

ITALIAN AFFAIRS

The 2013 Italian General Election: the End of Bipolarism?

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Introduction

The 2013 Italian general elections produced a largely unexpected and destabilizing outcome. The major surprise came from the *Movimento 5 stelle* (M5s, Five Star Movement), a brand new, anti-establishment political force which got more than 25% of the valid votes and turned out to be the largest party list in the domestic arena of the Chamber of Deputies. The destabilizing nature of the outcome stemmed from the lack of a real winner which ended up in political stalemate. In fact, the center-left won in the Chamber of Deputies, but not in the Senate and could not form a cabinet by itself. In the end, the *Partito democratico* (Pd, Democratic Party) was left with the only unpalatable option to have to form a 'grand governing coalition' with Berlusconi's *Popolo della libertà* (Pdl, People of Freedom).

Indeed, the widespread expectation was that the center-left would win with a large margin. For a long time before the vote most of the polls had indicated that Bersani's lead was large enough to make his coalition gain the absolute majority of seats in both chambers either alone or together with the Monti's coalition. It was not the case. Actually, what really happened in the ballot box on February 24th and 25th is still unclear to some extent. Here we will try to give a brief and preliminary explanation, analyzing the background to the election, the results and the role played by the electoral systems, the aggregate vote shifts between the 2013 and 2008 elections, the geographical distributions of the vote, and, finally, the transformation of the party system.

The background of the election

In the previous election of 2008, the victory of Berlusconi's center-right coalition was very large and its parties could enjoy a solid parliamentary majority both in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. It was actually the largest majority for a coalition in the Second Republic. The cabinet led by Berlusconi remained strong for some time even after the beginning of the economic crisis. However, its popularity started to decline due to sexual scandals related to Berlusconi's private life, the divisions within the Pdl, and the worsening of the financial crisis (Chiaramonte and D'Alimonte 2012). Eventually left without the support of a stable parliamentary majority, Berlusconi was forced to resign in November 2011. He was replaced by Mario Monti, once again (Marangoni and Verzichelli 2012) a technocratic prime minister whose cabinet had the support of parties from across the political spectrum, namely the Pd from the left, the Pdl from the right, and *Futuro e libertà per l'Italia* (Fli, Future and Freedom for Italy) and *Unione di centro* (Udc, Union of the Center) from the center. The new cabinet introduced economic austerity measures to restore the financial stability of the country and markets confidence. One year after the formation of the cabinet, when the financial situation of the country appeared to be improved and finally under control, Berlusconi's Pdl withdrew its support of the technocratic cabinet and attacked Monti's economic policies as too austere and dictated by Merkel's Germany. On 21 December 2012 Monti resigned as prime minister and forced elections a few months earlier than planned. Few days later Monti announced he would contest the incoming

general elections as the leader of a reformist and strongly pro-Europe coalition.

Four main political subjects competed in the election. In the center-left camp a coalition was formed under the leadership of Pierluigi Bersani. It consisted of three main party lists: Pd, *Sinistra ecologia e libertà* (Sel, Left, Ecology and Freedom), and *Centro democratico* (Cd, Democratic Center). In the center-right camp Berlusconi ran once again as the leader of a coalition made up of Pdl, *Lega Nord* (Ln, Northern League), *Fratelli d'Italia* (Fdi, Brothers of Italy), and a number of minor party lists. As for the outgoing prime minister, Monti found his own political party, *Scelta civica* (Sc, Civic Choice), and formed a centrist coalition together with Udc and Fli. The fourth main political actor to contest the election was the M5s, an independent party list created by Beppe Grillo, a comedian who had only been active in politics for the past few years, but who had quickly earned widespread popularity thanks to his anti-establishment position.

Berlusconi led an electoral campaign heavily focused on TV appearances and radio interviews. Despite the fact that he had guaranteed his support for Monti's cabinet over the past year, Berlusconi fiercely went on to attack his work and even promised to refund the property tax (Imu) that, he claimed, Monti had imposed only as a concession to Merkel and to the European bureaucrats. On the other end, Monti tried to make the most of his job as Prime Minister, having restored the financial stability of the country and rebuilt its credibility lost by his predecessor, Berlusconi. Grillo's campaign, led mainly through internet and in the squares, was characterized by a strong anti-corruption and anti-politics rhetoric. The movement's rallies ('tsunami tour') drew hundreds of thousands of angry people who just asked Grillo to 'send them all home', referring to the current parties and politicians. As finally for the center-left, which had supported the Monti's cabinet until the very

end and was now expected to emerge with the most votes and lead a new cabinet, its coalition leader Bersani hoped to present himself as a reliable candidate, the one most fit to govern the country for the following years. His campaign was, however, largely uninspiring and ultimately unsuccessful.

The results: turnout, votes and seats

The date of the election was set for February 24 and 25. According to the polls a significant drop in the turnout rate was to be expected, not only because of the harsh weather in many parts of the country, but mainly because of the anti-political climate. Turnout was actually 75.2%, a record low for the Italian general elections since 1948. It decreased of 5.3 percentage points (2.5 million voters) compared to the election of 2008, the biggest drop between two consecutive elections. It is plausible to connect these figures to the widespread discontent with the state of the economy and anger over almost all the existing parties, perceived to be corrupt and unable to make the institutional and economic reforms necessary for the country. Indeed, turnout fell to a lesser extent than many observers had expected. This is due to the presence of the M5s, which proved to be able to attract a significant number of former and potential abstentionists.

As for the electoral outcome, we need to distinguish what happened in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate. Table 1 summarizes the final distribution of votes and seats in the Chamber and, separately, the results in the arena in which the counting of votes serves the purpose of deciding the attribution of the majority premium (340 seats) to the plurality coalition or list. The latter arena accounts for the allocation of 617 out of the 630 total seats, while the remaining seats are at stake in the Valle d'Aosta single-member district (1) and in the 'foreign' constituency (12).

Table 1: Election Results, Chamber of Deputies 2013

Lists and <i>coalitions</i>	Arena of the majority premium				Total			
	Votes		Seats		Votes		Seats	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Partito democratico	8,644,523	25.4	292	47.3	8,932,615	25.5	297	47.1
Sinistra ecologia libertà	1,089,409	3.2	37	6.0	1,106,784	3.2	37	5.9
Centro democratico	167,072	0.5	6	1.0	167,072	0.5	6	1.0
Svp	146,804	0.4	5	0.8	146,804	0.4	5	0.8
Autonomie Liberté Démocratie	-	-	-	-	14,340	0.0	0	0.0
<i>Center-Left, Bersani's coalition (tot.)</i>	<i>10,047,808</i>	<i>29.6</i>	<i>340</i>	<i>55.1</i>	<i>10,367,615</i>	<i>29.6</i>	<i>345</i>	<i>54.8</i>
Il popolo della libertà	7,332,972	21.6	97	15.7	7,478,796	21.3	98	15.6
Lega Nord	1,390,014	4.1	18	2.9	1,392,398	4.0	18	2.9
Fratelli d'Italia	665,830	2.0	9	1.5	668,881	1.9	9	1.4
Others Center-Right	534,034	1.6	0	0.0	534,034	1.5	0	0.0
<i>Center-Right, Berlusconi's coalition (tot.)</i>	<i>9,922,850</i>	<i>29.2</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>20.1</i>	<i>10,074,109</i>	<i>28.7</i>	<i>125</i>	<i>19.8</i>
Scelta civica con Monti	2,824,065	8.3	37	6.0	3,004,739	8.6	39	6.2
Unione di centro	608,210	1.8	8	1.3	609,565	1.7	8	1.3
Futuro e libertà	159,332	0.5	0	0.0	159,332	0.5	0	0.0
<i>Center, Monti's coalition (tot.)</i>	<i>3,591,607</i>	<i>10.6</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>3,773,636</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>47</i>	<i>7.5</i>
Movimento 5 stelle	8,689,458	25.6	108	17.5	8,797,902	25.1	109	17.3
Rivoluzione civile	765,188	2.3	0	0.0	781,098	2.2	0	0.0
Fare per fermare il declino	380,756	1.1	0	0.0	391,664	1.1	0	0.0
Vallee d'Aoste	-	-	-	-	18,376	0.1	1	0.2
Mov. ass. italiani all'estero	-	-	-	-	140,473	0.4	2	0.3
Usei	-	-	-	-	44,024	0.1	1	0.2
Others (tot.)	604,857	1.8	0	0.0	668,390	1.9	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>34,002,524</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>617</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>35,057,287</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>630</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: Italian Ministry of Home Affairs

The total results show a difference of 293,506 votes between the center-left (29.6%) and the center-right (28.7%). In the decisive arena where the majority premium is assigned the difference was even lower, with the center-left receiving only 124,958 more votes than the center-right, less than 0.4% of the total of over 34 million valid votes cast. The coalition led by Monti got 10.8% of the valid votes, fewer than he and many expected. As for the individual parties, the Pd is the largest with 25.5%, while the M5s is the second one with 25.1% and the Pdl comes third

with 21.3%. However, if we exclude the votes cast in the foreign constituency, the M5s becomes the largest party having obtained more than 8.5 million votes (25.6%). This is indeed an impressive exploit: in the entire history of the Republic since 1946 a party competing for the first time in a general election has never obtained a similar percentage of votes.

Thanks to the majority premium, the minimal vote difference in favour of the center-left was transformed into a much larger difference in terms of seats: the center-left was

assigned 340 seats (55.1%), the center-right 124 (20.1%), the M5s 108 (17.5%) and the Monti's coalition 45 (7.3%). The results in the 'foreign' constituency were also favourable to the center-left, while a candidate of a local party won the seat in Valle d'Aosta. Overall, the final outcome

of the distribution of seats in the Chamber was such as to give 345 to the center-left (54,8%), 125 to the center-right (19.8%), 109 to the M5s (17.3%), 47 to the Monti's coalition (7.5%) and 4 to minor party lists.

Table 2: *Election Results, Senate 2013*

Lists and <i>coalitions</i>	Votes		Seats	
	No.	%	No.	%
Partito democratico	8,683,690	27.0	109	34.6
Sinistra ecologia libertà	912,308	2.8	7	2.2
Centro democratico	163,375	0.5	0	0.0
Il megafono - Lista Crocetta	138,581	0.4	1	0.3
Partito socialista italiano	57,688	0.2	0	0.0
I moderati	14,358	0.0	0	0.0
Svp	97,141	0.3	2	0.6
Svp-Patt-Pd-Upt	127,656	0.4	3	1.0
Pd-Svp	47,623	0.1	1	0.3
Autonomie Liberté Démocratie	20,430	0.1	0	0.0
<i>Center-Left, Bersani's coalition (tot.)</i>	<i>10,262,850</i>	<i>31.9</i>	<i>123</i>	<i>39.0</i>
Il popolo della libertà ^a	7,050,937	21.9	99	31.4
Lega Nord	1,331,163	4.1	17	5.4
Fratelli d'Italia	592,448	1.8	0	0.0
Grande Sud	122,100	0.4	1	0.3
Others Center-Right	542,178	1.7	0	0.0
<i>Center-Right, Berlusconi's coalition (tot.)</i>	<i>9,638,826</i>	<i>30.0</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>37.1</i>
Con Monti per l'Italia ^b	2,984,128	9.3	19	6.0
Movimento 5 stelle	7,471,671	23.3	54	17.1
Rivoluzione civile	575,391	1.8	0	0.0
Fare per fermare il declino	295,898	0.9	0	0.0
Vallee d'Aoste	24,609	0.1	1	0.3
Mov. ass. italiani all'estero	120,290	0.4	1	0.3
Usei	38,223	0.1	0	0.0
Others (tot.)	712,095	2.2	0	0.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>32,123,981</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>315</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: Italian Ministry of Home Affairs

Notes: ^a Includes the votes and the seat obtained by the list Pdl-Ln in the Trentino Alto Adige region; ^b Includes the votes obtained by the lists/candidates Udc and Scelta civica con Monti running respectively in the regions of Valle d'Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige.

The results of the Senate election are shown in table 2. Here the vote difference between the center-left and the center-right was a little larger than in the Chamber: the former coalition got 31.9% of the total votes, while the latter 30%. In spite of this, the final distribution of

seats was such that the center-left emerged in front with 'only' 123 seats (39%), as against the 117 seats (37.1%) of the center-right, 54 seats (17.1%) of the M5s, 19 seats (6%) of the Monti's list, and 2 seats for minor lists. This is a result that placed the winning coalition much below the

threshold of an absolute majority of the Senate's members and just 6 seats in front of the main opposing coalition. The result in the Senate, in other words, made it impossible to form not only a center-left majority, but also a post-electoral majority coalition between Bersani's center-left and Monti's center, which many considered the most likely outcome of this election.

The asymmetric effects of the electoral systems

In the end, the center-left won in the Chamber, but not in the Senate. These asymmetric outcomes are mainly caused by the different electoral systems used in the two chambers (D'Alimonte 2007).

The electoral system for the Chamber of Deputies is 'majority assuring', insofar as the coalition or list most voted at the national level obtains in any case – and therefore independently of the proportion of votes it has

obtained – at least 340 seats, a number equivalent to about 54 per cent of the total of Chamber seats and thus more than the absolute majority of its members.

Conversely, the electoral system for the Senate is not 'majority assuring'. Here the distribution of seats takes place separately and independently in each of the 20 regions. The majority premium is applied in 17 regions and provides for the assignment of 55% of the seats at stake to the coalition with the plurality of votes in each of them, while 45% of the seats are given to the losers provided that they have surmounted the thresholds of exclusion (20% for coalitions, 8% for independent lists). In the remaining 3 regions – Molise, Valle d'Aosta and Trentino-Alto Adige – and in the 'foreign constituency' the allocation of seats is done with different rules that take into account their territorial peculiarities.

Table 3. *Number of seats won by coalitions and independent party lists in the multi-member constituencies of the Senate*

Constituency	Center-left	Center-right	Center (Monti)	M5S	Others
Abruzzo	1	4	0	2	0
Basilicata	4	1	1	1	0
Calabria	2	6	0	2	0
Campania	6	16	2	5	0
Emilia Romagna	13	4	1	4	0
Friuli Venezia Giulia	4	1	1	1	0
Lazio	16	6	0	6	0
Liguria	5	1	1	1	0
Lombardy	11	27	4	7	0
Marche	5	1	1	1	0
Piedmont	13	4	2	3	0
Apulia	4	11	1	4	0
Sardinia	5	1	0	2	0
Sicily	5	14	0	6	0
Tuscany	10	3	1	4	0
Umbria	4	1	1	1	0
Veneto	4	14	2	4	0
<i>Total regions with premium</i>	<i>112</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>0</i>
Molise	1	1	0	0	0
Trentino Alto Adige	5	1	1	0	0
Valle d'Aosta	0	0	0	0	1
Foreign constituency	4	0	2	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>1</i>

In contrast to what happens in the case of the Chamber, there is no guarantee that the coalition or independent list with the largest number of votes nationally will obtain an absolute majority of the seats in the Senate. This is indeed what happened in the 2013 election. Table 3 shows the actual distribution of seats in the Senate for each constituency. The center-left won 10 regions out of the 17 where the premiums are given. The center-right won the remaining 7 regions, among which the three with the largest number of seats at stake: Lombardy, Campania, and Sicily. The M5s won nowhere. Nevertheless it was the first or second best loser in every region. The Monti's list came fourth, but was able to surmount the 8% threshold and to obtain seats in most regions. Jointly considered, the M5s and the Monti's list got 75 seats, a number equivalent to about 24% of the total. Just for the sake of comparison, in the previous election of 2008 the number of the

Senate seats attributed to the 'third' political forces had been seven, and in the election of 2006 only one. In other words, the multipolar setting of the electoral competition combined to the peculiar nature of the electoral system for the Senate is the main reason why neither the center-left nor the center-right could even approximate the threshold of the absolute majority of seats in this parliamentary branch.

The electoral decline of the center-right and center-left coalitions

One of the most relevant results of the 2013 general elections, compared with those of 2008, is, without any doubt, the electoral decline of the two coalitions of the center-left and the center-right. Indeed, they have collectively lost nearly 11 million votes, as it can be seen in Table 4. In particular, the center-right has lost a little

more than 7 million votes (i.e., 42% of its 2008 electorate), while the center-left has lost more than 3.5 million votes (i.e., 27% of its 2008 electorate). Once again, almost half of the center-right's electorate decided not to vote for Silvio

Berlusconi's coalition. This is mirrored by the center-left, which was abandoned by a fourth of its previous electorate.

Table 4: Electoral performance of the main coalitions in the Chamber of Deputies, 2008 and 2013 general elections (Valle d'Aosta and foreign constituency excluded)

Coalitions	Results
<i>Center-Right</i>	
Berlusconi 2008	17,063,929
Berlusconi 2013	9,923,100
Difference 2013-2008	-7,140,829
Var. %	-42%
<i>Center-Left</i>	
Veltroni 2008	13,686,460
Bersani 2013	10,047,507
Difference 2013-2008	-3,638,953
Var. %	-27%
<i>Center</i>	
Casini 2008	2,050,331
Monti 2013	3,591,560
Difference 2013-2008	+1,541,229
Var. %	+75%
<i>Others</i>	
Others 2008	3,651,539
Others 2013 ^a	1,751,811
Difference 2013-2008	-1,899,728
Var. %	-52%

^a It doesn't include the votes received by the M5S

The inability of the main political coalitions to gather support may be caused by some concurrent phenomena. First, as we have seen previously, the electoral turnout decreased largely with respect to 2008. One can therefore hypothesize that a minor but significant share of the total votes for the two main coalitions in 2008 ended in abstention in 2013. Second, the M5s was successful to a largely unexpected extent. This can be attributed to the ability of

Beppe Grillo to gain votes from both the center-left and the center-right coalitions, as it is confirmed by the analysis of individual vote shifts (De Sio and Schadee 2013). Indeed, the M5s is described as a 'web-populist party' (Corbetta and Gualmini 2013; Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013) cutting across the traditional ideological dimension. The electoral success of the M5s explains also the fall of the 'others' category in the table, which decreased by about 2 million

votes. Third, the Monti's coalition, compared with the Udc in 2008, increased, in absolute terms, by about 1 million and half votes (i.e. +42% with respect to 2008). This was another viable option for the former voters of the two main coalitions.

In terms of votes and percentages, Berlusconi's center-right is the biggest loser of this election. Almost half of its voters defected. They went in different directions, but very few crossed over to vote for the center-left. Actually, one of the reasons why the Bersani's coalition did not win – as expected – is exactly its inability to capture the vote of those electors moving away from the center-right parties, at a time when there were plenty of them. Indeed, the center-

left was not even capable to keep its own electorate. The major beneficiary of the defections from the center-right, as well as from the center-left, was Grillo's M5s, which could rightly claim to be the real winner of this election.

The geography of the vote

The center-left failed to make significant electoral gains in those areas where the Pdl and its allies had their strongholds, specifically the North-East and parts of the South. In these areas, both the center-left and the center-right lost votes but their relative strength did not change significantly, as it is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: *Electoral performance of the main coalitions and party lists in the Chamber of deputies, disaggregated by geopolitical area (differences in percentage points between the 2013 and 2008 general elections)*

Area	Center-left		Center-right		Center (Monti)		M5S
	% votes	2013-2008	% votes	2013-2008	% votes	2013-2008	% votes
North-West	28.8	-9.5	27.0	-19.4	11.7	+6.7	28.5
North-East	27.7	-3.7	33.2	-20.2	12.1	+7.5	21.4
Red Zone	38.9	-10.3	21.1	-14.4	9.2	+4.7	25.7
South	26.8	-9.3	30.8	-16.9	9.8	+2.9	27.3
Italy	29.5	-8.0	29.2	-17.6	10.6	+4.9	25.6

Though it lost heavily, the center-left remained the largest coalition (38.9%) in the regions of the so called 'Red Zone' (in central Italy), where its support has deep historical roots and where it controls local administrations (Diamanti 2010; Florida 2010). The center-right, in turn, maintained a competitive advantage in most of the North (33.2% in the North-East) and in many parts of the South (30.8%). The resilience of the center-right in many regions of the country helped Berlusconi to neutralize the majoritarian effects of the Senate electoral system and create a hung parliament.

The M5s was able to collect votes nationally at a quite homogeneous level. Its best

performances occurred in the North West (28.5%) and in the South (27.3%). However, it did quite well also in the 'Red Zone' (25.7%) and in the North East (21.4%). In general, the M5s cut across the traditional electoral geography, being competitive in all the regions of Italy. Conversely, as we have mentioned above, the three main political coalitions of 2013 (center-left, center-right, and center) showed a distribution of the votes that is more differentiated in territorial terms. The success of Beppe Grillo's movement, for certain, occurred to the detriment of both the main coalitions.

The center-right lost votes in all regions of Italy, but particularly in the North (-20.2 and

-19.4 percentage points, in the North-East and in the North-West respectively). The losses in Piedmont, Lombardy and, especially, in Veneto were particularly marked because many voters defected here from the Northern League. Conversely, the losses registered in the majority of southern regions and in Umbria and Tuscany were below the national average (-16.9 percentage points in the South and -14.4 in the 'Red Zone'). With specific regard to southern regions, the presence of several local list in the center-right coalition partially compensated the losses of the Pdl.

In similar fashion, the center-left electoral decline occurred in all the geopolitical areas of the country. The most significant losses, those above the national average, were in the South (-9.3 percentage points), in the North-West (-9.5) and in the 'Red Zone' (-10.3). In the latter, the fall was especially marked in Marche (-14.9 percentage points) and in Umbria (-11.8). Conversely, the decrease in the North-East (a conservative area from a political standpoint) was small (-3.7 percentage points).

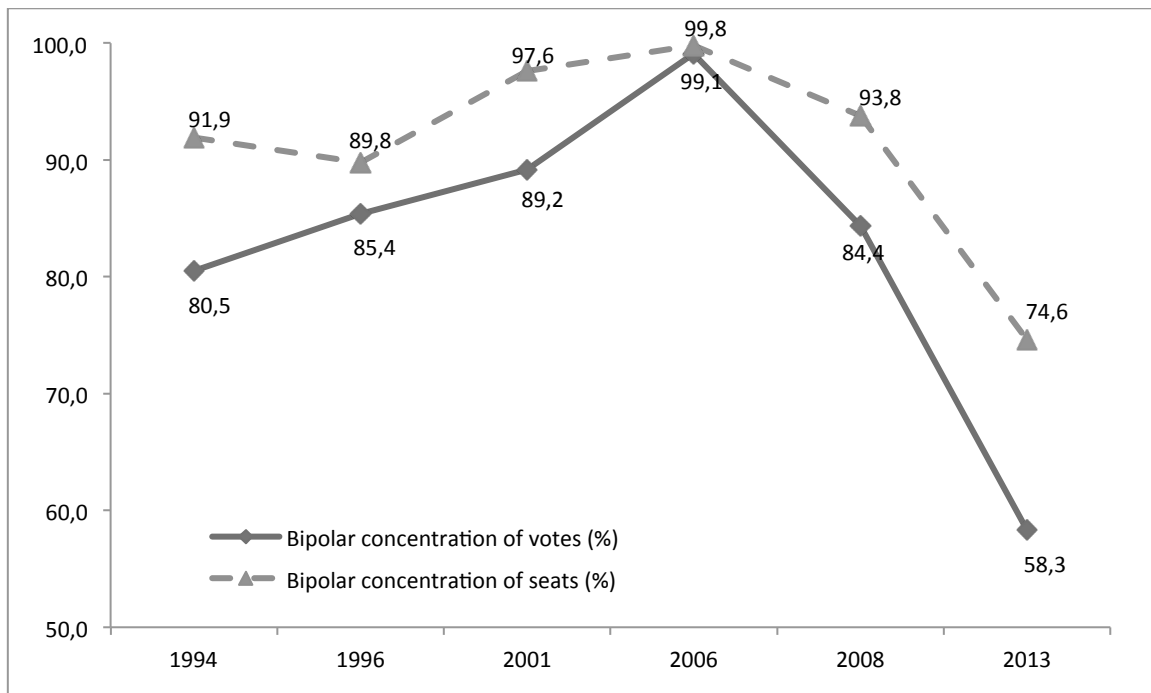
Finally, the Monti's coalition showed a territorial distribution of votes notably different from that of the Udc in 2008. The areas where it saw a greater increase in percentage points were the North-East (+7.5 percentage points) and the North-West (+6.7). Conversely, the electoral growth was below the national average in the South (+2.9 percentage points). In this respect, it is remarkable that the regions where the Monti's list did not reach the electoral threshold of 8% in the Senate were all in the center-south: Lazio, Sardinia, Abruzzo, Calabria, and Sicily. Furthermore, Sicily is the only region where the centrist coalition lost almost 50,000 votes compared to 2008 (-0.8 percentage points).

The end of the bipolar party system?

For the first time after 1994 elections were inconclusive. The Senate was left without a real winner. Both Grillo's M5s and Berlusconi's center-right, the latter in spite of its poor performance, prevented Bersani's center-left – the winner in Chamber for a little more than a handful of votes – from gaining the absolute majority of the seats in the Senate, even with the support of Monti. Moreover, due to the M5s unavailability to cooperate with the Pd and any other party, Berlusconi's Pdl ended up to be the essential partner of the Pd in a 'grand coalition' cabinet formed two months after the election and led by Enrico Letta. This was the inescapable consequence of the Italian party system having entered a restructuring phase, as it had already been evident before the vote (Ceccarini, Diamanti and Lazar 2012).

The economic crisis and the growing disaffection toward politics provided the ground for a sharp increase of electoral volatility, that in the 2013 general election reached the highest value in the history of Italy's Republic – 39.1 based on the Pedersen (1979) index – and one of the highest for general elections in consolidated democracies since 1945. The very high level of electoral volatility indicates that the percentage of voters who switched their preferences in this election was even greater than in 1994, at the time of the transition from the First to the Second Republic. This point is reinforced by the analysis of individual vote shifts according to which 37% of the voters moved away from their previous electoral choice (De Sio and Schadee 2013).

Figure 1: *Bipolar concentration of votes and seats in the 1994-2013 elections for the Chamber of deputies*



As a result of electoral change, new parties emerged and at least one of them, the M5s, proved to be highly competitive and a viable choice for many voters. On the other hand, the concentration of votes and seats on the two largest line-ups was the lowest in the history of the Second Republic. Together, the center-left and the center-right coalitions received only 58.3% of the Chamber votes and 74.6% of the seats. In 2008 the figures were 84.4 and 93.8%

respectively. In 2006, 99.1% and 99.8% (Figure 1). In other words, the bipolar structure of the Italian party system, one that had consolidated during the past twenty years (Chiaramonte 2010), almost collapsed in 2013. One election, however, may be not enough to support the conclusion that this is the end of bipolarism in Italy. Only the next general election will prove the point and we may not have to wait too long for it.

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