



Political Suicide in New York City and Italy: Part I - Italy

Jerry Krase (February 26, 2013)



New York City and Italy have a great deal in common, starting and ending with self-destructive electorates; voters who are intent on putting into office people who, in one way or another, hold them in contempt. In both democracies, The People are generally too ignorant and self-absorbed to notice that the pain they feel is self-inflicted. How does this happen?

New York City and Italy have a great deal in common, starting and ending with self-destructive electorates; voters who are intent on putting into office people who, in one way or another, hold them in contempt. In both nominal democracies, We The People are generally too ignorant and equally self-absorbed to notice that the political pain we feel is self-inflicted. How do situations like this consistently happen in electoral democracies? The Italian case in point is the Phoenix-like rising of Silvio Berlusconi who most of us had thought had already descended into one or another well-deserved Dantian circle of Hell. For il Cavaliere the most suitable ones probably are 2,3, 8 and 9. One postmodern reason for this state of affairs is a perversion of the Schadenfreude principle practiced in Italy as "the enemy of my enemy must be my friend" syndrome. In a Vatican-esque world where enemies are more reliable than friends, who themselves often can't be trusted, even technical, unelected governments can't make the trains run on time. On the other hand, Italians of the leftist kind are especially adverse to their friends being more successful than they are, so lasting and effective left-wing coalitions are oxymorons.

Then there is the reflexive "Don't tell me what to do!" syndrome by which the more Italians (and Italy itself) are criticized by foreigners, the greater is the likelihood that they will be exalted by Italians. In recent days, The New York Times and Kanzlerin Angela Merkel have done more to raise the esteem for Silvio in the eyes of the Italian public than his teenage pajama party girlfriends. Someone should have told Mutti that telling Italians who NOT to vote for has the opposite effect. The Times, like the old dog who can't learn new tricks, is hopeless and I believe Italian politicians seek its editorial disapproval.

As [Melissa Eddy](#) [2] wrote in The New York Times, when Merkel was asked last September if she feared a Berlusconi comeback, she had difficulty not smirking while sputtering "I am, as you know, a democratic politician and respect the outcome of elections in every country." Now with Silvio's Verdial triumphant return to the center-right stage the smirk (feixen) has been wiped off her face as she and the German government began, "...in not-so-subtle ways, to signal to Italians not to vote for him." For example, her finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, was quoted as advising Italians "... not to make the same mistake again by voting for him." Germans and Germany have not been especially good for Italians and Italy ever since the reign of their namesake Germanicus. The most recent havoc wreaked by the Vandals are the scandals presided over by the super cleric German import, Pope Benedict XVI (Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger). Given the bad blood that flowed between Angela and Silvio, after he was caught in a wiretap making a characteristically vulgar comment about her somatotype, it is not unexpected that he would use Merkel as a foil in his current campaign. It is she and Germany, rather than his own arrogance and ineptitude, as well as ungovernable Italians, that is responsible for Italy's well-deserved fiscal crisis.

Italy is always in deep stuff (sempre nei guai), and Italian voters consistently evidence well beyond the normal lack of confidence that voting and/or changing the government will do any good. This is most often reflected in staying home during elections and complaining about the returns. But, in the eyes of Rachel Donadio and many other foreign correspondents at least ("[The Rise of a Protest Movement Shows the Depth of Italy's Disillusionment](#) [3]"), a blurry bright spot has been the "Internet-savvy comedian turned populist rabble-rouser," who heads what might be the third most vote getting party headed by firebrand "comedian" Beppe Grillo. His tsunami "Five Star Movement" has swelled in anticipation of the national elections building on an "antisystem" (what "system" I don't know) message that draws discouraged voters away from both right and left-leaning parties.



Beppe's grass-roots campaign, among other populist things, calls for a referendum on the Euro. Some experts believe Grillo has made it all but impossible that Berlusconi & company will take back the reigns of government. Pier Luigi Bersani's center-left Democratic Party, is expected to place first, but without enough seats to govern alone and Mario Monti et al are where they should be in line.

Investors fear that if there is no clear victor, the political uncertainty might cause renewed market turmoil. They seem not to have noticed that the turmoil is the new normal (nuova normalita). More of a problem to some, is that Grillo's success could make Parliament, like the United States Congress I suppose, ungovernable (also the new normal). To add more insult to the injuries, Beppe can't serve in Parliament because he was convicted for manslaughter. According to Donadio, a political scientist and a pollster, called Grillo a "uniquely Italian invention." "We invented fascism, the Christian Democrats, Berlusconi, and now we've even invented Grillo." It remains to be seen however what Italy and Italians will invent, or re-invent, as they go to the polls on February 24-25. La Repubblica reported as I write this that they (Silvio, Pierluigi, and Mario come pure i tedeschi) have now ganged up on Beppe who, because he is being attacked by both friends and enemies, attracted almost a million supporters to a rally in Rome. Stay tuned.

The result might be an important lesson for Bill De Blasio, Sal Albanese, Christine Quinn, Bill Thompson, John Liu and every other Democrat seeking to defeat Big Money and Big Media in New York City.

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