

# **When the strong decide**

## **Party leaders and leaderships who rule the process**

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# Party elites

- Highly exclusive party bodies
- Only national executive committees?
- Party leaders
- May play various role in the internal life of political parties including the selection of candidates

# Role in candidate selection

- What can the elites get?
  - **Coherence of the party**
    - Balance between the factions
    - Suppression of disloyal MPs
  - **Loyalty of the candidates**
    - Selection as a reward or as a motivation
  - **Control over the later party policy**

# Role in candidate selection

- **Time frame:**
  - Pre-monitoring (screening)
  - Post-monitoring (veto)
- **Presence of rules:**
  - Formal
  - Non-formal
- **Intensity of interference:**
  - Systematic
  - Ad hoc

# Different cases and approaches

- **Czech Republic**

- ČSSD, VV



- **Slovakia**

- HZDS, SNS, SMER-SD



- **Italy**

- Forza Italia



# ČSSD



- Since 90s the main Czech social democratic party
- Weaker position until elections 1996
- In government:
  - 1998 - 2002
  - 2002 - 2006
  - 2013 -

# Candidate selection



- A multistage process
- Stages:
  - Local level – nominations
  - County delegates – selection 1
  - Regional delegates – selection 2 (**final list**)
  - National executive committee – final decision

# Candidate selection



- NEC has the right to modify the will of the regions – only formality
- Influence of the elite:
  - „Recommendations“ at the regional level
  - Non-formal aim of the party leader to support external candidates



# Regional conventions



- Officially the delegates select the list
- Before their decision the elite part of the convention composes the list
- Choice of delegates:
  - Select the candidates name by name (or in groups) using preferential votes
  - **En bloc vote of the list composed by the regional elite (list leader separately)**

# Regional conventions



# Regional conventions



- High approval by delegates
- List leaders and the remaining candidates as a whole get 90 % and more votes
- Regional delegates do not stand against the will of the regional elites who control the selection of the list

# Initiative of the leader



- Party leader Jiří Paroubek:
  - Aim to secure high positions on „his“ list for two celebrities – K. Brožová (actress) and J. Šlégr (former hockey player)
- Suspicions about mass registration in the region
- Little or no respect to the will of delegates
- Alleged breach of selection rules
- Help of the leader by political force

# Initiative of the leader



- Story of K. Brožová:
  - Got local nomination
  - Selected as county leader
  - Resigned before the regional convention
- *„Finally it ended as it ended and I mean that it is all right as it is like this.“*

(Brožová about her county selection)

# Initiative of the leader



- Story of J. Šlégr:
  - Got local nomination
  - County delegates in Litoměřice refused to support him → early ending of the convention due to unfilled women quota of the selectorate
  - County delegates in „safe“ Teplice selected Šlégr as number two (one after Brožová’s resignation)
  - Selected as number two on regional convention directly after the party leader Paroubek

# VV (Public Affairs)



- Originally created in 2001 as a local initiative in Prague
- Entered parliament and government in 2010
  - Populism
  - Against older generation of politicians (dinosaurs)
- Devastated image due alleged corrupt practices

# Candidate selection

- Multistage and assorted process
- **Leaders:**
  - Semi-closed primaries
- **Other candidates:**
  - Regional ad hoc conventions
- **Influence of the elite:**
  - Screening of candidates for primaries
  - Contracts of obedience with candidates



# Contracts with candidates

- Mandatory for all candidates
- Content:
  - MPs required to vote in accordance with the official opinion of the party
  - MPs required to stay in the party's parliamentary group
  - Fines in case of breach of the contract:
    - Up to 7 million Czech Crowns (255 000 EUR)
- Contracts non-compliant with the Constitution

# Contracts with candidates

- Candidates who refused to sign could not be on the final lists
- Daniela Göttelová:
  - Refused the contract (already selected as number 4 on one of the lists)
  - Immediate reaction of the leadership → kicked out from the list
- Leadership used this tool to gain control over the candidates and later MPs

# Parties in Slovakia



- **Electoral reform in 1998:**
  - One nationwide constituency (150 seats)
  - Parties create only one list where all candidates are listed
  - Main effect – strong centralization of the selection process
- **Three examples:**
  - HZDS (V. Mečiar)
  - SNS (J. Slota)
  - Smer (R. Fico)

# HZDS



- Dominant party in Slovakia in 90s
- Since 1998 gradual way down till marginalization (dissolution in 2014)
- For the whole period only one leader with a clearly unchallenged position:
  - De facto automatic reselection in his position
  - 2000 – monopoly on proposing vice-chairmen
  - Party delegates never refused his will

# Candidate selection



- Formal rules – Party Congress selects the candidates
- The real story in 2002:
  - Mečiar called the selection Congress shortly before elections and proposed a complete „recommended“ list for approval
  - Delegates asked (forced) to agree with the list without any change
  - Mečiar officially announced that any modification would lead to HZDS abstaining from the elections due to time restraints

# Candidate selection



- Explanation of selection in 2002
- *„For God’s sake, but it is like this. On July 17 the lists have to be submitted, on July 6 we hold a Congress. And if these are unable to make an agreement, I will not have different delegates. Who would make the candidate list?“*

# Candidate selection



- Mečiar got full control over the composition of the list
- Several high officials were removed from the list including the long-term number two Ivan Gašparovič
  - Revenge in 2004 presidential elections
- In 2006 delegates gave Mečiar a formal right to select the top candidates on the list (confirmation of already existing status quo)

# SNS



- Established in 1990, radical right, nationalist, xenophobic
- Split and unification in 2003 led to huge centralization of the party with an extensive powerful leader
- Significant features:
  - Leader may (without any control) appoint unlimited amount of members to the national executive body
  - Party Congress without periodical sessions (called only by the leader)
  - Public voting of party officials





# Candidate selection



- Before 2003 the party Congress selected the candidates → since that it lost all its formal power
- New selectorate – Party elite
- The process:
  - Party leadership proposes candidates on the list
  - Party leader has sole right for the „final revision“
- Power of the leader:
  - Personally controls the composition of the party leadership
  - Has the final word in the selection process

# Smer – SD



- Established in 1999 (after electoral reform 1998)
- Party leader Fico:
  - Most important figure from the beginning
  - High trust in the society
- Vague party organization:
  - No regional structures but agencies for first two years
  - Special rights for founding fathers until 2006

# Candidate selection



- No formal power to Congress
- The whole process limited to central party elite
- Rules:
  - Party leader proposes the list to the leadership
  - Leadership has the final word
- Selection as one of the ways how to solve the potential threat of internal factionalism





# Forza Italia



- Party built after the fall of the so called Italian first republic
- Party as a private act:
  - Good relations of Berlusconi with elites from the previous party settlement
  - Demise of DC and its partners threatened his economic interest  
→ party as a solution
- Berlusconi's empire:
  - Fininvest – holding composing of many parts
  - Mediaset, AC Milan, Mediolanum, ..

# Forza Italia - organization



- Party as a business model – 3 features
- **Strong centralization:**
  - Originally built on local clubs (4 000) without mentioning in the statutes
  - After establishment of the party before elections 1994 the clubs remained without real influence
  - Power concentrated on central level with little ties to subnational bodies



# Forza Italia - organization



- **Ties with Fininvest:**
  - Extremely strong links with Berlusconi's company (party leader or a company president?)
  - Official party bodies which had to be elected were appointed and occupied by employees with several external personalities
  - Representative of the local clubs who should follow their instructions was Berlusconi's manager from Fininvest

# Forza Italia – organization



- **Position of the leader:**
  - Berlusconi as the prime subject of the party
  - No control or limits – first statutes suspended for 3 years → first Congress in 1998 (Berlusconi selected as leader by acclamation)
  - Central arrangements done at Berlusconi’s mansion
- *„Decisions were taken within the restricted circle of Berlusconi’s ‘friends’“ (Hopkin – Paolucci 1999)*
- The inner circle – vice-presidents and managers of Fininvest, president of Publitalia, Mediaset TV star

# Candidate selection



- Elections 1994
- Based on formal rules the candidates were selected by the Council of the Presidency (party leadership) which could consult it with regional coordinators
- Officially a rather centralized and exclusive process compensated by the presence of subnational level
- In reality the process was highly dominated by the leader and his inner circle

# Candidate selection



- **Council of the Presidency:**
  - Not elected, but coopted by Berlusconi
  - Fininvest's employees (law-makers, managers)
  - Inclusion of popular personalities (academics) to make a more independent image
- **Regional coordinators:**
  - 20 persons
  - Appointed by the leadership
  - Mostly Berlusconi's employees
- The only subject in charge was the leader and his „friends“

# Power of the leaders

- **Different set of techniques**
  - Screening, recommendation, full control of the process
- **Various backing in the official rules**
  - Ranging from full formal to non-formal background
  - Real influence is often not observable from statues and rules
- **Intense vs. ad hoc approaches**
  - Systematic role of elites vs. occasional interventions

# Power of the leaders

Party	Subject	Rules	Control
ČSSD	Regional leaderships, party leader	Formal Non-formal	Strong
VV	Party leadership	Formal (not public)	Full
HZDS	Party leader	Non-formal, later partly formal	Full
SNS	Party leader	Formal	Full
SMER-SD	Party leadership	Formal	Strong
FI	Party leader	Formal Non-formal	Full