been deleted: Cabinet; Party size; Party ideology.

Source: own elaboration.