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Magistrates Going Into Politics

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MAGISTRATES GOING INTO POLITICS

Antonio Di Pietro and Italy of Values

James L. Newell

Introduction

With the outcome of the Italian general election of 2013, Antonio Di Pietro’s Italia dei Valori (Italy of Values, IdV) found itself excluded from Parliament for the first time in ten years. It had fielded candidates as part of the left-wing coalition, Rivoluzione Civile (Civil Revolution, RC) headed by another public prosecutor, Antonio Ingroia. But in the Chamber election RC managed only 2.3 per cent of the vote and therefore failed to cross the 4 per cent exclusion threshold, while in the Senate election it did even worse failing everywhere to come close to the 8 per cent exclusion threshold applied regionally. In some respects this was surprising; for the most spectacular result was the explosion of support for Beppe Grillo’s Movimento Cinque Stelle (Five-star Movement, M5S), with which IdV had much in common. Both were political independents, ‘non-coalitionable’ for some or all of their history (McDonnell and Newell, 2011: 444); both sought to challenge the stranglehold on political life of the mainstream parties, perceived as corrupt, remote from ordinary citizens and incapable of the reform of the political system they had promised twenty years earlier at the time of the great Tangentopoli/Mani pulite (‘Bribe City’/‘Clean Hands’) scandal; neither formation could be easily located on the left–right spectrum and drew members and supporters from all parts of it. They even had overlapping styles of political communication, both giving a privileged place to the Internet and the piazza. Grillo’s movement had not been present at the general election held less than five years before: now it took 25.6 per cent of the vote.

Of course, to a large extent it was the overlap in the nature of their appeals that explained the sharp contrast in the two forces’ performance. Ecological analyses carried out by the Istituto Cattaneo (Colloca et al., 2013) confirmed that significant proportions of IdV’s 2008 electorate had shifted to the M5S. But this left open the question why, despite the similarities, Di Pietro’s followers (whose best performance was the 8 per cent achieved in the 2009 European elections) had never managed to achieve the striking success that Grillo’s now achieved. Of course, the M5S explosion will have had to do with conjunctural factors not present when IdV was the only player in town; but on the other hand, popular discontent with ‘politics as usual’ from which both drew so much of their sustenance was long-standing, not new. And why was it
that, aware of the risk of being cannibalised by Grillo in 2013, Di Pietro had not reached an accommodation with him that might at least have kept the size of the feast to a minimum?

The remainder of this chapter is designed to shed light on these and other questions by exploring the factors underlying the emergence of IdV and the political debut of its leader; the nature of IdV as a party; and its strategy and electoral performance. IdV has often been criticised for the patrimonial style of leadership of its founder, from whose identity it has hardly been possible to separate its own. At the same time, it initially seems odd that Di Pietro, having won such enormous standing for his role in Mani pulite should then have decided to join a political class so negatively viewed by citizens, a class whose malfeasance he had done so much to expose. We therefore begin by examining the career of Antonio Di Pietro himself, seeking to uncover what drove his choices from the early 1990s on.

Emergence

A feeling for the degree to which Di Pietro was revered by the Italian public in the early 1990s can be obtained from the telegram sent to him by Anna Maria Florio on 18 May 1992:

> It is sad when in a nation a member of the judiciary as intelligent, honest, capable and courageous as you are is considered a hero. I hope no one, whether one of your superiors or a minister, perhaps from the Justice Department, stops you. Lined up behind you, you have almost the whole of Italy, which is saying to you: ‘Thank you Di Pietro!’


The scandal that turned Di Pietro into a popular hero had few to rival it. ‘It might even qualify, in some meaningful sense, as the twentieth century’s “greatest scandal”’ (Newell, 2005). It began on 17 February 1992, when Mario Chiesa, the head of a Milanese old people’s home, was arrested in the act of taking a 7 million lire bribe from the owner of a cleaning company. A member of the Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*, PSI), Chiesa owed his position to the system of the governing parties’ control, for patronage purposes, of large parts of the state apparatus, and assumed that the party would now erect a protective wall around him. In the past it had got representatives accused of accepting bribes elected to Parliament – whose members had then obligingly voted against the judicial authorities’ requests that their parliamentary immunity be lifted. But Chiesa had been caught ‘with his hands in the till’ and a general election was due on 5 April. Frequently the object of media satire for its shaky grasp of probity, the party abandoned him to his fate. He was, in party secretary Bettino Craxi’s words, ‘a little rascal’ who had thrown ‘a shadow over the entire image of a party which in fifty years in Milan . . . [had] never had an administrator convicted for grave crimes against the public administration’. Faced with this evidence that his political career was in ruins, Chiesa decided to confess all.

What came to light was a massive network of ‘mutually beneficial linkages’ (Waters, 1994: 170) between the political parties and powerful economic groups in the City: a network whose illegality required there to be, among those involved, a trust that would necessarily have been very difficult to establish – but very easy to break in the event of the slightest suspicion that the wall of silence surrounding the network had been breached. One confession therefore led to another and by November 1993, over half the members of Parliament found themselves under investigation for corruption, as did four former prime ministers and all those who had been members of the government at the time the scandal broke.

The effect of the exposure of corruption on this scale was to bring about a complete disintegration of the traditional parties of government and a complete restructuring of the party
system through impacts that were financial, organisational, electoral and institutional. Financially, the parties had become increasingly dependent on corrupt forms of funding while facing mounting accumulated debts. They were therefore pushed fairly quickly towards bankruptcy. This led to their organisational disintegration as they were deserted by venal members – aware that the parties could no longer serve as vehicles for upward mobility – and by ideologically committed members who had been kept in ignorance of the corrupt networks within them. The electoral impact was a haemorrhage of support as voters who had once supported the governing parties out of fear of the opposition communists no longer felt, now that the Berlin Wall was down, any particular compulsion to do so. The tidal wave of indignation the scandal provoked provided the popular backing required by a range of cross-party groups that now attempted – successfully – to bring about a change in the electoral law – through a referendum held in 1993 – and with it a change in the party system, which they hoped would produce more honest government.

Di Pietro’s role in this was as a public prosecutor who since the early 1980s had stood out for an ability to use information technology to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of judicial investigations. It was Di Pietro who had brought about Chiesa’s arrest by persuading Luca Magni, the aforementioned cleaning-company owner who had complained about being asked for a bribe, to present himself at Chiesa’s office with a briefcase containing marked banknotes and several listening devices while four carabinieri waited outside.

What caused his involvement to give him the status of popular hero was the high profile he had as a leading member of a group of investigators whose enquiries captured the public imagination. The downfall and humiliation of so many powerful figures delighted Italians, who had voted for them less because of any positive commitment than because of the feeling that they had little choice: they supported them either for reasons of clientelism – which, by turning citizens’ rights into favours, itself bred cynicism and resentment – or because they were frightened by the prospect of the communists taking power, or both. They knew that the world of politics was dark and labyrinthine and that its practitioners were powerful people with the ability to ‘fix things’ in such a way that they were immune from the impositions of a hostile state that ordinary citizens had to endure. Consequently, the sight of once untouchable figures at last getting their comeuppance was intoxicating (Newell, 2005).

The proceedings were framed in the media less as threats to the reputations of the individuals involved than as the trial of an entire political class, with Di Pietro cast in the role of moraliser of public life. Judicial reforms from the late 1950s had considerably increased the extent of prosecutors’ de facto discretion in deciding what to investigate. Combined with generational turnover this had led increasing numbers of judges and prosecutors, since the 1970s, to see their role less as a passive ‘bouche de la loi’ (Guarnieri, 1997: 158), than as one demanding – through penal initiatives in the areas of workplace safety, environmental pollution, tax evasion, fraud and so forth – that they use their powers to act as problem-solvers, attempting to tackle the great social issues of the day (Di Federico, 1989: 33). Not surprisingly then Enrico Pozzi (1997) recounts that, having endured three years of grinding routine at the Milan public prosecutor’s office, Di Pietro’s first ‘big break’ came with a 1987 investigation into corruption in the issuance of driving licences – where, according to biographers, what was at stake for Di Pietro was less the identification of offenders than the prevention of a potential massacre, his mission being ‘to rid Milan of “this cancer”, “to clean up the region of Lombardy”, “to enact a process of social disinfection”, to reclaim the State’ (Pozzi, 1997: 335, my translation). Consequently, the later ‘Clean Hands’ investigations would tend to be framed as a re-edition of David and Goliath, a morality play in which Di Pietro was depicted as doing battle, single-handedly, with the forces of evil.
Why, under these circumstances, would Di Pietro have decided – as he did in 1996 when he became Minister of Public Works in the first Prodi Government and then in 1997 as the centre-left’s successful candidate for a place in the Senate – to take to the field of politics? Hitherto he had been the leader, not of a group or a movement, but the impartial leader, above party politics, of an entire nation; in politics he would inevitably divide opinion around him, not unite it. Moreover, individual politicians had long used informal relations of connivance with members of the judiciary to trade political favours (e.g. help in getting a seat in Parliament) for judicial favours (such as damaging a political opponent), while often accusing the judiciary of political interference: The appearance, if not the substance, of an imperfect separation of the roles of judge and politician would hardly be lessened by a political debut.

Di Pietro’s own account of his decision was given in the preface to a lengthy interview published in 2008:

> Public life is like a football match: there are those who play and those who are good at giving advice and making angry criticisms from the sidelines. The basic choice, however, is between being a player or a spectator and I chose to be a player, with all the risks and uncertainties of the job, but also all of the satisfactions to be had from the pride that comes with being on the pitch ready to play the game of one’s life . . . as a magistrate I had revealed the illnesses of Italy’s political and business systems, so I thought that as a politician I would be able to contribute to the search for a cure, which for me consisted and still consists in a generational change in the composition of the political class

(Di Pietro, 2008: 7–8, my translation)

Di Pietro’s charisma would have provided the required confidence of success. He spoke a language that was colourful and informal, free of technicalities, flavoured with proverbial sayings and idioms, a language that was quickly dubbed in the media ‘dipietrese’. Such qualities made it possible to stake a claim to be the authentic voice of the people and thus to compete on the same terms as politicians such as Berlusconi and Umberto Bossi, who had met with considerable success precisely by adopting such strategies.

**Italia dei Valori**

Di Pietro originally set up his party in March 1998, some four months after he had been elected to the Senate. In fact, he set it up twice. Less than a year after its original founding the party was merged with the Democratici (Democrats) – conceived as the first of a series of steps designed to lead to the unification of all of the parties of the centre-left, one of the two main coalitions in the new, bipolar, party system that had emerged in the aftermath of Tangentopoli. Little more than a year after that, in 2000, Di Pietro left the Democrats and re-established IdV in protest at the decision of the former to support the formation of a government headed by the socialist, Giuliano Amato, who had been a close collaborator of former Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, one of the most high-profile defendants in the Mani pulite trials.

Cross-nationally, new parties tend not to last very long (Lucardie, 2000: 175). However, much depends on the political opportunity structure, and in the Italy of the late 1990s circumstances were rather propitious. Promoters of the 1993 referendum had assumed that the single-member simple plurality (SMSP) system they had achieved for the assignment of most parliamentary seats would result in party-system bipolarity by obliging parties close on the left–right spectrum to form electoral coalitions in order to avoid ideologically more distant parties.
taking seats at their joint expense with less than 50 per cent of the vote. It did produce this – but the bipolar system was highly fragmented: the disintegration (or in some cases transformation) of the traditional post-war Italian parties left large numbers of voters orphaned; and though disinclined to switch between coalitions, voters were rather weakly attached to the new parties within each coalition. Under these circumstances SMSP, which in other circumstances might have acted as a disincentive to potential newcomers, gave them a unique opportunity: as elections approached they could tell potential allies that they would run independently if their demands for safe seats were not met, aware that if non-aligned candidacies had few prospects of victory, ‘what was much more certain was that they could make their larger rivals lose’ (Newell, 2010).

Of course to be able to exercise such blackmail power potential newcomers have to have a credible project, that is, some problem – specific or general, of policy or ideology – on which they may reasonably expect to mobilise some minimum number of voters. IdV had such a project: the moralisation of public life, which citizens’ reactions to Mani pulite had already revealed to be one with considerable resonance.

It is interesting, under these circumstances, to ask why IdV emerged as a party forming part of the coalition of the centre-left. After all, there was nothing particularly left-wing about justice and legality, which might, indeed, be perceived as having more in common with law-and-order themes typical of the conservative right. Moreover, besides – or perhaps because of – this, the party’s location on the left–right spectrum was unclear, as its founder was clearly aware:

I am a pragmatist . . . This does not mean that the right and the left are both good or amount to the same thing. I grew up, yes, with a negative perception of the right: my parents had no nostalgia for Fascism and always spoke negatively of the period of il duce. They associated the right with arrogance, and I have always hated arrogance. As far as . . . the left is concerned . . . mine was a Catholic family . . . so for my parents [communism] represented sin. Only with time did I understand that . . . among communists too – as among anti-communists – there were many who could be taken as models of social and civic engagement . . . My experience has led me, over time, to develop a political outlook that has certain basic principles: on the one hand, the concept of a liberal economy, the free market, respect for private property and economic freedom; on the other hand, the recognition of individual rights and of solidarity towards the weak and unfortunate . . . It’s not right that the weakest are always the ones to lose, don’t you think?

(Di Pietro and Barbacetto, 2008: 63–5, my translation)

IdV found itself joining forces with the parties of the centre-left because of Silvio Berlusconi, the media magnate. Like Di Pietro, Berlusconi went into politics with a new political party which, like IdV, was its leader’s own creation, as were its rules and values, identity and organisation. But while Di Pietro had gone into politics seemingly with the ambition of leading a crusade to clean up public life, Berlusconi had done so to protect his business interests. His party, Forza Italia (FI), had emerged in 1994 as the fulcrum around which the coalition of the centre-right was built, and from then on, thanks to his high profile in the post-Cold War world of ‘personalised politics’, he himself had become the main political cleavage in Italian politics.

This had two significant consequences for Di Pietro and IdV. First, it created a political competitor whose conflict of interests as prime minister and owner of Italy’s three largest private television stations, and whose willingness to pass legislation to solve the legal problems to which he was subject as a private citizen, rendered him immensely controversial. It therefore provided IdV with the perfect target: the personification of the immorality whose expunging from public
life went to the heart of its raison d’être. Second, it naturally drew the party to the centre-left: for both Di Pietro and the centre-left, Berlusconi’s position and the type of control he exercised over the centre-right rendered his coalition inherently illegitimate as a potential governing actor.

Like FI, IdV was a ‘personal party’: a party created to further the political ambitions of its founder and whose internal organisation therefore reflects the founder’s more or less complete control (Calise, 2000). It also had characteristics of the ‘franchise party’ (Carty, 2004): a party the use of whose ‘brand’ is granted to autonomous local branches but whose political and communications strategies are the prerogative of the centre (Floridia, 2013). Formally, the distribution of power within the party was federal in nature: its regional structures had administrative, financial and statutory autonomy; they were to make decisions about whom to admit to the party. On the other hand, membership of the party was not to give membership of the ‘Association’, a legally separate entity whose control of the party’s assets and its symbol would ensure that these resources were protected from the potential claims of breakaway groups. Moreover, the fledgling IdV’s statute assigned the presidency of the Association, until such time as he decided to relinquish it, to Di Pietro while also stipulating that the role of president of the party was to be filled by the president of the Association. The president was given wide powers, including ownership of the party symbol, newspaper and website, and powers to amend the party statute, select candidates, appoint personnel, choose the party treasurer and so on (Pisicchio, 2008: 43).

These features of the party’s organisation help to explain two of its most distinctive characteristics. First, later complaints that Di Pietro ran the party as if it were a private fiefdom: as Calise (2000: 5–6) points out, in the personal party, the relationship between leaders and followers is governed by patrimony and charisma rather than rational–legal authority. Second, as a franchise party, IdV’s central organisations were ‘responsible for providing the basic product line (policy and leadership) . . . and for establishing standard organizational management’, while the local units were ‘charged with delivering the product’, i.e. ‘mobilizing campaigns to deliver the vote on the ground’ (Carty, 2004: 11). This being the case, there seemed to be a rather strong correlation between vote share and the presence of local leaders able to interact with voters directly, adding to their own appeal the ‘brand value’ of the party (Pisicchio, 2008: 9). This is hardly surprising, but it might explain IdV’s tendency, initially at least, to do better in the smaller than in the larger towns and cities (Emanuele, 2011); and as was suggested by the outcome of the 2001 general election, when the party failed by some 18,000 votes to cross the exclusion threshold, the matter was important for a small party like IdV insofar as it could make the difference between achieving some parliamentary representation or none at all.

Later, in 2008, the relationship between population density and the party’s support went into reverse, as then it did much better in the large urban centres than elsewhere, this in no small part thanks to the large influx of votes that came to it from the radical left (see below). This influx revealed a third characteristic of the party, namely, its tendency to draw volatile support from across the political spectrum — this thanks to its ambiguous left–right placement and to the anti-Berlusconi emphasis on legality (understood as public probity and due process), which made it attractive both to the ‘right-thinking’, moderate petit bourgeois, and to the anti-system protesters on the radical left (Pisicchio, 2008: 78–9). Not surprisingly, then, unlike with other parties with significant regional strongholds, support for IdV was distributed more or less evenly across the national territory (Emanuele, 2011: Table 2).

A final distinctive feature of IdV that deserves highlighting is the considerable investment the party made in Internet technology. This enabled it to connect more effectively with radical left protesters, given that those with their social characteristics — youth, high levels of education
and political efficacy – were disproportionately represented among assiduous Internet users. And by making it possible for the party to act as the focal point for relatively innocuous forms of protest, this enabled it to deal more effectively with the dilemmas posed by its need to speak simultaneously to those who wanted it to be a partito di lotta (‘party of struggle’) and the centrists among its supporters who wanted it to be a partito di governo (‘party of government’). Finally, by facilitating dialogue and interaction with activists and potential activists, it held out the prospect of overcoming the late twentieth-century conflict faced by parties everywhere between the electoral imperatives to centralise power in the hands of a charismatic leader, and the equally strong pressures (deriving from declining memberships, post-materialism and so forth) to increase the powers of activists.

**Electoral strategy and performance**

Thanks to factors such as these, IdV was always a minor party: by the time it came onto the scene, Berlusconi had already consolidated his hold on the centre-right (the centre-left was dominated by the DS) and the popular passion aroused by the great scandal had long cooled. The popular distrust of governing institutions that the passion expressed had since been channelled by Berlusconi into hostility towards the judiciary with his repeated complaints that his legal difficulties were the product of a witch-hunt by judicial officials with communist sympathies out to exploit their positions to damage him politically.

But though it remained a minor party, IdV was always – at least until the general election of 2013 – a ‘relevant’ party (Sartori, 1976). Early confirmation came with the outcome of the 2001 general election at which IdV refused to coalesce with the rest of the centre-left. This was largely because of the latter’s unwillingness or inability to act decisively on the matter of Berlusconi’s conflict of interests and because, going into his first general election as leader of IdV, Di Pietro wanted to establish a clear identity for his party and make a bid for the leadership of a potentially new coalition of anti-Berlusconi forces (Giostra, 2009: 219). In the end, the votes his party received in the SMSP arena (1,487,287), though insufficient to enable it to surmount the exclusion threshold, were of consequence for the outcome overall: if we make the counterfactual assumption that Di Pietro’s supporters would have voted for the centre-left in the absence of their preferred candidate, then the number of seats lost to the coalition as a result of its failure to reach an agreement with Di Pietro can be set at fifty-seven – fifty-seven being the number of colleges where the sum of the votes received by the centre-left Ulivo (‘Olive Tree’) candidate and the candidate representing Di Pietro’s party was larger than the vote received by the winning candidate of the centre-right. And had the Ulivo won all these seats, then what was a centre-right majority of 107 in the Chamber, might have been a centre-left majority of four.3

By the time the next general election was held in 2006, the electoral law had been changed, and had been changed in such a way that Di Pietro no longer needed to fear that running in harness would result in his party’s distinctive identity being submerged. The centre-right felt disadvantaged by the existing law because, as the outcomes of the 1996 and 2001 elections revealed, many of those who chose a centre-right party in the proportional arena were unwilling also to support the centre-right’s candidate in the plurality arena,4 whereas the opposite was true for supporters of the centre-left. Late in 2005, therefore, the centre-right used its parliamentary majority to force onto the statute book a law providing that seats would henceforth be distributed proportionally and that there would be a majority premium for the party or coalition of parties with the most votes overall. This disadvantaged the centre-left as the more fragmented...
of the two coalitions; for, given some uncertainty about the election’s likely outcome, the coveted majority premium encouraged the largest aggregations of lists possible – making it likely, by the same token, that any centre-left governing coalition would be too large and unwieldy to provide stability. This is what in fact transpired: IdV along with the other minor parties were encouraged to emphasise their distinctiveness and raise their profiles, knowing that the majority premium ensured that no votes would be wasted. Then, after the centre-left took office with a wafer-thin majority, the veto power of its many components and its consequent ineffectiveness ensured that the necessity for each party to distance itself from unpopular policies and thus from its allies ‘became ever more dominant with the passage of time’ (Florida, 2008: 319).

This circumstance was decisive for the way in which IdV would be obliged to position itself at the 2008 election following the government’s early demise. By then, the DS and the Margherita had merged to form the PD which, notwithstanding the electoral law, now declared that it would run alone, without allies – a decision driven by the belief that the former coalition was now ‘unelectable’, that victory for the centre-right was a near certainty and that by damaging its former minor-party allies, such a strategy would free it of their constraints in the future. IdV was an exception to this policy and thus found itself running in harness with the PD – this largely because it added a radical hue to the alliance, so assisting PD leader Walter Veltroni’s appeal to supporters of the now excluded radical left parties, to cast a ‘voto utile’ in favour of the only coalition (his own) with a realistic prospect of stopping Berlusconi (Bull and Newell, 2009: 340).

In the aftermath of the election, as the fourth largest party in a now much less fragmented Italian parliament, IdV became a considerable thorn in the side of its larger PD ally. Strengthened by a considerable inflow of votes from former Ulivo supporters and supporters of the radical left, and by a system of public funding which tied the amounts available to the votes a party had won, IdV’s representatives could now expect, in the much simplified party system that emerged from the election, to get a level of media attention they might once have only dreamt of. There thus followed a series of initiatives designed to outflank the PD, initiatives that would consolidate the images of Di Pietro and IdV as much more consistent and resolute opponents of the incumbent government and prime minister than Veltroni and the PD (Newell, 2009: 90–1).

In the short term, these initiatives were highly successful, enabling, as revealed by local and European elections, the party to grow at the expense of its larger ally (Newell, 2009). In the longer term, Di Pietro found that he had painted himself into a corner: attacks on the PD could only sustain an image of litigiousness on the centre-left, which kept it weak and therefore unattractive as an alternative to a Berlusconi government whose solidity, as the legislature progressed, was undermined by personal rivalries, by scandals and by divisions over how to confront the growing international financial crisis. Twenty years after Tangentopoli, promises of cleaner, more effective government seemed to vast swathes to have gone unfulfilled and the mainstream parties to be useless as vehicles for bringing about reform. Thus it was that demands for political overhaul were now expressed in growing support for Grillo’s M5S, which, by the local elections of May 2012, was in some areas achieving as much as 20 per cent of the vote, with the established parties in full retreat. This created seemingly impossible dilemmas for Di Pietro thinking of the general election of 2013: already in 2008, when in a famous incident Di Pietro had shared a platform with Grillo, the alliance had led to a number of high-profile resignations from the party (Newell, 2009: 95). The May elections confirmed that a re-edition of the 2008 alliance with the PD would almost certainly be a losing proposition; on the other hand, so might alliance with Grillo, a strategy that also exposed IdV to the risk of losing its
distinctive profile. This left the alternative of alliance with the radical left – the one which Di Pietro in the end chose – but this too involved a loss of identity: it was clear under the circumstances that none of the parties alone would clear the 4 per cent exclusion threshold; therefore all were obliged to merge their identities with that of RC, under whose symbol all of their candidates were fielded. The threshold was not cleared in any event. By the end of March 2013, Di Pietro had announced that IdV would be dissolved, eventually to be replaced by a constituent assembly that would give birth to a new party of a liberal democratic and reformist persuasion.

Conclusion

Italian politics is always full of surprises, and predictions, unless heavily qualified, are for the unwary. A few months before this was written few would have been willing to bet that Silvio Berlusconi had much of a political future, but he has made something of a comeback and his ‘opposite number’, Antonio Di Pietro, may yet do so too. On the other hand, the political adventure of the former prosecutor and his political party does seem to have come to something of a conclusion, permanent or temporary as it might be. In many respects, politician and party were the creation of their arch enemy, Silvio Berlusconi, someone with whom Di Pietro has more than a little in common – like Berlusconi, he is a self-made man; he shares the entrepreneur’s unshakeable self-confidence; for him, as for Berlusconi, politics is the means to an extra-political goal – and whose politics were necessary to his own success. In fact it might be said that the two men needed each other: for Berlusconi, Di Pietro was living proof of the desire for political interference of members of the judiciary; for Di Pietro, Berlusconi was the embodiment of immorality in public life. With the outcome of the 2013 election, many argued that the Second Republic which had come into being in the early 1990s had now been eclipsed; few doubted that Italian politics faced a highly uncertain future. What, on the other hand, was certain was that for better or worse Antonio Di Pietro had been one of the key actors, if not the key actor, both in bringing the Second Republic about and, now, in bringing it to an end. He had earned his place in history.

Notes

1 Continued in 2002 with the merger of the Democrats and others to form the Margherita (the ‘Daisy’) and in 2007 with the merger of the Margherita and the Democratici di Sinistra (Left Democrats, DS) to form the Partito Democratico (Democratic Party, PD).
2 Its vote share declined from 3.9 per cent in the 2001 general election to 2.3 in 2006 before almost doubling to 4.4 per cent at the election of 2008.
3 Actually, the matter is slightly more complicated than this, for technical reasons explained in Newell and Bull (2001), but the basic point holds.
4 In Chamber elections voters had two votes: one for the 75 per cent of deputies to be elected in the SMSP arena, another for the 25 per cent to be elected proportionally.

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