What's left of the Italian left

Newell, JL

What's left of the Italian Left?

JAMES L. NEWELL

European University Institute
University of Salford
Salford M5 4WT
j.l.newell@salford.ac.uk

What's left of the Italian Left?

JAMES L. NEWELL

Abstract

The 2008 election has left the impression that the Italian Left is in extreme difficulty, yet assessing this view is rendered difficult by uncertainty about what groups it includes. Taking as the relevant membership criterion the pursuit of actions to extend equality, enables one to make the assessment by exploring – in the arenas of party competition, public opinion and pressure groups – the obstacles in the way of, and the opportunities for, these actions. In the arena of party competition, prospects for equality will increase with the election of a government of the centre left, whose strengths include the presence of parties strongly committed to egalitarianism, and a solid electoral base. Weaknesses include disunity, and an inability of egalitarian parties to pursue their goals when in government; opportunities, the centre right's dependence on Berlusconi, and its divisions; threats, the centre right's advantages in permanent campaigning. In the arena of public opinion the prospects for equality and the Left are facilitated by egalitarian attitudes, offset by the salience of single issues on which attitudes are highly *in*-egalitarian. In the pressure-group arena, prospects are facilitated by the growth of associational activity and protest. Optimism, not pessimism is therefore appropriate given that the pursuit of equality will always be difficult even in the most favourable of circumstances.

Key words

Left, Right, equality, parties, voters, pressure groups

Introduction

When communism collapsed in Eastern Europe there was a plethora of debates about the future of the Left and about whether it any longer existed as an historical phenomenon, or even as a meaningful concept (Bobbio, 2004: 64-65). Something not dissimilar has happened on a smaller scale in the wake of the Italian general election of 2008, the outcome of which, for the first time in the history of the Republic, left Parliament without a single member claiming to represent the socialist or communist traditions. The purpose of this paper is therefore to examine the current strengths and weaknesses of the Left and the structure of opportunities and constraints now confronting it; to explore what contribution it has made to bringing about the circumstances in which it finds itself, and what this has to tell us about the prospects of it realising any of the significant items on its agenda at any time in the near future.

Doing this may help to shed light on a major conundrum in Italian politics. This is that despite the advent of bipolarity and alternation in government a decade and a half ago, the Left does not, at any time since, seem to have acquired any more power and influence than it had in the days when it was permanently excluded from government. Under the First Republic, the Italian Communist Party (Partito Comunista Italiano, PCI) was regularly the second largest party with an average vote of 27.2 percent between 1953 and 1987; but the Cold War dread of communism meant that it was never able to place

itself at the head of a coalition capable of offering an alternative to governing coalitions built around the Christian Democrats (Democrazia Cristiana, DC). With the early 1990s transformation of the party system and its consequent 'unblocking' – in large part the consequence of the end of the Cold War and the main opposition party's acquisition of eligibility for government through its own transformation – the prospects for the Left should in theory have improved dramatically: after all, it could now compete on equal terms with the Right in a way that it could not do previously. Yet coalitions involving the Left have, unlike their rivals on the centre right, never won a convincing election victory and in terms of votes, have trailed the centre right at every election but one (Table 1). So there is a need to find out why this is.

[Table 1 about here]

In carrying out this task our concern will be very much to seek *understanding*, where our use of this term is not innocent. That is, we think it important to account for the phenomena we seek to analyse by aiming to render intelligible, from the point of view of those involved, the action in which the phenomena are rooted; that is, by seeking to make sense of the meaning that actors themselves attach to their action. This is very important in discussing the Left, where too often political actors are condemned for behaviour (for example, fragmentation and a lack of unity) that would not attract such condemnation were greater efforts made to appreciate how the actors involved perceive the situations in which they find themselves. There seems to be no good reason for assuming that they are stupid and unable to see what academic observers can see so clearly! Before we engage with any of these issues, however, we need to define our terms.

What's Left in Italy

What must be included among those making up 'the Left' in Italy? Does it include the Democratic Party (Partito Democratico, PD), many of whose members would not accept the label for themselves? Does it include the Green Party? Does it include the movement of protest against the so-called Gelmini reform in the autumn of 2008? On the one hand, this might be included as the latest manifestation of a 'new opposition' whose centre of gravity is in the social movements; whose most dramatic expression to date has been the 2001 anti-capitalist protest in Genova; whose adherents have been driven by themes of social justice, traditional to the Left. On the other hand, it might be excluded for the strong anti-political vein in it and its challenge to the authority of the parties of the centre left. Does the category include some or all of the trade unions? Does it include the growing number of non-governmental, voluntary and co-operative associations, whose acts of civic engagement – in the context of a prime minister seeking explicitly to use Parliament to pursue laws with no apparent purpose beyond the resolution of his private legal difficulties – inevitably carry connotations of opposition to conventional politics and to the status quo? We think that the problem is best resolved by defining the Left less in terms of the organisations and groups that compose it, than as an idea or outlook to whose advancement a wide range of organisations and groups may contribute at different times.

A convenient starting point for the definitional task is therefore Norberto Bobbio's well-known classic, *Destra e Sinistra* (2004). Bobbio argues that what distinguishes the Left from the Right is a different attitude towards the ideal of equality. To be on the Left does not mean to aspire to the equality of everyone in every respect – in any case impossible – but to want greater equality – where this obtains the larger the number of people to whom resources or rights are distributed; the larger the number of categories of resources or rights distributed; the less restrictive the criteria used for the distribution. Thus universal suffrage is more equal than male suffrage; social and liberal democracy more equal than liberal democracy alone; the acquisition of adulthood more equal as a criterion for the distribution of political and social rights than the acquisition of property. In turn, the egalitarian aspiration stems from the belief that while humans are, as a matter of fact, equal in some respects and unequal in others, what is more important for their happy coexistence is what they have in common. To be on the Right, therefore, means to emphasise the value of inequality, that is, to start from the same recognition of the facts and to argue that what is more important for happy coexistence is what makes humans different. Concomitantly, to be on the Left is to argue that most non-trivial inequalities are social in nature and therefore easily eliminated. To be on the Right is to argue that they are rooted in nature, tradition or the past and therefore eliminated only with difficulty, if at all.

In some but not all cases – Bobbio's argument continues – extending equality requires restricting freedom since it requires the imposition of a regulation to bring it about. This makes it possible to identify, alongside equality and inequality, the dyad liberty and authority, distinguishing those within the categories of Left and Right: Thus to be on the far Left is to be willing to sacrifice liberty for equality. To be on the centre Left is to have a commitment to both ideals. To be on the centre Right is to have a commitment to liberty but to equality only insofar as it amounts to equality before the law. To be on the far Right is to deny the value of both liberty and equality.

This analysis enables us to sidestep the problem of the organisations and groups to enumerate among the Italian Left, by offering a basis on which slightly to refocus the question we started with. Bobbio's argument suggests that the degree of equality is something that can in principle be objectively measured. This makes it reasonable to assess the current state and future prospects of the Left by asking not about the performance and so on of this or that organisation or group rather than others, but rather, by asking what appear currently to be the main opportunities for and the obstacles in the way of the extension of equality, whoever its specific protagonists may be. With this in mind, the remainder of this paper is devoted to an analysis of such opportunities and obstacles in each of three arenas: that of party competition; public opinion; pressure-group activity.

The party-political arena

It is reasonable to assume that the prospects for an extension of equality will increase if, at the next election, the parties of the centre left are able to oust the current incumbents

and take over the reins of government themselves. This assumption makes it possible to carry out a SWOT analysis. As is well known, such analysis is used to inform strategic planning for the achievement of an end-state or objective, by providing information on the organisation's strengths and weaknesses (attributes of the organisation helpful and harmful to achieving the objective) as well as the opportunities and threats facing it (attributes of the environment helpful and harmful to achieving the objective).

Strengths

These include the presence, among the parties of the centre left, of organisations like Communist Refoundation (Rifondazione Comunista, RC), the Party of Italian Communists (Partito dei Comunisti Italiani, PdCI) and the Movement for the Left (Movimento per la Sinistra, MpS). It will seem strange to list the presence of these groups as 'strengths'; for they are small and quarrelsome (Figure 1). They are included because their commitment to the extension of equality is the firmest among the centre-left parties and because together they took 6.5 percent of the vote in the 2009 European elections – thereby confirming that, though they had been expelled from the national parliament in the 2008 election, they had not ceased to be a force in the electorate and that at least some of the supporters they had lost on that occasion would return to the fold. The result was still quite a bit below the parties' combined result at the 2006 election (10.2 percent) and at the previous European election (11.0 percent) in 2004, but it has to be judged in the context of the considerable damage the 2008 election outcome had done to them: without a parliamentary presence they risked being ignored by the media; and having suffered such a haemorrhage of votes they found that the money available to them through the system of public party funding fell from €51 million in 2006 to €13 million (Lopapa, 2008). This was bound to have significant organisational repercussions for them bearing in mind that RC, for example, relied for fully two thirds of its resources on the system of public funding (Bertolino, 2004: 323).

[Figure 1 about here]

True, the parties were divided at the 2009 elections and this meant that neither of the two lists they presented cleared the four percent exclusion threshold the Government and main opposition party, the PD, had agreed to in February. But the division and its consequences need to be correctly understood. In the first place, it found its origins in the post-mortem that took place after 2008 and especially in the division that emerged at RC's national congress in July 2008. Then two positions emerged. One was that of Nichi Vendola, president of the Puglia region, who felt that at the 2008 election the Rainbow Left (la Sinistra l'Arcobaleno, SA), the electoral coalition bringing together RC, the PdCI, the Greens and the Democratic Left (Sinistra Democratica, SD), had been unsuccessful because it had been a discordant federation. What was needed was a constituent process uniting all those parties willing to rethink fundamentally what being on the left now meant. By overcoming division, such a pluralistic organisation would, by virtue of its size, enable profitable engagement with the other large parties in the Italian political system, and find an interested audience among pressure-group activists, in the trade unions and among the new social movements. Vendola was the principal instigator

of the Sinistra e Libertà coalition in 2009. However, at the party's July congress, his position, with 47 percent of the votes, had been beaten by that of ex-Social Welfare minister, Paolo Ferrero, with 53. Ferrero became the principal instigator of the Lista Anticapitalista. His view was that inherent in Vendola's position was a danger of the liquidation of the party – whose organisational reinforcement was on the contrary necessary if one were to avoid the twin danger of left unity being deprived of specific horizons, and the risk of conflict among the potential constituent parties over what the nature of the new organisation was to be. On the face of it, neither of these views was unreasonable.

Paolo Ferrero explained very clearly the reasons why two separate lists were being presented at the European elections, in a letter published on the Lista Anticapitalista web site on 4 June 2009 (http://www.unaltraeuropa.eu/dett-blog.php?id_blog=11). These included the point that it could not be assumed that unity was inevitably a winning formula. It was, again, not an unreasonable position to take – as political scientists ought to be aware; for whether unity between two parties must necessarily bring them more support than if they take to the field separately depends on whether unity can attract *additional* voters beyond those *already* supporting the parties concerned; and it also depends on whether *these existing voters* will transfer their support to the united entity (which they may resist doing if they are strongly attached to their existing party but dislike the one(s) with which their party unites). They may be especially resistant where the process of unity creates internal conflict over what the identity of the united entity should be. The PD could certainly not be said to have avoided such conflict – so how much less reasonable was it to expect it of parties like those of the radical left, whose actions are much more heavily constrained by the attachment to normative principles of various kinds?

A second strength for the centre left is the relatively solid electoral position from which it might grow. Again, this might seem a strange assertion to make: in 2008 it lost almost 3.5 million electors as compared to 2006 and the component with any chance whatsoever of forming a government trailed Berlusconi and the centre right by nearly ten percent. However, the result must also be viewed in the context of previous outcomes and what was reasonable to expect. Given the unpopularity of the outgoing government, no one expected the centre left to win. Under these circumstances, in managing to enlarge its reservoir of support to 37.5 percent of the vote (as compared to the 33.6 percent the Ulivo and Italy of Values (Italia dei Valori, IdV) had won in 2006) 'the PD/IdV coalition…did not perform badly' (Chiaramonte, 2008: 200). And though the centre right won resoundingly, its victory came about largely because of the change in political supply (in breaking with the Union of the Centre (Unione di Centro, UDC), Berlusconi was subject to a potential loss of support that was smaller than the potential loss to which Veltroni was subject in breaking with the radical left) and because most of the 3.5 million electors the centre left lost abstained – 'as can be deduced both from the fall in turnout (down to 80.5 from 83.6 per cent) and from the first estimates of the flow of the vote made on the basis of both ecological (De Sio, 2008a) and individual-level data (Feltrin and Natale, 2008)' (Chiaramonte, 2008: 200). Few of those who failed to vote for the centre left

switched to the centre right.[1] Consequently, though Berlusconi's share of the vote rose (to 46.8 percent from the 40.6 percent the parties making up his coalition had obtained in 2006), in terms of actual votes his coalition had some 800,000 more than the constituent parties had had two years earlier (Chiaramonte, 2009: 202) – hardly an insuperable obstacle to have to surmount.

Weaknesses

Fairly obviously, the most significant difficulty the centre left faces in seeking to surmount that obstacle is overcoming the divisions that stand in the way of building a coalition with a sufficient to degree of unity to be credible as a potential alternative government. In 2007 and 2008, Veltroni sought – through the creation of the PD, first, and his decision to contest the election (almost) without allies, second – to bring into being a party capable of dominating, if not monopolising the political ground to the left of the centre the way Silvio Berlusconi has been able to dominate the ground to the right. Thereby, he hoped to reduce the problems of alliance formation if not eliminate the need for alliances altogether. Instead, by inducing Berlusconi to make a corresponding move – so that, as at every Second Republic election but one, the main centre-left party once again came in second behind the main party of the centre right[2] – Veltroni merely succeeded in providing confirmation that alliances are indispensible if the centre right is ever to be beaten.

And ironically, in bringing a reduction in party-system fragmentation, the PD's strategy in the run-up to 2008 has in some respects increased the difficulties of finding unity on the centre left because of the contribution it made to the growth in significance of IdV. By leaving Antonio Di Pietro, in a much simplified party system, at the head of a radical party whose support had considerably grown, the election outcome ensured that he would be able to attract a level of media attention he had had to compete hard for as one of nine parties in the former government. This is turn meant that he had an opportunity not to be missed to consolidate and extend his party's support by acting as a thorn in the side of the PD.

It is for this reason that the period since the election has seen Di Pietro hard at work seeking to consolidate his image as a far more consistent and aggressive opponent of the incumbent government and prime minister than the PD leaders, often attacking them for timidity. The latter, in turn, perceive Di Pietro's colourful focus on Berlusconi's misdemeanours as cutting little ice with ordinary voters located *beyond* the centre left's confines (who, they believe, look to the coalition to devote greater attention to the

---

[1] As a percentage of the electorate, those who had voted for the centre left in 2006 but now voted for the centre right came to 4.3 percent – but they were counterbalanced somewhat by movements in the opposite direct, so net losses due to shifts from centre left to centre right came to only 2.1 percent. Meanwhile, those who had voted centre left in 2006 but now abstained amounted to 5.6 percent of the electorate (De Sio, 2008b: 62).

[2] The election in question is the election of 1996 when Forza Italia (FI) took 7,712,149 votes in the proportional arena while the Democratic Party of the Left (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, PDS) took 7,894,118

economy and social welfare). They also perceive Di Pietro's style as one that assists Berlusconi; for, by allowing him to dub the opposition as a home to intolerance; and by allowing him to demand of the PD repudiation of its ally's more strident pronouncements, it enables him, every time Di Pietro makes one of his more colourful outbursts, to embarrass the PD and drive a wedge between the opposition parties.

For two reasons, the wedge is unlikely to get smaller in the short term. On the one hand, IdV and the PD clearly fish in the same pool of voters. This makes them direct competitors, and all the evidence is that in this competition, Di Pietro's strategy brings him considerable success: he has understood that notwithstanding Veltroni's decision in the 2008 campaign to abandon an 'anti-Berlusconi' style of opposition, such a style is, as the recent European elections suggest, what centre-left voters apparently *want*: thus, IdV's vote rose to 8.0 percent from the 4.4 percent he had obtained in 2008, even while, at 36.5 percent, the combined support for the parties – the PD, IdV and the Radicali – that had made up the centre left coalition last year remained virtually the same (it was 37.5 percent last year). On the other hand, the PD cannot refrain from taking its distance from Di Pietro because if it is to make any electoral headway whatsoever, then besides speaking successfully to radical spirits, it needs also to appeal to moderate elements located towards the centre of the political spectrum.

If the principal weakness of the centre left then is its lack of unity, an additional factor weakening it as a vehicle for extending equality is the dilemma that confronts those most strongly committed to this ideal. The dilemma is clearly illustrated by the position, in the last Prodi coalition, that was occupied by RC – which in time-honoured fashion, had joined the government through processes of *trasformismo*, with consequences as devastating as those suffered by parties of the Left that had been caught up in such processes on earlier occasions. In many respects the trajectory taken by RC mirrored that of the Italian Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano, PSI) in the early 1960s. Both were potential enemies of parties with a governing vocation, turned into allies of these parties through a process of cooptation. Neither party had any real control over the forces driving it toward government: each would have been condemned to political irrelevance had it turned its back on participation – and consequently neither was well placed to exploit its numerical indispensability for government survival to obtain the kinds of reforms of most concern to it.

Once in government RC found that, if it sought to exploit its indispensability as a means of advancing the causes of most concern to its core supporters, then by appearing to put the survival of the government in jeopardy, it risked losing the support of more recently acquired but less strongly attached supporters.[3] And indeed as one as one of nine parties every one of which was necessary for the survival of a government whose ideological span ran from clericalism to Trotskyism, it was constantly berated for behaving 'irresponsibly' by anyone in the media whose support for it was less than fervent. On the other hand, if it bowed to the resulting pressures, it was exposed to the

---

[3] The potential losses were not insignificant: in 2006 its vote in the Chamber of Deputies election amounted to 2,229,464: 20 percent more than the 1,868,659 votes it had won in 2001.

criticism of core supporters who would immediately accuse it of having sold out.[4] If such a notion would be damaging to it, then it was, on the other hand, terrified of bringing down the Government because of what it would have meant in terms of reminders of 1998, when the first Prodi government had fallen and it had suffered enormous organisational and electoral damage through the split that had been the consequence.

It was not surprising then that on a range of issues – from Afghanistan, to the Finance Law, pensions reform and the Government's proposals concerning civil partnerships – RC found itself obliged to support measures it was unhappy with or which fell far short of what it would have liked. Nor was it surprising that at the 2008 election, the reaction of a large proportion of its former supporters was to abstain or vote for one of the minor parties of the extreme left (Buzzanca, 2008; Mannheimer, 2008; Corbetta, Marcotti and Vanelli, 2008) while another sizeable proportion apparently heeded Veltroni's call to cast a 'useful vote' (*un voto utile*) by supporting the party (his own) best placed to stop Berlusconi.

Opportunities

In reflecting on opportunities, one's attention is, logically, drawn to the weaknesses of the incumbent government and its leader. Silvio Berlusconi has acquired a position in Italian politics that is pretty-much hegemonic – a position only slightly dented (perhaps by the Noemi Letizia affair) in the European election, which saw his party take 35.3 percent of the vote, somewhat below the average of 40.2 percent attributed to him by opinion polls from the end of February.[5] On the one hand, he is the fulcrum around which the centre right is built; on the other hand, opposition to him is the only common denominator of the parties on the centre left. It thus remains the case, now as it was before the election, that 'to be on the centre right means to support Berlusconi, to be on the centre left means to oppose him' (Urbani, 2009: 6). On the one hand, this is a source of weakness and division for the centre left; for while, until recently, the PD has sought to expand towards the centre by shelving anti-Berlusconi rhetoric, this has deprived it still further of any

---

[4] Just one blog post will have to suffice to illustrate the kind of reaction with which RC compromises were often greeted:

> Rifondazione has been embalmed. Incapable of reacting to any of the attacks of the centrists. Full of hang-ups. It's afraid that all its actions might bring a governmental crisis, but until now nothing of what has been proposed by Rifondazione has been discussed, the CPT are still in place, the Bossi-Fini law is still in force, the Biagi law continues to damage the lives of millions of workers, educational reform is not discussed, the PACS have become DICO but no one says anything, infrastructural projects are being re-proposed by a di Pietro out of control, not to mention the war… For the sake of keeping Prodi on his feet, Rifondazione is prepared to expel even its senators. Between Rifondazione and the social movements a chasm is opening up. Rifondazione does not represent them any more. Words of an active member. What's the point of keeping alive a government that pursues the policies of the right? (http:\\partigianamente.splinder.com/post /11297256)

[5] http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elezioni_europee_del_2009_(Italia)

clear identity leaving it vulnerable to the incursions of its allies to which many of its voters feel closer in any event (Diamanti, 2008: 1).

On the other hand, it provides the centre left with a two-fold opportunity. First, since the success of Berlusconi is *so* central to the cohesion of the centre right, it means that the unity of its constituent elements depends very heavily on his continued popularity – and this leaves them naturally vulnerable. Ample confirmation of this was offered by the experience of the last Berlusconi government: as long as his charisma brought the coalition as a whole success, then it could remain united; but once his began to fade, then not unnaturally the constituent parties sought to shore up their own popularity by heightening the salience of core issues on which they conflicted: demands for social protection and state intervention, in the case of the southern-based UDC and National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale, AN); welfare chauvinism and regional autonomy for the Northern League (Lega Nord, LN). And not unnaturally, every time Berlusconi seemed to falter, conflict – stemming from the aspirations of AN and the UDC to capture leadership of the coalition for themselves – was reinforced.

In the second place, though Berlusconi's position may not be immediately vulnerable, it has seemed so on the odd occasion since the start of the current media gossip about his private life.[6] Especially in the lead-up to the G8 Summit, there was the sense, as he visibly struggled to defend himself against allegations of lying and against increasingly strident media satire, that he was beginning to loose control of events and that the international prestige of the country was being undermined as a result. The loss of authority that seemed to be the consequence appeared, to judge from press reports, to have as its concomitant, the appearance of cracks in the loyalty of his followers.[7] However this may be, what is almost certain is that Berlusconi, given his age, will leave the political scene in the next few years rather than any later. Then, it is reasonable to expect some turmoil on the centre right arising from the uncertainty this may create for the future of the People of Freedom (Popolo della Libertà, PdL) whose image and organisation, despite everything, seems to be very heavily dependent on the image and the power in it of the entrepreneur.

A second opportunity seems to be opened up by the current divisions on the centre right, divisions which may, paradoxically, have been fuelled by the efforts to give it greater cohesion through the formation of the PdL. One thinks here of the recent conflict over funding for the South, and the related initiatives – attributed to Sicilian regional president, Raffaele Lombardo, and PdL spokespersons Gianfranco Miccichè and

---

[6] One hesitates to call it a 'scandal' as the revelations seem to have scandalised foreign observers more than they have ordinary Italians.

[7] See, for example, Guy Dinmore (2009: 9) in the *Financial Times* on 25 June: 'Ministers are falling into several camps. Those whose futures depend on Mt Berlusconi surviving, are vocal in defending him… Women groomed by Mr Berlusconi – including Mara Carfagna (equal opportunities minister) and Stefania Prestigiacomo (environment) – are loyal, but in the current circumstances find it difficult to speak out. Then there are key figures who have largely kept silent, seeing a future beyond Mr Berlusconi while hoping any succession will be orderly… [For example] Giulio Tremonti, finance minister, has the advantage of close ties with the Northern League'.

Antonio Martino – for the creation of a new Party of the South (Partito del Sud) (Sorgi, 2009; Schianchi, 2009). And one wonders whether the conflict would have had quite the division and significance it appears to have had before the PdL came into being: in the past, political expressions of the north-south divide in Italian politics might have taken the form of conflict between AN and the UDC on one side and the LN on the other, enabling Berlusconi and FI to pose as mediators, holding the ring and keeping the parties together. Now, with the merger between FI and AN, and with the UDC out of the coalition altogether, the conflict cannot but appear as a division within Berlusconi's *own* party, with the concomitant result of rendering the entrepreneur himself more vulnerable than he might otherwise have been.

Further divisions were opened up by the salvos launched by Umberto Bossi and the LN in July and August 2009 concerning the teaching of dialects in northern schools; giving the same constitutional status to regional flags as to the national flag; wage differentials (*gabbie salari*) as between those employed in the northern and southern parts of the country. In many respects, the LN is, like the parties of the radical left, an 'outsider party' (Deschower, 2004) needing to tread a path that lies between sustaining the Government in office, and acting as an 'opposition in government'. Like IdV, the LN fishes in the same pool of voters as its putative ally: flow-of-the vote charts show that in 2008, by far the largest portion of its striking advance was made up of those who two years previously had voted for FI, AN or the UDC (De Sio, 2008b: 65). Consequently, its spokespersons have an incentive to seek media attention by means of outbursts the nature of which cannot but be such as to sow divisions within the PdL given the 'composite' nature of the larger party. Such actions enable the LN to reassure core supporters it has not sold out, but do have the tendency of reducing government stability (Rosso, 2009: 3).

Threats

Arguably, the LN cannot afford to 'rock the boat' too much without the risk of its actions backfiring on it. If, consequently, the Government is able to retain the much greater degree of cohesiveness compared to its predecessors that it has shown hitherto, then it will wield an armament very dangerous for its adversaries; for under those circumstances, it will be much better placed than its predecessors to engage in that permanent campaigning – using support mobilisation as a key resource for governing, while using governing as an instrument to build and sustain support – that is essential for survival in mediated democracies (Roncarolo and Belluati, 2008). The significance of this can be seen by comparison with the previous Prodi government which found that effective use of communication as a tool in the battle to control the political agenda was extremely difficult because it had to manage a coalition composed of large numbers of parties each driven to keep salient its own distinctiveness by the imperatives built into the 2005 electoral law (Floridia, 2008). Not surprisingly, then, the government found it difficult to control the political agenda, and therefore the flow of communication. Thus it could do little to counter opposition portrayals of it as ineffective or, hence, the decline in its popularity. The Berlusconi government, with its coalition of two, and a cabinet in which the Prime Minister's own party has an absolute majority, has difficulties that come nowhere near these in terms of order of magnitude.

The consequences, in terms of the contrast in levels of popularity of Government and Prime Minister can be seen from the data presented in Figures 2 and 3. While at the start of Berlusconi's mandate 53 percent had 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in him as Prime Minister, eight months on the proportion was 55 percent. The proportion expressing 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in the Government as a whole has remained more or less stable at around a half. Now compare these with the proportions expressing confidence in Prodi and his government over the first eight months of *their* mandates. From Figure 3 we can see that though they start out from proportions actually higher than those marking the start of the current prime minister and government, the proportions then fall away rapidly to levels much lower than those enjoyed by the current incumbents.

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

Public opinion

To state the obvious, it seems unlikely that an agenda for greater equality will have much chance of success in the absence of both supportive attitudes among the public at large, and a willingness of those with such attitudes to support parties in a position to pursue the agenda. To enable us to explore these issues, Table 2 shows the results of a series of polls, which involved asking respondents for their opinions about a number of current issues. The polls were selected, from those made available by the Prime Minister's office through the web site http://www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it/, as ones which seemed likely to be most revealing of attitudes to equality. All have been undertaken since the 2008 election. Responses in the category to the left (second and third columns) are assumed to reflect a positive orientation to the ideal of equality; responses in the category to the right (columns four and five), a less positive or a negative orientation.

[Table 2 about here]

Obviously, the utility of these data is limited. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that on four of the six issues, a concern for equality seems to outweigh the opposite orientation, and that the two cases where this is not true both relate to the issue of immigration. Also worth noting is that supporters of centre right and centre left are much more sharply distinguished in terms of their attitudes to this issue than in terms of their attitudes to the others. Thus 90.1 and 89.6 percent of supporters of the PdL and LN respectively, but only 41.9 and 44.1 percent of PD and IdV supporters respectively, think that the Government's decision to turn away immigrants from Libya was right. By contrast, in relation to the issue of wage differentiation, the differences are much less marked: 60 percent of those who voted for the Pd/IdV coalition in 2008 worry that wage differentiation would increase the gap between North and South – but so do 49 percent of those who voted for the coalition headed by Berlusconi. Of course, the fact that the supporters of party A are more likely to take position X than Y than are the supporters of party B, does not on its own allow us to make the inference that those who take position X rather than Y are more likely to support party A than party B. However, the closer A

and B are to each other in size, the more entitled we are to make this inference and from other information at our disposal, we can be confident that the inference is valid in this case.[8]

This points to the conclusion or the hypothesis that though by and large Italian voters' outlooks incline more towards egalitarianism than towards in-egalitarianism, any advantage this brings to parties whose agendas are closest to the egalitarian end of the spectrum – the parties of the centre left – is counterbalanced by the effect of specific issues on which the balance of opinion is decidedly in-egalitarian. In other words, if the data suggest that those with egalitarian attitudes are on the whole more likely to support the centre left than the centre right, then issues like immigration almost certainly reduce what would otherwise be the benefit for the centre left: Attitudes on this issue are by-and-large highly *in*-egalitarian; it is one over which the parties of the centre right have established 'issue ownership' (that is, they have built their political identity partly on the basis of it); it is one that, relative to other issues, carries a very high emotional charge – in part, it seems reasonable to suppose, because of the frequency with which, in public debate, immigration is linked with a similarly emotive issue, namely crime.

The problems this state of affairs poses for equality and for the centre left are, one seems entitled to assume, magnified by the massive imbalance in access to the media as between centre right and centre left; for levels of public concern in these areas seem to be less closely related to changes in the underlying reality than to changes in the way the underlying reality is reported. In a recent article published in the newspaper *la Repubblica*, Ilvo Diamanti (2009) notes that public concerns were very high in the late 1990s; that they subsided in the first five years of the new millennium; that they rose in the following two years, and subsided once again thereafter. And while 21 percent mentioned the fight against crime as the most important issue when deciding how to vote in 2008, only 12 percent did so in 2009. It is difficult to explain the coincidence of these variations with changes of government by appealing to changes in reported crime statistics, for these show trendless fluctuation since 1991 (and suggest that Italy is one of the safest countries in Europe). More likely as an explanation is changes in reporting: while the early evening news bulletins of the six main TV channels broadcast 3,500 items dedicated to crime in the second half of 2007, the figure fell to little more than 2,500 in the second half of 2008 and then to less than 2,000 in the first six months of 2009.

Finally, it is worth noting that if these disadvantages can be tackled, then the prospects for electoral change favourable to the Left appear quite good. In 2008, Veltroni's coalition obtained 13,686,501 votes for Berlusconi's 17,064,334. 5,025,028 did not vote, voted for the centre right or voted for some other party, having voted for the

---

[8] Working with Italian National Election Study data, Cavazza et al. (2008: 167) show that those for whom immigration is an especially salient concern were much more likely to vote for Berlusconi's coalition than for the coalition head by veltroni (the relevant percentages being 77.2 and 12.3). By contrast, if 33.1 percent of those for whom some form of economic insecurity was especially salient voted for Veltroni's coalition, 48.5 percent of them nevertheless voted for the coalition headed by Berlusconi.

centre left in 2006.[9] Had these people been persuaded to vote for Veltroni's coalition, then, even without the support of the 1,855,840 who voted for one of the non-aligned parties of the Left, the former Communist leader would have won easily. There is little need to rehearse the limits of pencil-and-paper exercises of this kind. The point is that the number of voters *potentially available* to it is such that the Italian Left can win. To suggest, as Emiliano Brancaccio did in a recent roundtable in *MicroMega* (Revelli et al., 2009), that the Left is confronted with the prospect of 'a long and cold winter' strikes me as unduly pessimistic.

The pressure-group arena

Measures conducive to greater equality can be pursued as much through pressure exerted upon the institutions of government from the outside, as through the autonomous initiatives of those staffing the institutions. So, given that to be on the Left means to pursue objectives, in whatever form, that will extend equality, our analysis will be incomplete without some reflection on what, aside from the party system and public opinion, is currently going on in civil society.

Here we have seen in recent years a number of significant changes connected with the decline of the 'red' and 'white' subcultures and in the religious and ideological certainties of the Cold War period, which have created space for the growth of a 'new associationism'. This has been expressed by a wide range of small groups, cooperatives, non-profit and volunteer organisations, 'pragmatic, rather than ideological, inclusive rather than exclusive, non-violent' (Ginsborg, 2003: 121). Between 1999 and 2003, the number of non-governmental organisations rose from 170 to 200, while between 2001 and the end of 2003, the number of voluntary organisations rose by 14.9 percent. Meanwhile, between 2001 and 2004, the number of social cooperatives grew from 5,515 to 7,100 (Censis, 2005: 14-15). The apparent growth in civic commitment seems to have been accompanied by a growth in protest activity, with the number of street demonstrations of various kinds rising from 3,576 in 2000, to 7,022 in 2004 (Censis, 2005: 13).

We would suggest that the two may well be different manifestations of a single phenomenon, that is, a growth in civic engagement or activity that in some way implies a commitment to the welfare of the collectivity. In the context of a populist politics – which has encouraged an individualism (rooted in familistic assumptions) that can and sometimes does spill over into instances of high-level corruption and collusion with criminal organisations – such commitment, we would suggest, carries connotations of opposition to the centre right, and adherence to egalitarian ideals. Of course, protest can be driven by all kinds of objectives, of the Right as well as of the Left. However, we are persuaded that the emergence of this 'new opposition' ('new' because it has often appeared to challenge the authority of the centre-left parties, uncertain how to respond) is left-wing rather than right-wing in character, partly because all the most high-profile

---

[9] The figures refer to the majority premium arena and are calculated from the data for the 2008 election outcome provided on the Ministry of the Interior's web site (http://politiche.interno.it/politiche /camera080413/C000000000.htm) and from the percentages given in Table 4.3 of De Sio (2008b: 62).

protests of recent years appear to have had such a character. One thinks, here, of the school-students' protests against government-sponsored education reforms; the protests of the *Girotondi*; the enormous demonstrations and strikes against the proposals of second Berlusconi government to abolish article 18 of the Workers' Statute; protests against the war in Afghanistan; the European Social Forum; the protests against the invasion of Iraq, with their rainbow-coloured 'peace flags' hung from innumerable balconies up and down the country; the protests, in Val di Susa, against the proposed high-speed rail link between Lyon and Turin.

The most significant of waves of protest since the 2008 election have been the ones that took place in October and November last year following the publication of government proposals, which have since become law, for the reform of schools and universities. There were, in a range of major cities, a number of street demonstrations, involving occasional clashes with the police. There were also strikes and occupations of university buildings, the biggest single set of protests probably taking place on 30 October when the trade unions brought school and university staff out on strike and there were protest marches in several cities, with the one in Rome involving a million people according to the organisers.

We think that this heightened level of activism speaks positively to the prospects for equality and the Left because of what appears to be the relative efficacy of protest as a form of political activity in Italy. On the one hand, the long-standing weakness of the state (whose roots can be traced back at least as far as Unification itself) has on several notable occasions in the post-war period led the authorities, under pressure to give proof of the ability effectively to remain sovereign within their territory, to manage protest repressively (one thinks here of the policing of street demonstrations in the 1950s, and the strategy of tension in the 1970s). However, perhaps because of the very same weakness, the authorities have also historically been rather receptive to the substantive demands of protestors. One thinks, to take some of the most famous post-war examples, of the following.

- 1969 and 1970, in the immediate aftermath of the workers' and students' protests, saw
  - o   improvements to the pensions system;
  - o   the passage of the so-called Workers' Statute (which among other things established the right of workers to meet and organise at their places of work);
  - o   the introduction of divorce and the legislation necessary to give effect to the constitutional provisions providing for the establishment of decentralised (i.e. regional) government and for abrogative referenda.
- In 1976, the movement for urban renewal was successful in obtaining passage of law no. 278. This increased the opportunities for popular participation in local decision-making by providing for the election of decentralised, neighbourhood councils in municipalities of over 30,000 inhabitants.
- In the course of the 1980s, a large number of the social circles set up in the wake of the youth movement of 1977 gained official recognition as associations able to fill a number of the gaps in the provisions of the welfare state. A number of the circles even received public subsidies (Della Porta, 1996: 47, 79, 82).

Finally, it is worth suggesting that the success of any protest movement is likely to be positively correlated with the degree to which it is successful in establishing links with significant party-political actors, able to act as effective spearheads for the protesters. Perhaps the main reason why the anti-Gelmini protests died out rather rapidly and seem to have had no lasting consequences is precisely because they failed to do that. On the contrary, as a journalist seeking to provide a sketch of the outlooks of the students noted,

> Of Italian politicians there is not a single mention. [There is] opposition to the centre right and diffidence towards Veltroni and the Pd (Portanova, Riva and Schiavulli, 2008: 79).

One student declared: 'Let them not try again to take charge of the protest; it won't be accepted' (*e non provino ancora a metterci il cappello sopra, non passa*) (Portanova, Riva and Schiavulli, 2008: 79). This reflected a very strong anti-political mood in the protest movement that was summed up well by Filippo Andreatta, Professor of International Relations at the University of Bologna. When asked whether he thought the anxieties expressed by the student protestors were closer to being existential or political, he replied:

> I would say a pre-political anxiety. I see in it the lack of any hope rather than a political objective. Unlike in 1968, the protest has not been ignited by any ideology. It is directed against the political class as a whole, which is not seen as representative of the country at large (Portanova, Riva and Schiavulli, 2008: 75).

The significance of this is that a movement that goes beyond a certain point in rejecting politics must, surely, weaken itself by undermining its ability itself to act politically.

Conclusion

What we have sought to do in this paper is quite simply to take what evidence is most immediately available about the current features of party politics, public opinion and pressure-group activity in Italy to see what it suggests to us about the current state of the Left and its prospects, on the assumption that its apparent current weakness invites attempts to account for it. Our overview has to a large extent been of an impressionistic nature, but it has, we think, thrown up some specific suggestions that might now be explored in a more rigorous fashion (e.g. through the analysis of the 2008 ITANES data, which has just become publicly available); and it has thrown a question mark over the assumption of Left weakness itself.

For at least two reasons, it is at least highly doubtful that the Left is significantly weaker now than it has been at various times in the past. First, if the terms 'Left' and 'Right' refer to attitudes towards the ideal of egalitarianism, then our impression is that those involved in the pursuit of objectives that will increase equality, currently have significant party-political and electoral resources they can count upon, as well as a

number of potential opportunities in the weaknesses of the centre right and in a vibrant civil society. It cannot be automatically assumed that the prospects for left-wing party actors are bleaker now than they were two years ago when they were burdened with the responsibility of sustaining an unpopular government and under constant attack from putative allies to the right on the one hand, and from disappointed core supporters on the other.

Second, casting one's mind further back, one is reminded that once Italy had a large communist party with over thirty percent of the vote and a deep-rooted left-wing sub-culture in the central regions of the country; today the subculture has almost ceased to exist as such and parties with the communist label struggle to achieve a fraction of the vote of the PCI. But in terms of egalitarian demands once controversial but now taken for granted, it is obvious that the Left is immeasurably stronger today than when the PCI was at its height. It is enough to think of the significant advances that have been made over the past thirty years in terms of gender equality, in terms of the equality of those of different sexual orientations, of those belonging to different ethnic groups, of those at different stages of the life-cycle and so forth.

Of course those who are on the Italian Left in terms of their self perceptions will understandably argue that much remains to be done, and that the likelihood that a government will take office in the near future with anything like an incisive agenda in these and other areas of inequality seems small. One cannot but concur with both points. But one also feels moved to suggest that pessimism must be tempered by the awareness that the pursuit of equality will *always* be difficult even in the most favourable of circumstances. There are at least two reasons for this. One is that as compared to the Right, the Left is significantly handicapped by the much greater difficulty it has in achieving unity. In seeking to defend the extant against demands for greater equality, the Right has room for considerable ideological flexibility. The Right thus has

> an enormous unifying capacity because it is open to the most unprincipled cultural adventures and the most audacious importations. The left, by contrast, requires clarity of thought, theoretical rigour, and is thus lacerated by recurring, violent ideological conflicts because it conceives of the movement in terms of its inescapable relationship with theory (Terzi, 2003: 61).

In the second place, the principle of liberal democracy itself massively advantages the Right. By institutionalising political conflict and by offering formal political equality while remaining indifferent to substantive inequalities in the distribution of power, it automatically disadvantages those seeking redistribution; for on the one hand, it renders illegitimate any political project whose pursuit fails to respect its own institutional principles. On the other hand, by virtue of the substantive power imbalance itself, it erects considerable barriers in the way of the construction of a majority that would allow the pursuit of redistribution by means that *are* deemed legitimate. Unless the Left is willing to put aside some of its awe of liberal democracy – to incline (in terms of Bobbio's four categories) less towards the centre left and more towards the far left – then it will continue, in Italy as elsewhere, to face an uphill struggle.

References

Bobbio, Norberto (2004), *Destra e sinistra: Ragioni e significati di una distinzione politica*, Rome: Donzelli.

Bertolino, Simone (2004), *Rifondazione comunista: Storia e organizzazione*, Bologna: il Mulino.

Buzzanca, S. (2008), 'Sinistra Arcobaleno, un voto su due al Pd', *la Repubblica*, 17 April, p.13.

Cavazza, Nicoletti, Corbetta, Piergiorgio and Roccato, Michele (2008), 'Il colore politico del insicurezza', pp.161-178 in ITANES, *Il ritorno di Berlusconi: Vincitori e vinti nelle elezioni del 2008*, Bologna: il Mulino.

Censis (2005), *39º Rapporto annuale sulla situazione sociale del paese*, http://www.censis.it/

Chiaramonte, Alessandro (2008), 'How Prodi's Unione won by a handful of votes' pp.203-222 in James L. Newell (ed.), *The Italian General Election of 2006: Romano Prodi's Victory*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Chiaramonte, Alessandro (2009), 'Italian voters: Berlusconi's victory and the 'new' Italian party system', pp.193-210 in James L. Newell (ed.), *The Italian General Election of 2008: Berlusconi Strikes Back*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Corbetta, P. Marcotti, P and Vanelli, V (2008), 'Elezioni 2008 – Flussi elettorali in 15 città', Istituto Cattano, http://www.cattaneo.org/pubblicazioni/analisi/pdf/Analisi%20Cattaneo%20%20Flussi%20elettorali%202008%20in%2015%20citt%C3%A0%20(25%20giugno%202008).pdf

De Sio, L. (2008a), 'Elettori in movimento', paper presented to the workshop, 'Elezioni del 14-15 aprile 2008: prime analisi' organised by Sise (Società Italiana di Studi Elettorali), Florence, 14 May, www.studielettorali.it.

De Sio, L. (2008b), 'Il secondo motore del cambiamento: I flussi del voto', pp.57-70 in ITANES, *Il ritorno di Berlusconi: Vincitori e vinti nelle elezioni del 2008*, Bologna: il Mulino.

Della Porta, Donatella (1996), *Movimenti Collettivi e Sistema Politico in Italia 1960-1995*, Rome and Bari: Laterza.

Deschower, Kris (2004), 'New Parties in Government: A Framework for Analysis', paper presented to the workshop on 'New Parties in Government, ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, University of Uppsala, 13-18 April.

Diamanti, Ilvo (2008), 'Il "non luogo dei democratici" *la Repubblica,* 21 December, p.1.

Diamanti, Ilvo (2009), 'La paura a telecomando', *la Repubblica*, 9 August, pp.1, 6.

Dinmore, Guy (2009), 'Berlusconi whispers grow louder', *Financial Times*, 25 June, p.9.

Feltrin, P. and Natale, P. (2008), 'Elezioni politiche 2008. Primi risultati e scenari', *Polena* 5(1): 143-167.

Floridia, A. (2008) 'Gulliver Unbound. Possible Electoral Reforms and the 2008 Italian Election: Toward an end to 'Fragmented Bipolarity?'', *Modern Italy* 13(3): 317-332.

Ginsborg, Paul (2003), *Italy and its Discontents*, London: Penguin.

Lopapa, C. (2008), 'E nelle urne i partiti trovano un tesoro', *la Repubblica*, 17 April, p.4.

Mannheimer, R. (2008), 'Vince il bipolarismo Carroccio e Di Pietro nuove «ali radicali»', *Corriere della Sera*, 15 April, p.3.

Portanova, Mario, Riva, Gigi and Barbara Schiavulli (2008), 'Giovani Contro', *l'Espresso*, no. 44, 6 November, pp.72-79.

Revelli, Marcao, Dal Lago, Alessandro and Brancaccio, Emiliano (2009), 'Il freddo inverno della sinistra italiana', *MicroMega*, no. 4, 2009, pp.39-53.

Roncarolo, F. and Belluati, M. (2008) 'Surfing and trying to keep afloat. The political communication process in a highly fragmented coalition led by a 'Great Mediator'', *Modern Italy* 13(3): 333-348.

Rosso, Umberto (2009), 'Ora nel Pdl suona l'allarme "Così il Senatùr ci indebolisce"', *la Repubblica*, 17 August, p.3.

Schianchi, Francesca (2009) 'Nasce il partito del Sud e spaventa i colonnelli Pdl' *la Stampa*, 11 July, http://www.lastampa.it/redazione/cmsSezioni/politica/200907 articoli/45405girata.asp

Sorgi, Marcello (2009), 'Dalla Sicilia alla Campania il Partito del Sud mette le ali', *la Stampa*, 10 July, http://www.lastampa.it/redazione/cmsSezioni/politica/200907 articoli/45374girata.asp

Terzi, Riccardo, (2003), 'La natura della destra e i dilemma della sinistra', *Democrazia e Diritto*, no. 1, anno XLI, pp.61-68.

Urbani, G. (2009), Interview with Aldo Cazzullo, 'Urbani: il progretto del «nuovo» Pdl? La debolezza del Pd ci contaggia', *Corriere della Sera*, 15 January, p.6.

Table 1: Chamber of Deputies election results, 1994 – 2008

	Majoritarian arena					
	N votes	% votes	N votes	% votes	N votes	% votes
	Centre left		Centre right		Others	
1994	12,614,738	32.8	Polo 15,179,764	39.4	8,148,110	21.1
			AN 2,561,546	6.7		
1996	Ulivo					
	15,729,124	42.2	Polo 15,028,275	40.3	1,508,969	4.0
	Prog. 1,000,244	2.7	League 4,038,511	10.8		
2001	16,284,443	43.7	16,936,038	45.5	4,004,342	10.8
	Proportional arena					
	Centre left		Centre right		Others	
1994	13,298,244	34.3	17,944,799	46.4	7,474,000	19.3
1996	13,017,475	34.7	19,775,087	52.7	4,696,765	12.5
2001	12,976,189	35.0	18,433,911	49.7	5,673,061	15.3
2006	19,497,354	49.6	19,367,032	49.3	343,028	0.1
2008	PD/IdV					
	14,088,968	37.5	PdL/LN 17,394,890	46.3	2,771,899	7.4
	SA 1,152,781	3.1	UDC 2,131,759	5.7		

Sources: figures for 2001 and 1996 elections taken from 'Riepilogo elezioni politiche', http://brunik.altervista.org/20030922221253.html; figures for 1994 elections taken from http://www.rassegna.it/elezioni/indice.htm and from http://elezionistorico.interno.it/liste.php?tp=C&dt=27/03/1994&cta=I&tpEnte=A&tpSeg=C&numEnte=&sut1=&sut2=&sut3=&descEnte=&descArea=ITALIA; figures for 2006 elections taken from Chiaramonte (2008); figures for 2008 elections taken from Chiaramonte (2009).
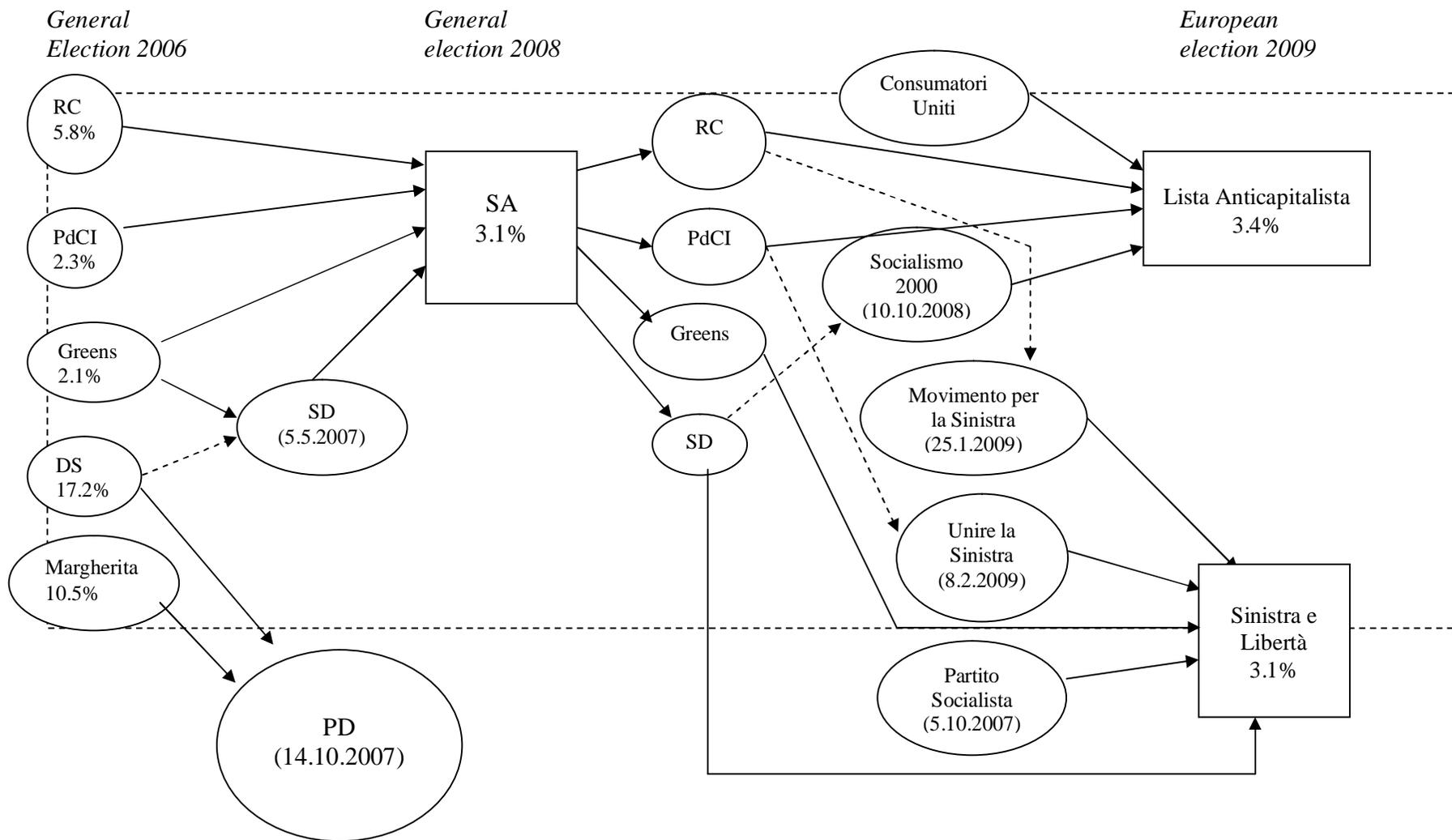
Table 2: Public attitudes on issues related to equality

Question	Response category	%	Response category	%
Dario Franceschini has proposed that measures to tackle the crisis should include the payment of a monthly unemployment cheque, by the State, to those who lose their jobs	In favour	60.0	Against	37.0
Cohabiting couples should have the same rights as married couples	Agree	58.1	Disagree / don't know / no answer	41.9
Would you agree with the idea of giving the right to vote in local elections to immigrants who have been settled in the country for some years, have a steady job and pay taxes?	Yes	52.6	No	39.8
With which of these statements do you most agree? 'Differentiating wages and salaries in different areas of the country in relation to differences in the cost of living would	increase still further the gap between North and South and increase poverty in the southern regions'	50.0	be a resource for the South by leading firms to invest where the cost of labour is lower'	37.0
Do you agree that clandestine immigration should be made a crime?	No	30.0	Yes	68.0
Recently, the Government turned away a boat bringing immigrants from Libya. In your view, was this decision	Wrong?	25.6	Right?	67.5

Note: the difference between 100, and row totals is accounted for by 'don't know' / no answer.

Source: http://www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it/: IPR Marketing (10 August 2009); Demos&Pi (21 May 2009); Demos&Pi (30 March 2009); ISPO S.R.L. (9 March 2009); CRESPI RICERCHE (5 September 2008); IPSOS Public Affairs (28 May 2008).

Figure 1: Alliance formation and division among the parties of the 'radical left', 2006 – 2009

General Election 2006

General election 2008

European election 2009

RC 5.8%

PdCI 2.3%

Greens 2.1%

DS 17.2%

Margherita 10.5%

SA 3.1%

SD (5.5.2007)

PD (14.10.2007)

RC

PdCI

Greens

SD

Consumatori Uniti

Socialismo 2000 (10.10.2008)

Movimento per la Sinistra (25.1.2009)

Unire la Sinistra (8.2.2009)

Partito Socialista (5.10.2007)

Lista Anticapitalista 3.4%

Sinistra e Libertà 3.1%

Note:

Ovals indicate independent parties and organisations
Squares and rectangles indicate electoral coalitions
Full arrows indicate majority shifts
Broken arrows indicate minority shifts
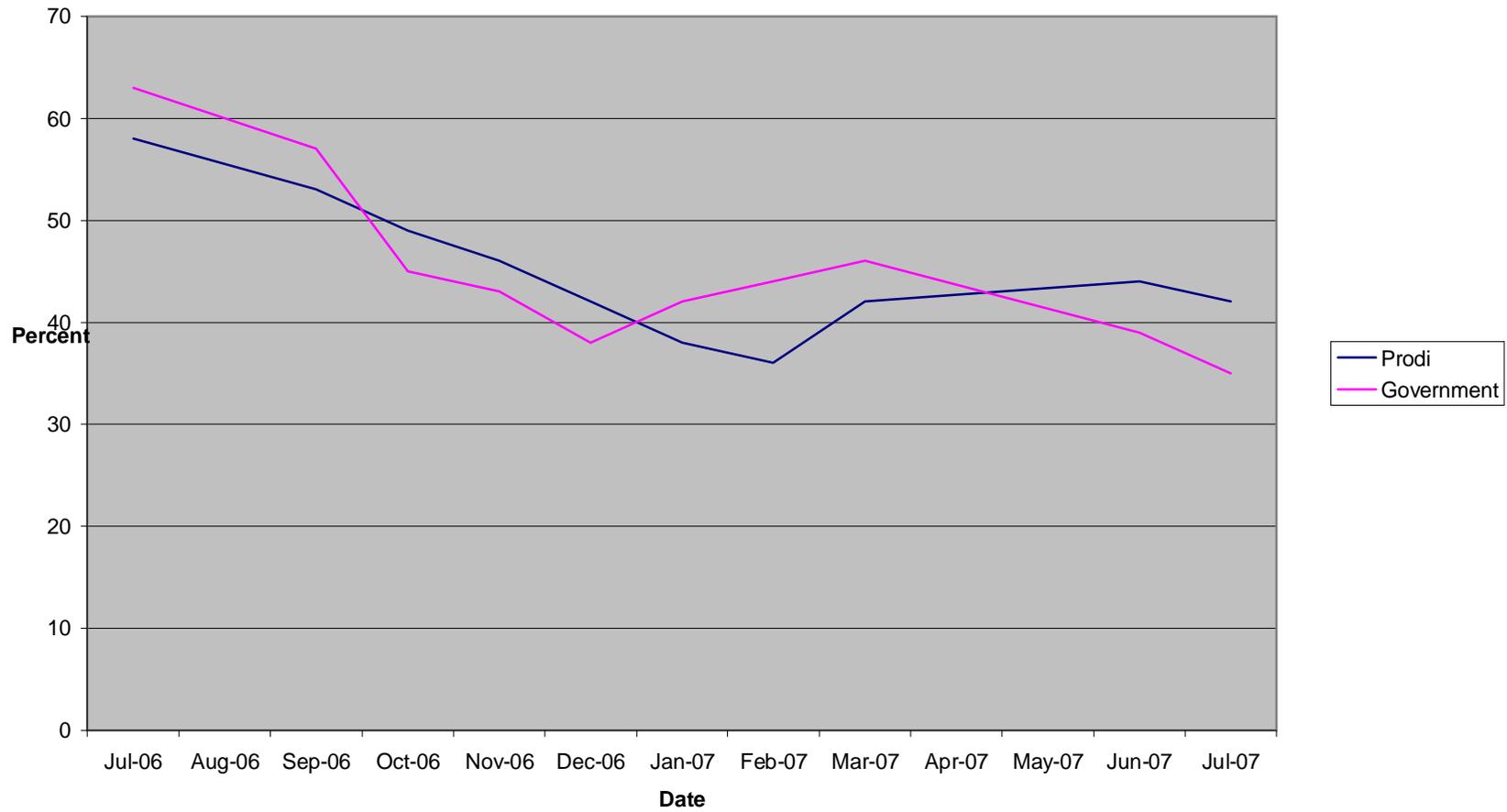
Abbreviations:

RC   Rifondazione Comunista
PdCI   Partrito dei Comunisti Italiani
DS   Democratici di Sinistra
SD   Sinistra Democratica
PD   Partito Democratico

Figure 2 Percent with 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in Berlusconi as PM and in his government
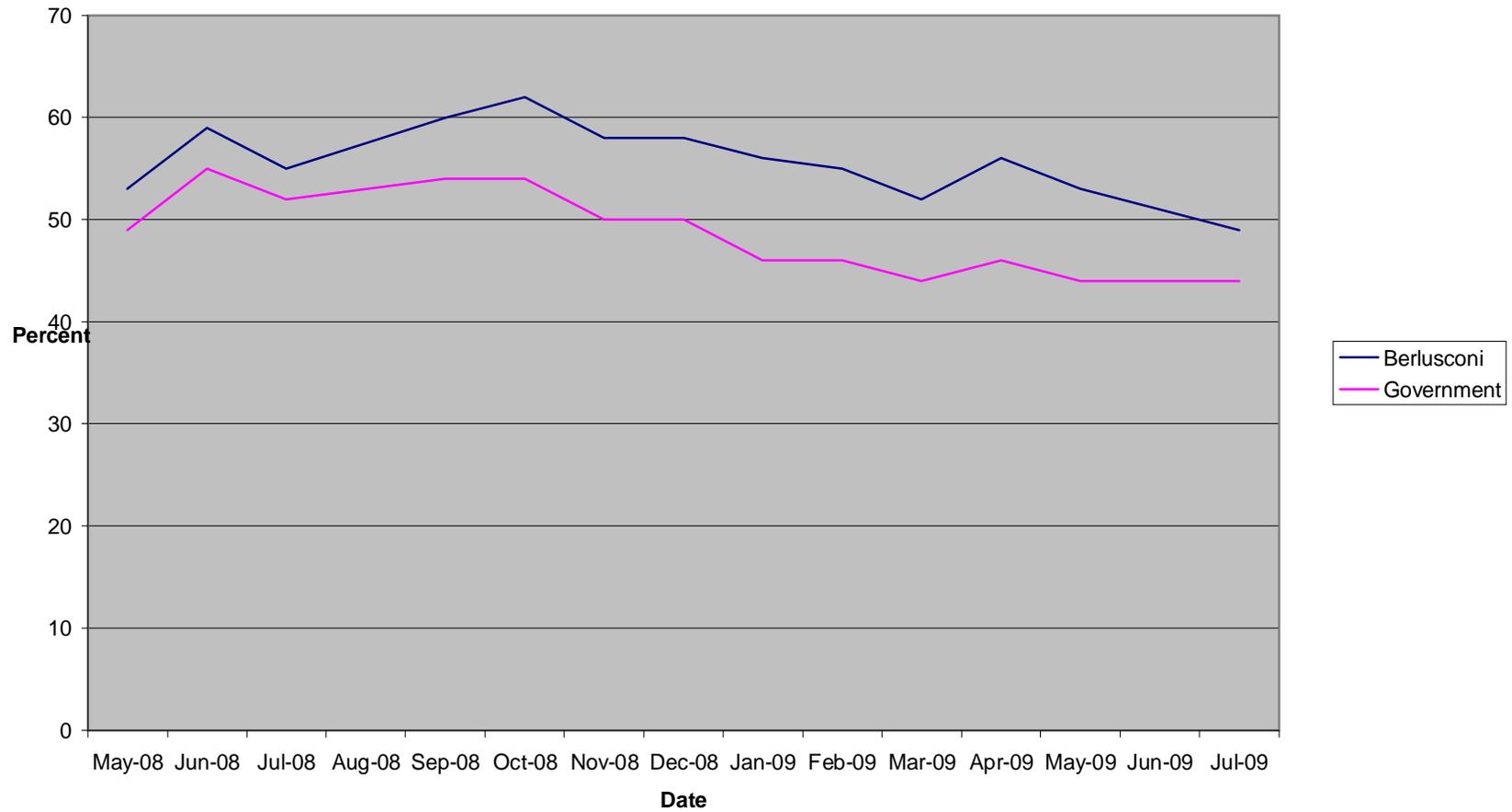
Source: IPR Marketing, www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it

Figure 3 Percent with 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in Prodi as PM and in his government

Source: IPR Marketing, www.sondaggipoliticoelettorali.it