

# LUISS



Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche

Cattedra di Political Sociology

**TRANSFORMING A 17% INTO THE MAJORITY: HOW  
THE LEAGUE OF MATTEO SALVINI DOMINATES THE  
ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE WHILE BEING THE  
THIRD PARTY IN PARLIAMENT**

**RELATORE**

Prof. Michele Sorice

**CANDIDATO**

Giulio De Angelis

Matr. 081952

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the causes of the extraordinary success of the League, which has been able to become the central political force in the Italian landscape, while having obtained only 17% of votes at the national elections the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2018. This outcome was already a major success, considering that the League’s last result during the 2013 elections had been just 4%, but it became the beginning of a progressive and relentless climb to power, as shown today by electoral pools. This has been possible due to a set of factors that vary from the strategic relationships the League has founded with the other parties before and after the elections, to the ability of its leader Matteo Salvini to collect consensus. Therefore, the central question with which

this paper deals is the following: how has the League become able to transform its 17% (third Italian party) into the “majority”?.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis will be carried out through three sections. In the first one we trace back the history of the Northern League, from its foundation, to the transformation into the League of Salvini. In this analysis great emphasis is posed on the electoral victories and defeats of the party, while in the second paragraph the focus switches to the differences between the former Northern League, and the new part led by Matteo Salvini. In the second section we move to a study completely based on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March elections. Firstly analysing the results and the strategic implication of those for the main parties, and secondly scrutinising deeply the “Contract of Government” stipulated by the League and the Five Star Movement. In the third and last section we will analyse the first year of government in two different ways. At first through an analysis of the results obtained by the two parties on the base of what they promised in the contract and what they were actually able to carry out in the first year. Then, focusing on the League, we will explore the communicative strategy adopted by Salvini in this period, and the implications of it.

As it may be already clear from this introduction, a central role in this study is held by the figure of Matteo Salvini, the undiscussed leader of the League, considered by many the central engine of the party, and the main reason for this striking success (Passarelli, Tuorto 2018, p.38) (Diamanti, Pregliasco 2019, p.16). In particular in the third section we will analyse the role of communication in shaping the success of the party, and in this field Salvini is clearly pivotal.

## **1 THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LEAGUE**

Since its formation the League has experienced many peaks and falls, even before the arrival of Salvini. In this chapter we will see what has been the role of the Northern League in the political landscape from its formation, until the “revolution” led by Matteo Salvini.

### **1.1 FROM THE FORMATION UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF SALVINI**

The lapse indicated in this title is clearly an extremely broad one, that would require an entire book to be explored. What we are interested in here is to identify the main traits of the party during time, with a particular focus on what has changed (especially in the last lustrous) and what instead has been kept constant. Moreover, as I have stated in the introduction, the figure of Salvini is of central interest for us, and that is the reason why in this section we are also going to see what has been the role of the current leader of the party in all those years.

To begin, we can set the foundation date of this party back in February 1991, when a group of regionalist and autonomist movements merged and officially founded Northern League (NL), of

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<sup>1</sup> We talk of a “majority” because, even if with just 186 members (128 deputies and 58 senators) out of 946 members of Parliament (628 deputies and 318 senators), that is 19% of seats, the League is able to act as it was a majority party. Data from the Chamber of Deputies and Senate websites, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2019.

which Umberto Bossi was the secretary.<sup>2</sup> At the time Matteo Salvini was already a militant, and, in 1993 he was elected in the city council in Milan. In 1994 we have the first governmental experience of the Northern League in the Berlusconi I government. In that year, thanks to its membership into the centre-right coalition, the party was able to get 180 seats in Parliament with only 8.4% of votes. To get an idea of the weight of the NL in the political landscape we can say that this result represents approximately the average outcome for the Northern League before 2018 elections (actually, during years the party has faced various falls, with percentages around 4%), indeed, the highest result before March elections came in 1996, when the NL got 10.1% of votes (in that occasion, however, they only got 86 seats in Parliament, since they were running alone). This makes it easier to understand why the 17% of 2018 is considered a major victory for the party, but this is an issue that we will debate with greater focus in the following sections.

The successful result of 1996 was an important turning point for the Northern League, because it prompted an intensification in the secessionist will of the party, which claimed the independence of Padania (term used to refer to the region of the Po valley). The party even led a referendum in 1997 to make Padania a Federal Republic (sovereign and independent).<sup>3</sup> In that occasion the abstention of the League from the centre-right coalition was pivotal for the defeat of the formation led by Berlusconi (also because the League got such an high share of votes), and this led to a centre-left government (with Romano Prodi).

In 2001 elections the League goes back into the centre right coalition and the script is the same of 1994: the centre-right coalition wins, but Bossi's party got only 3.9% of votes. In the meanwhile Matteo Salvini is still a member of the city council of Milan (role that he will hold until 2012).

In 2004, at the European elections, the League regains some support, obtaining 5.1% of votes, and in this occasion Salvini gets elected (he will keep the seat just for 2 years).

In the following years the League continues to regain support: in 2006 it gains 4.6% of votes (a bit less than the percentage of 2004, but we should keep in mind that those were European elections), so a light increase in respect to 2001; in 2008 the League gains 8.2% of votes playing another time an important role in the success of the centre-right coalition. In these elections Matteo Salvini got a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. However Salvini will keep this seat for just 1 year, because in 2009 he will be elected again at the European Parliament, option that he favoured.

## **1.2 SALVINI'S LEAGUE, A NEW ONE?**

From this moment on Salvini becomes the central figure of the Northern League (the word "Northern" in the name of the party will disappear only in 2018 elections). In 2013 the party only gains 4.1% of votes (by the way, Salvini was elected as a deputy, but gave up the seat to remain in the European Parliament). This result was a clear electoral defeat and it could have meant the end of

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<sup>2</sup> This party can be defined as a federation, composed of the following 6 "sub-parties": Liga Veneta, Lega Lombarda, Piemont Autonomista, Uniuin Ligure, Lega Emiliano-Romagnola and Alleanza Toscana.

<sup>3</sup> The result of the referendum was of 97% of votes in favour of independence (almost 5 million total votes), but it had no legal relevance, and it was not recognised by the State.

the party, but instead it was the starting point of a rebirth of it. A small parenthesis should be opened to explain why it is not exaggerated to say that the NL could have disappeared in 2013, and, above all, why this did not happen. In 2012 a scandal emerged, concerning the high spheres of the formation, Bossi in first place, that were accused of having spent money of the party (coming from public finances) for private reasons. Borghese (Diamanti, Pregliasco, 2019, pp. 109 to 111) compares this case with another one of the same year, regarding the party of Antonio Di Pietro (leader of “Italia dei Valori”), that ended up losing almost all its consensus, and becoming politically irrelevant. However he identifies three reasons for which the League, instead, has been able to survive. Firstly, its solid and deeply-rooted party structure. In the second place, authoritative members able to inherit the leadership in the transitory phase (as Maroni). Finally, its importance in the centre-right coalition, with Berlusconi not willing to leave the party alone. Going back to the chronology of the NL, at the end of 2013 Salvini becomes the new Federal Secretary of the party, defeating in the primary elections Umberto Bossi (a landslide victory with 82% of votes). The new party’s leader will once again run for the European elections in 2014 where the League will get 6.2% of votes. We enter now in a distinct phase of the (Northern) League which is characterised by the new leadership of Matteo Salvini.

The shifting of the League from being a mere regionalist party towards a definite right-wing identity had started already at the beginning of the millennium, but the national scope of the party is a trait fundamentally introduced by Salvini, and clearly this corresponds to a partial abandoning of the northern issue. The battles carried out by the party became those typical of a sovereigntist formation, namely the conflict with the European Union (which, together with the praise of the Italian identity, are two faces of the same coin), or the fight against immigration. The secessionist battle was abandoned and the word “Northern” was removed from the symbol and from the name of the party. However, as Passarelli and Tuorto (2018) notice, the League is still strongly tied with the North: firstly for what concerns its electorate, but also in regard to its programme.

For the former point, it is sufficient to scrutinise the electoral results for each Italian Region in last elections.<sup>4</sup> For this scope we will divide Italy in three macro Regions on the base of the division used by ISTAT, that is the following.<sup>5</sup> North: Piemonte, Valle d’Aosta, Liguria, Lombardia, Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna (8 Regions). Centre: Toscana, Umbria, Marche, Lazio (4 Regions). South and Islands: Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna (8 Regions). The national result was 17.4%, so we will see here which are the Regions over and under this average result. Of the 8 Northern Regions 7 were above the average<sup>6</sup> and 1 (Valle d’Aosta) in line with it. Of the 4 Central Regions, Umbria was over the average, Toscana and Marche were in line, and Lazio below. All of the 8 Southern Regions were above the average. So, the Regions in line or above the average were 11, all of the 8 Northern Regions and 3 Central Regions, while the 9 below the average were all the Southern regions and 1 of those in the Centre. These results clearly depict a geographical cleavage within the country, and prove that the League, even in 2018 was by far stronger in the North. In this paper I am not mentioning the results of the 26<sup>th</sup> of May European Elections (2019), because of high temporal

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<sup>4</sup> Data taken from the Website of the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>5</sup> <http://dwcis.istat.it/cis/docs/4-8.htm>

<sup>6</sup> In Trentino Alto Adige the League got only 19.2% of votes (so not much more than the national average), but this is explained by the presence of the very strong SVP (provincial party) that got 24.2%

proximity of it with the date of writing. However in this occasion is interesting to compare the 2019 results with those of 2018. Indeed, even if two different kinds of elections (we should keep in mind also that in 2018 the turnout was 72%, while in 2019 it was only 56%), the tight linkages with national politics allow us to compare the two in order to derive the popularity of the main political parties. Following the same method used to observe the 2018 we can now see what has happened in May 2019, when the national average for the League has been 34.3%. Of the 8 Northern Regions 5 are over the average (Lombardia, Piemonte, Valle d'Aosta, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto), 2 are in line with the national result (Liguria, Emilia Romagna) and 1 (Trentino Alto Adige) is under the national average.<sup>7</sup> Of the Central Regions, 2 were above the average (Marche, Umbria), 1 in line with (slightly below) it (Toscana) and 1 below it (Lazio). In conclusion, of the 8 Southern Regions, 1 was in line with (slightly over) the national result (Abruzzo), and the other 7 below it. Again, the Regions above or in line with the national result were 11 (as it was in 2018), 7 from the North, 3 from the Centre and 1 from the South, while the 9 below the average came mainly from the South (7). This very brief analysis shows us that, even if the League has increased so much its consensus, its electoral base can still be found mainly in the North.

The second aspect thanks to which we can observe the linkage of the League with the North is the electoral programme of Salvini's party. Both measures as the flat tax, favouring entrepreneurs, and measures such as those aimed at protecting the "Made in Italy", seem more likely to benefit the North, due to the greater entity of its industrial capacity. Moreover, many voters of the League are productive entrepreneurs, scared by the economic and social crisis. The issue of immigration tends to be perceived as more relevant by the electors of the League, and this is in line with Northern perspective (in the South unemployment is seen as the central issue) (Passarelli, Tuorto, 2018). It is not surprising that the League's programme reflects those interests, firstly because policies favouring entrepreneurship are typical of a right-wing party, and secondly the League, even if having changed skin, is still the same party, so a total and radical distortion of the programme could not have taken place in such a small period. Indeed we should bear in mind that a deep transformation in the slogans, in the leader and in the electorate (that, as we have seen, has not changed so much) does not automatically imply a substantial transformation of the policies and programmes of the party.

## **2 THE LEAGUE AT THE ELECTIONS: ELECTORAL RESULTS, STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND GOVERNMENT ALLIANCE**

In this second section we will first see what are the results of the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 elections and the political implications of those, namely what are the alliances and hostilities between the main parties, and how those, together with their respective electoral weights, have determined the government alliance between the League and the Five Star Movement. The first two paragraphs will deal with these issues. The third paragraph will instead be an analysis of the "Contract for the Government of Change" stipulated by the two forces in order to determine the government agenda.

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<sup>7</sup> The League is still the first party with nearly 28% of votes, but again the SVP proves to be really strong getting 26% of votes.

## 2.1 ELECTORAL RESULTS

After the vote on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 the electoral results of the main parties were the following: 37% for the centre-right coalition (17.4% League, 14.2% Forza Italia, 4.3% Fratelli d'Italia)<sup>8</sup>, 32.5% for the M5S and 22.9% for the centre-left coalition (18.7% PD)<sup>9</sup>. Clearly, with no one having “50% plus 1” votes, we can't speak of an actual winner (even if, due to the rules of “Rosatellum”, the current electoral law, a parliamentary majority could result just from passing the 40% threshold). This is because none of the parties nor of the coalitions is able to form a government without receiving an external support. However, on political grounds, we can surely divide the parties in winners and losers, on the base of the bargaining power the gained, but also by comparing their results with their respective outcomes in past elections, to find out whether they have gained or lost support.

## 2.2 STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

We can start analysing the centre-right coalition. With its 37% they were the formation that collected the most votes, and this led some (evidently many right-wing politicians) to identify themselves as the winners when commenting the electoral results (some examples are Berlusconi, Meloni, Brunetta or Toti). However, even with such a large consensus, the coalition was not able to gain a majority of seats in Parliament, and consequently it did not have the possibility of forming a government. This is the reason why, after the vote, a bargaining phases took place between them, the Five Star Movement and the Democratic Party. Indeed a majority would have been possible only resulting from an alliance between two of those three formations. This process resulted extremely complicated due to the presence of various red lines imposed by the parties (we will see them in this paragraph, while commenting each formation). This said, a pivotal consequence of the vote for the centre-right coalition was the new internal equilibrium between the parties composing it. Indeed, the 4<sup>th</sup> of March vote recognised the League as the main party in the coalition, with a gap, in respect to Forza Italia, of more than 3 points, this is pivotal for two reasons: a political one and a practical one.

The political reason is the establishment of Salvini as the new leader of the right wing coalition, overcoming Berlusconi. This is also due to the fact that (a part from the actual results) the League found itself in a positive trend, both confirmed by its chronology of electoral results in the last years (which we have seen in the first section) and by the electoral polls that will come in the following months (those were clearly not available in that moment, but are for us a confirmation of the trends that were already hypothesised).

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<sup>8</sup> Also “Noi con l'Italia – UDC” was member of the coalition, with 1.3% of votes, but here we are focusing only on parties with a higher political relevance.

<sup>9</sup> Other parties in the coalition were “+Europa” (2.6%), “Italia Europa Insieme” (0.6%), “Civica Popolare Lorenzin” (0.5%), “SVP-PATT” (0.4%).

For what concerns the electoral results, we can briefly summarise (since we saw this more deeply in the first section) the path followed by the League in the last decades in light of the 2018 result. The starting point of the party's exploit dates back to 2001, when they got 3.9% of votes at national elections, and from that moment on they continued to raise their consensus. In 2006 they reached a percentage of 4.6%, which became 8.2% just two years later, in 2008. Finally, in 2018, the extraordinary 17.4% result can be considered a sort of natural arriving point for all this path (clearly this "arriving point" could be even crossed and overcome, as it has indeed happened). The result of 2013, a miserable 4.1%, is evidently not in line with the rest of the path. The reason for this result is the crisis that struck the party in 2012, caused by the scandal concerning its undiscussed (at least until that moment) leader Umberto Bossi. We won't carry out here an analysis of what happened, but we are interested in identifying that moment as a divide between two phases that characterise the Northern League and the League: the first one dating, as we have previously said, from 1991 until 2012, the second one from that moment on, so until 2018 elections. The central differences between the two periods are to be found in the leaders, respectively Umberto Bossi and Matteo Salvini, and in the driving ideologies of the party in each case, which are respectively ,and using an extremely synthetic and generic definition, federalism and nationalism.

The rebirth of the League under the strong leadership of Matteo Salvini, together with the decline of Forza Italia made clear that Berlusconi did not have the power to drive all the coalition, so the latter was forced to cede the leadership (even if we do not have explicit declarations in this regard, but, as we have said, we are talking of a political issue, that does not necessarily need official claims). We should also take into account that Berlusconi was extremely weak, not only due to the negative result of his party, but also because of personal issues, as the impossibility of presenting himself as a candidate in 2018 elections. Moreover, in a general "revolutionary" climate, with perceived winds of change, a young leader as Salvini tends to be much more easily associated with the rebirth of the centre-right coalition, in comparison to the much older leader of Forza Italia.<sup>10</sup> All this said, it is now easier to understand on what political grounds the leader of the League have been able to become dominant in the coalition, with the result of the election assuming the value of a final confirmation of his primacy.

Going to the practical issue we mentioned before, we should consider not only the fact that, having gained a larger quantity votes, the League is stronger in Parliament in respect to Forza Italia, but also that it was the only able to form an alliance with the M5S, that refused categorically to negotiate with Forza Italia, even less to enter and alliance with them. So the League was the party with the greatest freedom of choice in that situation. The Five Star Movement could not get an alliance with the Democratic Party, because they had immediately pulled themselves out of the negotiations, deciding to relegate their party to the opposition (some, as Martina and Delrio, claiming that their electors had asked them to do so through their vote)<sup>11</sup>, regardless of who would have been the party (or parties) in government. Since the M5S could only look at right for an ally, it became clear that the League was their only option. For the party of Salvini this situation resulted in

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<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that, differently from what many people may think, Salvini has entered politics before Berlusconi, indeed he became a militant of the Northern League in 1990 and was elected in 1993, while Berlusconi joined the political scene in 1994 (even if, of course, the political weights of the two figures were much different at the time).

<sup>11</sup> Others, as Michele Emiliano, criticised this choice.



a gain of much power: they were the first party in the first coalition (acquiring its leadership), they were the ones who had grown more (in proportion), and they were contended between the centre-right coalition and the M5S (making them the only party actually able to choose what to do).

The result of this situation was, as we all know, the alliance between the Movement and the League, which gave birth, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2018, to the 65<sup>th</sup> government of the Italian Republic, the government Conte.<sup>12</sup> In the following paragraph we are going to analyse the “Contract of Government” that regulates the alliance between the two parties forming the parliamentary majority.

### **2.3 THE CONTRACT FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF CHANGE: A FAIR REPRESENTATION OF THE MAJORITY?**

The alliance between the two parties is based on the so called “Contract of Government” (in full length the “Contract for the Government of Change”) that is a document signed by both Luigi Di Maio (leader of the Five Star Movement) and Matteo Salvini. This document contains the guidelines for the actions of the government, namely it says what is the stance of the executive with respect to different issues and it establishes the main measures and provisions the government is willing to carry out, so it is a sort of electoral programme of the government. One of the reasons that is likely to be at the base of the contract is the fact that, being the two parties quite different from each other, they wanted to provide to their voters a sort of guarantee: the things promised in the electoral campaign were written down in the contract, meaning that the government would in this way ensure a cooperation between the two formations in the execution of the content of the document. Clearly all of this is just what the two parties have stated, and does not necessarily mean that it corresponds to what will happen in concrete. This is because the document is only politically binding, meaning that it does not provide any insurance, it is not worth more than a promise made during the electoral campaign. A great debate has been generated by this contract, and the issues are various.

One important point is that both factions had already proposed quite ambitious programmes during their electoral campaigns, requiring large quantities of public funds to be realised, so merging the two generated an even more ambitious agenda, causing the scepticism a great number of commentators who considered impossible for a government to carry out all those measures. Moreover, the two strong points of the M5S and the League, respectively the “citizenship income” and the “flat tax”, seemed to be incompatible and conflicting measures, both on practical and on political grounds (M. Panarari and G. Dosi raised those critics for instance). The contract may have been also a way for both the parties to keep at a safe distance from the other formation. Indeed during the electoral campaign they used to attack each other, so an alliance was doomed to raise some eyebrows between their voters. In particular the members of the Movement had in many occasions stated that they were not willing to get into any alliance with other parties, so when they found themselves forced to do it, they had to find a way to sweeten the pill to their electors. The

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<sup>12</sup> In this dissertation we will not mention much the figure of Giuseppe Conte, even if Prime Minister, because our focus is on the League, so the figures mentioned are mainly those significant in this respect.

solution was to put great focus on the contract in order to represent the alliance with the League as just a cooperation, a sort of “cohabitation”.

What we are really interested in, however, are not much those debates, but the analysis of the content of the contract. In this way we will be able to see whether one of the two parties has been able to obtain more from the writing of the document. That is because, since we are studying the success of the League, its relation with the government partner is of fundamental importance, and understanding up to what extent Salvini has been able to impose his line from the very first moment is pivotal. Clearly also the political insights and a comprehension of the communicative strategies are necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the success of the League, but we are dealing with those issues in the other sections, while here we should only focus on the ability of the party to impose and carry out its agenda.

The Contract for the Government of Change is composed of 30 points that constitute the guidelines for the government action for the 5 years it will be in charge<sup>13</sup>. The topics vary from agriculture and environment to public debt and deficit, from immigration to work, or from welfare to education, or tourism. Clearly, being the programme, not only of two parties, but of a national government, the topics are many and extremely distinct. The two parties forming the executive have adopted some common positions during the electoral campaigns, but on much other issues their visions are diametrically different. So, by carrying out a comparison between the contract and their respective programmes, we may be able to see which of the two parties has been able to make its positions prevail. It is pivotal to note, however, that the Five Star Movement, with its 32.5% of votes has 326 seats in the Parliament (219 in the Chamber of Deputies and 107 in the Senate), while the League, with 17.5% of votes has just 181 seats (123 in the Chamber of Deputies and 58 in the Senate). This means that the proportion between the two parties can be fairly approximated to 2/3 and 1/3 respectively for the Movement and the League. This proportion is reflected also in the composition of the executive, which, consisting of 18 ministers (including the Prime Minister), sees 10 of them coming from the M5S or close to this party (as Conte himself and Costa), and only 6 members of the League or close to it (Bussetti).<sup>14</sup> Logic would imply that a contract between the two, composed of 30 points, should comprehend, more or less, 20 points resembling the programme of the Movement, and 10 closer to that of the League. It is possible to carry out this comparison, because in many cases the points reflect exactly the position of one of the two parties, so are not the result of a compromise. It seems that the logic behind the contract was not to find an agreement on each issue, but to decide for each topic which of the two parties would dictate its line (Collina, 2019). This is of course connected to the abovementioned critics that accuse the government to have proposed a too ambitious programme, extremely difficult and costly to realise, and, moreover, containing incompatible points. This said, we are now going to investigate the different issues covered by the contract, to see if the proportion we have theorised is respected.

I have decided to divide the different points in 5 categories based on the level of affinity of the point with the positions of the parties, but also on the distance of the other party from that issue. So,

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<sup>13</sup> The 5 years length is the one established by the Italian law, so, of course, the government may last less than this period, which by the way would be in line with the Italian tradition that counts 64 governments (excluding Conte Cabinet) in 72 years (1946-2018), so an average length of 1.1 years for government.

<sup>14</sup> The remaining 2 ministers are Moavero Milanesi and Tria, which are independent, namely they are not associated with one of the two parties.

for instance, an issue supported in the same way by both parties will be considered neutral, as would be for an issue on which none of the two has shown particular interest, while a position supported by the M5S, even if not a priority, but contrasted or ignored by the League will fall under the first or second category (extremely close or close to the M5S). This means that two issues equally supported by a party, may fall in different categories depending on the stance of the other party. This is an effect of the comparative nature of this analysis. The categories are the following:

- Extremely close to the M5S (1)
- Close to the M5S (2)
- Neutral between the two (3)
- Close to the League (4)
- Extremely close to the League (5)

The following analysis is not based on quantitative data, the method followed is simply a comparison for each point of the contract with the corresponding (or with the closest) point on both the electoral programmes of the League and of the Five Star Movement and with their characteristic positions on different issues (that resulted from their announcements and their electoral campaigns). The analysis has been partially inspired by and confronted with those of Marcucci (2018) and of Castigliani and Pretini (2018).

### **The functioning of the Government and of the Parliamentary Groups**

This point is largely based on presenting how the two forces are willing to cooperate during the legislature (for instance it describes the Conciliation Committee)<sup>15</sup>, so it is an apolitical issue. However this point contains also an ethical code for the members of the government, based on the Severino Law, that is directly taken from one of the strong positions of the movement. For this reason I decided to put this point in the first category.

### **Public Water**

Not much to say about this point, the issue of public water is one of the “5 stars” of the Movement<sup>16</sup>, whereas in the programme of the League there is only a brief reference in the chapter about the Environment. Moreover, in the 2011 referendum on this issue (also mentioned in the contract) the Movement position was very strong, while the League did not side a specific position. First category.

### **Agriculture and Fishing – Made in Italy**

Even if the Movement favours aids to the agricultural sector, this point goes clearly to the League. The latter party has two specific sections dedicated to Agriculture and Fishing, moreover

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<sup>15</sup> An organ composed of the Prime Minister, the two political leaders (and vice-presidents of the Council of Ministers), the group leaders of the two parties in the Chambers and the ministers in charge for the topic of discussion, whose aim is to find an agreement in case of a dispute between the formations.

<sup>16</sup> The five stars represent five fundamental issues for the Movement: public water, environment, transports, connectivity and development.

the protection of the Made in Italy is one of the strong points of Salvini's party. We can add to this the critic to the European Union, with the proposal of a rediscussion of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the EU, that are relevant points in the Leagues programme. Fifth category.

### **Environment, Green Economy and Zero Waste**

This thematic is characteristic of the Movement (the ILVA issue is treated here), but for the League, even if without a major stress on the issue, we can still find points supporting this position (as that on "circular economy" in the chapter about the Environment). For this reason this point falls in the second category.

### **Investments Bank and Savings**

Even if the institution of a Bank for investments for farmers or small enterprises is a point coming from the Movement, the extension to savers and the presence of points present in the League's programme (as the Reform of Basilea protocols) make this point a neutral one.

### **Conflict of Interests**

Definitely a point coming from the Five Star Movement. An example of the different stances of the two parties in this field is the tug-of-war that the two parties conducted before forming the government to decide whether Forza Italia (so Berlusconi) would enter the government. The position of the Movement (that in the end prevailed) was firmly against it, as we have already stated, and one of the reasons was exactly the conflict of interest of the (likely) greatest Italian entrepreneur. This is why the point falls with no doubt in the first category.

### **Culture**

Both parties refer to the role of culture in their programmes (section on "Cultural Goods" in the programme of the Movement and section on "Cultural Goods and Italian Identity" for the League), but at the same time, none of them, finds in this category its strong point. Neutral issue.

### **Public Debt and Deficit**

One important concept in this point is the willingness to reduce the public debt not through taxation or austerity, but through an increase in the domestic demand (not only). This is in line with both the citizenship income and the flat tax. However the positions in respect to the European Treaties on the deficit seem to be much softer than those originally upheld by the League. So this point fits the second category.

### **Defence**

The positions in this point are quite vague, especially in reference to the revaluation of the Italian presence in international missions. However the implementation of the Armed Forces "for the protection of the territory and of the national sovereignty" is clearly a point attributable to the League. Fifth category.

### **Foreign Policy**

The interesting position here is the openness to Russia (even if confirming the position as a NATO member), suggested as a possible partner, and an interruption of the sanctions imposed to this country is deemed appropriate. Opening to Russia is the second point in the section on “Foreign policy and Defence” of the League’s programme. Fifth category.

### **Revenue: Flat Tax and Simplification**

Not much to say on this point, as we have already mentioned many times, the flat tax is totally ascribable to the League, collocating this point in the last category.

### **Rapid and Efficient Justice**

Although the Movement has expressed some positions in line with this point, as that on the impossibility for a former politician to become a magistrate (even if already a magistrate in the past) that traces exactly what is expressed in the section on “Justice” in the M5S programme, the influence of the League in this part of the contract is, to my mind, greater. The most evident part is that on self-defence, which should be always lawful. The latter is again a strong position of the League, so (considering the integration of some points in line with the movement) this issue should be collocated in the fourth category.

### **Immigration: Repatriation and End of the Business**

Also in this case we can identify some positions of the movement, but for this issue the harsh stance of Salvini to the matter is evident even just from the wording, deserving to this point the last category.

### **Labour**

By far ascribable to the Movement. Paves the way for the citizenship income (strengthening of the employment centres) and hosts many important issues for Di Maio’s party. First category.

### **Struggle against Corruption**

The quintessential issue for the Movement, that has honesty and fight against corruption as historic and characteristic traits. First category again.

### **Ministry for Disabilities**

There are no stances of the Movement against this issue, however it should fall in the fourth category, because of the much greater emphasis of the League in this respect. In the programme of Salvini’s party, indeed, we can find a specific section dedicated to this (“Social Policies: Disability”).

### **Pensions. Stop to Fornero Law**

This is exactly a point of the League. However it should be placed in the fourth category, since the M5S, even though with less emphasis, is also against this law.

### **Policies for the Family and Natality**

A strong point for the League, based largely on their section of “Family”. The Movement has not promoted particularly this matter. Last category.

### **Citizenship Income and Citizenship Pension**

As in the flat tax case, there is not much to say for this point. It is a policy branded Five Star Movement, so it falls in the first category.

### **Institutional Reforms, Autonomy and Direct Democracy**

All those three points (direct democracy in particular) have been upheld by the Movement in the last years, but due to some favourable positions of the League too (in particular in the field of autonomy), this point will be inserted in the second category.

### **Healthcare**

The point starts with this sentence “It is a priority to preserve the current model of management of the healthcare system mainly based on public funding”. This is exactly the title of the first paragraph of the section concerning “Healthcare” in the League’s programme. However the position promoted in this section are largely in line with the proposal of the M5S. For these reasons it should be considered a neutral point.

### **School**

Also this point seems to be neutral, and it is due to the fact that there are many shared views by the two forces in this field. An example is the position against the alternation school-job introduced by the centre-left governments, that is considered a form of exploitation of the students by both parties.

### **Security, Legality and Police**

The stance of the Movement is not against this point, but we cannot even say it is particularly in favour of it. Actually, the M5S has not put on this issue great emphasis. On the contrary, for the League, this is an extremely relevant point. Fifth category.

### **Sport**

This point is another one that should be considered neutral. Neither the Movement nor the League are characterised by particularly strong positions in this field. Though they both move a critic to CONI (Italian National Olympic Committee), proposing to reform it in order to reduce its powers.

### **South**

There is not much to say on this point, simply because of its shortness (8 lines). The only issue here is the willingness to aim at an homogeneous development for the country, without making particular distinctions for the southern region. Unfortunately a region that suffers from underdevelopment in comparison to the rest of the country, will not solve its problem just if treated in the same way as the rest of the country, so ignoring this difference is likely going to have the

opposite effect of accentuating it. This is the reason why this point definitely goes to the League, that as we have already said, has important roots in the north. Furthermore, the positions in defence of the south (left too much isolated by the State) that the M5S has taken during the years make this even more clearly a defeat for the party of Di Maio. Fifth category.

### **Cut of the Costs of Politics, of the Costs of the Institutions and of the Golden Pensions**

Signature measures of the Five Star Movement that, in addition, are not particularly relevant for the League, that leaves the authorship of this point totally to the Movement. First category.

### **Transports, Infrastructures and Telecommunications**

Mainly in line with the position of the Movement, with the themes of sustainable mobility, incentives for electric vehicles, or transparency in public television. However I will classify this point in the second category due to the vague position taken in respect to the TAV<sup>17</sup>, that will be only rediscussed, so not necessarily interrupted as the M5S stated in the electoral campaign (the League is in favour of the work).

### **Tourism**

This section is quite balanced, because it does not contain measures on which the two parties may start a dispute (for instance they both consider necessary to institute a Ministry for Tourism), but in general it is easier to identify the programme of the League than that of the M5S (as is the case for instance with the “Touristic Web Tax”, proposed by the League). This may be also because the programme of the Movement was already weaker and less elaborated in this respect than that of the government partner. The category is so the fourth.

### **European Union**

Both the League and the Movement have been critic towards the European Union during years, but the position of Di Maio’s party tended to be softer, aiming more at engaging a discussion with the EU than an harsh conflict with it. The contract of government reflects much more the former view, the more diplomatic one. This is why this point falls within the first category.

### **University and Research**

As in other cases this issue is not a strong point for neither the League nor for the Movement, and in this point we find proposals that are shared by both parties (as increasing funds for Universities). This final point can be considered neutral.

After all this analysis we can see that the 30 points composing the contract are equally distributed between the two parties, indeed the results for each category are the following:

- Extremely close to the M5S (M5S +): 8
- Close to the M5S (M5S): 4

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<sup>17</sup> TAV stands for “Treno ad Alta Velocità” (High Speed Train), that is an uncompleted (barely started) work that should connect Italy with France, which has generated a great debate during the electoral campaign and even afterwards.

- Neutral between the two (N): 6
- Close to the League (L): 4
- Extremely close to the League (L +): 8

Intuitively this specular division may lead to think of a contract that is perfectly balanced between the two forces, and this would be true if we were talking of two government partners with equal weights. However, that is not our case, the two parties are not equal at all. The Five Star Movement has gained twice the votes the League got, and consequently the number of their seats in the Parliament is almost twofold that of the majority partner (and as we have seen this proportion is valid also for the ministers forming the cabinet). This said, even if we consider this analysis of the contract as very approximate due to the lack of extreme rigour, the trend is clearly far from being a 2/3 – 1/3 proportion. From this we can deduce that from the very first moment (that of the writing of the contract) the League has been able to compensate for the disproportion of seats by laying down a document that over represents their role and their power in the government. In this occasion it seems that the League has been able to exploit its greater experience as a party (Carrieri, De Sio, 2018). This is an important starting point to understand how Salvini’s party has been able to drain the votes of their allies in the majority. Moreover, it will be the base of the analysis of the successes and the defeats of the two forces during the first months (nearly one year) of government, in particular, which are the trademark measures each party has been able to implement and how efficiently they have communicated it to the public.

Here we have a table that summarises the positioning of all the different points in the five categories. The initials for each category are those outlined above (in the results).

POINTS OF THE CONTRACT		EVALUATION OF THE AFFINITY WITH EACH PARTY				
LIST	ISSUE	M5S +	M5S	N	L	L +
1)	The functioning of the Government and of the Parliamentary Groups	<b>X</b>				
2)	Public Water	<b>X</b>				
3)	Agriculture and Fishing – Made in Italy					<b>X</b>
4)	Environment, Green Economy and Zero Waste		<b>X</b>			
5)	Investments Bank and Savings			<b>X</b>		
6)	Conflict of Interests	<b>X</b>				
7)	Culture			<b>X</b>		



8)	Public Debt and Deficit		<b>X</b>			
9)	Defence					<b>X</b>
10)	Foreign Policy					<b>X</b>
11)	Revenue: Flat Tax and Simplification					<b>X</b>
12)	Rapid and Efficient Justice				<b>X</b>	
13)	Immigration: Repatriation and End of the Business					<b>X</b>
14)	Labour	<b>X</b>				
15)	Struggle against Corruption	<b>X</b>				
16)	Ministry for Disabilities				<b>X</b>	
17)	Pensions. Stop to Fornero Law				<b>X</b>	
18)	Policies for the Family and Natality					<b>X</b>
19)	Citizenship Income and Citizenship Pension	<b>X</b>				
20)	Institutional Reforms, Autonomy and Direct Democracy		<b>X</b>			
21)	Healthcare			<b>X</b>		
22)	School			<b>X</b>		
23)	Security, Legality and Police					<b>X</b>
24)	Sport			<b>X</b>		
25)	South					<b>X</b>
26)	Cut of the Costs of Politics, of the Costs of the Institutions and of the Golden Pensions	<b>X</b>				
27)	Transports, Infrastructures and Telecommunications		<b>X</b>			

28)	Tourism				<b>X</b>	
29)	European Union	<b>X</b>				
30)	University and Research			<b>X</b>		

### **3 THE FIRST YEAR OF GOVERNMENT: AIMS REACHED BY THE PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

In this last section we are going to analyse what has happened in this first year of government. The focus will be firstly on what has the government actually done in this period, highlighting for each provision if it lays in the sphere of action of the Movement or of the League (on the base of the division developed in the previous section). In this way we will be able to judge which of the two parties has been able to carry out a larger quantity of measures coming from its own programme, and how effective have these been in their concrete application. It follows naturally that the “Contract for the Government of Change”, that has been analysed in the second section plays a central role in this work, since it is the base for the political action of this executive, on which both forces have agreed. In the second part of this section we will detach ourselves a bit from the practical results obtained by the two parties and we will study more deeply the figure of the League’s leader, Matteo Salvini. Of course we have already described him partially in the first section, however here we will focus on his ability to communicate with the public (in particular with his supporters) with the aim of understanding how is he shaping the image of himself, of his party and of the government. This second part of the section will be complementary to the first one, since it will help us to understand the importance of effectively communicating the government action. In other words, how much the perceived success of a party depends on its concrete accomplishments and up to what extent it depends on its ability to positively and strategically communicate those.

Since our central interest is on the League, we are now going to analyse firstly what the Five Star Movement has done and then what are the measures ascribable to Salvini’s party, so that in the latter case we will be able to immediately lay down a comparison. Furthermore, it is important to clarify that here we are focusing on what are the measures that the government has implemented, and those that have been launched, with mentions of what has not been done only in cases in which those lacks have a relevant impact in the perception of the government or of one of the two formations composing it. To conclude, one last important mention before starting the analysis is that is evident the willingness of both the members of government to act largely in order to consolidate (and possibly expand) their consensus, and this is reflected in a variety of aspects, from the emphasis on the trademark measures, to the taking of some steps back on measures that were

announced and were later denied or corrected on the base of the public response to them.<sup>18</sup> All of this said, we can now start with the analysis.

### **3.1 THE CONTRACT FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF CHANGE: ACCOMPLISHMENTS AFTER THE FIRST YEAR**

The best method to carry out this investigation is to check one by one the different points of the contract. The division of the points between the two parties is taken from the previous section. Firstly the 6 neutral points will be scrutinised for a matter of completeness, and because they may lead in any case to relevant insights regarding the parties. Secondly the 8 plus 4 points of the Movement will be analysed, and finally the 8 plus 4 points of the League.

#### **NEUTRAL POINTS**

##### **Investments Bank and Savings**

This issue seems having been totally put aside by the government. There is no news regarding the institution of the Investment Bank, indeed, apart from the willingness to do it, there is no further information. The Budget Bill of 2019 instituted a fund to reimburse savers but the issue is still far from being solved.

##### **Culture**

The funds allocated to the “Unique Fund for the Show Business” (FUS) have been increased by 8 million (2.4%). But the contract provided for a reform, which has not taken place.

##### **Healthcare**

Also in this sphere still not much has been done, but at least some measures have been launched, as the reduction of waiting times for medical service (imposing a maximum time threshold), or an increase of hiring funds for medical personnel.

##### **School**

Also in this field we have only measures proposed or started, but not completed. Some bills have been submitted to solve the “school-job alternation” issue, or also that of the transfer of teachers.

##### **Sport**

This is the point, within the neutral ones, the government has intervened mostly on. The CONI reform (that we have mentioned already in the previous section) has taken place, and other

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<sup>18</sup> An example is the eco-tax that the government seemed to be about to impose, but had to retreat on it due to public outcry. Or also the widely known case of the deficit that the government ensured would have been 2.4%, but was then lowered to 2.04%, a figure that generated some suspicion due to its illusory similarity with the original one.

measures have been started, as that of the introduction in each school of a compulsory degree in physical education for physical education teachers.

## **University and Research**

Contrary to the sport section, this one is that on which the government seems having done less. The Fund for the concession of scholarships has been increased of 10 million (in line with the trend of the last years), but not much more has been done. No National Agency for Research, no extension of the “No-Tax Area”<sup>19</sup>, no measures against academic precarity.

It is evident from this brief investigation that the action of the government in those that I have defined as neutral issues has been extremely weak. With the exclusion of the point on Sport, just a minimal percentage of provisions have been implemented, with a considerable quantity of points still in discussion phase, and many others simply left untouched (this is the case for the majority of issues laid down in the last section (University and Research).

## **POINTS OF THE FIVE STAR MOVEMENT<sup>20</sup>**

### **The functioning of the Government and of the Parliamentary Groups**

This point has been widely respected by the government for what concerns the application of Severino Law and the establishment of an ethical code (an example is the revocation of the role for Armando Siri)<sup>21</sup>, indeed in this first year, there have been no members in the government presenting a conflict of interests or investigated for serious crimes (as corruption). However is worth mentioning that the proposal of increasing the importance of the Parliament has not been respected, an example is the fact that the vote of confidence has been used 31.6% of times in the first semester of government (Openpolis, 2018) more or less the same as what happened in the government of Gentiloni (33%), and more than those of Letta (27.8%) and Renzi (26.7%).

### **Public Water**

Not much to say on this issue, the two parties have diverging opinions, with the League’s deputies sceptical about the exclusion of privates in the sector and the costs that have to be faced, so the measure are still in the discussion phase.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The main proposal was to expand the notion of conflict of interest “over the mere economic interest” and to apply it “also for non-governmental tasks”. This has not been done yet.

### **Labour**

The implementation of a way of management of accessory work is at the moment the only point accomplished, through the reintroduction of the vouchers in some sectors. However most of the other proposals are still not completed (as the employment centres, for which funds have been

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<sup>19</sup> On the base of the ISEE, students falling under a certain threshold are exonerated from the payment of the university fee.

<sup>20</sup> Firstly the 8 points of the first category, then the 4 laying in the second category.

<sup>21</sup> Undersecretary of the Ministry for Infrastructures and Transports investigated for corruption.

allocated, but there are still no final measures) or not even started (as the law on minimum salary that has not been approved yet, or the structural reduction of tax wedge).

### **Struggle against Corruption**

In this field much progress has been made with the anticorruption law: wiretapping has been reinforced, the undercover agent has been introduced (ex. to gain proves of corruption) and the expulsion from the public administration (or even from having contacts with it) of people convicted for corruption has been enforced.

### **Citizenship Income and Citizenship Pension**

Even though largely criticised, the citizenship income has been implemented, the laws regulating the entity of 780 monthly euros as a maximum threshold, and those regulating the 3 job offers have been approved. Still the effects have to be seen (and evaluated) and some issues solved (as the employment centres still not efficient), but we can say that the legislative base for the measure has been set.

### **Cut of the Costs of Politics, of the Costs of the Institutions and of the Golden Pensions**

The Budget Law of 2019 provides for cuts on golden pensions, but on the other two points, no definitive legislation has been implemented.

### **European Union**

For the European issue barely anything has been done. A part from the intervention against the Bolkestein procedure (that, by the way, is likely to lead to infringement proceedings by the EU), all other proposals have been left aside. In this list we have the changing of the European Central Bank Statute, the improvement of the rights derived from the European citizenship or the recognition by the European Union of Italy as an “external geographical border”.

### **Environment, Green Economy and Zero Waste**

There are no definitive provisions in this regard. Just some measures in discussion phase (as the promotion of circular economy, or the increase in powers of majors in order the better face emergencies as reconstruction), and other proposals still not even launched (as the increase in the regional funds to foster recycling, or the mapping of all structures facing an asbestos risk).

### **Public Debt and Deficit**

The rediscussion of the EU Treaties on deficit (Fiscal Compact) and in particular the deduction of public investments from the deficit were two important aims for the government, but for the moment no result has been obtained. On the contrary harsh debates were generated on the matter causing a conflict between Italy and the European Commission, that risked leading to infringement proceedings.

### **Institutional Reforms, Autonomy and Direct Democracy**

No agreement has been found with regions asking for autonomy. The cutting of useless laws was also an important point, but apart from the “simplification decree” of February 2019, still a substantial reduction of the legislative body has not occurred. The provision regarding free internet connection for everyone (at least half an hour each day) has been implemented, but still a minority of municipalities has adopted it.

## **Transports, Infrastructures and Telecommunications**

The most relevant provision for this point at the moment is the introduction of incentives to buy hybrid or electric vehicles. For what regards the TAV, there is still not a final decision, neither official declarations explaining what is the exact willingness of the executive (in which the Movement and the League have contrasting positions on the issue). In the field of Telecommunications instead, the position of the government was against any kind of political influence on the media through the appointment of the central figures, but this scheme does not seem to have changed in this legislature.<sup>22</sup>

From this investigation of the points close to the Movement we can say that the issues on which a complete action has been taken are just a few. Indeed, apart from laws against corruption and conflict of interests, and from the partial implementation of the citizenship income, much of the measures proposed in this part of the contract are still just on the paper, and many other are uncomplete. It is also true that we are just at the end of the first twelve months of government, which should last for five years, so much time will have to pass yet. Moreover many measures may require more time to be implemented effectively, so in the following years there is the possibility of a rapid sequence of results of which the basis has been posed this year. In any case, what we are interested in is a comparative analysis, so the absolute number of provisions implemented is not as relevant as the difference between the successful points ascribable to the Movement and those connected with the League. This said we can now see how efficient the government has been in implementing the remaining 12 points that we have classified as closer to the League.

## **POINTS OF THE LEAGUE**

### **Agriculture and Fishing – Made in Italy**

At the moment there are no definitive provisions implementing this point. The PAC reform will come in 2019 so the influence of Italian positions on it have still to be measured. Regarding the protection of fishing, a provision establishing a compensation for fishers in periods in which they are not allowed to work (in order to protect sea fauna) has been renewed. The aim of rediscussing bonds on fishing imposed by the EU still has not been reached, and the same is true for the AGEA (National Agency for Agricultural Supplies) reform. To conclude, we can deduce that not much has been done for the objectives contained in this point yet.

### **Defence**

The investments on defence to protect the Italian industry in this area have not been made. The “mission decree” regulating the missions for 2019 will show what will be the position of Italy in

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<sup>22</sup> Marcello Foa (President of RAI) and Fabrizio Salini (CEO of RAI) are considered to be, respectively, close to the League and to the Five Star Movement.

international missions (for which the contract of government considered a revaluation), so at the moment there are no clues to know that. Also for the issues regarding defence we cannot identify new relevant measures.

## **Foreign Policy**

On this issue little or nothing has been done. The most evident point regards sanctions on Russia that the government wanted to abolish. In the 6 votes held at the EU to prorogue those sanctions, that took place after the settlement of this government, Italy has always voted in favour, as all other Member States have done. Also provisions aimed at implementing the security of vote for Italians living abroad were proposed in the contract, but at the moment, apart from some declarations, no measures have been approved. Some contacts with other nations to implement the fight against terrorism have been started.

## **Revenue: Flat Tax and Simplification**

Through the “fiscal decree” taxation of electronic cigarettes has been largely reduced, but this may be the only issue in this point for which the government has effectively intervened. The possible increase in VAT has been avoided for 2019, but it has been confirmed and even enhanced for 2020 and 2021.<sup>23</sup> The contract also aimed at a “reduction of the level of fiscal pressure”, but the percentages are the following: 42.1% in 2018 (this is the starting point), 42.0% in 2019, 42.7% in 2020, 42.7% in 2021, 42.5% in 2022 (data from 2019 to 2022 are of course predictions).<sup>24</sup> It is evident that those predictions do not represent a reduction in fiscal pressure. To conclude, what about the flat tax (the trademark measure of the League)? Firstly it is important to say that the term “flat tax” is misleading, since the Italian Constitution (article 53) imposes the progressivity of the tax system. That is why the government has proposed two rates at 15% and 20%, that still have to be introduced. So also in this direction, much more has to be done.

## **Immigration: Repatriation and End of the Business**

Greater transparency has been imposed regarding the funds for immigration policies by the “security decree”. However many other issues have been left unsolved. Italy has not pursued the “alignment of current protection forms to the international standards”, on the contrary the “security decree” has abolished the residency permit for humanitarian reasons (substituting them with special permits of the length of one year) that is present in 25 European Countries (21 EU Members). The reform of the Dublin Regulation was also a pivotal point (mainly due to its 13<sup>th</sup> article)<sup>25</sup> but for the moment no agreement with the other signatories has been found.

## **Policies for the Family and Natalty**

Help has been provided to families with old people increasing the fund for non-autonomous old people and that for familiar caregivers (aimed at favouring this activity). Also some measures in

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<sup>23</sup> The so called “safety clauses” were introduced in 2011. They impose an increase of the VAT to ensure a proper financial statement in line with the EU regulations, in case this is not reached in other ways during the year.

<sup>24</sup> Data from DEF (Economic and Financial Planning Document) 2019, p. 19

<sup>25</sup> This article sets that the State of first entrance for the immigrant is responsible for the person.

favour of familiar welfare have been implemented increasing the Found for Family Policies. Though, still much of that proposed in the contract is missing.

### **Security, Legality and Police**

Many proposals to empower security forces were laid down in the contract, but, for the moment, only an increase in the budget, the hiring of new policemen and some investments on equipment are completed objectives. Updating of barracks has not taken place. The proposal of anti-terrorism training has been presented, but still not even discussed. The definition of the compulsory minimal equipment for police forces is also still missing.

### **South**

This is the most generic of all points of the contract, and being also 8 lines long, it is impossible to identify specific proposals in order to judge it.

### **Rapid and Efficient Justice**

The improvement of the “class action”<sup>26</sup> instrument is the only definitive provision. The government still has not intervened on most measures, such as those aimed at granting “certainty of the sentence”, or accelerating civil trials, or lowering the cost of court fees.<sup>27</sup>

### **Ministry for Disabilities**

Even if the a proper ministry has not been instituted, this government has introduced the figure of the Minister for Family and Disability (Lorenzo Fontana). He is the head of a Department of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Other measures launched are the formation of better qualified special needs teachers (in particular the institution of courses to teach sign language), or also the providing of funds to ensure and “incentivise the hiring in public and private sectors of people with disabilities”.

### **Pensions. Stop to Fornero Law**

The main point here was the introduction of the so called “Quota 100”<sup>28</sup>, that has been actually introduced (even if, as we said for the citizenship income, it raised much criticism), and also the pension system created by Fornero has been tackled and is being modified. However the contract referred to 41 years of pension contribution, while the thresholds at the moment are 41 years and 10 months for men and 42 years and 10 months for women.

### **Tourism**

On this last point there is barely anything the government has done. The only provision is that on the expansion of the national Wi-Fi system we have already mentioned (in reference to the 30 minutes each day of free internet), that should work also for tourists. Apart from that, we have a

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<sup>26</sup> Consumers can conduct a legal action against a firm to defend their rights and interests, and they can do it collectively.

<sup>27</sup> A tax paid to the State for judicial proceedings.

<sup>28</sup> A person can retire when the sum of his/her age and the years of pension contributions is 100 (being the age at least 62).



long sequence of promises still not kept. The Ministry of Tourism does not exist yet (the matter is managed by the Ministry for the Agricultural, Environmental and Forestry Policies, now renamed Ministry for the Agricultural, Environmental, Forestry Policies and Tourism), the tourist tax has not been abolished, and the proposal of creating a “unique national platform devoted to tourism and tourists” has not been realised for the moment.

From this overview results that, regarding the points close to the League, not much has been done for the moment. As the Five Star Movement with the citizenship income, Salvini’s party also took care of launching its trademark measure (“Quota 100”) as soon as possible, and this is likely to be the reason for critics aimed at both issues, accused of being realised too quickly and approximately. After all this investigation of the first year of government is evident that only a small percentage of the measures in the contract have been pursued. Many have however been launched, and are likely to enter into force in the next year. Anyway, as previously stated, our interest is not in judging how well the government has done, but who, between the two parties has done better. Let me briefly summarise the main successes and main faults of the two formations.

The Movement has introduced the citizenship income, that even with all the problems it may have, has arrived and will be improved by the government. Then, an important contribution ascribable to the movement consists of the various laws against corruption. And also we may add some cuts (as that on golden pensions), that, even if scarcely relevant for determining the budget, have a symbolic value, and tend to be appreciated by their electors. On the sides of employment and relationship with the European Union not much progress has been made. Going to the League, we mainly notice the introduction of “Quota 100” and an increase in the budget for police forces. Though still much provision to implement armed forces are lacking as we have seen. Also on the protection of Made in Italy much work still is required.

There is no need to comment more what the two factions have or have not done, because from this chapter we have clearly seen that both of them have carried out some of their objectives, but leaving aside many others. Since the collocation of the points more or less close to one of the two parties has been mainly driven by personal interpretation (even if based on empirical data such as public announcements or on proposals written on the programmes and on the contract), we have to take the results with a pinch of salt. The trend that has emerged is that the Movement has been slightly more efficient in concretising their proposals. Though, the value of each single provision is difficult to weight, so we should not only count the numbers of measures improved, but evaluate them in the light of the fact that they may assume completely different values for people. Just think of the difference between a law against corruption and the law instituting the citizenship income: even if they have been classified as single issues, is evident that their weights are extremely different, and so are their practical effects and the values attributed to them by citizens (especially the voters of the Movement). In any case, from this analysis, as approximate it may be, I can quite confidently derive a conclusion: the huge success of the League, paralleled by a great fall of the Five Star Movement (with many electors moving from the latter party to the former) cannot be explained by a much greater efficiency in the activity of governing. Indeed, as nuanced the interpretation of their results may be, it is evident that the League has not gained this enormous popularity thanks to its reforms. So what can be the pivotal explanation to understand this success? The answer is the topic of the following paragraph: communication.

### 3.2 THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

In this last paragraph we are going to analyse the importance of communication for the League. We will see that communication not only plays a fundamental role, but we can even say that it is the centre of the League's strategy. Moreover, it is equally relevant to understand a second point: when we talk of the League's communicative strategy, we are talking of Salvini. Clearly Salvini cannot be responsible by himself for all of it, but he is central in all the aspects of it. It is evident that a single person could not be able to manage such a huge apparatus alone, because it requires an enormous quantity of activities, from the constant analysis of data to the development of up to date strategies. This reasoning may generate in the reader a misleading idea, namely that Salvini is just the frontman of this organisation composed of a large number of people, and so that his role is marginal and his figure, eventually, replaceable. Even if the first part of the sentence is true, that is, Salvini is the peak of an iceberg composed of many people, this does not make Salvini less important. On the contrary, the success of the party largely depends on his ability to perfectly interpret that role. Indeed, considering Salvini just a puppet in the hands of his various spin-doctors and image consultants would be a fatal error. Luca Morisi, the head of his communication team said "there exist only one Salvini's spin-doctor and it is Salvini himself" (2018). This witnesses the fact that the communicative ability of Salvini is innate, and not built on him by other people. In an event called "Election Days 2018" Morisi, while talking of the spontaneity of the League's leader communication also affirmed that "Salvini has a natural talent for reading tendencies in people's opinions" (2018). This said, we can now try to find out what are the focal points of the communicative strategy of the leader, and how, through it, he has been able to shape the perception of his governing activity in such a positive way for many people.

As a first step we should focus a bit on what is the role of Salvini as the leader of his party. We have already said that his leadership is a strong one. To delve into this topic we can make an interesting comparison with another leader who also experienced a huge success: Matteo Renzi. Renzi, in 2014 European elections gained an astonishing 40.8% of votes (remember that at the time the League got only 6.2%) with the Democratic Party. We are not interested here in analysing the causes of Renzi's victory, but the difference between their leaderships. That of Renzi was based on the fact that he seemed to be able to transform Italian politics, think of the expression "rozzamatore" ("scrap dealer") that he used to describe himself since 2010 (Renzi, 2010). As Lorenzo Pregliasco (2019) evidences, Renzi was mainly seen as a means, and was supported by an heterogeneous electorate willing to modernise the Italian society. Salvini, on the contrary, has a solid base of supporters, who call him "Captain", and this is no accidental name, it instead reflects exactly the fact that people trust him as a person. The support is not for his proposals (even if those clearly play a role), but it is mainly for his figure. People think that he is able to solve their problems, and they are not particularly interested in how he is going to do it. On this regard Passarelli and Tuorto (2018) state that more than "charm" we should talk of "popularity" when referring to Salvini.

While distinguishing Salvini from other leaders we can identify two pivotal differences with Renzi and Di Maio (or more in general, with the Five Star Movement), both determined by exogenous causes, so not related to the personality of the figure. Though, we should firstly make

clear that those are just conjectures, since the parallel is between a leader that is at the peak of his success (so we do not know yet if he is facing a decline or a further rise) and two other leaders that have already fallen (Renzi) or seem to be going in that direction (Di Maio and the Movement).

The difference with Renzi is that the PD's leader found an opposition within his party (which is not a surprise for one proposing to "rotaamare" many party members), he was accused of distorting the nature of the party (Zoggia, 2016), and he was largely blamed for not being a true representative of the left, so his leadership was undermined. Today, members of the centre-right cannot move the same critic to Salvini (Damilano, 2019), so he may be able to legitimately become the hegemon of the centre-right (and the fall of Forza Italia seems to push things in this direction). Not by chance many former electors of Berlusconi's party moved to the League in last elections (De Sio, Paparo, 2018). Moreover, the direction that Salvini seems to be giving to the centre-right coalition is not so moderate, but reflects the radicalization observable through all Europe, and indeed leads to the formation of a right-wing tradition, where many electors (and consequently many representatives) adopt radical positions (Damilano, 2019).

Going to the comparison with the five star movement, we relate to what just said, because a pivotal difference lays in the ideology. We have said that Salvini is representing the right-wing positions, but if we talk of the Five Star Movement we cannot so clearly collocate them in the left-right axe. And this is perceived also by the electors, and is reflected in their actions. There are many ways to define an ideology, but a concept we can easily agree on, is to say that we are referring to a coherent set of ideas. The lack of coherence indeed can severely undermine the credibility of an ideology, especially if it is that proposed by a large entity such as a political party. The Movement seems to lack this coherent set of ideas, and this is shown by their frequent changes of position on various topics (think of their positions on exiting the Euro system, or on getting vaccinated, or on Ilva).<sup>29 30 31</sup> On the contrary the League gives to people a clear reference point. And this can be one of the reasons explaining their stealing of votes from the M5S: electors of the Movement who found themselves disoriented by the volatility of the positions of this party, ended up turning to the League, because there they found a stable reference point. As Policastro (2019) notices, voters of the Five Star Movement were previously electors of both left-wing and right-wing formations. Those people were let down by their parties, which were experiencing a period of crisis, and so moved to the M5S that was instead prospering and proposing new solutions. With a government composed of a downfalling party (the Movement) and another party which is instead growing and, moreover, is clearly collocated on the right, much of the M5S electors, former right-wing voters, shifted to the latter formation. It seems like the lack of ideological boundaries, in the end, backfired. Indeed, in the initial phase of gaining consensus, this characteristic of the Movement proved extremely useful, and they were perfectly aware of this (not by chance they categorically refused to collocate themselves on the left-right axis). This ambiguous positioning allowed them, each time a debate raised, to adopt the stance which was the most popular at the moment, even if this could

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<sup>29</sup> They used to propose exiting the Euro system to solve economic problems of Italy (especially in 2013), but during time their position changed, and now that they are in government, there are no more announcements of this sort.

<sup>30</sup> In the programme they only wrote to "discuss the issue of vaccines", but also in this field their positions have varied from fiercely no vax (Beppe Grillo in many occasions) to more moderate stances that were only against the compulsoriness of those.

<sup>31</sup> Di Maio during the electoral campaign promised he would have closed the factory, but once in government he changed his mind, stating that all those people could not lose their job.

result in incoherent viewpoints. When they entered the government, however, this strategy did not work anymore, and, furthermore, it caused their electors to be disoriented, generating the shift to the right we have previously described. Those just scrutinised are the weaknesses of the Movement, which are surely relevant, but to understand the phenomenon we are studying we have to see why the League became such an attractive option. How has Salvini been able to become the undisputed kingmaker?

The first relevant point regards visibility. Indeed, in this last year, Salvini has completely monopolised the public debate. For someone who is even just slightly interested in politics, even a person who only switches on the TV for the newscast a couple of times a week, or that enters a social network a few times a day, it is barely impossible not to meet Salvini. Clearly it is not so strange for the leader of a party in government to have great visibility, but the figures of Salvini are considerably high. The Biannual Report of the TG Observatory (“TG” stands for newscast) based on the period that goes from October 2018 to March 2019, provides us with interesting data, partially proving what could have been otherwise considered just a perception. A study of the presences of political figures on the headlines of the 7 most important generalist newscasts’ primetime editions shows the following results. Salvini has scored in the mentioned six months a total of 871 presences, compared to the 682 of Giuseppe Conte, the 656 of Luigi Di Maio and the only 62 of Zingaretti (leader of the Democratic Part). The report shows also those of the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, which are 174. Another interesting number is that shown by Carone and Cavallaro (2019) that have gathered all the posts published by the Facebook page of Matteo Salvini through all 2018: those amount to 3785, that is an average of more than 10 posts each day. So it is evident that Salvini is permeating the political landscape, partly due to his power position and party because of its communicative strategy. This said, what are the contents of his innumerable speeches and posts?

The three topics on which Salvini focuses the most are the following: Italians, immigration and security (Carone, Cavallaro, 2019). These clearly correspond with the main points of the Leagues programme, even if obviously they are three extremely wide concepts. When talking of Italians we refer to a variety of issues, going from the national identity (a cultural issue), to the protection of Made in Italy for instance, or also the problem of pensions. Secondly, the concept of immigration is quite straightforward: it includes the conflict with the European Union (responsible for leaving Italy alone in the management of the migratory crisis), or the high rate of criminality ascribable to migrants, or also the economic resources spent to manage and host all those people. The last concept, security, is extremely generic, it partially merges with the issue of immigration, but also regards principles as that of legitimate self-defence. A constant mentioning of this issues gives to Salvini a great appeal: Carone and Cavallaro (2019) found out that 47% of Salvini’s publication on Facebook in 2018 (that correspond to nearly 1800 posts) treat on (or more) of these three categories. Salvini reflects a widespread common feeling, that is an emphasis on these issues, perceived as being of primary importance, and, even more relevant, for which past government are deemed responsible due to a lack of interest in them (opinion that the League’s leader supports).

Salvini proposes to be the one able to put finally an end to those problems, and does this by representing himself as a common man, sharing the rage of all his supporters and electors, that at the same time see him as one of them, but also as a powerful figure with the means and the capacity

to tackle and easily solve all problems. Moreover, whenever he decides to talk of those issues, he is granted support, indeed we may talk of “safe issues”. This is because these are problems for which he does not risk to be held accountable (thanks to the reshaping of the League’s image we saw in the first section), so he can only benefit from fostering this kind of discussion.

Through his uninterrupted contact with people (in person or by the media) he is able to reach at the same time different objectives. Firstly he shows himself as an extremely active politician, synonym of efficiency, always ready to take a position and always able to provide a solution (his commenting of a politically relevant event tends to come within the same day, and it is likely to be through a live recording on Facebook). This is a paradox if we consider that his presence at the Ministry is extremely limited: “la Repubblica” has estimated 17 days from the beginning of 2019 until the middle of May, while in the meantime he has participated to 211 events (political meetings and non-institutional events)<sup>32</sup>. A second important consequence of his constant presence on the news and on the media is that he is able to influence the agenda of public debate, since he can daily choose the topic on which generating a debate. Diamanti (2019) talks of “distracting” the media through an introduction in the public debate of less relevant issues in order to push the focus away from topics on which the government is weaker. The example provided by the author is that of the capturing of Cesare Battisti, on which huge emphasis was placed, while in the same days extremely negative data regarding industrial production were published. In that occasion much of the news focused more in the former topic than on the latter.

## CONCLUSION

Most of this dissertation has been mainly dedicated to data analysis, from electoral results, to points of electoral programmes, or also statistics on communication. At the end of this path it is necessary to derive some conclusions. Even though many deductions have already been outlined during the different sections, it is important now to lay down a more comprehensive one. It is evident that from its formation the (Northern) League has grown much, and moreover, the change of strategy led by Salvini is pivotal. Apart from the results confirming it, is also clear that a regionalist movement could have not become so popular at the national level. Indeed the nationalisation of the party, has allowed it to collect consensus in a great variety of areas that up to that moment had been left isolated, out of the formation’s scope. Moreover its popularity and the ability of Salvini to gain trust has strengthened its position in the North, that as we have seen still plays a key role for the party. This is exactly the most important point in the successful operation of rebranding carried out by the League: gaining support from new segments of the population without losing the support of the old electors (and even increasing it). This has been possible also due to the rooting of the party on the territory (Lombardia, Veneto and Friuli have regional Presidents members of the League).

The concrete results of the League in this first year of government have not been so positive, but the ability of Salvini to highlight the successes (for instance by always choosing the most appropriate statistics to mention) and hiding the defeats (we have seen the case of “media distraction”) has been magisterial. Moreover, with his uninterrupted presence on the news the leader has been able to

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<sup>32</sup> Tonacci F. 14 May 2019

complete his nationalisation process (as we said, nowadays it is impossible for an elector to not be aware of the existence and of the positions of Salvini). The alliance with the Movement has been exploited efficiently by the League, that has been able to leave the ground to the M5S on the right issues and to fight against them where they were weaker, always without mining the relationship with the rest of the centre-right coalition (which however was the easiest task, since the popularity of the League allows the party to be essential for the right).

To conclude, the rise of the League has culminated with the great success (at the national level) of the European Elections. The party is likely to be close to its maximum popularity, and, as time passes, it will have to make new choices and update its strategies. The main reason that will make this necessary is that the League will not be able to be considered for much longer as a new force in the system, able to change it, so concrete and undeniable results in line with their promises will be soon or later demanded by their electors.

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## **SUMMARY IN ITALIAN LANGUAGE / SINTESI IN LINGUA ITALIANA**

### **INTRODUZIONE**

Il successo della Lega nelle elezioni politiche del 4 Marzo 2018 è sicuramente l'aspetto più significativo tra i vari risultati ed implicazioni che queste hanno portato. Questo perché il partito guidato da Matteo Salvini risulta essere il più cresciuto, in proporzione, tra tutti i principali schieramenti. Infatti, seppure sia il Movimento Cinque Stelle il partito che ha ottenuto più voti, ovvero il 32,5%, a fronte del 17,4% registrato dalla Lega, basta guardare i risultati delle elezioni precedenti per capire che la crescita del partito di Salvini ha un qualcosa di incredibile a confronto delle altre formazioni. Il partito guidato da Luigi Di Maio nel 2013 aveva ottenuto il 25,6% dei voti, quindi c'è stata sicuramente una crescita, ma questa è stata il culmine di un trend avviato da anni e che vedeva già da tempo i 5 Stelle come prima forza politica del paese. Nulla togliere a questo partito, che a buon titolo è considerato tra i vincitori delle elezioni, ma il risultato della Lega assume una maggiore importanza data la sua imprevedibilità (anche se, come capiremo nel corso del testo, una conoscenza della trasformazione leghista negli ultimi anni avrebbe reso questo risultato decisamente più prevedibile). Nel 2013 infatti la Lega ottenne solamente 4,1% dei voti, il che vuol dire che in 5 anni il partito di Salvini è riuscito a quadruplicare i voti, un risultato impressionante, soprattutto se consideriamo che il secondo miglior risultato mai raggiunto dal partito si era registrato nel 1996 con un 10,1%.

### **LA TRASFORMAZIONE DELLA LEGA**

La Lega Nord (LN) nasce nel 1991 dall'unione di vari partiti regionalisti con segretario federale Umberto Bossi, che manterrà questo ruolo fino al 2012, per poi cederlo, prima a Roberto Maroni per un breve periodo transitorio, e poi a Matteo Salvini, che diverrà segretario nel 2013 sconfiggendo alle primarie, in modo schiacciato (82% dei voti), proprio Bossi. Il partito nel corso degli anni attraversa alti e bassi. Partecipa alternativamente alle elezioni in alleanza col centro-

destra. Nel 1996 il partito, correndo da solo, ottiene il 10,1% dei voti, un grande successo, dopo il quale la volontà secessionista del partito si intensifica. Infatti all'epoca una delle battaglie principali della Lega Nord era quella per l'indipendenza (prima della Padania, successivamente del Nord in generale). Come già detto nell'introduzione, quello del 1996 è stato, ad oggi, il secondo risultato migliore per la Lega dopo il 17,4% del 2018. All'epoca però il partito non era parte della coalizione di centro-destra, ottenne solamente 86 seggi in Parlamento. Nel 1994, seppur con un risultato del 8,4% , grazie al suo ruolo all'interno della coalizione (che vinse le elezioni) i seggi ottenuti furono 180: più del doppio a fronte di meno voti ricevuti. Nel 2001 la Lega Nord torna nell'alleanza con Berlusconi, ma stavolta ottiene un misero 3,9%. Nel elezioni successive la LN riprende a crescere, anche se molto lentamente, e senza riuscire a ripetere quel 10%. Nel 2004, alle elezioni europee, ottiene il 5,1%. Due anni dopo il 4,6%. Nel 2008, finalmente, assistiamo ad una crescita più sostanziosa, infatti il partito riceve l'8,2% dei voti, giocando tra l'altro un ruolo importante nel successo del centro destra in quelle elezioni. Il tracollo però non tarda ad arrivare, con il risultato delle politiche del 2013: la Lega Nord ottiene, all'interno della coalizione, il 4,1% dei voti. Questo si spiega in gran parte con il crollo, a livello politico, del suo storico leader Umberto Bossi, avvenuto l'anno precedente, nel 2012. La causa fu uno scandalo per il quale, in sostanza, risultò che Bossi avesse utilizzato per fini privati i fondi del partito, derivanti dal finanziamento pubblico. Questa fu evidentemente un'enorme macchia sul nome del segretario, e di conseguenza, indebolì fortemente tutta la Lega Nord. Nel 2013, però subentra Matteo Salvini, che, come descritto precedentemente, sconfigge Bossi nelle primarie del partito, a fine anno. Da quel giorno incomincia un processo di restaurazione a lungo termine del partito. Finisce l'era Bossi, durata dal 1991 al 2012, ed inizia l'era Salvini. La Lega di Salvini (prenderà letteralmente questo nome) non è più Lega Nord, ma diviene un partito con ambizioni nazionali, la cui immagine viene ricostruita da zero. Ciononostante il Nord non verrà mai abbandonato dalla Lega, rimanendo infatti la principale sede dei suoi elettori, nonché un territorio sul quale puntare, e, se possibile, favorire (punti forti del programma della Lega, come la flat-tax o la protezione delle industrie italiane, sembrano di fatto favorire il Nord, seppur non direttamente indirizzate ad esso). Salvini è al centro di questa rivoluzione, eppure lui stesso, nonostante appaia come un giovane restauratore, è parte della Lega (Nord) già da tempo. Vediamo in breve il suo percorso. A partire dal 1990 Matteo Salvini milita nel partito, venendo eletto consigliere comunale a Milano nel 1993 (seppur a tratti, manterrà questo ruolo fino al 2012, il che mostra anche quanto egli sia addentro ai meccanismi del partito già da tempo). Nel 2004 viene eletto per la prima volta al Parlamento Europeo. Nel 2008 verrà eletto alla Camera, dove però rimane solo un anno in quanto, nel 2009, viene nuovamente votato per divenire un europarlamentare, carica che preferisce, rinunciando quindi al suo seggio da deputato. Tutta questa carriera lo porta a dov'è adesso: Segretario Federale della Lega. Il suo partito si muove verso temi più tipici della destra, dove oggi viene spontaneo collocare infatti la Lega, i temi principali diventano sovranismo e protezione dell'identità nazionale, con la tematica del federalismo che passa in secondo piano, seppur senza sparire definitivamente (come già detto, la nuova Lega si rinnova, ma senza abbandonare i vecchi elettori). Questo forte radicamento nel Nord, che persiste nel 2018, ma anche nel 2019 è dimostrato dai risultati elettorali in entrambi gli anni. Infatti la Lega risulta essere di gran lunga più votata nelle regioni settentrionali, con una graduale diminuzione del consenso man mano che si scende più a sud. Ovviamente in questi ultimi

due anni la Lega è stata in grado di ottenere voti in regioni nelle quali un decennio fa non sarebbe mai stata votata (il che è chiaro per un partito volto a rappresentare solo una parte del territorio italiano, per giunta con un'accezione conflittuale nei confronti del meridione), soprattutto nel 2019, quando i consensi rispetto all'anno precedente sono raddoppiati. Ma la Lega sembra ancora lontana dal divenire un partito nazionale, vista la grande polarizzazione geografica del suo elettorato.

## LA LEGA ALLE ELEZIONI

In questa seconda sezione il focus si sposta sul risultato del 4 Marzo, prima analizzando la situazione venutasi a creare nel periodo immediatamente successivo al voto, in cui i vari schieramenti hanno dovuto fare i conti sulla base delle rispettive percentuali. Successivamente vedremo fino a che punto il Contratto di Governo, stipulato tra Lega e Movimento Cinque Stelle, rispecchia l'equilibrio di potere presente tra i due (sulla carta, e nei fatti). Le urne non hanno dato vincitori, o perlomeno, nessun partito in grado di governare da solo in quanto in possesso di una maggioranza dei seggi in Parlamento. Le percentuali più rilevanti sono le seguenti: 37% del centro destra, composto da Lega (17,4%), Forza Italia (14,2%) e Fratelli d'Italia (4,3%); 32,5% del Movimento Cinque Stelle; 22,9% del centro sinistra, composto principalmente dal Partito Democratico (18,7%). Pur non essendoci vincitori assoluti, possiamo individuare due vincitori relativi, cioè il Movimento, primo partito, e la coalizione di centro destra, prima formazione. Ciononostante tutti gli schieramenti, pure i vincitori, necessitavano l'appoggio di altre forze per formare il governo, e dai vari paletti imposti da ciascuno, è derivato l'esito finale. Infatti il Partito Democratico si è dichiarato da subito intenzionato ad andare all'opposizione, lasciando così il campo a 5 Stelle e centro destra. Il Movimento, però, si è rifiutato di formare un'alleanza con Forza Italia, per via della presenza di Berlusconi. L'unica opzione rimanente era quella di un'alleanza tra grillini e leghisti, che fece infatti nascere il cosiddetto governo giallo-verde. Questa situazione ha messo la Lega, e di conseguenza Salvini, in un'ottima posizione strategica. Infatti egli è stato incoronato da queste elezioni nuovo leader del centro-destra, scalzando Berlusconi. L'esperienza di governo con i 5 Stelle gli permetterà di aumentare il suo potere, ribadendo ancora più fortemente questa posizione. Tra l'altro egli si ritrova ad essere l'unico ad avere due opzioni tra cui scegliere (i cosiddetti due "forni"). La seconda vittoria di Salvini avviene nella stipulazione del contratto. Infatti questo sembra rispecchiare un equilibrio di potere molto differente da quello rappresentato dai seggi in Parlamento. Infatti a fronte dei 326 parlamentari 5 Stelle, siedono nelle camere 181 leghisti. Una proporzione che possiamo approssimare a 2/3 e 1/3 rispettivamente per Movimento e Lega. Tra l'altro questa proporzione si rispecchia anche nel governo, in cui 10 ministri su 18 sono in orbita M5S, e solamente 6 in area Lega (2 sono considerati tecnici). Se andiamo invece ad analizzare il contratto risulta che dei 30 punti che lo compongono 12 sono accostabili al programma del Movimento ed altri 12 quello della Lega (6 punti sono neutrali). Questo dimostra che la Lega, facendo valere la maggiore esperienza di governo e la superiore abilità politica, sia riuscita fin dal primo momento a compensare per quello svantaggio elettorale non da poco. Non per nulla ad oggi i fronti si sono invertiti.

## IL PRIMO ANNO DI GOVERNO

In quest'ultima sezione cerchiamo di spiegare il successo dello schieramento di Salvini, soprattutto in relazione alla competizione interna al governo con i 5 Stelle. Per prima cosa vediamo come i due partiti si sono posti nei confronti del Contratto per il governo del Cambiamento, dopodiché andremo a studiare la comunicazione di Salvini, che sembra essere, a fronte di risultati mediocri, la principale causa dell'enorme successo leghista. Da un'analisi punto per punto, del contratto di governo, avevamo diviso il testo in tre aree, una a trazione grillina, una riconducibile alla Lega, e un'ultima composta dalle tematiche neutrali (ovvero queste in cui i due partiti la pensano allo stesso modo, oppure mostrano scarso interesse). Dopo avere confrontato i vari punti con i risultati concreti ottenuti dal governo in questo primo anno, risulta quanto segue. L'esecutivo giallo-verde, in questi primi 12 mesi, ha concluso solo una piccola parte dei provvedimenti esposti nel programma, ed alcuni di questi sono stati per giunta compromessi (in questi casi il governo si è mosso in una direzione opposta rispetto a quella preannunciata). Certo si tratta del primo di cinque anni di governo (a meno di crisi anticipate chiaramente), quindi è normale che il programma non sia stato completato, tuttavia i progressi fatti sembrano limitati anche alla luce di ciò. Tra i due partiti, quello che sembra essere stato più operativo è il Movimento Cinque Stelle, principalmente per via delle leggi anti-corrruzione, uno dei punti forti in campagna elettorale per il partito di Di Maio. Per il resto i partiti hanno ottenuto risultati molto simili, entrambi hanno portato avanti, tra l'altro molto frettolosamente (probabilmente in vista del voto del 26 Maggio per le elezioni europee) i loro cavalli di battaglia. Questi sono, rispettivamente per Movimento e Lega, il Reddito di Cittadinanza e Quota 100 (Quota 100 è condivisa anche dal Movimento, ma le posizioni a riguardo della Lega sono molto più forti) che sono stati entrambi avviati, seppur ancora largamente da perfezionare. A pesare su questo bilancio, che vede i 5 Stelle leggermente in vantaggio, è l'assenza di un'importante misura targata Lega, ovvero la flat-tax. I numerosi problemi riscontrati per l'attuazione di questa misura ne hanno reso impossibile la messa in atto nel primo anno di governo. Detto ciò, anche se la categorizzazione dei punti e il confronto tra contratto e risultati possono essere ritenuti solo misure approssimative dell'operato del governo, è chiaro che il successo enorme della Lega, passata dal 17,4% al 34,4%, non viene spiegato dai risultati ottenuti dal governo. Se così fosse questi sarebbero chiaramente visibili "ad occhio nudo". Per questo motivo infatti, lo studio si sposta sul secondo aspetto caratterizzante questo primo anno di governo: la comunicazione di Salvini. Infatti l'abilità comunicativa di Salvini risulta giocare un ruolo centrale nel successo leghista. A partire dall'enorme visibilità di cui gode il leader del primo partito italiano. Nel semestre che va da Ottobre 2018 a Marzo 2019 Salvini è stato presente sulle testate dei 6 principali TG nell'edizione serale (quella con più ascolti) per ben 871 volte, da confrontare con le 682 di Giuseppe Conte, le 656 di Luigi Di Maio, le 174 di Sergio Mattarella e le sole 62 di Nicola Zingaretti. A riprova della onnipresenza di Salvini vi è anche il dato riguardante i social, infatti se guardiamo la sua pagina Facebook (social più seguito in Italia) possiamo osservare una continua pubblicazione di post tramite i quali il leader della Lega commenta gli avvenimenti del giorno (contribuendo così a indirizzare costantemente i propri elettori), introduce argomenti di dibattito (influenzando così fortemente anche i media tradizionali, che si ritrovano spesso a commentare le sue posizioni) e pubblica frequentemente immagini di vita quotidiana, volte a rafforzare il suo legame con i suoi fan (i suoi elettori più fedeli), che lo vedono come uno di loro. Un dato interessante è quello dei post pubblicati sulla suddetta

pagina nel 2018: un totale di 3785 in un anno, corrispondente ad una media di più di 10 al giorno. E il trend prosegue anche nel 2019. Le tematiche trattate nella maggioranza dei suoi post sono, non a caso, tra le più sentite per una larga fascia di cittadini: Italia (o Italiani), immigrazione e sicurezza. Oltre alla grande visibilità c'è un'abilità innata di Salvini nel saper comunicare in modo empatico e nel saper intercettare ed anticipare il sentimento popolare, il che gli permette di essere spesso il primo ad affrontare le questioni ritenute più rilevanti ed eventualmente fornire ai suoi "followers" una versione che sia più conciliabile con le sue posizioni. Lo stesso responsabile della comunicazione del leader leghista, Luca Morisi, ha affermato che, seppur ci sia un grande lavoro da parte di uno staff dietro le strategie comunicative di Salvini, l'enorme successo ottenuto da quest'ultimo è dovuto ad una sua personale e straordinaria capacità di interpretare il ruolo alla perfezione.

## CONCLUSIONE

Il successo della Lega nel 2019 sembra quindi essere ascrivibile in gran parte alla capacità del suo leader di attrarre consenso e di imporre la sua narrazione. La Lega è stata abile nello sfruttare al meglio il risultato del 4 Marzo, entrando in un governo nel quale aveva poco da perdere e molto da guadagnare, e mantenendo al tempo stesso solide le sue radici a destra, creando così uno spazio in cui muoversi (e in cui comandare) una volta raggiunto il ruolo di primo partito. La sfida che attende la Lega nei prossimi anni (ma probabilmente già nei prossimi mesi) è quella di riuscire a tenere fede alle numerose promesse fatte (che man mano che il tempo passa dovranno necessariamente tramutarsi in azioni concrete) ed aggiornare la propria strategia per poter affrontare il nuovo ruolo che sembra inevitabilmente doverle spettare, ovvero quello di forza governo responsabile per l'andamento del paese, e le vite dei propri elettori.