

The center-right and center-left coalitions lose almost 11 million votes

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One of the most relevant results of the 2013 general elections, compared with those from 2008, is, without any doubt, the electoral decline of the two coalitions of the center-left and the center-right.¹ Indeed, the two main coalitions have collectively lost nearly 11 million votes. In particular, the center-right has lost a little more than 7 million votes (i.e., 42% of its 2008 consensus), while the center-left has lost more than 3.5 million votes (i.e., 27% of its 2008 consensus). Once again, almost half of the center-right's electorate decided not to vote for Silvio Berlusconi's coalition. This is mirrored by the center-left, which was abandoned by almost a fourth of its electorate. This electoral meltdown has involved both coalitions, even though the center-right is the political coalition that registered the biggest losses, winning 46.8% in 2008 but free-falling to 29.2% in 2013. Furthermore, in 2008, the two coalitions together represented 84.4% of the total valid votes, while in 2013, they represent "only" 58.7%. All this indicates strongly how the Italian party system² has entered a restructuring phase with increasing electoral volatility.³

The center-right lost votes in all regions of Italy, but particularly in Liguria (-51%), Sicily (-49%), Sardinia and Trentino-Alto Adige (-48%), Marche (-46%), and Emilia-Romagna and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (-45%). Conversely, the losses registered in the majority of southern regions and in Umbria are below the national average. In similar fashion, the center-left electoral decline occurs in all the re-

gions in Italy (with the exception of Trentino-Alto Adige). The most significant losses, those above the national average, occur in the southern regions, especially in Molise (-40%), where it was known that Antonio Di Pietro's party no longer belongs to the coalition. The losses continued in Abruzzo (-38%), Sicily (-34%), Sardinia, Apulia, Campania, Calabria (-31%), Liguria (-32%), and Marche (-36%). The losses registered in many of the former "red zone"⁴ regions and in the north are either near the average or below it.

The inability of the main political coalitions to gather support may be caused by some concurrent phenomena. First, with respect to 2008, the electoral turnout⁵ decreased by approximately 5 percentage points (i.e., almost 2.6 million votes). This drop is deeper than just the physiological decline of participation due to the generational turnover (to be estimated at two percentage points in the downward). One can therefore hypothesize that a good portion of the total votes for the two main coalitions in 2008 ended in abstention in 2013. Moreover, during the most recent general elections, the M5S was incredibly successful, obtaining more than 8.5 million votes in the Chamber, winning 25.6% of the seats. This can be attributed to the success of M5S and Beppe Grillo to obtain votes from the other two main center-left and center-right coalitions. Grillo has been able to collect votes nationally at a pretty homogeneous level, represented most strongly in Sicily (33.5%), Marche

¹ For a thorough analysis of the 2008 election results, see D'Alimonte and Chiaramonte (2010).

² For an analysis of the evolution of the party system in Italy, see Chiaramonte (2007, 2010).

³ For further information on the concept of electoral volatility, see Pedersen (1979) and Bartolini (1986).

⁴ For a thorough examination of the characteristics of the red subculture and of the electoral behavior of the regions within it, see Baccetti and Messina (2009), Diamanti (2010), Floridaia (2010), and De Sio (2011).

⁵ For an analysis of the evolution in Italian electoral turnout, see Tuorto (2010).

Table 1. Electoral performance of the main coalitions at the Chamber of Deputies, by region (2008 and 2013 general elections)

Region	Berlusconi 2008	Berlusconi 2013	Var. %	Veltroni 2008	Bersani 2013	Var. %	Casini 2008	Monti 2013	Var. %	M5S 2013	M5S %	Voters 2008 (%)	Voters 2013 (%)	Diff % 2008 vs. 2013
Abruzzo	357,502	229,883	-36%	335,226	204,285	-39%	48,534	69,158	42%	232,542	29.87	80.95	75.95	-5.01
Basilicata	127,972	76,407	-40%	151,576	106,002	-30%	23,430	34,925	49%	75,258	24.27	75.38	69.50	-5.88
Calabria	465,996	283,163	-39%	384,693	265,685	-31%	87,580	98,480	12%	233,169	24.86	71.41	63.15	-8.26
Campania	1,719,068	1,063,495	-38%	1,132,314	775,822	-31%	217,284	337,682	55%	661,075	22.14	76.20	67.88	-8.32
Emilia-R.	1,019,805	557,071	-45%	1,401,094	1,073,209	-23%	119,789	248,579	108%	658,443	24.64	86.18	82.10	-4.08
Friuli-V. G.	364,484	201,865	-45%	272,092	198,175	-27%	46,051	92,813	102%	196,218	27.23	80.78	77.20	-3.58
Lazio	1,517,620	924,641	-39%	1,420,058	987,872	-30%	165,868	291,334	76%	928,175	28.04	81.28	77.51	-3.77
Liguria	435,748	215,186	-51%	425,054	290,502	-32%	37,830	92,593	145%	299,966	32.10	78.00	75.12	-2.89
Lombardy	3,390,037	2,047,431	-40%	1,974,158	1,614,458	-18%	261,806	691,402	164%	1,126,147	19.65	84.69	79.61	-5.08
Marche	364,064	196,884	-46%	449,049	288,278	-36%	59,848	99,002	65%	298,141	32.13	82.94	79.84	-3.11
Molise	82,561	53,469	-35%	89,959	54,296	-40%	11,459	20,105	75%	52,057	27.67	78.60	78.13	-0.47
Piedmont	1,279,363	721,239	-44%	1,021,428	726,631	-29%	141,404	309,999	119%	706,297	27.53	80.76	77.26	-3.49
Apulia	1,129,886	727,376	-36%	847,294	584,125	-31%	189,454	231,718	22%	563,243	25.53	76.21	69.94	-6.27
Sardinia	421,420	219,197	-48%	393,078	272,519	-31%	54,665	87,243	60%	274,834	29.69	72.30	68.32	-3.98
Sicily	1,531,324	786,484	-49%	813,202	538,093	-34%	264,454	215,042	-19%	842,617	33.55	75.02	64.59	-10.43
Tuscany	797,428	459,697	-42%	1,193,321	922,300	-23%	98,573	187,287	90%	532,875	24.01	83.71	79.19	-4.52
Trentino-A. A	186,293	96,246	-48%	170,843	271,088	59%	25,594	84,242	229%	88,622	14.62	84.26	81.03	-3.22
Umbria	204,124	127,962	-37%	267,641	187,197	-30%	25,582	50,603	98%	143,004	27.16	84.15	79.53	-4.62
Veneto	1,669,234	935,404	-44%	944,380	686,970	-27%	171,126	349,353	104%	775,862	26.35	84.72	81.71	-3.01
Total	17,063,929	9,923,100	-42%	1,368,6460	1,004,7507	-27%	205,0331	359,1560	75%	8,688,545	25.55	80.51	75.20	-5.32

and Liguria (32.1%). It is important to highlight that both Liguria and Sicily are the regions where the center-right lost the most votes compared with the 2008 elections (almost half of the votes), and at the same time, they are two regions where the center-left (always compared with 2008) saw losses above the national average. As for the center-left, it is important to note how the coalition's smallest loss was recorded in Lombardy (-18%), where the M5S only reached 19.6%, the worst percentage obtained by Grillo's movement with the exception for Trentino-Alto Adige (14.6%). The only region of the former "red zone" where the losses for the center-left are above the national average, as we have already seen, is Marche, one of the regions where the M5S was most successful.

Finally, Mario Monti's coalition, compared with the UdC in 2008, increased, in absolute terms, its votes in all regions except in Sicily, where it lost almost 50,000 votes compared with 2008 (-19%). In Sicily, Monti and his coalition could not surpass 5.9% in the Senate and failed to get any candidates elected. At the national level, the center coalition led by Monti obtained almost 3.5 million votes, while the UdC obtained more than 2 million votes by itself in 2008. In the diachronic comparison, it is important to point out that Monti's coalition showed a territorial distribution of votes notably different from that of the UdC in 2008. The regions where it saw an increase in votes are Trentino-Alto Adige (+229%), Lombardy (+164%), Liguria (+145%), Piedmont (+119%), Emilia-Romagna (+108%), Veneto (+104%), and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (+102%). The biggest electoral growth occurred in these northern regions. In this respect, it is remarkable that the regions where Monti's list does not reach the electoral threshold of 8% minimum in the Senate are all midsouth regions: Lazio, Sardinia, Abruzzo, Calabria, and Sicily.

Therefore, these elections mark an evident electoral decline for the two main coalitions of the center-left and center-right, both incapable of keeping a significant share of their own electorates. This increased electoral volatility can be explained

to some extent by the growing disaffection toward politics and the subsequent increase in abstentions. On the other hand, there is now a different competitive dynamic in Italian politics: no longer are there only two main coalitions (bipolar); rather, now there are four (quadripolar). In particular, a new political force, the M5S, has been highly competitive and a viable and popular choice for many electors who had previously cast their ballot for the center-right or center-left in 2008.

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