

Democratization of Candidate Selection Processes
and its effect on a Party's Electoral Fortune:
Evidence from a Cross-National Analysis

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Introduction

Mazal Mualem, an Israeli reporter in Maariv newspaper argued in 2012 that members of Likud's central committee wish to change the party's constitution and abandon the usage of primaries. Instead they wish to give the party's MERKAZ the right to select the party's candidates and arrange the list. Mualem argued this move would be an "electoral terrorist attack", arguing that canceling the primaries will surely distance huge segments of the public away from Likud (Mualem 2012).

In a round table held in 1995 at the Israeli Democracy Institute Nisim Zvili argued that Labour's adoption of the primaries was a mean to extricate the party from stagnation and improve public opinion about it. Hence, it was hoped Labour would improve its electoral fortune (Carmon 1995).

Indeed scholars have identified that in an era, where parties' image and electoral base are in decline, they seek various means, among which the adoption of primaries, to increase their electoral fortune (Scarrow 1999). The logic is simple: democratizing candidate selection procedures increases a party's legitimacy and popularity; helps it get rid of its seemingly corrupt and convoluted organization; improves a party's image and perception—a process that is mimicked and reinforced by the media's positive attitude towards primaries; and strengthen participation (Scarrow 1999).

All these are hypothesized to affect a party's electoral fortune, as it is assumed parties that adopt primaries and democratize their selection procedures will increase their vote and seats shares in parliament (Hazan and Rahat 2010, 9). Moreover, this process might perpetuate itself since "if a party that democratize its selection method enjoys electoral success, other parties are likely to follow suit" (Hazan and Rahat 2010, 10).

Thus, it is clear politicians, the media, and to some extent political scientists believe adoption of democratized candidate selection procedure improves a party's electoral fortune and enables it to increase its seat share in parliament. However to date there has

been no systematic comparative research (to the best of my knowledge) that examine whether and to what extent primaries contribute to a party's electoral success.

Scarrow (1999, 345) argued that German parties opened their internal party procedures and introduced primaries (among other procedures), in an attempt to deal with "decreasing participation in electorally oriented politics". Thus, parties tried to overcome citizens' bias against conventional partisan politics and defeat electoral losses and declining party membership by introducing democracy to their internal procedures. Moreover, Scarrow argues that party leaders maintained that "their parties could gain voters by responding to the new participation preferences" (347). Examining the CDU and the SPD's expansion of their internal procedures, Scarrow concludes that their reforms had only limited affect in increasing participation in conventional electoral politics and that indeed "neither the SPD nor CDU have received much electoral credit for supporting these reforms. . . nor have the parties been able to translate the popularity of membership 'primaries' into election victories" (357). Scarrow's research demonstrate the possibility of the myth: it is plausible that party leaders believe democratization of selection procedures increase their vote share and improve their electoral fortune, but it is yet to be proved empirically. This paper aims to do just that.

Recent decades have witnessed an ever growing body of literature that describes and examines candidate selection procedures consequences. Often times these consequences were portrayed in negative colors. Thus, it has been argued for example that primaries weaken party discipline and increases ideological heterogeneity within it (Hazan 1998, 2000, Sieberer 2006, Akirav 2010, Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999) or that it increases politicians' dependence on money and hence may facilitate corruption.

Nonetheless despite its negative consequences if democratized selection processes improves a party's electoral fortune, it would be very hard, to say the least, to convince party leaders (and the public for that matter) to abolish primaries and adopt more restrictive selection processes. Since a party's prime goal and because a politicians' main

motivation is to increase seat shares and get re-elected (respectively), to the degree to which primaries promote these means, it would be considered a justified end. But is that the case? Do primaries improve electoral fortune or is it just a myth?

This paper tries to answer this question by using a newly collected dataset with information on 472 parties.

Research Design

“In the study of candidate selection, therefore, the unit of analysis is the single party, in a particular country, at a specific time” (Hazan and Rahat 2010, 4). The unit of analysis in the data of the paper is a party, from a certain country, at a certain point in time. Thus, the data contains information for 472 parties from 41 countries. Data on candidate selection procedures is scarce and hence due to data availability I was not able to choose my countries/parties/points in time randomly. I chose cases so as to maximize variation in the key independent variable: candidate selection processes. Nonetheless, I limited the time frame of the data to post WW2, and analyzed candidate selection processes only for democratic countries as they are defined by the Freedom House.

I use this data to examine whether parties that adopt primaries and democratize their selection processes tend to do better in the elections and increase their seat share. The main independent variable of this paper is, therefore, candidate selection processes.

Candidate selection processes are the way candidates gain permission to use the party’s banner at the general elections. Rahat and Hazan classified candidate selection processes along 4 dimensions: selectorate, decentralization, candidacy and the voting system (Hazan and Rahat 2010). I use the first two dimensions—selectorate and decentralization—to construct a candidate selection index that varies from a restrictive to an inclusive pole (Shomer N.d.).

Selectorate refers to the body of people that can participate in the selection pro-

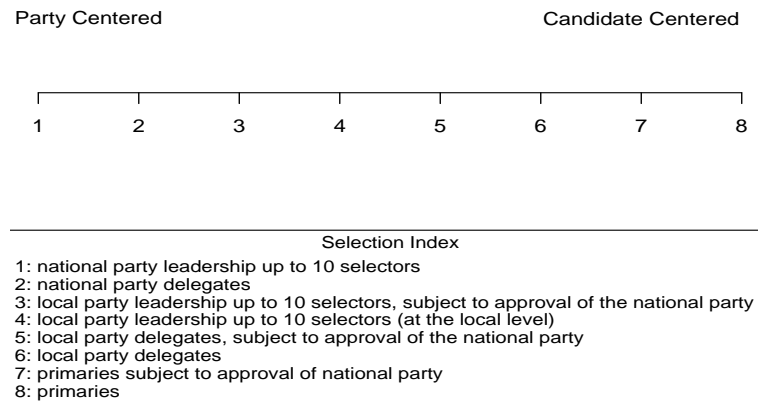
cedure. At the most exclusive pole, a single party leader functions as the selectorate and determines who gets to be a candidate. At the most inclusive side the entire electorate can select the candidates. Variation along the selectorate dimension is determined by its size. The second dimension articulated by Rahat and Hazan is candidate selections' degree of decentralization. In a centralized selection mechanism parties use national party selectorates to select their candidates (Hazan 2002). On the other hand, in a decentralized selection procedure local party organizations solely make the selection (Malcolm 1973, Ranney 1965).

As mentioned, in this paper I classify candidate selection processes on an index similar to Shomer (2009)) and Shomer (N.d.) in from the most restrictive to the most permissive mechanism (see Figure 1). The lowest level was ascribed to the most restrictive exclusive and centralized selection mechanism: selection by national party leader(s). Movement along the index towards higher categories means that either the scope of the selectorate was increased or the level at which the selection were held was decentralized. Thus, for example, category 2 refers to selection by national party delegates such as committee, party conference, and so on. While the level of decentralization remains similar to the first category, the selectorate of this selection process is more inclusive.

The next two categories depict selection processes where local party leadership functions as the selectorate. In the third category, the decision is not final, as it is subject to the approval of the national party by veto or addition of candidates. The fourth category does not need such approval. The fifth and sixth categories depict selection processes in which the local party delegates, by committee, conference, or other means, select the candidates. However, in the fifth category, the decision is subject to national party approval, whereas in the sixth it does not. Lastly, categories 7 and 8 refer to candidate selection processes via primaries (open or closed), where the decision might be subject to national party intervention in the seventh category, and it might not be in the eighth. Figure'2 presents the frequencies of candidate selection processes within each

of the categories.

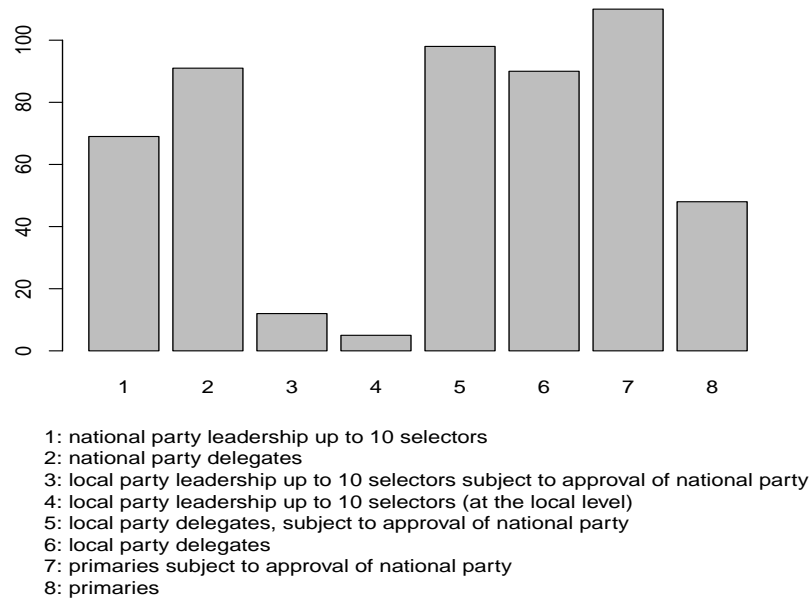
Figure 1:



In addition to the composed index presented in Figure 1, I also examine the relationships between selection processes and electoral success using the two distinct dimensions presented by Hazan and Rahat (2010). Thus, Similar to O'Brien and Shomer (2013) the Selectorate variable is a three categories variable, that measures whether candidates are selected by a small group of party leaders, party delegates or by primaries. Similarly, the decentralization variable has three categories, where the first one refers to selection carried out at the national level, and the last one depicts decentralized selection processes with an intermediate category. The main dependent variable is electoral success. It is defined as the degree to which a party lost or gained seats in parliament. Specifically, I measure this variable in two ways: difference in number and difference in percentage. The first measures electoral success in number of seats terms, whereas the latter calculates the difference on the percentage of seats a party received (out of the

total number of seats in its parliament).

Figure 2:



For the two variables I measure the difference between $t-1$ and t , where $t-1$ signifies the election prior to the ones for which the selection processes took place, and time t represents the elections immediately after the selection procedures occurred. Thus, for example if a data point includes information about the way the Conservative party in the UK selected its candidate prior to the 1997 elections, the difference in number (percentage) of seats will be calculated by subtracting the number (percentage) of seats the Conservative gained in the 1997 elections from the number (percentage) of seats it gained at the 1992 elections [$seats_{1992} - seats_{1997}$]. A positive difference means that a party lost seats after the selection process occurred, since the number (percentage) of seats on $t-1$ was greater than it was in time t . A negative difference means that party gained seats. Figure 3 and Figure 4 presents the histograms of the above mentioned variables.

Figure 3:

Histogram of seat difference

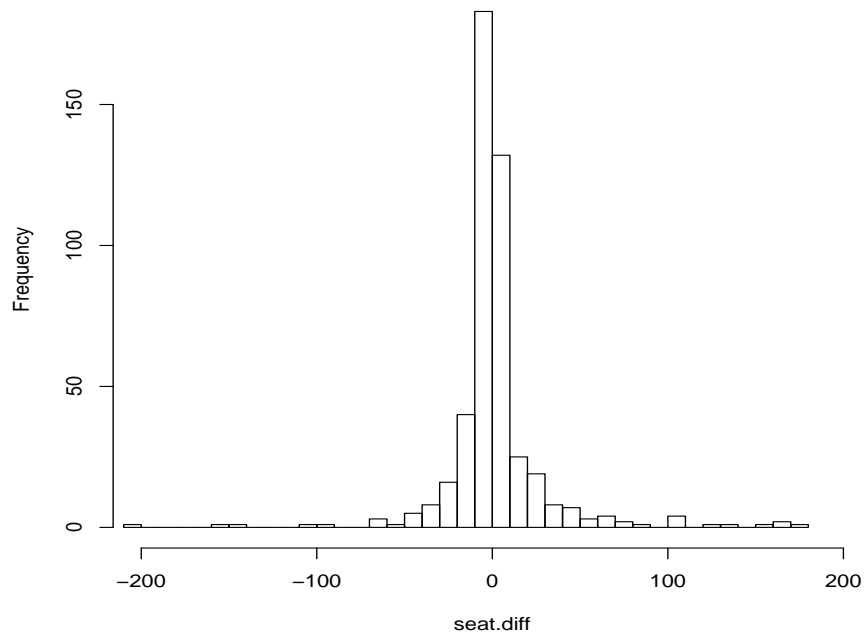
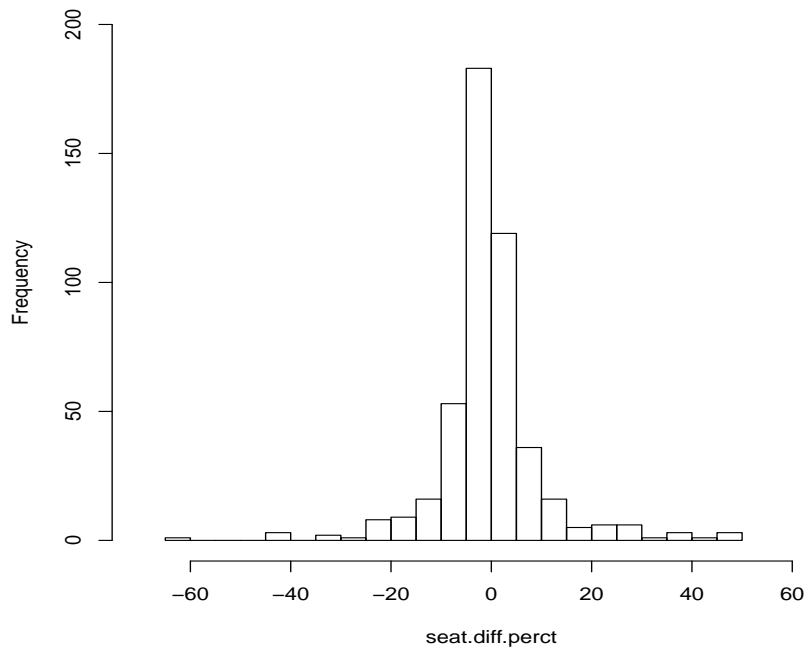


Figure 4:

Figure 4: Histogram of seat difference percentage



Bivariate Analysis

Do democratized inclusive selection processes improve a party's electoral fortune? Are parties selected by primaries better off in terms of seat gains compared to parties that use restricted candidate selection methods? If indeed democratized candidate selection mechanisms help parties and increase their seat share, it would be hard to convince party leaders and legislators to relinquish this procedure. On the other hand, if the relationship between primaries and electoral success are a mere myth, then in light of myriad pitfalls with the adoption of primaries, parties and party leaders should re-think their selection methods.

As a first cut, I examine the bivariate relationship between electoral success and candidate selection processes on the entire dataset. I test whether parties that use permissive selection mechanism like primaries are associated with seat gains (negative seat

Table 1: Bivariate relationship between selection processes and electoral success (whole dataset)

Seat Difference		Seat Percentage	
Selection Index	$\chi^2 = 749.875$ $p = 0.177$ $r_{pearson} = -0.016$ [-0.106, 0.074]	Selection Index	$\chi^2 = 2588.84$ $p = 0.005$ $r_{pearson} = 0.095$ [0.006, 0.184]
Selectorate	$\chi^2 = 202.149$ $p = 0.33$ $r_{pearson} = -0.015$ [-0.105, 0.075] $\eta^2 = 0.0002$	Selectorate	$\chi^2 = 676.16$ $p = 0.034$ $r_{pearson} = 0.056$ [-0.034, 0.145] $\eta^2 = 0.003$
Decentralization	$\chi^2 = 198.914$ $p = 0.41$ $r_{pearson} = -0.012$ [-0.102, 0.078] $\eta^2 = 0.0001$	Decentralization	$\chi^2 = 696.568$ $p = 0.00$ $r_{pearson} = 0.1$ [-0.008, 0.187] $\eta^2 = 0.01$

difference). To examine these bivariate relationships I use the chi-square measure, a Pearson correlation coefficient, and an ANOVA analysis. Table 1 presents the bi-variate results for both difference in seat numbers and difference in seat percentages. I examine the relationships of each of these variables with the selection index presented in Figure 1, the 3 categories selectorate variable and the tri-category decentralization variable.

As can be seen from Table 1, there is no relationship between the type of selection method a party uses and its electoral success measured as the difference in number of seats between time t-1 and time t. This holds true whether we use the selection index presented in Figure 1, or the two distinct variables of selectorate and decentralization.

Thus, the chi square test for the independence between *selection index* and seat difference is not significant, indicating that we can not reject the null hypothesis that selection and seat difference are statistically independent. It seems they may be independent from one another. Moreover, the Pearson correlation coefficient is small (-0.016)

and its confidence interval overlaps 0, indicating we cannot assert that it is different from zero. Similarly, the chi-square measures between *selectorate* and seat difference as well as between *decentralization* and seat difference fail to gain significance, alluding for independence between the variables. This lack of relationship is strengthened by the Pearson correlation coefficients which are infinitesimal and fail to gain significance (for both *selectorate* as well as *decentralization*). Lastly, the eta square measure from a one-way ANOVA is very small (0.0002 for *selectorate* and 0.0001 for *decentralization*) indicating that the proportion of variance in seat difference explained by the type of *selectorate* or the degree of *decentralization* of the selection procedure is minute. All in all, I conclude that no relationship exists between selection procedures and electoral success measured in terms of number of seats.

When we measure electoral success as the difference in seat shares (as a percentage of the number of seats in the parliament) between time t-1 and time t the results are surprising. As Table 1 reveals the Pearson correlation between the *selection index* and the electoral gains is close to 0.1, and its 95% confidence interval does not overlay zero. Indeed there seem to be a weak positive correlation between selection and seat share gains. This positive correlation indicates that as we move towards more inclusive selection processes, the seat share difference between time t-1 and t gets larger, which means that parties **lose** seats in time t compared to time t-1. These results are opposite to the ones hypothesized by both politicians and scholars.

Looking at the relationships between *selectorate* and electoral success, and *decentralization* and electoral gains, we can see that the positive correlation between *selection index* and seat shares stem mainly from a relationship between the level of centralization at which the selection process takes place and electoral success. It turns out that parties that selects with decentralized methods, **lose** seats at the subsequent elections, as is indicated by the positive (relatively weak) Pearson correlation (0.098), whose 95% confidence interval does not include 0. Note, though, that the correlation between *selec-*

torate and seat share is not significant.

These results are further supported by looking at Figure . Figure 5(a) presents box-plot of seat difference by selection processes whereas 5(b) presents the boxplot of seat percentage difference by selection methods. As can be seen in the latter plot the overlaid regression line has an ever so slightly positive slope.

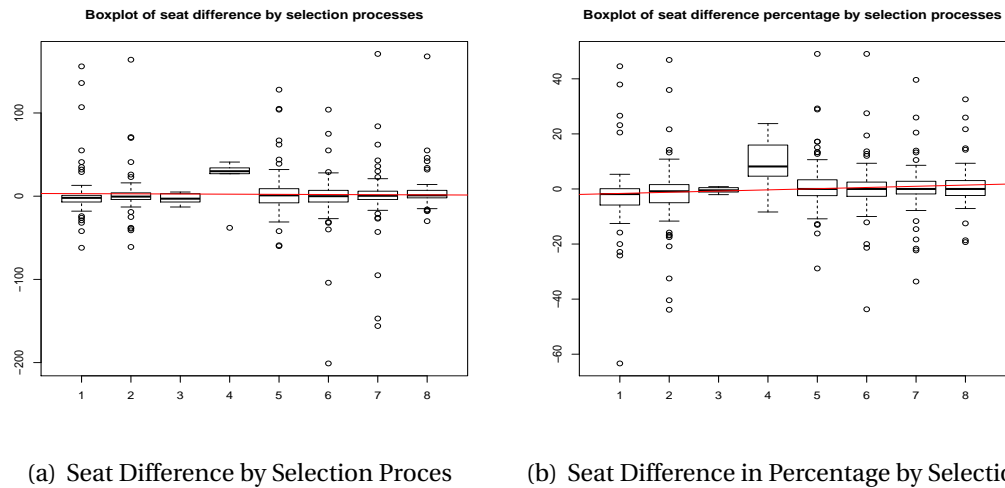


Figure 5: Electoral Success by Selection Processes

As a second cut to the analysis I restricted the dataset, and re-run the analysis, to those parties for which I could gather data on their selection procedures both at time t as well as at time $t-1$. This restricted dataset allows me to examine whether changes in selection processes affect changes in seat shares. The newly restricted dataset contains information for 136 parties from 18 countries. The main independent variables in this dataset were coded as the difference in *selection index*, *selectorate* and *decentralization* between time $t-1$ and time t . Thus, if this difference is negative, it means that the coding at time t was greater than it is at time $t-1$, which substantively means that parties democratized their selection procedures at time t (compared to $t-1$). On the other hand, a positive difference in *selection index*, *selectorate* and *decentralization* differences means that parties restricted their selection processes at time t (compared to time $t-1$).

Table 2 presents the same bi-variate analysis conducted in Table 1 for the restricted

Table 2: Bivariate relationship between selection processes differences and electoral success (restricted dataset)

Seat Difference		Seat Percentage	
Selection Index Difference	$\chi^2 = 333.24$ $p = 0.393$ $r_{pearson} = 0.04$ [-0.130, 0.207]	Selection Index Difference	$\chi^2 = 595.6$ $p = 0.94$ $r_{pearson} = -0.133$ [-0.294, 0.003]
Selectorate Difference	$\chi^2 = 117.48$ $p = 0.624$ $r_{pearson} = 0.054$ [-0.116, 0.220] $\eta^2 = 0.003$	Selectorate Difference	$\chi^2 = 207.47$ $p = 0.95$ $r_{pearson} = 0.122$ [-0.285, 0.047] $\eta^2 = 0.02$
Decentralization Difference	$\chi^2 = 267.912$ $p = 0.109$ $r_{pearson} = 0.043$ [-0.127, 0.210] $\eta^2 = 0.002$	Decentralization Difference	$\chi^2 = 430.73$ $p = 0.41$ $r_{pearson} = 0.16$ [-0.320, 0.008] $\eta^2 = 0.03$

dataset. Note that if democratization of selection processes improves parties' electoral fortune we would anticipate a positive correlation as parties that democratized their selection at time t are hypothesized to gain seats at time t (negative selection difference associated with negative seat difference).

As table 2 reveals the assertion that democratization of selection procedures will benefit a party and increase its seat share and improve its electoral fortune fails to gain support from the data. Parties that opened their selection processes, increased the scope of their selectorate or decentralized the locus of the selection method did not improve their electoral fortune and gain more seats. The various χ^2 tests indicate that selection processes and electoral fortune may be independent from one another, while the non-significant correlation coefficients indicate a lack of linear relationships.

The restricted dataset used for the analysis in Table 2, contained all the parties/years for which I had information on selection processes at time t-1 and time t, whether these parties altered their selection procedures between the two time period or not. The next

cut of the analysis is to restrict the data even further and look only on those parties that indeed changed their selection processes from time t-1 to time t. All in all, 36 parties witnessed a **change** in their selection index variable, where 10 parties adopted more restrictive selection processes at time t (compared to t-1), and 26 democratized and open their selection processes. Similarly, we have 25 parties that witnessed some change in their level of decentralization out of which 15 nationalized their selection processes. Lastly, we have 29 parties that had a change in the scope of their selectorate between time t-1 and time t, out of which 23 parties increased the scope of their selectorate and 6 restricted it.

Analyzing the 36 parties that witnessed a change on their selection index does not provide support for the claim that democratization of selection procedures improved electoral fortune measured in seat difference terms. The Pearson correlation coefficient is very weak at 0.044 and its 95% confidence interval overlay zero. Similarly, examining the 29 parties that had some change in the scope of their selectorate did not reveal support for the hypotheses as the chi-square test reveals we cannot reject the null that selectorate and seat difference are independent, and the 95% confidence interval of the Pearson coefficient overlaps zero. Looking at the 25 parties that altered their decentralization levels fails to find support either. These results are supported by analysis of seat percentage difference. Thus for example for the 36 parties that witnessed some change on their selection index, the correlation coefficient fails to gain statistical significance.

The analysis conducted thus far measures any change in selection processes. It might be that looking only at parties that adopted primaries will provide support for the electoral fortune assertion. There are a total of 17 parties that adopted primaries. Table 3 presents the seat difference and seat percent difference of all 17 parties. As can be seen, whereas some parties' electoral fortune improves by adopting primaries (negative seat difference and seat percent difference), others' worsen. 9 parties gain seat after adopting primaries, whereas 8 parties loose seats. 2 parties neither gain nor loose seats after

Table 3: Electoral Fortune of 17 Parties that Adopted Primaries)

Party	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Seat Difference	-9	-9	-4	-5	6	0	3	0	36	-21	9	-27	-2	9	171	-147	-26
Seat Percentage Difference	-5.4	-2.4	-2.4	-4.2	5	0	2.5	0	7.2	-6	2.6	-7.7	-0.6	2.6	25.9	-22.3	-3.9

altering their selection procedures to primaries.

Preliminary Conclusions and Future Work

Politicians as well as political scientists have argued that parties adopt primaries and democratize their selection processes, among other things, to improve their electoral fortune and increase their seat share. It has been argued that primaries promote a healthier less convoluted perception of the party, that democratization of internal processes opens up the party to a larger audience, and that primaries might reduce corruption, strengthen legitimacy and increase political participation. Hence, it was argued that democratization of selection processes—increasing the scope of the selectorate and decentralizing the procedures—would improve a party’s brand name, and boost its electoral success.

In this paper I seek to examine whether the link between selection processes and electoral fortune is real or is it a political myth? To the degree to which democratization of selection processes and specifically the adoption of primaries improves parties’ electoral fortune, it would be very hard, and practically impossible, to convince party leaders to abandon primaries in light of their, by now well researched, pitfalls and drawbacks. On the other hand, if my analysis determines the link between primaries and electoral success to be a myth, it should be easier to encourage party leaders to adopt other means for selecting their candidates.

In this paper, I took a first cut at the problem. To examine whether democratization of selection processes is associated with electoral gains, I collected data on parties’

selection processes and electoral fortunes for 472 parties from 41 democratic countries. Using bi-variate analysis on the whole, as well as restricted dataset, revealed that, all in all, there seem not to be a relationship between the manner by which parties select their candidates and their electoral fortune.

The analysis presented thus far is preliminary, of course. In the future I plan to extend it by using a multi-variate analysis to examine whether selection processes affect electoral success, controlling for some factors that might affect the latter. In addition, I intent to take advantage of the multi-level structure of the dataset where parties in certain years are nested within countries. Thus, I plan on using a hierarchical model to examine what affects a party's electoral success and use covariates that are both at the party as well as the county level. I will examine whether economic situation, the structure of political competition measured by the effective number of parties, the threshold used in a country, the levels of cohesion the party exhibited at t-1 and its governmental status help explain, in addition to candidate selection processes, whether a party gain or loose seats in the elections. The hierarchical model will also help deal with the non-independence across cases (parties) from the same country-year.

Additionally, I would like to examine whether politicians' belief that democratizing selection processes improves electoral fortune is evident in parties' tendencies to democratize selection when their seat shares are low. To this end, I will regard intra-party candidate selection processes as an outcome variable to be explained by the main independent variable of a party's seat share. Lastly, it would be interesting to examine whether the belief that democratizing selection procedures improves a party's electoral fortune is found in voters' opinion.

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