Making Sense of Italian Populism: The Five Star Movement and the Lega

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the rise of two Italian populist movements, the cyber-populism of the Five Star Movement under Beppe Grillo, and the nativist populism of the Lega under Matteo Salvini. I first frame the rise of Italian populism and the brief coalition government the two parties formed in 2018-2019 within broader political and institutional trends, and then compare the role of leadership in the two movements and analyse the discursive strategies used in both to mobilize "the people" and win voters' support.

KEYWORDS: Right-wing Populism; Populist Discourses; Italian Politics; Matteo Salvini; Beppe Grillo

Introduction

     "Populism" is now one of the most researched words on the internet and in 2017 the Cambridge Dictionary declared it the word of the year. It is a much contested and protean concept. Scholars have variously described populism as a political strategy (Weyland, 2001), a discursive style (Jägers and Walgrave, 2007), a political style (Moffit, 2016), an organizational form (Taggart, 1995), an illiberal political manifestation (Zakerea, 1997; Müller, 2016), and an authoritarian experiment in democracy (Finchelstein, 2019), but it was Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde (2004) and his collaborator Rovita Kaltwasser (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013; 2016) who provided what has now become a dominant definition of populism, one which was used as the conceptual basis for a series of

articles in *The Guardian* published between 2018 and 2019 about populism and how to fight it (Baker, 2019).

Mudde famously described populism as a "thin" ideology: it does not have the intellectual sophistication of nationalism, socialism or liberalism. Instead, it focuses narrowly on the antagonistic relationship between the "pure people" and the "corrupt elites" (Mudde, 2004). Populism's ideological thinness explains the diversity of its manifestations for one of the advantages of being a "thin ideology" working with an elemental duality between purity and corruption is that it is highly flexible and can be easily attached to more "thick" host ideologies such as nationalism, socialism, liberalism, or right-wing extremism. These characteristics have led Mudde to conclude that the main reason for the success of today's global populist parties is the ease with which populism can be attached to xenophobic forms of nationalism.

Mudde's conceptual framework will be used as a starting point in my investigation of the two types of Italian populism because it helps to explain how leaders like Matteo Salvini change their identities in order to thrive politically, and how Beppe Grillo can claim that the M5S has gone beyond right and left political distinctions. But I also want to analyse the discursive strategies used by both movements to mobilize "the people" and win voter's support. The central claim of many populists is that politics should be an expression of the "general will" of the people and power can be seized democratically by the mobilization of this will by a strong leader. The people's will is "common sense" and the basis of good politics while the leader is the embodiment of the people's feelings. "The people" are represented by the populists as a single entity, much like "the nation" functions for nationalists: an idealized construct of a collective political subject, an "imagined community." How "the people" are discursively envisioned in different populist movements, and how these movements define leadership, are key elements in understanding them.

The M5S draws on a form of populism with a deeply rooted notion of democracy that voters now perceive as being betrayed. Beppe Grillo wants to bring the membership of the M5S into direct participation with political power and redress a democratic deficit through digital means, but this strategy has its own contradiction, as I will discuss. Matteo Salvini and the Lega appeals to its supporters by using the rhetoric of ethnic belonging and exclusion, and by building a relationship between the leader and "the people" who see in Salvini's rising political status an extension of their own power. Both movements grew out of a unique set of historical circumstances, which we will now briefly review.

Populism, Parties and Leaders

Critics of various theoretical persuasions have noted that populism emerges from a crisis of political representation (Finchelstein, 2019) and partly as a response to neoliberal globalization (Laclau, 2005; Laclau and Mouffe, [1985] 2014; Mouffe, 2018). A cursory look at the Lega's and the M5S's policies shows how many of their political objectives are shaped by these concerns. Lanzone and Woods (2015), who analysed the platform policies of the Lega and the Five Star Movement, have argued that both movements claim to be against establishment politics and both define the elite as a corrupt international oligarchy grounded in neoliberal global capitalism. Both see the EU as a Trojan horse of globalization. They oppose austerity measures dictated by Brussels as well as many aspects of free trade agreements and open borders. Both movements are critical of widening social inequality but only the Lega is wed to the extreme language of nationalist xenophobia with emphasis on "the leader" as a reflection of the will of the people. One other element they share is that they both mobilise the electorate's feelings of political disempowerment, itself a symptom of the crisis of democratic representation.

The crisis of political representation was brought into sharp relief in Italy at the end of the First Republic (1948-1992). As a result of corruption scandals (*Tangentopoli*) and criminal investigation of connections between leaders and their parties to the Mafia and other criminal organizations (*Mani Pulite*) in the early 1990s, the old establishment parties – the Socialists, the Italian Communist Party, and the Christian Democrats along with others – disbanded and new political parties were formed. According to Katz and Mair (1995; 2009), many European parties had by the mid-1990's lost their ability to represent society and had become "cartel parties." They no longer represented different interests or opposed one another by promoting alternative policies; instead parties colluded with each other in order to share the resources that the state made available to them through public funding. The parties became part of the state rather than representative of society, and the differences between parties diminished, denying voters genuine political alternatives. The resulting frustration fuelled the rise of new populist politicians who positioned themselves in opposition to establishment elites.

By the mid-1990s, the Italian electorate had become less deferential to party labels and more attracted to leaders like Silvio Berlusconi and his new party Forza Italia. Previously, traditional parties had mediated between the state and

voters organized in local networks and territorial bases, but Berlusconi's electoral success was achieved largely through the appeal of a charismatic personality and sustained by a personal party. Italian political scientist Mauro Calise (2010) has called this transition the "personalization of power." When political power is personalized it manifests certain traits. The new leaders seem to be both all powerful and extremely fragile. They ride popularity waves and are generally short-lived. Berlusconi was both a reflection of and an exception to this rule. He came to power by establishing Forza Italia as a personal power base and, as one the most long-serving politicians of the post-war era, he survived because of his control of a significant segment of the national media. Berlusconi gave us the model of the anti-establishment millionaire as populist leader, and of a party tied to a political figure rather than a specific national policy.

Matteo Renzi, the former leader of the centre-left Democratic Party (PD) who formed a short-lived government in 2014-2016, provides an example of the fickle nature of personalized power (Calise, 2013). Initially, Renzi came to power with enthusiastic popular support and the promise of "*rottamazione*": the scrapping of the old generation of centre-left politicians and networks in order to give space to a younger and more honest group of politicians. The sympathetic foreign press called him a "demolition man" who wanted to alter the Italian Constitution and reform the "rigid" labour market that business claimed plagued the Italian economy. Renzi's reforms were closely tied to neoliberal policies (Anderson, 2013) and his political rise and fall illustrates the fate of some European Left parties that compromised with neoliberalism. Many Italians voters came to perceive Renzi as arrogant and aloof and his party, the PD, was soundly defeated by voters in the 2018 elections. The coalition of the Lega and the M5S was the result of the aftermath of Renzi's and the PD's political collapse.

Beppe Grillo and the Cyberpopulism of the Five Star Movement

When Italians voted in the 2018 election, the Five Star Movement emerged as the largest single party with 32.7 percent of the vote, and the far-right Lega party won 17.3 percent. These were impressive results for both parties, and a particularly significant win for the Five Star Movement as only four parties previously – the Christian Democrats, the Italian Communist Party, Forza Italia, and the Democratic Party (PD) – have achieved comparable results in the history of post-war Italy. Beppe Grillo, the comedian and blogger who founded the M5S, envisioned it not as a party but as an internet movement driven by a duty to "re-moralize politics" and by a practical "common sense" that goes beyond the

conventional labels of left and right. He wanted to create a new model of political communication and an innovative form of governance. Parliament could be replaced by an on-line democracy where citizens, informed by the internet, could drive policy directly.

Grillo was an early social media adopter at a time when the web was beginning to rewire politics. He recognized that politicians could bypass traditional gatekeepers and speak directly to their base without the mediation of national journalists, newspapers or television. Much like Occupy movements globally, the M5S is interested in building democratic political engagement through social media. Using crowd-sourcing techniques, the movement spread by forming local "meet-up" groups around the country and soon became an important political force that succeeded in bringing together a wide variety of groups concerned with local issues into a national grievance network. The Five Star refers to the five dominant organizing themes of the movement: public water, sustainable development, sustainable transport, right to internet access, and better environmental protection.

The M5S originated as an alliance between Beppe Grillo and the internet guru Gianroberto Casaleggio. Beppe Grillo had built a large national audience as a stand-up comedian who criticised corrupt local politicians and greedy bankers. Giancarlo Casaleggio, owner of a large private Milanese internet and publishing company that advises on network strategies, Casaleggio Associates, helped Beppe Grillo set up a blog and a well-run interactive site and later collaborated on a book about what the coming of interactive politics could look like (Casaleggio and Grillo, 2011). Grillo's blog at first dispensed "counter-information" as a way to fight the "fake news" of traditional media but quickly moved on to other matters. In 2007 in Bologna, Grillo launched a successful national campaign, V-Day (*Vaffanculo* or "fuck off" day), as a protest against bad government, which spread to many other Italian cities. In 2009, the year the M5S was founded, Grillo (2009) promised an epic biblical battle between David and Goliath. "We only have the web, the meet ups, our enthusiasm and my meetings. They have all the rest. We are the last, the excluded, the derided. That is why we will succeed," he wrote in his blog. Four years later, in 2013, the movement won 25 percent of the national vote (Lanzone, 2015), and a decade after its inception, as noted, it had 32.7 percent of the national vote and was in power in a coalition with the Lega.

Much of the M5S's success rests on Beppe Grillo's deft use of the media: television, radio, newspapers, and the web (Ravelli, 2017). He is a charismatic personality, a trickster figure who became a media hub for the M5S, and he uses

his powers of persuasion and his flair for entertainment to challenge traditional political elites and appeal to a wide audience. Grillo's populism began by denouncing the "blood sucking" oligarchy made up of the different "social castes" that dominate Italian society and protect their own narrow interests. In Italian political discourse there is a powerful argument that the ruling class has been transformed into a number of castes (Rizzo and Stella, 2007). The castes, " *le caste,*" include politicians and trade unionists who defend "anachronistic" labour privileges, but more centrally, media elites. As Grillo explains in his blog: "the castes are united together and form an immense body, a supersocial group that feeds on the blood of those who produce…The castes do not derive their power from controlling the means of production but by controlling the means of information. The political caste, the caste of the newspapers, the caste of the central government…[they are like]…a parasite that kills the body that hosts it" (2013).

The founders of the M5S believe that "the will of the people" can be digitalized and they have been at the forefront of exploring how this can be done. When the M5S was created, Casaleggio Associates, who designed the Five Star platform and managed Beppe Grillo's blog, searched for ways to digitally capture the "will of the people," and that meant collecting massive amounts of data about its members and developing strategies for keeping the membership engaged. The online platform is regularly used to poll members and track their preferences. In 2015, Davide Casaleggio (the son of Gianroberto, who had recently died of brain cancer), upgraded the Five Star online platform into an advanced system called Rousseau, which made it easier for members to put themselves forward as candidates and decide who would stand for election.

Some critics (Lanzone, 2015; Horowitz, 2018) have painted Davide Casaleggio and his father Gianroberto before him as mysterious Svengali figures manipulating the issues in the background; others (Gerbaudo and Screti, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2018; Loucaides, 2019) point out that the tactics the M5S uses to produce online engagement and make followers feel that they are part of an organic movement are not much different from the corporate branding strategies of a tech startup which aims to grow rapidly, "upgrade" followers to "paying supporters" and keep them engaged through interactive content and email sign-ups. The very digital tools that were supposed to give members control over the movement, critics suggest, are being used by the leadership to control the membership.

M5S's anti-authoritarian stance has led it to join with parties and movements on the European right that are also anti-establishment and critical of Brussels. In the European parliament the M5S allies with Nigel Farage and the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The M5S position can be classified as a "soft" Euroscepticism. They are critical of the international elites and the bureaucrats in Brussels, but are more willing to negotiate changes than some of their allies. Farage's UKIP and the M5S share one trait: a digital populism effectively managed by a tightly controlled leadership. Much has been written about how the UKIP was a virtual carbon copy of the M5S and how the lessons in anti-establishment "direct digital democracy" that Casaleggio learned from building the M5S were passed on to Farage (Loucaides, 2018; Davies, 2019). These examples further underscore the point that amassing and analysing data from the membership can both hone party strategy and enhance new forms of electoral manipulation: the latter is a growing concern to voters who were originally drawn to the M5S's popular democratic message.

During the 2018 election, the M5S's winning card was economic populism: it promised to challenge austerity measures and introduce a "citizen's wage," the "*reddito di cittadinanza*," a basic income plan that offers €780 a month for the unemployed. The "citizen's wage" attracted many new voters, especially in Italy's less well off southern regions of Sicily, Campania, and Puglia, and the appeal of the "citizen wage" was used by many of the foreign press to characterize the M5S as a soft form of "left populism," a characterization which is not quite accurate when we examine the movement's restrictive positions on refugees and immigration, which are ideologically more to the right. For example, Grillo was against "*jus soli*" legislation that would have given Italian citizenship to children of immigrants born in Italy. The issue was extremely divisive within the movement and the M5S abstained from voting on the *jus soli* bill, effectively defeating it. And during the 2018 election, the M5S's new leader, Luigi di Maio, consistently fired up rhetoric against refugees and migrants and articulated the position that the M5S wants to "stop the 'taxi service' that brings migrants to Italy.

While the European right looks to a "strong" leader, M5S is suspicious of the term "political leader." Grillo is ineligible to stand for parliament because of a conviction for manslaughter related to an automotive crash that resulted in the deaths of two of his friends and their nine-year old son, and has defined his role as that of a "mediator" rather than a leader. The M5S's political figurehead is Luigi di Maio, who in September of 2017 put his name forward in an online primary election as candidate for Italian premiership through the new Rousseau

platform. He won handily and went on to win an election and form a government in coalition with the Lega. Despite having a father who was involved with the far-right neo-fascist movement, di Maio says he does not share his father's ideology. He is young, reassuring, and more like a practical old-style centrist politician (Horowitz, 2018), but in polls after the election he was over-shadowed by the more charismatic and aggressive coalition partner, Matteo Salvini.

The M5S has varied constituencies and mixes right wing cultural stances with more traditional leftist platforms; it attracts voters from both the right and the left by taking Euro-sceptical and anti-globalization stands and by attacking government handling of the "refugee crisis." The M5S has no platform commitment to ethno-nationalism, though the rhetoric of some of its members leans in that direction. What we can say about the M5S policy is that it is "fuzzy"; it has no clear ideological attachment and draws, at times incoherently, from a variety of ideologies. Some critics (Lanzone and Woods (2015); Ivaldi, Lanzone and Woods, 2017) have called the M5S a "populist idiosyncrasy." Depending on the issue and public mood they can trend either right or left. It has both an inclusive economic notion of "the people" like the populist left, and an exclusionary cultural nativism like the populist radical right (Muddle and Kaltwasser, 2013). What has kept voters who hold these divergent views together is their dissatisfaction with the way that Italian democracy has been functioning and a commitment to a "moral revitalization of politics" (Corbetta et al., 2019): these are the feelings that Beppe Grillo has been able to mobilize.

The Lega and Matteo Salvini: The People, the Leader, and the Rhetoric of Fear

Matteo Salvini's Lega party is the closest thing Italy has to Donald Trump, especially when it comes to immigration, law and order, and social media. "If Trump has Twitter, Salvini is the king of Facebook," writes Alexander Stille (2018) in the pages of *The Guardian*. Salvini's use of social media has been the source of much coverage in the popular press (Volpicelli, 2018; Giuffrida, 2018; Kalia, Barr and Giuffrida, 2018) and journalists and commentators have compared him to a chameleon that pops up everywhere in different guises. He has learned to both provoke and charm, and he shifts between soothing traditional Italian references to family and friendship, and brutal attacks on his enemies. The rhetorical strategies of stimulating both positive and negative emotions are familiar to those who study right-wing activism and discourses (Caporale, 2018): lower the voter's guard by playing on fear and anger, and then suggest that the solution lies in the populist values of the Lega and its leader. Through these

discursive strategies, Salvini has made himself a relatable figure to his audience: he is a tough guy but he is "one of us."

Matteo Salvini's most notable achievement was expanding the Lega from a separatist northern party to a national one. After Salvini wrested control of the Lega Nord party from Umberto Bossi in 2014, the autonomist cries against Rome were replaced with slogans against Brussels, international banks and corporations, while the enemies of "the people" were no longer "southerners" but immigrants and refugees. Under Salvini, the tag "Northern" was dropped and the party became simply the Lega, stressing its defence of *all* Italian people against external threats and lessening its traditional autonomist agenda.

What helped Matteo Salvini change his political identity was the "refugee crisis": the huge jump in the number of people entering Italy through North Africa, and the perception that the European Union had abandoned Southern Europe (Greece, Italy and Spain) to deal effectively alone with what is properly a pan-European problem. The "refugee crisis" was a game changer for many parties. As Stille (2018) reports, there was an influx of 42,000 refugees into Italy in 2013. The following year that number increased to 170,000 then peaked in 2016 at 181,000, a year in which 500 people drowned making the crossing from Libya to Sicily, one of the most dangerous refugee crossings in the world. Government inefficiency and corruption in refugee resettlement programs have also created a national perception that housing and caring for refugees has become a business dominated by various local mafias, such as the Sicilian Mafia, the Neapolitan Camorra, and the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta. References to the mafia and their links to migrants are ubiquitous in Salvini's rhetoric of fear (Caporale, 2018).

Salvini's political narrative focuses on immigrant invasion, terrorism, and crime, all of which are claimed to threaten the national security, identity, and sovereignty of Italians as a people. Issues such as unequal economic development and the increase of social and economic inequalities are difficult to solve or even to explain but terrorism, anti-Islamic feeling, and the fear of being replaced are easy to manipulate. And so Salvini proposed to bring back the crucifix in every public space in order to reinforce Italy's Catholic tradition. He pushed law and order issues and has passed security laws that protect the use of firearms as self-defence against intruders. He has also tried to scrap laws that ban hate speech, the promotion of racial discrimination, and the advocacy of fascism, as well as laws supporting gay families.

The Lega is now a much broader party than it used to be and its electoral success is largely based on fear of migrants and immigration and the promotion

of nativist ethno-nationalism. As Interior Minister, Salvini quickly made his mark by turning away a boatload of more than 600 African refugees on a ship named *Aquarius* operated by the non-profit organization, *SOS Mediterranée*, which rescues people stranded while trying to reach Europe by sea. The move greatly boosted Salvini's ratings in Italy but attracted international condemnation. "While we are standing here, the third load of slaves in a single month is not arriving in Italy," he announced, "[T]he warning has been sent to the human traffickers, mafiosi and camoristi: the carnival is over" (quoted in Stille, 2018). "*La pacchia é finita*" (the party is over) is one of Salini's favourite phrases.

Salvini pushed to pass the so-called "Salvini decree": a bill which abolishes humanitarian protection for those not eligible for refugee status but who cannot be sent home. The majority of migrants who have arrived in Italy have been granted humanitarian protection, with some 100,000 people estimated to hold a permit valid for two years that enables them to work. Many of these migrants are in welcome centres while some are employed as temporary workers. The "Salvini decree" effectively means that people can suddenly become reclassified as illegal immigrants. Italy's national statistics office estimates that the decree will make 130,000 migrants illegal by 2020 (Tondo and Giuffrida, 2018).

Journalist Roberto Saviano (2019) has written about the ways in which the migrant population is now being exploited both for profit and political gain. Immigrant ghettos have sprung up in the agro-business sectors of Italy, especially in the south where "migrants earn fifty cents a crate of picked oranges or a euro per crate for mandarins under inhumane working conditions." The politics that incite hatred towards migrants do nothing to change these conditions because, writes Saviano, "migrant workers have become a low-cost workforce with no rights" and they "can be both exploited and blamed for the purposes of garnering populist votes."

The rise of the Lega has given new life to the extreme right and fed a climate of racism and hate. The number of racially motivated attacks has increased sharply in Italy. Every day we read or hear of ethnically motivated abuses and refugees and migrants being targeted by fascist groups like Casa Pound and Forza Nuova. The mainstreaming of fascist ideology is particularly disturbing. The post-war Italian Constitution was explicitly anti-fascist and in much of Italy fascism had been marginalized, but as the historian Andrea Mammone (2016) writes, fascism has been rehabilitated in contemporary Italy by populist politicians who see in fascists and racists potential allies. In Europe, not just in Italy, fascist ideologies never fully disappeared; they survived and now thrive under the current

climate of nativist xenophobia. In fact, in Italy, three of Mussolini's descendants have entered the political arena: Caio Mussolini, the great grandson of the Italian dictator, ran in the European election as a candidate for the right-wing Brothers of Italy in May 2019. His second cousin, Alessandra Mussolini, has been at forefront of right-wing politics for nearly thirty years. She is a member of the European Parliament allied to Berlusconi's Forza Italia, while Rachele Mussolini is a city councillor in Rome and also associated with Brothers of Italy.

Salvini and the Lega have enabled the far right to publicly display its face and spout its hateful messages. At a recent protest against the Roma people, the neo-fascist Forza Nuova read a statement: "we are ready to raise black flags and Italian flags against the invasion and ethnic replacement" (quoted in Tondo, 2019). The rhetoric is all too familiar and the results have been deadly. The most egregious example occurred in December 2011, when a supporter of Casa Pound opened fire at two central markets in Florence, killing two Senegalese street vendors and injuring three others before turning the gun on himself. Another horrific incident occurred in 2018 when a supporter of the Northern League injured six African migrants in a racially motivated shooting spree in the central city of Macerata.

Salvini's political popularity surged during his coalition with the M5S to a near cult status, emboldening his push for power. In the European election (May 25, 2019), the Lega won over 34 percent of the vote, doubling their percentage of the vote in the year since the 2018 general election and making it the party with the largest voter support in Italy. Rising poll numbers, along with the growing perception that some of the M5S elected officials were ineffectual amateurs, gave Salvini the confidence to try to bring down the government. During the months of July and August of 2019, Salvini became "*Il Capitano*" and unleashed a media blitz that intensified his ethnic nationalist message. He combined state power with personal media presence and posed as a "strong man," giving stump-like speeches on the beaches bare chested, praising Vladimir Putin as the best hope for Europe, displaying and kissing crucifixes, stopping more NGO ships involved in refugee rescue from entering Italian ports, and asking for the people to give him ill defined "full powers." (Broder, 2019).

The backlash came quickly and decisively from his coalition partner whose popularity had dropped from 32 to 17 percent. In August 2019, Beppe Grillo (2019) wrote a blog about self-preservation called "The Consistency of the Cockroach" (*la coerenza dello scaraffoggio*) where he called for the formation of a new government that would stop the "barbarians" rather than triggering an

election. Plummeting popular support left the M5S with a stark choice of either losing an upcoming election or allying itself with the left of centre party, the PD, in order to stop Salvini. The M5S and the PD put aside their differences and created a new governing alliance to end the "barbarian" invasion. It is difficult to predict how long the new coalition between the PD and the M5S can last: it will most likely be short and Salvini will be waiting in the wings.

Conclusion

What can we learn from this schematic comparison between the Lega and the M5S, and how does it help us to understand some of the dynamics of contemporary Italian populism? Populism in Italy arose, in part, in response to a feeling of non-representation, of being excluded from a political world perceived as dichotomized between the few who have power and the many who do not. I have outlined some of the reasons that can account for this pervasive feeling of dissatisfaction with and hostility to political elites, such as the rise of the cartel party and widening social inequalities due to neoliberal globalization, the increase in anxieties about being left behind economically and disempowered politically, and the "refugee crisis" that reinforced fears about national security and ethnic replacement.

The comparison between the Lega and the M5S demonstrate a key point about leadership and personal power. One reason why populist movements develop and grow is because they have a leader who can act as a "social entrepreneur" for the demands of "the people." Political personal power, as Calise suggests, matters more now in the Italian electoral landscape than it has at any time since Mussolini, and this has opened new opportunities for "entrepreneurial leaders" such as Grillo and Salvini (and before them Berlusconi and Renzi) to attract and mobilize disaffected voters and turn them into enthusiastic supporters. Populism is highly dependent on the figure of a leader to mirror the "will of the people." When the voice of "the people" is perceived as being expressed through the mouth of a leader we come close to understanding some of the dynamics of populism. Grillo's ineligibility for parliament and the failure of the M5S to elect a political figure that can match the charismatic Grillo most likely hindered that movement's success, though there are other reasons why voters turned against the M5S, including growing suspicion of the M5S's democratic digitalism. Italian Populism, it seems, achieves better electoral results if the leadership is like that of Salvini, authoritative and authoritarian. Salvini, through his narrative about

corrupt elites and nationalist xenophobia, has already come very close to political power, and he has not gone away.

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