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Trade Unions and Political Parties in Italy (1946–2014): Ideological Positions and Critical Junctures

Andrea Ceron  and Fedra Negri 

ABSTRACT

The paper investigates party-union relationships in Italy (1946–2014) by hand-coding parties' parliamentary speeches and trade unions' congress motions. In line with the cartel party thesis, a time series analysis shows that the ideological closeness between the left-wing Italian General Confederation of Labour and left-wing parties deteriorated when the Italian Socialist Party (1980) and the heirs of the Italian Communist Party (1998) converged toward the centre of the ideological spectrum. Conversely, the closeness between the Catholic-inspired Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions and the heirs of Christian Democracy increased after 1994, when the former party's leftist factions became the major part of the Italian Popular Party.

KEYWORDS


Trade unions; party-union relationships; CGIL; CISL; PCI; DC; PSI; text analysis

The alliance between trade unions and parties, especially left-wing ones, is a classic topic in comparative politics and comparative political economy. Since the 1950s, the sociological literature has explained party-union relationships as manifestations of similar societal cleavages and has focused mainly on the ties between trade unions and social-democratic parties, which are seen as the representatives of the working class in corporate and electoral channels, respectively (e.g., Duverger 1954).

Beginning in the 1970s, scholars have highlighted that the transformation of mass parties into catch-all (Kirchheimer 1966) and cartel parties (Katz & Mair 1995, 2009) weakened party-union linkages (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman 2013, Kelly 2015, Kitschelt 1994, Poguntke 2002). However, the actual shape of party-union relationships is far from settled. Indeed, other studies reached more nuanced conclusions, underlining the persistence of party-union ties even in recent decades (e.g., Yishai 2001, Jacoby & Behrens 2016, Poguntke 2002).

The literature has investigated this topic mainly by focusing on the formal rules that regulate party-union relationships, on the existence of liaison committees, on leadership and membership overlap, and on a wide typology of common collective activities (e.g., Padgett & Paterson 1991, pp. 177–185). Conversely, this paper explores the twofold relationship between parties and trade unions by evaluating how the association between these actors' ideological positions changed over time. For this purpose, we present a longitudinal case study focused on Italy and explore the relationship starting from the establishment of the Italian Republic (1946)—when, after the fall of Fascism, parties and

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trade unions ceased to be in a clandestine state—until 2014, by relying on the latest available data on trade unions' congresses and parties' parliamentary speeches. In detail, this paper improves on existing studies by providing an empirical assessment of the degree of similarity between parties' and trade unions' positions over time through a manual content analysis of several textual documents. Indeed, this technique allows us to perform a time series analysis to identify the critical junctures, namely, the years, in which party-union ties in Italy began to deteriorate or broke down.

In addition to data availability, there are several good reasons to draw attention to Italy. First, despite a number of recent contributions (e.g., Carrieri 2014, Mattina & Carrieri 2017), the nature of party-union relationships in Italy remains a highly debated topic. On one hand, scholars have argued that in Catholic nations, trade unions have always been less strongly linked with parties than they have in more secularised countries (Padgett & Paterson 1991, p. 184). On the other hand, other scholars have argued that Italian trade unions split along partisan lines and that they are highly dependent on their reference parties (Urbani 1976). Second, the Italian party system has experienced dramatic changes during its 70-year history. Indeed, the Bribeville (*Tangentopoli*) corruption scandal (1992) prompted the collapse of so-called First Italian Republic (1946–1994), which had featured the highest rate of cabinet turnover in Western Europe alongside a lack of substantial alternation under the ruling power of the DC (Democrazia Cristiana – Christian Democracy). From 1994 to date, the so-called Second Italian Republic has seen alternating centre-left and centre-right coalitions in government, although cabinet turnover remains quite high.

This fast-moving scenario forced Italian parties to change as well. The PCI (Partito Comunista Italiano – Italian Communist Party) abandoned the Marxist tradition by moderating its stances up to the point of merging itself with the heirs of the DC's left-wing faction and joining the PD (Partito Democratico – Democratic Party). Dramatically hit by the 1992 corruption scandals, the PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano – Italian Socialist Party) and the DC dissolved themselves, pushing their members to join other parties. The paper will help us understand how party-union ties reacted to this changing party system. Section one provides preliminary information on Italian parties and trade unions. Sections two and three review the literature on the weakening of party-union ties, summarising recent empirical studies. Section four introduces the datasets and explains the methodology employed to build them. Finally, parties' and trade unions' positions are compared over time through a time-series analysis.

Key information on the Italian case

This paper maps the historical evolution of parties' and trade unions' ideological positions and identifies the critical junctures in which they began to diverge through a longitudinal case study on Italy. The analysis begins with the establishment of the Italian Republic (1946) until 2014, when the most recent data are available. It focuses on the two most important Italian trade union confederations (hereafter trade unions): the CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro – Italian General Confederation of Labour) and the CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori – Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions).¹

Table 1. The heirs of the PCI, PSI, and DC.

Acronym	Party name	Years of activity	Government
<i>The PCI and its heirs</i>			
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party)	1943–1991	1946–1947; 1976–1979
PDS	Partito Democratico della Sinistra (Democratic Party of the Left)	1991–1998	1993; 1995–1998
DS	Democratici di Sinistra (Democrats of the Left)	1998–2007	1998–2001; 2006–2007
PD	Partito Democratico (Democratic Party)	2007 to date	2007–2008; 2011–2017
<i>The PSI and its heirs</i>			
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party)	1892–1994	1946–1947; 1963–1968; 1969; 1970–1971; 1973–1974; 1976; 1980–1994
SDI	Socialisti Democratici Italiani (Italian Democratic Socialists)	1998–2007	1998–1999; 2000–2001
RNP	La Rosa nel Pugno (Rose in the Fist)	2005–2007	2006–2007
<i>The DC and its heirs</i>			
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy)	1943–1994	1946–1994
PPI	Partito Popolare Italiano (Italian Popular Party)	1994–2002	1995–2001
DL	La Margherita (The Daisy)	2002–2007 (to join the PD)	2006–2007

The CGIL was established in 1944 by an agreement between the PCI, the PSI, and the DC. Its institutional configuration reflected its origin: indeed, it was led by three general secretaries, one for each of the founding parties. However, in 1948, the Catholic faction broke up to create the CISL. Since their creation, these trade unions have played a major role in shaping labour market policies and welfare programmes in Italy by negotiating social pacts with governments (e.g., Ceron and Negri 2018) and they jointly represent between 75 per cent and 100 per cent of unionised workers.

Traditionally, CGIL and CISL have been linked with the three largest mass parties: the PCI, the PSI, and the DC.² After 1948, the CGIL became composed mainly of communist and socialist members and ideologically linked to the PCI and the PSI (La Palombara 1957), while the CISL was ideologically closer to the DC. As anticipated, these parties underwent deep changes during nearly seventy years of Italian history. The PCI gradually moved toward the centre of the political spectrum by giving birth to the PDS (Partito Democratico della Sinistra – Democratic Party of the Left), then to the DS (Democratici di Sinistra–Democrats of the Left) and finally to the PD, which also includes former DC left-wing members. The PSI was nearly destroyed by the 1992 corruption scandals, and smaller actors assumed its legacy, such as the SDI (Socialisti Democratici Italiani – Italian Democratic Socialists), which later created the RNP (La Rosa nel Pugno – Rose in the Fist). The same corruption scandal also hit the major governing party, the DC. Its left-wing factions reorganised themselves into the PPI (Partito Popolare Italiano – Italian Popular Party) and then into DL (La Margherita – The Daisy) to finally merge themselves with their former communist counterparts in the PD. Table 1 summarises these changes and lists the years each party has been in government.

Party-union relationships: literature review and theoretical framework

Since the 1950s, the relationships between trade unions and parties have attracted the attention of political sociologists and political scientists. The relationship between left-wing parties and trade unions has been the most studied (e.g., Bartolini 2000, Kitschelt 1994). For

example, Duverger underlined how socialist mass parties in Western Europe often emerged from trade union movements, cooperatives, and friendly societies (Duverger 1954). However, party-union relationships are not exclusive prerogatives of left-wing parties. Indeed, agrarian parties established alliances with farmers' unions (e.g., Duverger 1954, pp. 5–7) and conservative parties collaborated with trade unions that emerged from religious cleavages (von Beyme 1985, p. 192) or with business associations.

Since the 1970s, scholars have emphasised a weakening or 'hollowing out' (Poguntke 2002, p. 59) of the links between parties (especially left-wing ones) and trade unions. Scholars embracing the power resource theory (e.g., Korpi 1983) have underlined that after the late 1960s, the Fordism crisis determined a steep decline in trade union membership (Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman 2013, Kelly 2015) and in the strength of class voting. Therefore, left-wing parties de-aligned from trade unions because these organisations were too weak to be considered useful allies (Hyman & Gumbrell-McCormick 2010, Jacoby & Behrens 2016, Upchurch et al. 2009).

Other approaches have argued that party-union relationships are affected by changes in costs and benefits (Allern & Bale 2017). As far as parties' benefits are concerned, trade unions provide parties with policy expertise, information about voters' grievances and opinions, financial resources, and organisational and electoral support (Allern & Bale 2012). However, links with trade unions may prevent other groups of voters from supporting the party or prevent other parties from coalescing with it in government formation. For trade unions, the benefits include increased membership and influence over party policy choices, while the main risk lies in alienating current and potential members and in the inability to seek arrangements with other parties that may offer better deals in terms of policy payoffs (Parsons 2015).

Finally, another explanation for the weakening of party-union relationships refers to the so-called 'catch-all party thesis' (Kirchheimer 1966). From the late 1950s onwards, the erosion of traditional social boundaries has implied a weakening of formerly highly distinctive collective identities, making it harder for parties to identify with separate sectors of the electorate and to assume shared long-term interests. Moreover, economic growth and the increased importance of the welfare state have facilitated the elaboration of less-partisan manifestos that addressed the stakes of a broader audience. Accordingly, the evolution of mass parties into catch-all parties led parties and interest groups to look for reciprocal autonomy in order to attract different voters and allies (Allern & Bale 2012). Thirty years later, Kirchheimer's argument has been extended by two well-known theoretical contributions: the 'cartel party thesis' (Katz & Mair 1995, 2009) and the model of political preference change along with the related theory of party competition (Kitschelt 1994, 2000).

The cartel party thesis argues that, beginning in the 1990s, the sharp decline in party membership and party identification encouraged catch-all parties in Western democracies to look elsewhere for their resources. Parties learned to dampen competition among themselves for offices and to secure party subsidies from the state. In this sense, the state became an institutionalised structure of support, sustaining the parties that traditionally hold executive and legislative roles while excluding potential competitors. Because their survival depends mainly on state subsidies, cartel parties have further detached themselves from their internal (i.e., party members, activists and collateral organisations) and external (i.e., voters) principals. Thus, the process of cartelisation resulted in a decline in the linkages

between parties (especially left-wing one), and trade unions, which were crucial collateral organisations in the age of mass parties.

The crucial argument of the cartel party thesis has been deeply criticised by Kitschelt (2000), who challenged the assumption that the leaders of established parties are no longer responsive to their internal and external principals. In his own words, 'wouldn't it be easiest for politicians to protect their political survival by allocating not only resources [public party financing] to their own parties, but by *also* responding to citizens' interests?' (Kitschelt 2000, p. 156). While the cartel party thesis is grounded on a top-down perspective in which office-seeking politicians detach themselves from internal and external principals to maximise their power (Katz & Mair 1995), Kitschelt adopted a bottom-up perspective. He argued that since the 1970s, changes in the socioeconomic class structure of advanced capitalism and in the organisation of political-economic institutions, such as the welfare state and the channels of interest group intermediation, have transformed citizens' preferences, thus reshaping the political space in which parties compete. More intellectually demanding jobs in the service sector fostered the emergence of new political demands that put greater emphasis on individual self-realisation and socio-cultural controversies than on economic income distribution and security. Thus, the political space, which was once identified by the purely distributive conflict between the socialist left and the capitalist right, experienced a second cleavage in which libertarians and authoritarians became opposed (Kitschelt 1994, 2000).

This change dramatically hit left-wing parties, especially socialist and social-democratic ones. Indeed, these parties can no longer win elections if they represent primarily blue-collar workers in manufacturing industries and stick to the agenda of property rights and income distribution (Kitschelt 1994, p. 286). Therefore, Kitschelt (1994, 2000) recognised that established parties, especially social-democratic ones, needed to moderate their policy stances on the economic left-right dimension (in line with Katz and Mair 1995, 2009). However, he maintained that this ideological convergence does not mean that established parties, as agents, ignore the preferences of their electoral constituencies, the principals. Instead, it simply suggests that 'under current political-economic conditions and given the changes of social structure and life styles, revolutionary challenges to the existing order cannot find support in the population' (Kitschelt 2000, p. 174).

Concerning party-union relationships, Kitschelt assumed that trade unions hold a core set of stable preferences opposed to 'either the challenge of market efficiency or the challenge of left-libertarian politics' (Kitschelt 1994, p. 225). This means that, while strong trade unions allied with social-democratic parties once were a political asset that boosted the parties' electoral fortunes and policy effectiveness, instead in the post-industrial era, this asset became a liability (Kitschelt 1994, p. 6). Thus, left-wing parties distanced themselves from trade unions in order to increase their own strategic flexibility.

Empirical perspectives on party-union relationships: research questions

The extent to which the actual relationships between parties and trade unions conform to the doomsday scenario depicted in the literature is far from settled. Several case studies have revealed that the unravelling between parties, especially left-wing ones, and trade unions has occurred in places where these ties were stronger, such as in Sweden (Aylott 2003, Piazza 2001, p. 416), the United Kingdom (Quinn 2010) and France (Hyman &

Gumbrell-McCormick 2010, pp. 322–326, Parsons 2015). Scholars have also found significantly weakened links between parties and trade unions in Australia and New Zealand (Katz 2001a, pp. 73–74). A comparative study on Scandinavian labour and farmer parties beginning in the late 1990s suggested that both party types currently have more distant relations with the respective trade unions than they did before, while agrarian party links with farmer unions have weakened the most (Sundberg 2003).

Other studies have reported more nuanced conclusions. Christiansen (2012) revealed that in Denmark, the weakening of party-union linkages occurred at different times in different party families according to the resources that each party, as a goal-seeking political actor, was able to derive from each interest group. Thomas (2001, pp. 270–272) found a clear decline in the historical links between social-democratic parties and trade unions only in democracies that retained strong left-wing governing parties (e.g., Israel, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), while he did not find this general trend in other countries.

Finally, other scholars have emphasised the persistence of party-union relationships. Jacoby and Behrens (2016) found persistence in the German case. In Israel, Yishai (2001, pp. 270–271) showed that governing parties strengthened their links with certain interest groups, including trade unions, to secure their offices in the long run. In Spain, parties tried to place their members into several interest groups and encouraged interest group members to join the party and campaign for it (Verge 2012). Poguntke's study (2002, p. 47) of eleven European countries between 1960 and 1989 also revealed tremendous stability in ties between parties and collateral organisations over time.

In the same vein, Simoni (2013) proved that policy alignment between centre-left parties in office and trade unions characterised European politics even in the low-inflation period (1974–2005). However, his statistical analysis suggested that policy alignment between centre-left parties and trade unions is less likely to occur when labour is marginal in the operation of the economy and unions are politically fragmented. As such, he reframed Kitschelt's expectation (1994, p. 6) by arguing that compositional change in the labour market does not necessarily imply the demise of the alliance between centre-left parties and trade unions. Indeed, an alliance with coordinated trade unions, which are able to reach distributional compromises within themselves 'among bits and pieces of the working class' (Kitschelt 1994, p. 33), will help centre-left parties to identify a viable distributional compromise among different portions of their electorate. In this case, the involvement of trade unions in the policy-making process will point centre-left parties in office toward the optimal policy mix to win the maximum consensus from centrist voters without major losses from the left flank (Simoni 2013, p. 328). More recently, another study on party-union links in 12 Western democracies suggested that the alliances between left-of-centre parties and trade unions are by no means just 'a legacy of the past'. It demonstrated that these links vary according to how useful they are for the actors involved: they are stronger where trade unions are larger, fewer and more unified and, to some extent, where parties are less able to rely on the state to finance their organisational activities and electoral campaigns (Allern & Bale 2017).

This variety in terms of empirical results suggests that more evidence is required to shed light on the nature of party-union relationships and on its variation over time, and in this regard, a different perspective that focuses more on the actual policy claims of each political actor can be useful to analyse the puzzle in greater depth. Indeed, the relationship between parties and trade unions is a multidimensional phenomenon that has been investigated in

many different ways (for a systematic review, see Allern & Bale 2012). Overall, it is possible to focus on how parties and trade unions interact as organisations (i.e., organisational closeness), on how they exchange resources (i.e., material closeness), and on their degree of similarity in terms of ideology and policy preferences (i.e., ideological closeness).

To date, scholars have focused more on organisational closeness, mapping strategies (e.g., corporate membership, joint committees, or regular élite contacts) through which parties and trade unions may interact repeatedly, thus facilitating mutual decision-making, planning and coordination (e.g., Allern et al. 2007, Duverger 1954, Kirchheimer 1966, Poguntke 2002, Thomas 2001, von Beyme 1985), and on material closeness, paying attention to financial donations and transfer of labour or shared resource pools between parties and trade unions (e.g., Yishai 2001, Sundberg 2003).

This paper looks at party-union relationships through the lens of the ideological closeness between these actors (e.g., Poguntke 2002, Simoni 2013, Thomas 2001). From a theoretical point of view, both the cartel party thesis (Katz & Mair 1995, 2009) and Kitschelt's (1994, 2000) model explain the detachment of left-wing parties from trade unions, pointing to party leaders' ideological shift toward more liberal policy positions. However, Simoni (2013) underlines that this explanation is grounded on the assumption that trade unions have stable ideological positions and are always against market liberal policies. Conversely, we do not take these positions of trade unions as given, and we argue that trade unions can adjust their views over time exactly like parties do. Accordingly, we compare parties' and trade unions' ideological positions by answering the following research question:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How strong is the association between parties' and trade unions' ideological positions and how has it changed over time?

Moreover, if a relationship between parties and trade unions exists, we aim to identify the critical junctures, namely, the year, in which party-union relationships began to deteriorate or break down, as well as the events that contributed to this outcome:

Research Question 2 (RQ2): When did the association between parties' and trade unions' ideological positions deteriorate, and what elements explain this de-alignment?

Based on our theoretical framework, with respect to RQ1, we expect to observe strong party-union relationships concerning left-wing parties, which are ideologically more similar to Italian trade unions and more dependent on the resources that such collateral organisations can bring to left-wing opposition parties.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Party-union relationships should be particularly strong for left-wing parties.

However, due to changes in the socioeconomic structure of capitalism and in the internal organisation of political parties, we also expect to observe de-alignment over time (once again, mainly for left-wing parties). More specifically, concerning RQ2, we expect to observe deterioration in party-union relationships linked with the process of the moderation and cartelisation of political parties.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Party-union relationships should be weakened by the process of ideological moderation and cartelisation experienced by left-wing Italian political parties.

A new data-set on the Italian case

To compare parties' and trade unions' ideological positions over time, we built two datasets by performing an in-depth content analysis of several textual documents with a coding

scheme similar to the one employed by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP; Budge et al. 2001). The first data-set analyses the final motions approved during 35 trade unions' national congresses held between 1947 and 2014 (i.e., 17 CGIL congresses and 18 CISL congresses). The second data-set codes 738 parliamentary speeches delivered by parliamentary parties in 73 investiture debates from 1946 to 2014, thus covering the whole history of the Italian Republic.

According to the CMP procedure, each textual document (i.e., trade unions congress motions and parties' parliamentary speeches) has been divided into quasi-sentences. Then, each quasi-sentence has been classified into 68 pre-defined categories (see the online appendix for the list). Beginning with trade union congress motions, two of these categories are by far the most frequently used, as they account for 40 per cent of quasi-sentences: one is related to positive references toward labour groups, the working class, and the unemployed (category 415 'Labour Groups: Positive') and the other is related to the concept of social justice in terms of equality, special protection for the underprivileged, the need for fair distribution of resources, and the removal of class barriers (category 412 'Social Justice – fair distribution').

We report several examples of quasi-sentences classified into these two categories to assess the validity of the hand-coding. With respect to CGIL motions, the sentence *'The fight for an 'economy of work' implies the need for a unitary movement that achieves an improvement of workers' condition'* (source: 1956 CGIL congress) has been assigned to category 415, while the sentence *'The crucial aspect of our proposal is the request for an immediate policy of fair redistribution'* (source: 2002 CGIL congress) has been assigned to category 412. Analogously, with respect to CISL motions, we classified into category 415 sentences such as the following: *'Our trade union refuses any alliance with other societal groups that could damage the working class'*, whereas sentences such as *'The political action should be able to extend the promotion of social justice'* were classified into category 412.

Moving to parties' parliamentary speeches, we updated the Italian Legislative Speeches Data-set (ILSD), which applies the same coding scheme to the speeches delivered by parliamentary parties during investiture debates from 1946 to 2014. Due to the high frequency of cabinet reshuffles in Italy, this data-set allows us to track changes in parties' positions almost year by year, thereby providing a continuous and time-variant measure of parties' views. Coherently with our research questions, we focused on the PCI, the PSI, and the DC, the three largest mass parties that are traditionally associated with the labour movement. In detail, we compared the ideological positions of the CGIL with those of the communist and the socialist party families. Instead, we linked the Catholic-inspired CISL with the DC and its centre-left heirs, composed of the former DC's left-wing factions (see Table 1).

We investigated the ideological closeness between parties and trade unions by focusing on the categories related to the economic issue, which portrays the traditional divide between the State and the market. Indeed, the economic issue is by far the most salient in parliamentary investiture debates. Parties devote 18 per cent of their quasi-sentences to this topic on average (the value is double the attention paid to the second most salient issue). Moreover, this topic consistently ranks first over time, as we find similar levels of attention (always approximately 18 per cent) in both the First and the Second Italian Republics. Furthermore, the economic issue is crucial for trade unions, which devote on average more than 54 per cent of quasi-sentences in their congress motions to discussions of labour and economic policies.

The position of each actor (i.e., party or trade union) on the economic dimension corresponds to the absolute difference between the share of quasi-sentences devoted to pro-market arguments and the share of quasi-sentences devoted to pro-State arguments in parliamentary speeches (for parties) or in congress motions (for trade unions).³ By doing so, we located both parties and trade unions on a common economic scale that ranges from –100 (pro-State polarity) to +100 (pro-market polarity). Positive values indicate that the actor is more in favour of free markets, free trade, and free enterprise and would keep the public budget under control instead of increasing public expenditure. Conversely, negative values indicate that the actor supports State intervention in the economy, market regulation, and welfare state enlargement. Note that this operationalisation is in line with the traditional CMP approach used to create ideological scales, such as the well-known RILE (right-left) scale (Budge et al. 2001).

Time-series analysis

The incidence of quasi-sentences on the economic dimension is higher in trade union motions than in party investiture speeches, thus pushing trade unions toward the extreme of the economic scale. However, here we are not interested in the absolute placement of each actor on the economic dimension. Rather, we pay attention to the relative shifts of each actor and to the evolution of the distance between parties and trade unions over time.

The relationship between the CGIL and the PCI (and its heirs)

Figure 1 compares the ideological positions retained by the CGIL in its congress motions with those expressed by the PCI and its heirs in their parliamentary speeches. The picture highlights the existence of a strong ideological link between the PCI (and its heirs) and the CGIL, as the trends of the policy positions move together from 1945 until the end of the 1990s.

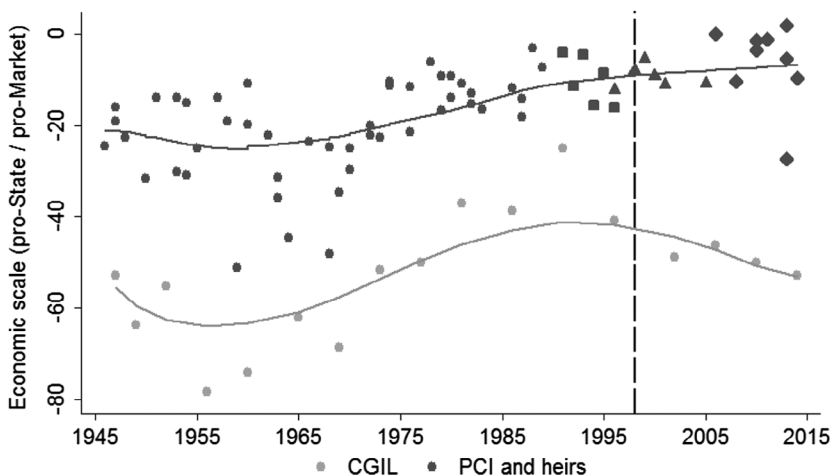


Figure 1. Positions on the economic dimension of the PCI (and its heirs) and the CGIL.

In 1944, the PCI is one of the three founders of the CGIL together with the PSI and the DC. However, the collaboration of these three parties ended in 1947, when the Christian Democrat Prime Minister De Gasperi expelled the PCI and the PSI from the coalition government. The Cold War climate, the deteriorating relationships between the DC and the PCI in the political arena, the anger against the PCI central office (which culminated in 1948 with the attempt to assassinate Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the PCI) affected the internal equilibrium of the CGIL. As anticipated, in 1948, the Catholic faction broke up and created the CISL, which was ideologically closer to the DC.

The PCI exerted tighter control over its ideological faction inside the CGIL than the PSI did (Bartolini 2000). Indeed, the PCI followed the Leninist concept of the 'transmission belt' (Lenin 1920), according to which party-union relationships should be driven by the communist party and trade unions must simply act as the party's agent in the economic sphere. Thus, the PCI strongly opposed any of the CGIL's attempts to gain more autonomy (Feltrin 1991, p. 356). For instance, in 1956, during the VIII PCI National Congress, Giuseppe Di Vittorio, who was simultaneously a PCI representative and the CGIL general secretary, publicly requested the party in central office to abandon the notion of the transmission belt. This claim went unheeded, and the PCI leaders forced Di Vittorio to recant his request. Later, in 1969, during the XII PCI National Congress, Agostino Novella (the successor to Di Vittorio as the CGIL general secretary) solicited more freedom of action for the CGIL, but once again, this request was neglected by PCI leaders, and Novella was forced to resign. Figure 1 shows that during the years 1968–1974, the trends of the policy positions expressed by the CGIL and by the PCI continued to move together. Indeed, during these years, the CGIL and the PCI engaged in a series of major strikes with leftist students in the industrial areas of Northern Italy, thus forcing the government to make important concessions, such as the Statute of Workers' Rights in 1970 (Salvati 2000, pp. 452–454).

The stagflation triggered by the oil crisis (1973), a new wave of youth demonstrations (1977) and, more dramatically, the offensive of the Red Brigade terrorist group pushed the PCI to grant its external support to the so-called 'governments of national solidarity' led by the DC. Beginning in 1976, the PCI, which was led by Enrico Berlinguer, moderated its policy stances according to a strategy known as the 'historical compromise' with the DC (Kitschelt 1994, p. 194). Following the line of its reference party, the CGIL cooperated with the government by accepting wage restraint policies (1978) to restore capital accumulation.

Two years later, when the PCI once again radicalised its positions (1980), the CGIL also became more radical and detached itself from the other trade unions (1983). For instance, in 1985, the PCI and the CGIL jointly promoted a popular referendum and fought together to abrogate the modification of the wage indexation mechanism (the so-called 'Sliding Wage Scale') introduced by the cabinet led by Bettino Craxi, the leader of the PSI, with the consent of the other trade unions (Salvati 2000, p. 458).

Our data suggest that the PCI and CGIL moved together from 1945 to the 1990s. Note that in 1991, at XX National Congress, the PCI moderated its ideological position: it changed its name to the PDS and chose as its symbol an oak with the hammer and sickle image. The large majority of party members agreed with this change. The PCI's leftist faction split, giving birth to the small PRC (Partito della Rifondazione Comunista – Communist Refoundation Party).

As Figure 1 shows, the positions of the CGIL and those of the PDS began to diverge at the end of the 1990s. We performed a Zivot-Andrews unit root test (Andrews & Zivot 1992) on the distance between these two actors and detected a structural breakpoint in the year

1998. Indeed, this year represents a crucial ideological turning point for the heirs of the PCI. For the first time, socialist, republican, green, and Christian organisations joined the party, which changed its name from PDS to DS. This ideological change was followed by a modification of the party symbol: the socialist red rose replaced the traditional communist hammer and sickle image. Moreover, the DS changed its internal rules and instead of having the leader appointed by the small executive party committee, it was the whole party congress in charge of selecting the leader (party members voted for a motion or a delegate who explicitly supported one of the candidates running for party leadership).

Furthermore, in 1998, for the first time in Italian history, a former PCI politician, Massimo D'Alema, was appointed Prime Minister. In addition, from a policy point of view, a path-breaking labour market reform known as the 'Treu Package', which introduced temporary agency work in Italy, was approved (1997) with the support of the PDS. The CGIL did not endorse the Treu Package and conducted tough negotiations with the cabinet to obtain the exclusion of agricultural and construction sectors from its enforcement (Pritoni 2010).

The ideological distance between the CGIL and the heirs of its founding party, the PCI, further increased in recent years. Indeed, in 2007, the DS merged with the Catholic centre-left DL party, which was constituted mainly by members of the former DC's leftist factions. They created the PD, which further shifted its ideological position toward the centre. Indeed, the new political class within the PD paid far less attention to the stakes of the CGIL (Carrieri 2014). For instance, in 2012, the PD approved the pension reform proposed by the caretaker government led by Mario Monti, which drastically increased the retirement age. In 2014, the new PD leader Matteo Renzi assumed a critical position towards trade unions, especially the CGIL, accusing it of defending labour market insiders and of hindering the changes needed to revive the Italian economy (Mattina & Carrieri 2017, p. 180). In fact, Renzi abruptly ended any negotiations with trade unions, and his cabinet unilaterally adopted a labour market reform known as the 'Jobs Act' (Sacchi 2015), which dismantled one of the most symbolic policy gains achieved by the unions (Article 18 of the Statute of the Workers' Rights)⁴.

In summary, from the end of the 1990s, the heirs of the PCI moved significantly toward the centre of the ideological spectrum, even though the CGIL did not follow this shift. Accordingly, from that moment on, the distance between the heirs of the PCI and the CGIL began to increase.

The relationship between the CGIL and the PSI (and its heirs)

Figure 2 compares the policy positions retained by the CGIL with those expressed by the PSI and its heirs. Overall, the picture displays a similar pattern to that of Figure 1: these two actors moved together from the aftermath of World War II to the end of the 1970s, shifting their policy positions in the same direction. Indeed, in the 1960s, when Italy was ruled by cabinets supported by centre-left coalitions, the PSI obtained the CGIL's support in an attempt to combat the 1963 economic recession by means of wage regulation. During large strikes in the 'Hot Autumn' (1969), the PSI tried to act as the representative of the labour movements in the cabinet, thus inducing its coalition partner, the DC, to exclude the PSI from the cabinet (1972). Compared to the previous scenario (CGIL-PCI relationships), in this case, the Zivot-Andrews test identifies an earlier structural breakpoint in the year 1980.

Beginning from the ideological dimension, in 1976, a motley coalition of the right-wing and left-wing factions inside the PSI chose Bettino Craxi as the party leader. Within five years,

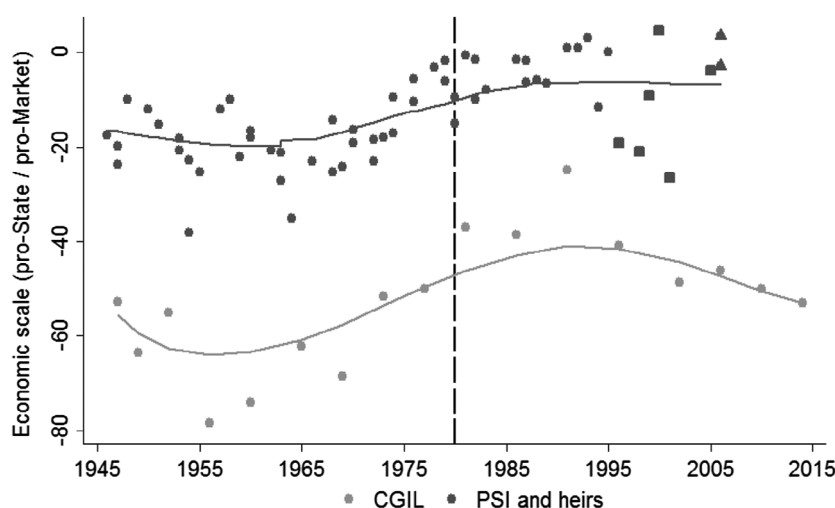


Figure 2. Positions on the economic dimension of the PSI (and its heirs) and the CGIL.

Craxi consolidated his power (Hine 1986, p. 122) and pushed the party to abandon the Marxist tradition in order to embrace the social-democratic one (1978), changing the party's symbol accordingly (i.e., by replacing the communist hammer and sickle image with the socialist red carnation). Under his leadership, the PSI endorsed basic capitalist institutions and economic austerity policies (Kitschelt 1994, p. 193).

Moving on to party rules during his mandate, Craxi enhanced his autonomy vis-à-vis party activists (Ceron 2012) by modifying the procedure to select the party leader, who was previously appointed by party executives. Conversely, under the new rule, the leader was directly elected by the party congress, which was a larger and ineffective body less able to constrain the leader's choices (Kitschelt 1994, p. 238). Note that due to the increased autonomy granted to the party leader, the 1981 congress was the last contested congress in the history of the PSI.

Finally, in 1980, the PSI re-joined the cabinet after having been in opposition for six years and engaged in an aggressive penetration of the state apparatus (Kitschelt 1994, p. 238). In 1984, the Craxi cabinet signed a tripartite pact known as the 'Saint Valentine's Agreement' on wage moderation, which was strongly opposed by the PCI and the CGIL (Salvati 2000, p. 458). In conclusion, the changes experienced by the PSI around the year 1980 are very similar to those experienced by the heirs of the PCI around the year 1998. Before Craxi's ascent, the party's dominant coalition, which consisted of left-traditionalists, maintained close links to the socialist minority in the communist-dominated CGIL (Kreile 1988). However, the year 1980 coincides with a substantial centrist shift made by the PSI. Moreover, changes in party rules increased the autonomy of the party leader from grassroots members and collateral organisations. Finally, the PSI re-entered the governing coalition, thus gaining easier access to state resources.

The relationship between the CISL and the DC (and its heirs)

Figure 3 compares the positions of the CISL with those of the DC and its heirs. This enquiry is interesting because both the CISL, which originated in 1948 from the exit of Catholic

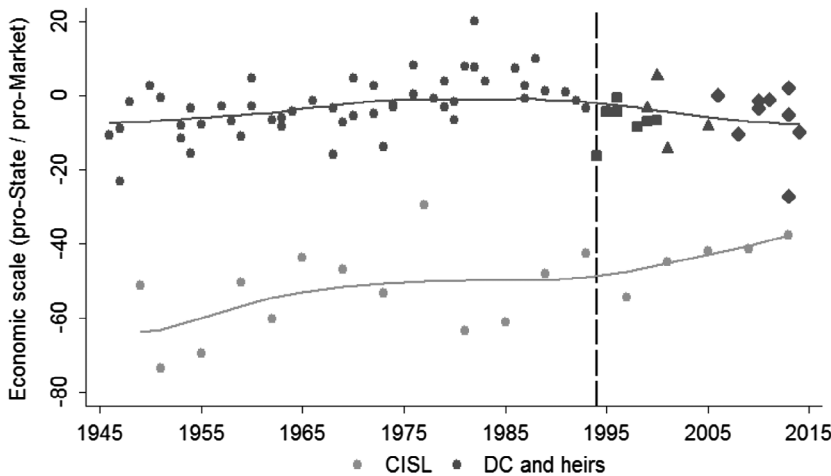


Figure 3. Positions on the economic dimension of the DC (and its heirs) and the CISL.

members from the CGIL, and the DC are extremely distant from the Marxist tradition. They shared a common Christian democratic ideology rooted in a social market economy framework. Moreover, the DC was the major party (or the single party) in Italian governments from 1944 to 1994. Therefore, describing the relationship between the CISL and the DC implies describing the linkage between this trade union and the government. Figure 3 portrays a different path than previous figures. The ideological proximity between the DC and the CISL, which was lower under the centrist leadership of De Gasperi, grew in the 1960s, when the centre-left DC factions took control of the party, opening the way to a centre-left government coalition involving the DC and the PSI. As previously described, during these years, the CISL (and the CGIL) cooperated with the government to contain the economic recession that arose in 1963 by means of wage regulation.

The CISL also cooperated with national solidarity governments in the second half of the 1970s by signing the Agreement on the Sliding Wage Scale (Oliver 2011) and supporting a policy of wage moderation (1978). After signing the Scotti Agreement (1983) and the Saint Valentine's Agreement (1984), the CISL further moderated its stances. This process of moderation continued in the early 1990s, when the devaluation of the Lira pushed the Amato I and Ciampi cabinets to bargain with social partners (Regini and Regalia 1997) by achieving tripartite agreements on the Abolition of the Sliding Wage Scale (1992; Oliver 2011) and on labour costs (i.e., Ciampi Protocol 1993). Thus, this overview highlights how the CISL cooperated with governments led by the DC, especially when the leadership of this party belonged to centre-left factions, which openly originated from the contribution of trade union members.

Moving to the time-series analysis, the Zivot-Andrews test reveals that a structural breakpoint occurred in 1994. However, whereas the structural breakpoints in Figures 1 and 2 identify the years in which party-union relationships deteriorated, after 1994, the policy positions expressed by the heirs of the DC and those retained by the CISL became closer. The year 1994 marked a turning point in the history of the DC. Dramatically hit by the Bribeville corruption scandal (1992), the party changed its name to the PPI and the right-wing factions broke away to create a smaller centre-right party. Consequently, the former DC centre-left factions became the bulk of the new PPI. Moreover, in 1994, for the first time

in Italian history after 1944, the heirs of the DC were no longer in office because they had been defeated by the recently born Go Italy (Forza Italia – FI), a centre-right party led by businessman Silvio Berlusconi.

The pattern identified in Figure 3 concerning the DC-CISL relationship symmetrically mirrors those in Figures 1 and 2 concerning PCI/PSI-CGIL relationships. Indeed, the policy positions endorsed by these left-wing parties and by the CGIL began to diverge when the PCI and the PSI moderated their stances and became involved in government coalitions. Conversely, the relationship between the heirs of the DC and the CISL increased when the rightist factions inside the DC left the party and when the party left office. This finding of the stronger link between the CISL and the heirs of DC (particularly the PD) is in line with Mattina and Carrieri (2017, p. 180), according to whom the PD loosened its links with the CGIL, while it significantly expanded the range of unstructured links with the CISL, such as mutual invitations to attend conferences and to participate in consultative arrangements at which issues of common interest are discussed. This pattern also suggests that centre-left parties (such as the PPI, the DL and the PD) may still find it useful to ally with coordinated trade unions and reach distributional compromises within different portions of the electorate (Simoni 2013).

Discussion and conclusion

The present paper evaluated the degree of ideological affinity between parties and trade unions in Italy over the last seventy years to describe how party-union relationships have evolved over time. By means of a time-series analysis, we identified the years in which parties' and trade unions' positions began to follow different trajectories. Concerning the relationship between the left-wing CGIL and its left-wing reference parties, the time-series analyses identified as critical junctures the years 1980 (for the PSI) and 1998 (for the heirs of the PCI). These findings shed light on several common patterns.

First, in those two years, the two left-wing parties definitively abandoned the Marxist tradition in favour of the socialist one. This change, which was also underlined by adjustments in the parties' symbols, has been associated with a notable shift toward the centre of the ideological spectrum. This finding is in line with both the cartel party thesis (Katz & Mair 1995, 2009) and Kitschelt's argument (1994), which highlight how policy moderation by left-wing parties leads them to consider links with less-flexible trade unions as a liability that damages the party strategy. Thus, as these parties move more toward the centre of the ideological spectrum (it does not matter whether they do this to build cartels with the other mainstream parties, thus securing their offices, or to follow the changes in the electorate's preferences), they pay less attention to trade unions (Katz & Mair 1995, p. 23; Kitschelt 1994, p. 6).

Second, in those two years, these parties were involved in governing coalitions. Indeed, access to the government provided them with alternative financial resources (in line with the idea of cartelisation: Katz & Mair 1995, 2009) and increased the likelihood to be forced to comply with budgetary and external constraints, thus deepening the gap between trade unions and their reference parties.

Third, in those years, these parties changed their internal rules by establishing more direct elections of the party leader (voted by party members), who became formally appointed by wider audiences (the party congress instead of small executive party committees). This

feature increased the autonomy of party leaders from rank-and-file members and collateral organisations such as trade unions.

This link between intra-party rules and the weakening of party-union ties is in line with the argument put forward by Katz (2001b), who underlined that a directly elected party leader retains higher legitimacy and can therefore eliminate the constraints imposed by activists (Ceron 2012) and collateral organisations, becoming freer to shape the party's line according to his or her own preferences in order to reach compromises and build cartels with other parties. However, this finding is also coherent with Kitschelt's argument, which claimed that 'traditionalist' party activists who defend the welfare state and want to maintain tighter relationships with trade unions (Kitschelt 1994, pp. 219–221) can affect the party line only if the party leader is selected by party executives, a small body in which they may exert a pivotal role (Ceron 2012). In contrast, autonomous leadership selected by party conferences, which are large and ineffective party bodies, are more likely to detach the party from trade unions in order to appeal to a larger section of the electorate (Kitschelt 1994, pp. 208–218).

Finally, the analysis of the DC-CISL relationship has been used as a counterfactual case study. Indeed, both the CISL and the DC did not belong to the Marxist tradition, and thus, their mutual relationship cannot be explained by dependence mechanisms between the party and the trade union. Nevertheless, even in this context, we found support for the explanatory elements discussed so far. Indeed, the time-series analysis revealed that the relationship between the Catholic-inspired CISL and the centrist DC tightened after the Bribeville scandal, which threw the party out of office (1994), hampered its vote share, and produced the split of right-wing factions. This split, in turn, strengthened the ideological link between the CISL and the centre-left heirs of the DC, which moved to the left on the economic dimension in an attempt to rebuild a solid constituency.

Returning to our hypotheses, we found confirmation for H1, showing that in the Italian context, we observe strong party-union ties among left-wing parties. However, as suggested in H2, we also noticed a deterioration of party-union relationships due to the moderation and the cartelisation of left-wing parties. In summary, the time-series analysis emphasised the role of ideological moderation, office-seeking motives, and intra-party rules in weakening or strengthening party-union ties. From this latter perspective, it will be intriguing to explore the effect on party-union relationships of party primaries – which further enlarge the electorate to select party leaders and, in Italy, opened the way to Renzi's leadership (Mattina & Carrieri 2017).

In turn, it will be intriguing to evaluate the implications of the de-alignment between left-wing parties and trade unions in light of the challenge posed by populist parties (Carrieri 2014). This aspect could be particularly interesting if left-wing parties' attempts to distance themselves from trade unions in order to enlarge their electoral constituency fail to produce a systematic increase in the share of voters from new societal groups. This situation can in fact favour conservative (Kitschelt 1994, p. 286) or populist parties.

To conclude, this paper emphasised the importance of examining in depth the actual ideological positions of trade unions, and the present analysis could be profitably extended beyond the Italian case to investigate party-union relationships in countries such as France, Belgium, Portugal, and Spain, which are characterised by the presence of multiple ideologically oriented trade unions. The availability of new data on trade unions' positions will also be useful to investigate government-union relationships concerning corporatism and social pacts (Ceron & Negri 2018). Thus, it will be possible to dig into the 'cartelisation

of trade unions', as some unions may decide to moderate their policy stances in order to become involved in the negotiation of social pacts with the cabinet. However, at the same time, other unions may refuse to water down their ideological identity. This element could help to explain why the CISL moved to the right after the 1990s, while the CGIL moved to the left. Taking cues from this analysis, future research could better investigate whether the idea of a cartel party also applies to other political actors, such as trade unions.

Notes

1. We ignored the smaller Italian Union of Workers (Unione Italiana del Lavoro – UIL), which was created in 1950 by union members belonging to small centre-left parties (such as the Italian Republican Party and the Italian Socialist Democratic Party), because it represents only approximately 10 per cent of unionised workers.
2. Small parties, parties not linked to the two main trade unions, or new parties (which cannot be considered splinter groups of the historic ones) have not been considered in the analysis.
3. The categories used to create the economic dimension are described in the online appendix.
4. Article 18 of the Statute of Workers' Rights, which dated from 1970, required employers with 15 or more workers to reinstate – not just compensate – permanent workers whose dismissal was ruled unjust by the courts. Renzi's labour market reform softened its application: automatic reinstatement became limited to null and discriminatory dismissals. Employees dismissed for other reasons, such as restructuring, will be compensated only if the dismissal is later found to have been illegal. Illegal disciplinary dismissals are subject to reinstatement only under extraordinary circumstances (for details, see Sacchi 2015).

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