

Stability Despite Change: The Inner Logic of the Italian Parliament (A Preliminary Analysis)

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Hypotheses & Analytical Strategy

Political scientists assigned the Italian democracy of the period 1948-1993 to the camp of consociative democracies. Yet, government was never shared, the state remained strongly centralized and the political parties clashed violently against each other. If it was a consociative democracy, nobody noticed it.

The uniqueness of the Italian political system has been described from two perspectives: 1. a degenerative case of an idealtype (consociative democracy); 2. the distortion produced by strong political parties (*partitocrazia*). Both 1 & 2 assume politicians are over-socialized actors reproducing macro-cultural values. We take issue with both perspectives.

Indeed, Italy has many anomalies but our aim is not to construct another taxonomy of political regimes, but to explain how the concrete behavior of Italian politicians maintained a certain structure.

Toward this goal, we take history seriously and consider the Italian Parliament as an institution that operates with specific rules (standing orders) under a clear institutional tradition (*trasformismo*).

Our broad research hypotheses is that rules largely explain the behavior of the Italian Parliamentary members (MP) and that this can be detected most clearly in the cycle following the establishment of new rules.

Italian Parliamentary rules (changed in 1948, 1971 and 1986) were quite different from those of other Western Parliaments. As a consequence, political parties were strong in the civil society but weak within the assembly. In particular, rules perpetuated the tradition of the Italian Parliament to function as a source of clientelistic power.

Here, we present some preliminary results for the period 1972-1976. The 1971 rules of the House (*Camera dei Deputati*) established, among other things, that representatives from all parties decided the agenda of the assembly, not the president.

We expect these rules to have increased collaboration between MP across ideological divisions, further weakening political parties. Consequently, we expect an increase of the clientelistic logic of the Parliament.

Background & the Data

The '70s ushered in a deep restructuring of the Italian economy that caused deep tensions in the Italian civil society.



March, 6 1973. A wedding in a factory occupied by the workers.

Furthermore, the effects caused by a tumultuous process of industrialization, which had begun some 20 years before, came to the surface in the '70s. Covered by a thick layer of ideological rhetoric, old contradictions present since the birth of the Italian State reappeared--Catholics versus Lay, North versus South, Modernity versus Tradition.



March, 14 1977. The funeral of Francesco Lorusso, a communist militant killed in Bologna during a clash with the police.

The Data: A MP could be either active (AMP) if he introduces a bill or could just cosponsor bills introduced by others. We induced a network of collaborations between AMP on the basis of a preliminary sample of a 1116 bills (24.6% of total bills). Only bills of length within one standard deviation from the average number of sponsors were considered (length < 20).

Preliminary Results

Bills whose support came across party lines are considered more likely to be of clientelistic nature (the so called *leggine*). The table underneath counts the number of dyads by party affiliations.

	DC	MISTO	MSI	PCI	PLI	PRI	PSDI	PSI
DC	178	16	50	105	38	5	38	77
MISTO	16	0	0	8	0	2	0	2
MSI	50	0	3	10	10	3	7	12
PCI	105	8	10	15	15	5	7	27
PLI	38	0	10	15	5	0	6	19
PRI	5	2	3	5	0	1	2	1
PSDI	38	0	7	7	6	2	2	6
PSI	77	2	12	27	19	1	6	8

DC = Christian Democrats; MISTO = AMP of mixed parties; MSI = Italian Social Movement; PCI = Italian Communist Party; PLI = Italian Liberal Party; PRI = Italian Republican Party; PSDI = Italian Socialdemocrat Party; PSI = Italian Socialist Party

The following equations give a general frame for analyzing the tendency for within or across party collaboration.

$$\omega_{i,j} = \rho + (1 - \rho)\pi_j \quad i = j \quad \text{where } \omega \text{ is the cell entry for } [i,j],$$

$$(1 - \rho)\pi_j \quad i \neq j \quad \rho \text{ is the estimated homophily}$$

π_j are the observed marginal for table 1.

The estimated overall collaboration within parties (*homophily* = 0.15) generates vector rows statistically similar to those of the above table (Mann-Wilcoxon test of rank orders). The low homophily suggests a strong tendency of collaborating across party lines.

The following table reports the content of the bill by the type of dyad. A homogenous dyad is made by two AMP of the same party; a congruent dyad by two AMP of the government coalition while a heterogeneous dyad is made of two AMP that of different parties and that are not in the congruent case.

	Homogeneous	Congruent	Heterogenous
Const. Matters	0.322	0.167	0.511
Agriculture	0.294	0.118	0.588
Budget	0.000	0.000	1.000
Defense	0.324	0.169	0.507
Foreign	0.400	0.000	0.600
Justice	0.347	0.143	0.510
Public Health	0.250	0.312	0.438
Commerce	0.217	0.130	0.652
Interior	0.269	0.284	0.448
Education	0.258	0.215	0.527
Public Projects	0.196	0.235	0.569
Various	0.150	0.200	0.650
Social Security	0.304	0.161	0.536
Treasury	0.269	0.224	0.507
Transportation	0.243	0.297	0.459