

The Italian election

The BBC and other parts of the media seem to be very quiet about the Italian election. You would have thought this stunning result was worth a bit of comment, analysis and discussion. Just as we saw in Greece, Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere in the Eurozone the traditional centre right and centre left parties have been dashed aside. 5 Star, a fairly new movement, has swept through the south of Italy, whilst the Lega has dominated in the northern Italian plain, taking much of Lombardy, the Veneto, Trentino and Piedmont. The centre left governing party was left holding on to Tuscany, whilst losing in most of the country. It slumped to just 18.9% of the vote, with the centre right party Forza that had displaced the Christian democrats some years ago only polling 13.9%.

Both 5 Star and Lega are Eurosceptic. Mr Salvini who leads Lega speaks for the centre right coalition as its largest party. The coalition has 37% of the vote. Mr Di Maio, the leader of 5 Star, speaks for 32.3% of the vote. One of them should be Prime Minister, though coalition talks could I suppose find some other combination of parties which gave the job to someone else. The Lega campaigned for Italy to leave the Euro and to remove the Maastricht, Nice, Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties from Italy's constitution. 5 Star dropped its wish to leave the Euro, but made clear its opposition to EU budget and Euro austerity policies and proposed spending more with tax cuts.

Lega representatives have made clear their view that the EU should change its approach to the UK and try and rescue an Agreement which they think would be in the EU's interests. They had already upset the EU authorities massively, so that will not make much difference to the relationship.

The Italian result is another in a long series showing growing anger and frustration with the economic and budgetary policies of the Euro, high levels of unemployment, and the EU's migration policy. It will probably make Brussels corral the waggons of integration more and will doubtless entice them to try to influence the government formation talks which will now be fascinating. The collapse of Italy's governing party to 18.9% does at least make Mrs Merkel's 26% vote share for her CDU look good!