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## The Italian public sphere: a case of dramatized polarization

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### Abstract

This contribution is organized along two main interpretive lines. First: the Italian public sphere is very polarized because of well-established historical attitudes, a crowded media market and new technologies that push towards segmentation of the audience. The arrival of Berlusconi has only reinforced the already existing polarization that goes well beyond the borders of partisanship involving the content of news, the structure and professionalism of news outlets and also the recipients that divide themselves along the lines of political attitudes. The second characteristic feature of the Italian public sphere involves the tendency towards dramatization, which is also produced by the sudden commercialization of the entire mass media system that started in 1980. This article's thesis is supported by examples of dramatization and extreme political discourse. The consequences that derive from this situation are discussed in the conclusion.

### Keywords

Political polarization, dramatization, media system, segmentation.

### Speaking loudly

Since 1994, leftists and intellectuals throughout Italy have enjoyed a popular parlour game. It is called *antiberlusconismo*: Berlusconi and the mafia, Berlusconi and the conflict of interest, Berlusconi and the Italian exceptionality, Berlusconi like Mussolini, and so on. Excesses in this game are not rare: a few years back, ex-Minister of Justice Oliviero Diliberto, a member of the extreme leftist party *Comunisti italiani*, was asked during a television talk show about his preferred place of vacation. He answered: 'at the Billionaire but stuffed with trinitotoluene'.<sup>1</sup>

In truth, it is not different on the opposite side. In 1994, in his televised speech to announce his *discesa in campo* (entry into the field), Berlusconi revived the figures of the 'Communists'

who don't have any faith. They would like to transform the country into a shouting square ready to condemn the opponents . . . I don't want to live in a country without freedom, a country that is ruled by immature political forces that are linked to an economically and politically disastrous past.

The struggle against communism became a dominant theme in most of Berlusconi's public discourses, while on the other side his opponents were, and still are, picturing him as the 'devil' to be defeated.

This is nothing new. The history of the Italian public sphere is that of a polarized-pluralist public sphere, as Daniel Hallin and I defined it following Giovanni Sartori's characterization of the Italian political system (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Sartori 1976). The roots of this symbolic polarization are to be found in the past history of the country and, of course, in its both old and more recent economic and social cleavages: a difficult transformation from agricultural to industrial society that has caused social imbalances, dramatic differences between north and south, a diffuse distrust in state institutions, etc. One can go back to Capuleti and Montecchi, to Guelfi and Ghibellini and, closer to us, to *fascisti e antifascisti*; and even closer, one can refer to the 1948 political elections and the opposition between *comunisti e anticomunisti*. For many scholars, this election campaign, and more generally the period during which it took place, represents a turning point in Italian history. It has assumed an 'epochal character' determining consequences and a symbolic framework, the struggle between communism and anti-communism, that is still alive today (Cavazza 2002). As Edoardo Novelli (2008, x) writes: 'The 1948 campaign has set the issues that will feature the following decades. First of all the contraposition between communism and anti-communism ... and then the theme capitalism vs. anti-capitalism.'

Communist Party on one side, Christian Democracy on the other. Here's how they treated each other in 1948: 'Mamma, salva i tuoi bambini dal bolscevismo' (mum, save your children from bolshevism). 'Scudo crociato, scudo di morte' (crossed shield, death shield).<sup>2</sup> Visuals were even more dramatic: the image of death appeared in many posters, while in other posters the Cossacks (the communists coming from Russia) were portrayed invading St Peter's Square in Rome.

Studying expressions and symbols such as these, the historian Angelo Ventrone wrote a book titled *Il nemico interno* (the internal enemy), which starts with these words:

Political propaganda in Italy has taken ... the forms of a fight to the death against the figure of the internal enemy, that is, the political opponent who would be an illegitimate ruler of the country as they are accused of being dependent on an external enemy and are, therefore, accused of conspiring in an underhand way against fellow citizens. (Ventrone 2005, 3)

Ventrone particularly refers to the debate and the struggle around the Communist Party and its role in Italian society.

A few years earlier, the semiotician Omar Calabrese (1998, 11) wrote a booklet stressing similar features: 'We could say that the play of politics is progressively moving from the "race" model towards the "fight model".'

Calabrese was no longer talking about post-war Italy. Rather, he was observing the political debate in Italy in Berlusconi's era.

There is no doubt that everywhere, not just in Italy, political propaganda is inclined towards exacerbating tones and the use of strong and emotional symbols and language, such as 'the Cossacks arriving in St Peter's Square' or 'the crossed death shield'. All the examples I have previously cited derive from past propaganda battles (with many coming from the period of the Cold War and from the bloody moment of the very transition from fascism). Nevertheless, if we look at the public debate today in Italy, the tones of all political competitors and also of the news media that cover such a competition are not very different.

The titles of recent Italian newspapers confirm this quite clearly. In the era of Berlusconi, some titles frame the political struggle to accentuate the differences in terms of sexual inclinations: 'Al Pd non piace la gnocca' (Pd doesn't like pussy) is the title of *Liberio*, a well-known rightist newspaper.<sup>3</sup> The title refers to the harsh and depressing discussion of Berlusconi's sex scandals: Berlusconi and his fellows like women; leftists do not. On the other side, there are titles like 'Io paziento qualche giorno poi se mi fregano è guerra' (I can wait for some days. Then if they cheat me, it is war; *La Repubblica*, May 6, 2011). The speaker is a rightist member of Parliament who joined the Berlusconi coalition in exchange for a seat as minister. The newspaper puts in very crude terms the unseemly exchange that made possible the survival of Berlusconi's coalition. But, then if the agreement was not respected, it would be 'war'. The paper inserted the possible exchange into an interpretive frame of corruption, a frame usually identified with the right coalition.

Of course, today words and symbols are different and less extreme than the ones of the Cold War period (nobody is talking anymore about 'the Cossacks'). Nevertheless, they indicate a very polarized public sphere in which not just political actors but newspapers too take side with sharp language, a very well-rooted custom that is widely recognized (Sorrentino 2003; Bergamini 2006; Marletti 2010). The entire structure of the Italian public sphere is polarized because political competitors are distant from each other, at least symbolically. They attack each other in a way that leaves little space for possible agreement. In his 1982 book, Sartori defined as polarized pluralist those systems in which 'there exists a situation of absence of basic consensus within which the distribution of opinions covers a conceivable maximum of distance' (Sartori 1982, 9).

Observing the public sphere in Italy today, one has to recognize that this 'absence of basic consensus' is still largely surviving. Indeed, in polarized-pluralist political systems, the news media are part of those 'poles' that characterize the extreme points of the political. They have a clear ideological and political position; they reflect the sharpness of this debate and try to take active part in the decision-making process by setting the symbolic context within which this process takes place.

The arrival of Berlusconi has further accentuated this situation. He found an already existing condition of strong partisanship by the media and a more general condition of political polarization, which he brought to an extreme, going back to old and well-established symbolic oppositions (communists vs. anti-communists) and using all his personal resources (money and his media empire) to make this opposition more dramatic. As I argue later on, Berlusconi has become the issue around which a new polarization of the Italian public sphere has been constructed. The struggle between those who are in favour and those who are against Berlusconi has shaped the Italian public sphere since 1994, replacing in some way the opposition between communists and anti-communists which nevertheless Berlusconi himself has tried to maintain.

New media may further reinforce this dramatized polarization, both in reference to Berlusconi but in connection to other issues as well. The case of Beppe Grillo and his political movement, Movimento 5 Stelle, is the best signal of this new form of polarization. It is not by chance that Grillo comes from the world of theatre and television and that his predominant skills are those of drama and spectacle. His language is extreme – his mission is to fight the many ‘corrupted’ who sit in Parliament. His blog, from which he started his political adventure, is, as most existing blogs, essentially aimed at constructing a ‘virtual community’ of people who share the same views (Rheingold 2000). In this way, the ‘echo chamber effect’ of the new media (Sunstein 2007) further reinforces the polarization of the old media: citizens talk to each other as if they were listening to their own echo. They repeat and reinforce what they have already heard and what they already share. The ‘echo chamber effect’ of the new media fits perfectly with the traditional polarization of the Italian public sphere.

### **Rooted partisan character of the Italian news media**

The situation described so far also depends on the particular history of the Italian mass media system. As in many other western democracies, the first Italian newspapers were born as part of the ongoing literary, intellectual and political debate of the nascent public sphere (Murialdi 1986). They were instrument in the hands of the elites that were confronting each other, according to the well-known interpretation of Jürgen Habermas. In many countries, this situation remained unchanged until the development of a mass market in which traditional political-oriented newspapers were replaced by newspapers focusing on more ‘popular’ topics and addressed not just to intellectual elites but to a larger public, well identified by the so-called ‘man on the street’. This is what happened in the nineteenth century in the United States with the ‘penny press’ (Schudson 1978) and in Austria and in Germany with the *Boulverzeitungen* newspapers, which, like the penny press, were sold in the streets. Other countries later followed this path, transforming their original political and elite-oriented papers into new tools addressed to a mass market. In Italy, however, the shift towards a mass media system inserted within a market-driven logic

occurred late, much later than in other countries, with the consequence that the mass media did not become a tool to produce profit and were not able to survive by themselves. Rather, they maintained their elitist attitude and, because of their weak economic condition, they became property of business and political groups that used them to support their positions and intervene in the decision-making process (Capecchi and Livolsi 1971; Murialdi 1995).

The main consequence of the missing shift towards a market-driven system has been the never-ending segmentation of the Italian news outlets. Each newspaper was (and still is) addressed to a small number of consumers who already share particular points of view rather than to the large, heterogeneous mass market that was progressively developing in many parts of the western world. Indeed, each Italian news medium has remained substantially addressed to a specific small elite competing with others. The title of the by now famous piece by Enzo Forcella (1959), 'Millecinquecento lettori' (1,500 readers), illustrates very well the situation of the Italian print press in 1959. In his piece, the journalist of *La Stampa* (Italy's third largest newspaper in circulation) admits to having just that number of readers (1,500) for his political articles.

The tendency towards a segmentation based on pre-existing cultural and political attitudes has been consolidating through the years because of historical conditions that fostered the partisan nature of most Italian news media. Under fascism, the media were used essentially as propaganda tools: voluntarily or because they were forced, many journalists became obedient to the fascist regime and used their work activity mainly to support the regime's policies and its very emphatic, rhetorical language (Cannistraro 1975; Allotti 2012). These journalists either became involved with fascism or were obliged to shut up, just like their newspapers.

The Resistance was the first step towards freedom, but this experience too reinforced the partisan character of the Italian news media. Indeed, newspapers were first 'illegal' instruments for the underground fight against fascism and later became organizational tools in the hands of the groups that were constructing a new democracy. In Italy, as in Germany, the Allied forces were willing to license all those newspapers that demonstrated a clear anti-fascist slant and in particular favoured those newspapers that were expressions of anti-fascist forces but that, at the same time, were accepting the principles of freedom of the press (Pizarroso Quintero 1989).

The arrival of television did not change the traditional subordination of the media to politics. The title of Edoardo Novelli's 1995 book that reconstructs the history of the relationship between politics and television illustrates very well this situation: *Dalla tv di partito al partito della tv* (from party television to the television party). Italian television has always been strictly connected to politics and mostly to government parties on the basis of links of different intensity depending on historical periods and on specific parties or groups. The very well-known *lottizzazione* (allotment) is the best demonstration of the ties that have existed and still exist between both majority and opposition parties on one side

and public broadcasting on the other, affecting both the organizational and the decision-making structure of public television and its content (Mancini 2009).<sup>4</sup>

The ‘commercial deluge’ of the 1980s, which completely reshaped the media systems of many European democracies (Blumler 1992), deeply affected the Italian media as well. But in Italy, mass media commercialization took place in a very particular way, mixing together with the already existing tradition of partisanship. All the media outlets today are responding to the needs of market competition; their content and their discourse too are now adapted to the same logic. Infotainment, talk shows, popularization, dramatization, personalization are the concepts that seem to direct, even if in different measure, both broadcasting and print press in Italy. Many studies have pointed out these tendencies in reference to television, although the print press is not free from them either (Novelli 2006; Mazzoleni and Sfardini 2009; Marletti 2010). The Italian exceptionality lays in the fact that these tendencies mix together with the already existing partisanship.

### Partisan but also inclined to drama

Indeed, the public sphere emerging from both the ‘commercial deluge’ that deeply changed the entire mass media system in the 1980s and the disappearance of the old political system in 1993–1994 still features a high level of partisanship mixed together with dramatization. This mixture can be observed both in the print press and in television (both public and commercial).

More precisely, partisanship can be observed in the content of the news, in the professional figures of those working within the news organization (and frequently it can be observed also in the structure of the news organization itself), and in the attitudes of the audience.

Almost all Italian news media are biased in their content, both as to the selection of news and their treatment. Of course, there are different levels of bias, but every Italian citizen knows that in buying *Il Giornale* they will get a coverage that is more in favour of the centre-right coalition (and in particular of

**Table 1** Airtime devoted by RAI and Mediaset newscasts to majority and opposition members in 2010 (%)

|               | Majority | Opposition | Others |
|---------------|----------|------------|--------|
| Tg1           | 27.9     | 25.9       | 46.2   |
| Tg2           | 27.9     | 28.2       | 43.9   |
| Tg3           | 30.4     | 40.5       | 29.1   |
| Tg4           | 42.8     | 16.6       | 40.6   |
| Tg5           | 27.1     | 27.9       | 45     |
| Studio Aperto | 25.6     | 26.3       | 48.1   |

Source: Osservatorio Isimm Ricerche.

Berlusconi's party) and less of the centere-left. Readers of *La Repubblica* will get the opposite view: it is not by chance that Eugenio Scalfari, founder of *La Repubblica*, wrote in the first issue in 1976,

This newspaper is a bit different from others: it is a journal of information that doesn't pretend to follow an illusory political neutrality, but declares explicitly that it has taken a side in the political battle. It is made by men who belong to the vast arc of the Italian left. (*La Repubblica*, January 14, 1976)

There are recent and complete data for TV news. Table 1 shows the airtime in 2010 devoted by RAI newscasts (Tg1, Tg2, Tg3) and Mediaset newscasts (Tg4, Tg5, Studio Aperto) to majority and opposition members expressing their points of view.<sup>5</sup> The most striking numbers are those of Tg4 (traditionally a right-wing-oriented newscast) and Tg3 (traditionally a left-wing-oriented newscast). Indeed, they represent a good indication of the polarization of the Italian public sphere, which in the 'Berlusconi era' has become even more polarized while assuming new features. In spite of all the recommendations that come from the regulatory bodies (and which for RAI assume the characters of legal constraints),<sup>6</sup> the two newscasts maintain their traditional slant, giving significantly more time to the political forces to which they are traditionally linked. The difference in amount is so large that it underlines not just a partisan strategy but a very marked polarization.

Partisanship may be found also in the professional figures working within the news outlets. Most Italian journalists have a clear political affiliation that not rarely overlaps with the more general affiliation of the news outlet itself. The shift from professional journalism towards direct political involvement and vice versa is (and has always been) quite normal in Italian journalism. Important and not by chance, very prominent journalists have accomplished this journey from journalism and politics and back: Michele Santoro, Lilly Gruber, Piero Marrazzo, Gustavo Selva, Piero Badaloni, etc. Most of these journalists are on the left side of the political spectrum and have been working within Public

**Table 2 TV news consumption by vote (%)**

|          | PD   | PDL  | Other voters | Total | N   |
|----------|------|------|--------------|-------|-----|
| RAI 1    | 33.3 | 24.2 | 42.4         | 100   | 702 |
| RAI 2    | 32.1 | 18.5 | 49.5         | 100   | 81  |
| RAI 3    | 44.4 | 9.1  | 46.4         | 100   | 297 |
| Canale 5 | 10.1 | 50.9 | 39.1         | 100   | 525 |
| Italia 1 | 11.7 | 39.4 | 49           | 100   | 94  |
| Rete 4   | 6.8  | 59.3 | 33.9         | 100   | 59  |
| La 7     | 32   | 14   | 54           | 100   | 50  |
| Others   | 22.3 | 19.4 | 58.3         | 100   | 139 |

Source: Itanes 2008



Service Broadcasting, but right-wing journalists travelling between news media and politics are not lacking.

A recent study shows that more than 12 per cent of the members of Parliament are either journalists or former journalists; in the United Kingdom this number decreases to 6.5 per cent and in Germany to 3.9 per cent (Ciaglia 2012). This is another confirmation that the journey between mass media and politics is not a rare one and that it is much more frequent in Italy than in other western democracies.

Consumption too is partisan, both as to print press readership and television audience. Table 2 shows the level of audience partisanship for Italian TV news. There is a marked and stable connection between leftist voters and those channels that give larger space to leftist politicians, and there is a marked and stable connection between Berlusconi voters and those who watch his television networks. Indeed, by knowing how many citizens watch either Canale 5 or Rete 4 or Italia 1 (the Mediaset channels<sup>7</sup>), it is possible to predict the electoral outcome. In the 2008 Itanes (Italian National Elections Study) study, the authors wrote that 'the importance of television is associated with one of the major characteristics of the election in the Second Republic: the alignment between electoral choices and TV consumption' (Legnante and Sani 2008).

Of those who watch Canale 5 (the most diffused Mediaset channel) 50.9 per cent vote for Popolo della Libertà (PDL), Berlusconi's party, while only 10.1 per cent vote for the major competing party, the Partito Democratico (PD). On the opposite side, 44.4 per cent of those who watch RAI 3 (the traditionally leftist public service broadcasting channel) vote PD, while only 9.1 per cent vote PDL. These data confirm the results of several previous studies (Itanes 2001, 2006) and stress the high level of political parallelism existing in the Italian public sphere; there is a very strong correlation between the political dimension of the media message and the electoral choices of its receivers/users. Leftist news outlets are consumed by leftist people and rightist channel by rightist voters.

The partisanship that has been a historically prominent feature of the Italian public sphere assumed new, more extreme characteristics with the commercialization of the 1980s. Indeed, the increased number of media outlets further forced each of them to seek its own segmented audience within a very crowded media market. For a number of reasons one can identify the basis for this segmentation in the political attitudes of the consumers: first of all this was the well-established orientation of the Italian mass media even in a much less competitive market; second, the political system directly pressured the media to clearly address a partisan audience (in particular this was, and still is, the case of Public Service Broadcasting, which through the logic of *lottizzazione* strictly depended on the influence of the different political parties, both majority and opposition parties); and, finally, structural and property links were clearly determining the choices of the news outlets (this is obviously the case of Berlusconi's television networks but it is not the only case).

Market competition has mixed the already existing media partisanship with dramatization: indeed the easiest choice has been that of the exaggeration of tones and language to reach and maintain an audience segmented on the basis of political affiliation. The arrival of Berlusconi in the political arena brought to an extreme the already existing partisanship and political polarization, both in his television networks but also in those networks (and shows) that have not fallen under his control. Indeed, while his networks together with those RAI channels he was able to control were taking positions in his favour, those that were able to maintain spaces for autonomy took the opposite stance. Take, for example, the well-known television anchorman Michele Santoro, who has become the most famous representative of *antiberlusconismo*. Santoro's harsh, continuous attacks against the '*cavaliere*' (Berlusconi) seemingly mirror the attacks of those, like the well-known journalist Emilio Fede, who were loudly acclaiming Berlusconi.

In this very polarized situation, the language of politics has been brought to an extreme to reinforce the already existing links between news outlets and affiliated citizens. As there is no possibility of reaching new consumers within a market characterized by strong ties of fidelity, each news organization just needs to further confirm the political opinions of the traditional addressee. It accomplishes this through the exaggeration of emotional language and through a very negative campaign against the opponent conducted both in the realm of traditional politics, for example in the 'equation of Berlusconi and Mussolini', and at the level of everyday life, such as the sex scandals that again have involved Berlusconi but also other political figures on the left such as Piero Marrazzo. The titles presented at the beginning of this paper testify to the loud level the public debate has reached in Italy.

A sudden and often excessive personalization of politics provides another occasion to build emotional stories around single figures; extreme hate and extreme love, in particular, have been the emotions expressed when featuring Berlusconi and his political adventures. Berlusconi himself has chosen this strategy, which has then been largely confirmed by his opponents. Positive and negative personalization has perfectly met the needs of market segmentation.

The formats of televised representation of political debate are another instrument of dramatized polarization: the harsh struggle between competing figures has become the main rule of televised talk shows. *Come nella boxe* (like in boxing) is the title of the already quoted booklet written in 1998 by Calabrese. Since then, televised public debate has become even more heated and the audience seems to reward this strategy. As Mazzoleni and Sfondini (2009) have noted, infotainment and 'politainment' have replaced the more traditional forms of political discourse. Their book offers plenty of examples of the most recent tendency towards the dramatization of politics.

And, lastly, journalists themselves have assumed the role of stars in this tendency towards dramatization. It is not by chance that a Festival of Journalism has been established. Reporters have become central to the spectacle; they, like the politicians, become part of a dramatized duel in front of the television or

theatre audiences.<sup>8</sup> As Carlo Marletti (2010, 19) writes, 'The desire to be the centre of attention is such that some of the Italian journalists have become themselves the show.'

All this has taken place within a situation in which traditional political organizations are losing ground, as they are in most of the western world. Nevertheless, political attitudes still maintain a strong potential for mobilization. This potential has been increased by the dramatization of the struggle and the continuous *demonizzazione* (demonization) of the opponent. Renato Mannheimer, a well-known political scientist and pollster, defined 'dramatizing mobilization' the electoral strategy that in the 2006 political elections allowed Berlusconi almost to close the gap separating his centre-right coalition from the centre-left one (Mannheimer 2006). In the campaign's final fifteen days, Berlusconi harshly attacked his opponents; during a by now famous debate in the northern city of Vicenza, he jumped on the stage and remained there well beyond the expected time. He loudly blamed the entrepreneurs who were filling the theatre and who typically voted for Berlusconi for being too dependent on the leftists' proposals.

The dramatization of the political struggle reinforces and confirms the already existing beliefs of the segmented public. Political polarization is therefore fostered in a highly competitive mass media market. But as the existing opinions and beliefs are reinforced, the distance between competitors is enlarged. The lack of a shared corpus of norms that follows the division of journalism into different and competing political and ideological fields (Mancini 2000) further reinforces the tendency towards a dramatization that very often goes beyond those professional journalistic standards that in most of the western democracies are a common heritage of the press. Because of their weak and blurred identity (blurred mostly between media and politics), journalists are involved in a very harsh struggle that adopts exaggerations, accusations, high-sounding rhetoric and emphatic language and does not facilitate the sharing of a common place where to meet.

Indeed, the main problem deriving from this situation of dramatized polarization is the absence of a common public sphere where different forces can meet, discuss and find the necessary agreement. The exasperation of tones, the diffuse self-referential character of the public debate, and the dependence on very segmented and partisan sources of information very often prevent competing voices from talking with each other and starting the necessary negotiating process. In this kind of public sphere, citizens do not seem to be invited to meet with other fellow citizens. They just rely on their own sources of information, which reinforce their beliefs and opinions.

An even more general consequence is the weakness of the idea of public interest and public good: this is a consequence but also a reason for the polarized organization of the public sphere. Every day, citizens face an image of their community that appears to be deeply divided into opposed camps that do not talk each other, insult each other, try to delegitimize the competing parts, and

pay very little attention to the existence of common rules and values. In the end, it is the idea itself of community that is at risk as a common set of values and beliefs does not seem to exist. Citizens and their representative organizations cannot trust each other. They do not appear to be playing within a common framework of rules. As Loreto Di Nucci and Ernesto Galli della Loggia (2003, 11) write: 'There is a contraposition that in its roots and its development is fed, not so much with social, religious, or language cleavages, rather it is based on factors of ideological and political nature.'

But here a strange paradox emerges: if a common 'home' may seem at risk because of such polarization, nevertheless it has to be recognized that the Italian public sphere is very much alive. It is a noisy space with room for very loud voices to be heard. Organized groups of different natures that fit within the logic of dramatized polarization have the opportunity to express their point of view: again the case of Beppe Grillo and his Movimento 5 Stelle is a good example of how a movement without pre-existing ties to the new media systems can enter the public arena if it feeds the need for polarization and dramatization.

In this situation, 'objectivity' is reached through the 'plurality of partialities', which is a very different public sphere from the traditional liberal public sphere. In the Italian public sphere, news media and groups of different nature overlap:

media are viewed as a more complex articulation between individuals, groups and power structures. This takes into account the fact that individual interests are safeguarded and advanced in modern liberal democracies partly through collective organizations like political parties and pressure groups, and a strategic level through the construction and recomposition of alliances and coalitions. (Curran 1991, 31)

So in the end, an ambiguous situation emerges: there exists a very alive debate but it risks falling into polarization because of the mixture of dramatization and partisanship and because very often the public debate is self-referential – it seeks only to reinforce group identity. Two main consequences ensue: first, those who are not involved with the already existing struggle and who do not 'speak with loud voices' are left at the margins. Many citizens simply do not have the opportunity to be considered. Second, the idea itself of public good and common interest is at risk because the existing polarization makes the identification with a 'common house' hard to achieve.

## Notes

- 1 The Billionaire is a famous nightclub in Sardegna, close to Berlusconi's well-known 'villa Certosa'. Many rich, right-wing people (including Berlusconi himself) like to spend their summer nights at the nightclub.
- 2 The crossed shield was the symbol of Christian Democracy.
- 3 Pd is Partito Democratico, the Italian leftist party deriving from the previous Communist Party.

- 4 'Lottizzazione' refers to the distribution of positions of major power and prestige of RAI (and more generally of all companies depending on state resources) on the basis of political affiliation.
- 5 Others include the air time devoted to government and other political forces.
- 6 Regulatory bodies include Agcom (Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni) and Commissione Parlamentare di Vigilanza that exactly defines the way in which RAI has to cover political life.
- 7 As is well known, Mediaset is the television conglomerate owned by Berlusconi.
- 8 In Perugia, an International Festival of Journalism has started, similar to festivals in other Italian cities such as the Festival of Economics, the Festival of Philosophy, etc.

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