

Book Reviews

Section edited by Carla Monteleone

ELISABETTA DE GIORGI, *L'opposizione parlamentare in Italia. Dall'antiberlusconismo all'antipolitica* (Rome: Carocci, 2017). 148 pp., €15,00 (paperback), ISBN: 9788843085835

Parliamentary opposition is a key actor in democratic political systems. Although opposition parties are often unable to actually shape policy-making outcomes, the conduct of those political groups that are present in parliament but do not participate in the government may be crucial for the functioning of legislative assemblies and, more in general, for the overall quality of democracy. Except in cases of minority government, executives do not need the votes of opposition members to ensure the passage of their measures in parliament; however, even when a government controls a majority of parliamentary seats, a minimum level of cooperation from the opposition is commonly required to guarantee adherence to the rules of the legislative process. Moreover, opposition parties may play a crucial role in the democratic circuit of representation and accountability, as they voice political opinions not represented in the government, expose the latter to public challenge and oversight, and offer alternatives to the policies implemented by the incumbent cabinet.

The behavior of legislative minorities may also reveal important information about the type of democracy a given country resembles most. In spite of its relevance, parliamentary opposition is a rather neglected topic in the political science literature. Much greater attention has usually been paid to the study of executives, especially in parliamentary regimes like Italy and other European countries. In this respect, however, Italy offers a particularly interesting case to be investigated, as the role of the Italian parliamentary opposition and its relations with the government have dramatically changed in the last 25 years.

Aiming to fill this gap, Elisabetta De Giorgi's book focuses on parliamentary opposition in Italy, analyzing its behavior during the lawmaking process and its overall function in the political system. Not only the author discusses how the role of the opposition in the Italian parliament has evolved over time; she also provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the patterns of opposition behavior observed in the so-called bipolar phase (1994-2013) of Ital-

ian political history. In addition, the author analyzes the characteristics and actions of Italian opposition parties in the most recent period (i.e. after 2013) in light of some fundamental developments that are currently affecting the structure of party systems in Europe. Among these, the ever-growing Europeanization of policymaking, the repercussions of the economic crisis, the unprecedented electoral success of anti-establishment parties and the emergence of new dimensions of party competition.

Although primarily interested in the Italian parliamentary opposition, the volume touches on a number of more general research topics, many of which are relevant not only for the analysis of the Italian case but also in a comparative perspective. Besides government-opposition relations, this work deals with the hurdles encountered during the Italian transition from the so-called First Republic to the Second Republic, with the comparison among different legislative instruments and behavioral styles, and with the role of national parliaments in the multi-level decision making of the European Union (EU). Other themes addressed by the book are crisis politics, parties' current dilemma between responsiveness and responsibility, the rise of Eurosceptic parties and the evolving structure of party competition in Europe.

The volume is organized as follows. The first chapter is devoted to conceptual, theoretical and methodological issues. The author defines parliamentary opposition as a political subject comprising one or more parliamentary party groups, whose actions in the legislative arena are intended (a) to check and contrast the government's actions, and (b) to present itself in front of voters as a real alternative to the government in office. An encompassing theoretical framework is then outlined and used to generate hypotheses about the behavior of opposition parties in the Italian parliament. The author's general expectations emphasize the importance of parties' policy preferences and of the content of the legislation examined by parliament. In the most recent period, opposition behavior is also hypothesized to be deeply shaped by the Europeanization of domestic policymaking, especially after the start of the economic crisis. Furthermore, the author conjectures that new opposition parties like the Five Star Movement (M5S) should behave differently from mainstream opposition parties. In light of these expectations, an appropriate research design is specified.

The second chapter sketches the evolution of the Italian parliamentary opposition throughout the post-war era, tracing how the composition and role of opposition have changed as Italy moved from the First to the Second Republic, and from the latter to the period following the 2013 general elections. Italian parliamentary opposition during the First Republic is defined by De Giorgi as a "halved opposition". On the one hand, the two main legislative minorities in the Italian parliament – the communist PCI and the post-fascist MSI – used to control and harshly criticize the executive. On the other hand, up to the Nineties they did not actually represent a government alternative to the DC-led coalitions: they did not act at all as a "government in waiting". At the same time, however, lawmaking was characterized by high levels of cooperation between the government parties and the communist opposition.

Owing to the establishment of bipolar competition and the actual occurrence of alternation in government, during the Second Republic the Italian opposition was expected to perform its role in a more adversarial style. In the author's view, this did not happen not only because of the permanent fragmentation of the opposition camp, but also because of three specific reasons. These are the absence of constitutional and legislative rules clearly formalizing the role of the opposition, the lack of will – on the part of key political actors – to change the existing rules, and parties' decision to center their campaign strategies on a pro- or anti-Berlusconi position rather than on alternative programmatic proposals. The elections held in 2013, with (perhaps) the end of bipolarism, seem to have moved Italian government-opposition relations further away from a majoritarian model.

Focusing on the Second Republic, the third chapter explores which factors can make Italian opposition parties more or less prone to support government-sponsored legislation. Rather than emphasizing the role of systemic factors, whose explanatory power has been shown to be limited, the author formulates a set of hypotheses that rely on opposition parties' policy-seeking and vote-seeking incentives. The key explanatory variables are the policy distance between opposition and government, the salience that opposition parties attribute to bills, whether or not legislative proposals correspond to the programmatic priorities of the government, and the wider or narrower scope of legislation. The author's expectations are largely supported by the data on how opposition parties voted on government-sponsored bills in the Chamber of Deputies between 1996 and 2011.

The fourth and fifth chapters assess the role of more general political factors related to the EU involvement in domestic policymaking, the impact of the crisis and the evolution of national party systems in Europe. In particular, the fourth chapter analyzes how Italian opposition parties have reacted to the increasing Europeanization of domestic lawmaking, a process that has been intensified during the recent crisis in the Eurozone. Data from a survey administered to legislators show that Italian opposition members have become more Eurosceptic. By the same token, after the start of the crisis opposition parties are found to be less likely to support governmental bills, especially in those domains that are more deeply Europeanized. Empirical evidence then demonstrates that Italian opposition parties are increasingly using Euroscepticism as a prominent opposition strategy, which makes the pro/anti-EU dimension overlap more and more with the government-opposition divide.

The fifth chapter focuses on the legislative behavior of the M5S, taken as a prototypical case of what has been labelled by Peter Mair as the "new opposition". In so far as they do not participate in the government, new anti-establishment (and often Eurosceptic) parties can well express citizens' opinions and are hence highly responsive to their voters. In contrast, mainstream opposition parties, which are just temporarily in the opposition, are less responsive but more responsible; in times of economic hardship they can be electorally punished by voters. In Italy, the (non-responsible) M5S can be expected to act differently from other (more responsible) mainstream opposition parties. Beppe Grillo himself stated that the M5S would have opened the Italian parliament as a "tuna can". Indeed, data on legislative votes during the 2013-2016 period show that Five Star deputies tend to oppose all government initiatives,

not only those with a programmatic content. However, if compared to other Italian opposition legislators, members of the M5S are not found to introduce a higher number of bills, parliamentary questions, interpellations or motions.

On the whole, De Giorgi's book expands in an original way on the literature on lawmaking in the Italian parliament. However, the implications of her study will be valuable not only for legislative scholars. The book contributes to our understanding of the evolution of Italy from a pivotal political system to a democracy based on bipolar alternation, and from the latter to a new system whose traits are still to be clearly defined. Furthermore, the findings of this book can be particularly relevant for analyzing the ongoing changes in European party systems and their relations with the crisis and the multi-level decision-making processes in the EU.

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SERGIO FABBRINI AND RAFFAELE MARCHETTI (EDS.), *Still a Western World? Continuity and Change in Global Order* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017). 162 pp., €110,00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781857438703

Still a Western World? deals with a core issue in international relations theory and in the study of the contemporary international system: the factors that contributed to the formation of the present international order and the factors that may contribute to its change and continuity. The editors' introductory chapter ("The Debate on Global Order in a Changing World") summarizes the causal mechanisms that led to the stability of the international order from the main theoretical perspectives in international relations. Their summary serves to demonstrate that the notion of international order is a deeply contested one. Furthermore, the editors focus on the factors that help bring about order even under anarchy, an issue that is believed to be of great relevance in situations of political transition. They argue for the relevance of this by citing the end of the Cold War as a seminal moment that led to dramatic shifts in power distribution. Moreover, the steady process of the globalization of international affairs is also regarded as an important factor in this context.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that the debate on the fundamental features of the contemporary international order and of the consequences of its possible change has been very lively. This edited volume is a valuable contribution to this debate due to the variety of perspectives it adopts (combining a systemic perspective with Western and national ones) and the outstanding profile of the scholars that have taken part in the project. The contents of the book pertain to two main topics: (i) the stability, or the instability, of the international order and (ii) the factors that complicate the international order.

A core issue that has recently received a lot of scholarly attention is whether the principles, rules, and political structures underpinning the international order are well functioning and stable, thereby keeping international conflicts under control.