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## Electoral system, political supply and TV visibility: a comparison between the 2006 and 2008 elections

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### Abstract:

This article proposes some reflections and data on the topic regarding the visibility of parties and their leaders on television during the electoral campaigns in 2006 and 2008, with the aim of addressing whether the changes in the structure of the political supply between the two elections were associated with substantial differences in the visibility granted to the running parties.

### Keywords:

Italy, Electoral system, Porcellum, Electoral Campaign, TV visibility

### Note:

This article is a re-elaboration of *Sistema elettorale, offerta politica e visibilità in TV: un confronto tra le elezioni 2006 e 2008*, in "Polena", 2008, n. 3.

"It is outrageous that Berlusconi and Veltroni complain about the *par condicio*. They have almost all of the airtime on TV. What else do they want? To host the weather forecast?" (Enrico Boselli);

"There seem to be two prime ministerial candidates, while the others are treated as though they were just any other political leader. We aren't here to beg for a few more minutes, but Italy has the right to a correct information which represents the real forces at play." (Fausto Bertinotti);

"The behaviour of the TV channels is shameful, particularly that of the news broadcasts." (Lorenzo Cesa);

"Widespread data from Communications Regulatory Authority confirm not only a dramatic imbalance which advantages Berlusconi, they also depict an interference on the actual results of the electoral competition." (Antonello Soro);

"We have had 6% just like any other party. What is happening? That because of a purpose-designed law, if the market share isn't sustained by an adequate media share (ours is 46% to cite a number) [...] support for the minor parties, which have 0.1, will increase, and as a result, we're heading towards the fragmentation of the political system. (Silvio Berlusconi)<sup>1</sup>.

When the new electoral law was first applied in 2006, the formation of two coalitions, which almost completely encompassed the political supply, shifted to second place internal squabbles which had taken place behind battle lines. Things went differently in 2008, when Veltroni and later on Berlusconi decided to "run [almost] by themselves" (a decision made, among other reasons, in light of the relative predictability of the final outcome in terms of political victory). This choice increased the importance of the competition between political factions which were part of the groups candidating themselves for Government (PD+IDV for the centre-left, PDL+Lega for the centre-right) and those which had been excluded, some more voluntarily than others. The "simplification" of the party system in parliament<sup>2</sup>, coming as a result of the elections,

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<sup>1</sup> The citations of Cesa and Boselli are from *Par condicio, tutti contro tutti, l'Udc si appella al Quirinale*, in *La Repubblica*, 23 March 2008, pp. 6-7; that of Bertinotti in *Arcobaleno a viale Mazzini contro la Rai a due piazze, Il Manifesto*, 14 March 2008, p. 4; that of Soro in *Calabrò: par condicio da rispettare. I "piccoli": ne sia garante il Colle*, *Il Messaggero*, 23 March 2008, p. 4; that of Berlusconi is taken from the television interview on "Matrix" of 11 April 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, in order to draw conclusions as to what degree the Italian party system is heading towards simplification, it would be appropriate to wait for, along with the result of the European Elections in 2009 and the Regional Elections in 2010, the third application of "Porcellum", in order to verify if it will bring the leadership of the parties to choices similar to those of the "simplification" which occurred after the 2008 vote.

later initiated the debate over which aspects of the electoral campaign had contributed to generate the election results.

The second application of the electoral system known as "Porcellum"<sup>3</sup> allows us to draw some initial conclusions as to its effect on electoral campaigns. Indeed, though not directly, the characteristics of the electoral system create a process of constraints and opportunities within which choices are made, first by competitors and media operators<sup>4</sup>, and later by voters. Just as they do for decisions regarding the definition of the political supply, from time to time political party executives interpret the electoral system in different ways and set their campaign strategies accordingly (also in light of political circumstances and the climate of public opinion with its consequences in terms of expectations of the margin of victory by one of the candidates). At the same time, it is likely that in relation to the events which mark the progress of the campaign, media operators also may interpret the legal constraints (such as the *par condicio* law, further commented in the conclusion), which determine media space allocation<sup>5</sup>.

In this article, I will propose some reflections and data on the topic, regarding the visibility of parties and their leaders on television during the electoral campaigns in 2006 and 2008, with the aim of addressing whether the changes in the structure of the political supply between the two elections were associated with substantial differences in the visibility granted to the running parties.

## **1. The "Porcellum" electoral law and the 2006 electoral campaign**

The first electoral campaign conducted under the "Porcellum" saw all of the significant parties group themselves either in L'Unione ("The Union") led by Prodi, or in the Casa Delle Libertà ("House of Freedoms") led by Berlusconi. With the exception of a few

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<sup>3</sup> By the definition of its own drafter Calderoli: "The electoral law? I wrote it, but it is a *porcata* [dirty trick]", see Legnante and Sani 2007. For more detail on the characteristics of the electoral system see: D'Alimonte and Chiaramonte 2007; Feltrin, Natale and Ricolfi 2007; Chiaramonte and Di Virgilio 2007; Feltrin and Fabrizio 2008.

<sup>4</sup> An initial comparison between the tone of the harsh 2006 campaign between the two coalitions (very much inclusive) of the Unione and of the Casa delle Libertà and the calmer campaign of 2008 between the two political groups led by Berlusconi and Veltroni and the other parties suggests a note of caution when proposing strict causal links between the electoral system and the campaign. For more information on the 2006 and 2008 campaigns see, among others: AA.VV. 2006; Mancini 2007; Legnante 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Biorcio 2006; Mannheim 2006; Legnante and Sani 2007, 2008; Mancini and Cornia 2008; Vaccari 2008.

<sup>5</sup> A similar reasoning can also be applied to the campaign conducted under the previous electoral system, the "Mattarellum", in 1994, 1996 and 2001: although in the context of the new mixed electoral system, each of these campaigns has specific elements that characterise it in a way marked more for some than others. For example, exaggeration of the innovative nature of bipolar competition penalised, in terms of television, the centre in 1994 (Mancini et al. 1995; Segatti 1995) more than the Lega in 1996 (Sani and Segatti 1996).

very marginal parties (which together were to obtain 0.5% of valid votes), there were only two prime ministerial candidates on whom the electoral campaign was structured around.

In light of the risk of a likely defeat indicated by opinion polls, Berlusconi and the center-right targeted non-voters by trying to gain as much media exposure as possible, especially in the pre-campaign phase. Prodi, on the other hand, chose not to be as present on television, except for in the final part of the campaign, with the aim of maintaining the advantage that had been generated by dissatisfaction towards the outgoing Berlusconi government. Even though the introduction of the new proportional electoral system (though with a majority premium) for the Chamber of Representatives and for the Senate, left space for a three-striker strategy (Berlusconi, Fini, Casini) by the centre-right, data on their presence on television shows that Berlusconi's visibility was constantly higher than that of his running mates. This was also the case, in spite of at a lower level of visibility, of Prodi and other centre-left leaders (Legnante 2007).

The 2006 elections produced a historical outcome: for the first time in Italy's electoral history, approval of the centre-left forces surpassed, even if by the narrowest of margins, that of the centre-right (however it should be noted that in 1996, in contrast, l'Ulivo won thanks to the defection of Lega from the opposing coalition). Despite the outcome of the elections, the electoral campaign can be interpreted as one characterised by "mobilization" (Corbetta et al. 1988) and continuity. Contributing to the nature of the campaign was the aggressive insistence of the leaders (particularly Berlusconi) on the most partisan and divisive issues, the persistent selective exposure of voters to television networks supporting one of the sides, and the absence of new issues (criminality and immigration, as in 2001) or candidates (Berlusconi, as in 1994 and Prodi, as in 1996).

## **2. The 2008 electoral campaign: the parties**

The second experience with the "Porcellum" electoral law was noticeably different for a number of reasons. The decision of the PD and the PDL to run by themselves, and the presence of several other parties and premiership candidates, demonstrated the flexibility of the electoral system. While in 2006 "Porcellum" generated an almost complete bipolarisation of the competition without reducing party fragmentation, in 2008 the two principal coalitions obtained 84.4% of the votes. However, parliamentary fragmentation was markedly reduced. Other studies have investigated what determined the outcome of the election<sup>6</sup>. The following data are limited to an analysis of the extent to which the

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<sup>6</sup> See Mannheimer and Natale 2008; AA.VV. 2008; ITANES 2008.

communication supply was “bipolarised”. We compared two aspects of media programming during the 2006 and 2008 campaigns<sup>7</sup>. The first aspect concerns the overall allocation of airtime, the second concerns the presence on television of the main leaders. In both cases we considered data on news broadcasts, as they represent the programs which are least strictly dependent on the *par condicio* rules (Mancini and Cornia 2008). The comparison was carried out on six party and institutional groups (described in detail in table 1), which allowed us to compare visibility in 2008 with that of two years earlier, despite the changes in the political supply.

Isimm<sup>8</sup> data made available by the AgCom (Communications Regulatory Authority) indicate that for all of the time periods considered<sup>9</sup>, both the “non-Berlusconi” centre-right forces and the “non-Veltroni” centre-left forces were allocated an airtime quota higher than 10% (table 1). The distribution of broadcast time between the Berlusconi coalition and the Veltroni coalition is essentially balanced on Rai network (on which, in January 2008, there continues to be an equal division of airtime into thirds which also included institutional bodies. However, as the electoral campaign commences, airtime dedicated to the government in office decreases and time dedicated to the parties running for the April elections increases). Mediaset network shows a similar trend of the contraction of time dedicated to the outgoing government, yet a much more evident dilation of airtime is dedicated to the Berlusconi coalition (which alone takes up more than half of the total allocated time) in the month preceding the electoral campaign. However, in the final month, *par condicio* regulations impose a time distribution more similar to that of Rai (Legnante and Sani 2008; Mancini and Cornia 2008).

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<sup>7</sup> I’m grateful to Emma Squillaci, who collaborated with the collection and the processing of the data, Matteo Preda, who performed some preliminary analysis, Paolo Natale and Cristiano Vezzoni, who commented an earlier draft of this paper.

<sup>8</sup> Institute for the study of Innovation of the Media and for Multimedia.

<sup>9</sup> Data from the Communications Regulatory Authority are available on the website [www.agcom.it](http://www.agcom.it). In relation to 2008, at the time of the publication of this article, the data available were from the period 1-31 January, 6 February-9 March (pre-electoral campaign) and 10 March-2 April (covering a substantial part of the actual electoral campaign).

**Table 1.** Distribution of speaking time of a number of political and institutional subjects\* in news broadcasts (Rai and Mediaset; all editions; line labels refer to the political supply of 2008)

	Rai			Mediaset		
	January	Feb 6th - Mar 9th	Mar 10th - Apr 2nd	January	Feb 6th - Mar 9th	Mar 10th - Apr 2nd
Veltroni Coalition	17.9%	28.7%	28.2%	13.8%	24.2%	30.9%
"Non-Veltroni" centre-left forces	13.2%	13.4%	13.7%	14.5%	8.6%	11.4%
Government and Speakers from House of Reps and Senate	24.5%	4.9%	5.3%	15.7%	1.9%	1.2%
President of the Republic +EU(+Others)	11.0%	8.7%	9.0%	14.4%	5.7%	9.6%
"Non-Berlusconi" centre-right forces	9.2%	14.9%	13.8%	7.4%	8.1%	12.2%
Berlusconi Coalition	24.2%	29.4%	30.0%	34.3%	51.4%	34.7%
Total	9h57'52"	12h02'13"	9h05'51"	10h23'16"	10h47'34"	12h52'14"

Source: analysis based on raw data provided by Osservatorio Isimm Ricerche and published by AgCom ([www.agcom.it](http://www.agcom.it))

\* By "Veltroni Coalition" it is meant the PD+IDV in 2008 and DS+Margherita+IDV in 2006; by ""Non-Veltroni" centre-left forces", all other parties which in 2006 participated in L'Unione and who, in 2008, were not part of the main coalition. For 2006, time slots of La Rosa nel Pugno were equally divided between the two centre-left aggregations, in light of the alliance of the Radical party with the PD in 2008 and the decision to run alone of the PS. By "Berlusconi Coalition", therefore, we identify PDL+Lega+MPA in 2008 and by ""Non-Berlusconi" centre-right forces" those parties which in 2008 ran outside the main centre-right aggregation. "Others" (outside coalitions already in 2006) and the most "neutral" institutional figures such as the Presidency of the Republic and the European Union were aggregated for convenience, while "Government and Speakers of the House of Representatives and Senate" were considered as a separate category: even though they were institutional figures, still, throughout the electoral campaign, they often played an active role in the competition.

However, a comparison between data from 2008 and 2006 reveals the most interesting results (table 2)<sup>10</sup>. In 2008, in light of the rapidly unfolding political crisis and the significant decisions by the President of the Republic which followed, the group

<sup>10</sup> Of the available online data found at [www.agcom.it](http://www.agcom.it), we used those related to the months of January, February and March 2006, even though these time periods do not coincide exactly with those described in the previous footnote, this choice allowed the maximum comparability between the two electoral campaigns.

“President of the Republic and European Union” increased its visibility<sup>11</sup>. It is also noteworthy the marked drop in visibility of members of the outgoing government. This fact raises the already much-debated hypothesis that centre-right and centre-left governments are treated differently with regard to airtime: a question which we do not intend to explore here<sup>12</sup>. As for the political forces directly involved in the electoral competition, we observe that the visibility of the Berlusconi coalition is stable, that of the Veltroni coalition decreases (partly because it was represented by members of the government). However, the most relevant fact is the increased visibility of the “non-Berlusconi” and “non-Veltroni” forces compared to that of two years earlier: the visibility of the “non-Veltroni” centre-left forces increases by 4.2 (speaking time) or 5.1 (airtime) percentage points as does that of the “non Berlusconi” centre-right forces, which increases by 6.1 percentage points (speaking time) or 4.7 (airtime).

**Table 2.** Visibility (speaking time and airtime) of a number of political and institutional groups in Rai and Mediaset news broadcasts during the 2006 and 2008 electoral campaigns (line labels refer to the 2008 political supply).

	Speaking time			Airtime		
	2006	2008	Differenc e	2006	2008	Differenc e
Veltroni Coalition	26.8%	24.3%	-2.5	28.6%	23.6%	-5.0
“Non-Veltroni” centre-left forces	8.2%	12.4%	4.2	6.4%	11.4%	5.1
Government and Speakers from House of Reps and Senate	18.3%	8.4%	-9.9	20.7%	13.4%	-7.3
President of the Republic +EU(+Others)	7.9%	9.7%	1.8	8.8%	11.6%	2.8
“Non-Berlusconi” centre-right forces	5.1%	11.0%	6.0	4.7%	9.5%	4.7
Berlusconi Coalition	33.7%	34.2%	0.4	30.8%	30.5%	-0.3
Total time (hh:mm:ss)	47h02’59”	65h09’00”		191h59’58”	182h59’58”	

Source: analysis based on raw data provided by Osservatorio Isimm Ricerche and published by AgCom ([www.agcom.it](http://www.agcom.it))

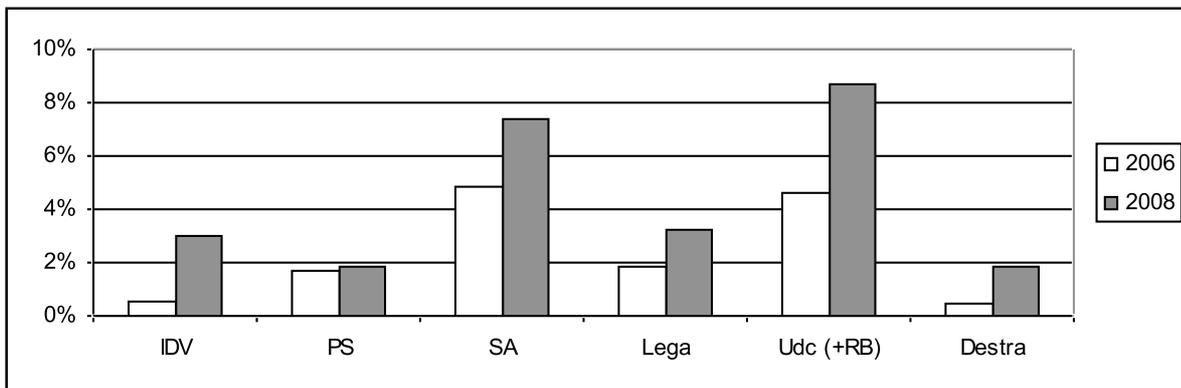
Data regarding the main actors of the “non-Berlusconi” and “non-Veltroni” forces are also interesting. Considering, for the sake of simplicity, only “speaking time” (as data

<sup>11</sup> Visibility is shown both in terms of “speaking time”, in which the political representative speaks directly, and the comprehensive measure of “airtime”, which also comprises discussion segments in which the political representative is the subject of the words of other actors, both political and non political (journalists etc.).

<sup>12</sup> See Sani 2000; Sani and Legnante 2001.

on “airtime” are extremely similar), Figure 1 illustrates that for all of the “minor” forces, broadcasting space increased compared to that of 2006. For some, the increase is particularly marked: from 0.6% to 3.0% for L’Italia dei valori, from 4.9% to 7.4% for the Sinistra Acobaleno, from 4.6% to 8.7% for the Udc from 0.5% to 1.9% for La Destra.

**Figure 1.** Visibility (speaking time) of a number of parties in news broadcasts during the 2006 and 2008 electoral campaigns



Source: analysis based on raw data provided by Osservatorio Isimm Ricerche and published by AgCom ([www.agcom.it](http://www.agcom.it))

### 3. The electoral campaign on television: the leaders

Data from the Osservatorio di Pavia in relation to the comparison between 2006 and 2008 of the main political leaders, confirm what has been highlighted thus far. Table 3 demonstrates that the visibility of the two main competitors remains around the same magnitude. Veltroni is four and a half percentage points more visible than Prodi was two years earlier, while Berlusconi loses six percentage points. Despite these differences being far from insignificant, if on one hand the centrality of their position remained unchanged, on the other, it cannot be argued that it had increased any further. The differences are largely explicable in light of the changes to the electoral strategies as compared to two years earlier: Veltroni tried to be much more “present” on television than Prodi had been, and Berlusconi was committed to defending his large margin of advantage and, as such, he did not need to resort to the “television flood” which had accompanied his almost successful electoral recovery in 2006.

Again, the most interesting data concern the other leaders contesting in the electoral competition. We begin by considering the running mates of the two main candidates, which joined the PD and the PDL. Within the centre-right there are only minimal variations in Fini’s visibility, while within the centre-left, Fassino and Rutelli’s markedly decreases: it seems that on the PD side, which was previously divided between

Ds and Margherita, some degree of simplification and concentration of the electoral message on the figure of the leader took place, at least in terms of the presence of the leader on TV<sup>13</sup>. As for the minor allies of these groups, while the visibility of the main figures of the Lega Nord remains the same, that of Di Pietro increases. However, consistent with what has been previously highlighted regarding the parties, it was mainly the "alternative" prime ministerial candidates who noticeably increased their visibility: a gain in visibility occurs especially for Casini (8.8%, who gains just below twice the share of 2006) and Bertinotti (7.3%, over four times the share of 2006). The presence of Boselli also increases by about one percent, while the visibility of Santanchè is lower than that of Storace in 2006, though this can be explained in terms of the excessive (and unwelcome) media exposure of the ex-governor due to accusations raised during the "Laziogate" investigations. Summing up, considering the electoral campaign as a whole, the decision of the smaller parties to run for office separately from the main coalitions appears to have paid off, at least in terms of visibility on television.

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<sup>13</sup> This process is confirmed by the fact that even the other PD leaders (neither Franceschini, 1,2%, nor Bersani, 0,1%) are not as visible as Fassino and Rutelli were in 2006.

**Table 3.** Visibility of the main leaders in 2006 and 2008 (last ten weeks of electoral campaign; Rai prime time news broadcasts)

	2006		2008		Difference (percentage points)
Centre-Right Leader	Berlusconi	22.3%	Berlusconi	16.1%	-6.2
Centre-Left Leader	Prodi	14.9%	Veltroni	19.5%	4.5
"Loyal" centre-right allies	Fini	5.3%	Fini	5.6%	0.3
	Calderoli	2.0%	Maroni	1.1%	-0.3
	Maroni	0.7%	Bossi	1.3%	
"Loyal" centre-left allies	Fassino	4.4%	Fassino	0.1%	-4.4
	Rutelli	3.7%	Rutelli	0.7%	-3.1
	Di Pietro	0.7%	Di Pietro	2.2%	1.5
Centre-right "former allies"	Casini	5.1%	Casini	8.8%	3.8
	Storace	1.8%	Santanché	1.0%	-0.8
Centre-left "former allies"	Bertinotti	1.7%	Bertinotti	7.3%	5.5
	Boselli	1.5%	Boselli	2.4%	1.0
Others (Institutional, other politicians, etc.)	Others	35.9%	Others	34.0%	-1.9
Total		100.0%		100.0%	
Total time	27h35'28"		23h01'11"		

Source: analysis based on raw data provided by Osservatorio di Pavia

#### 4. Conclusions. Some considerations on the relationship between electoral system, political supply, TV visibility and votes

In this article, we have compared two indicators of the visibility of the main political forces on television broadcasts during the 2006 and 2008 electoral campaigns. The aim was to verify to what extent complaints by a number of political forces regarding media "under representation" were founded. These arguments of supposed "under representation" were used to explain electoral failure (in the case of the Sa), lack of success (for the Udc) or electoral success not as large as reasonably expected (for the PDL).

On the basis of the data we have considered<sup>14</sup>, it is fair to claim that also in 2008 the application of the par condicio rules produced a result which is half-way between

<sup>14</sup> The results of the analysis are also essentially confirmed by an initial comparison between the data of the news broadcasts and that relating to the entire programming on the one hand and between the final months of the electoral campaign (in which the par condicio applies) and the previous month (in which at least in theory the times can be less balanced), on the other.

arguments which suggest that parliamentary relevance should be "reproduced" on television (this especially in the pre-campaign phase) and those which call for the distribution of equal opportunity (in particular, in the final month of the electoral campaign). Indeed, during the electoral campaign, while the minor parties, on one hand, complained about the centrality of the two leadership candidates, on the other hand, the leaders themselves and several observers highlighted that the *par condicio* rules compelled television networks to allocate considerable time slots to all of the main competitors. Even in the presence of a political confrontation which had never been so close to a two-party model, if on one hand, the media continued with the trend (which was first seen in the 80s) of focusing on the "one-on-one" competitive aspects between leaders, on the other hand, it showed an overall respect for the pluralism of the political forces in the game, thus re-balancing the competition (as the *par condicio* regulations indicate). Furthermore, especially during the final month of the electoral campaign, the media compensated for the lack of earlier visibility of the minor forces (also following the recommendations of the Communications Regulatory Authority, see Mancini and Cornia 2008). Considering the final electoral outcome, the combination of the regulations and their interpretation by media operators seems to have "rewarded", in terms of visibility, the choice of those who ran outside the main coalitions. Those who lost the election were not made to suffer a contraction of their media exposure compared to the exposure that they enjoyed when the electoral outcome had been more favourable. The simplification of the political scene was determined by voters on April 11th-12th and not by the television networks during the months leading up to the election<sup>15</sup>.

It is also necessary to clarify that even if the results we have come to indicate that the minor forces were not under-represented when compared to 2006, in 2008 the *par condicio* law, which was designed for a bipolar context such as the one generated by the "Mattarellum" and by the political supply of 2006, showed that it had serious application issues when faced with the presence of two main candidates, six outsiders and several other "premiership candidates". In this situation, any solution for the distribution of airtime would have been dissatisfactory, as it was well stated in the words of the president of the Communications Regulatory Authority ahead of the final two months of the electoral campaign ("it would have been advisable to introduce modifications to the electoral law, and consequently to the *par condicio* regulations, before the elections, in order to adjust

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that this analysis does not consider local television.

them to the changed political scene"<sup>16</sup>) and less than a month before voting ("we need to acknowledge the difficulties in the application of the regulations with regard to *par condicio* – which a number of actors have raised – which can be attributed to changes in the political scene since its introduction..."<sup>17</sup>). Perhaps the *par condicio* law does not only need to be reviewed, it has also demonstrated all of the difficulties in its application, especially towards Berlusconi's PDL, which on many occasions was favoured not only by Tg4 and Studio Aperto news broadcasts (as usual<sup>18</sup>) but also, especially in the initial part of the campaign, by almost all of the main news broadcasts (with the exception of Tg3)<sup>19</sup>.

In this work we have not expanded on a number of medium-term factors which have rendered particularly delicate the relationship between politics and television in Italy. Here we are referring to the presence as a leading figure in the political arena of the owner of an almost total private television monopoly and to the persistence of links between the public service (the other duopolist of the television market) and the political sphere. Furthermore, this occurs in a context in which the impact of other media actors as an instrument of information and of orientation as to what occurs in political life is limited by the public's lack of use of, and/or by the absolute centrality of television (of non-specific TV channels in particular) in cultural life and in the formation of public opinion. Not to mention the obsessive preoccupation that television may heavily condition the course of elections, accompanied by the just as obsessive temptation to nullify its possible effects<sup>20</sup>. The comparison between 2006 and 2008 and the discrepancy between visibility and voting percentages suggests that there are good reasons to present doubts as to the existence of a direct relationship between media visibility and electoral success. In relation to the subject of our analysis, however, this article ends with two notes of clarification. The first concerns Silvio Berlusconi's fear that the "liberticidal" rules of *par condicio* could jeopardise his electoral success. It is true to say that, compared to the electoral results, the PDL (and similarly, the PD) had to give up some of its airtime to its competitors. However, contrary

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<sup>16</sup> *Vigilanza e AgCom. Par condicio anche per i Tg digitali*, *Il Sole-24 ore*, 14 February 2008, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Calabrò: par condicio da rispettare. I "piccoli": ne sia garante il Colle*, *Il Messaggero*, 23 March 2008, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *La par condicio? Solo in 7 giorni*, *Il Sole-24 ore*, 10 April 2008, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Il Garante: par condicio violata, nei Tg troppo spazio al Pdl*, *La Repubblica*, 22 March 2008, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> With regard to this aspect, a significant example is given by the declaration undersigned (mandatory in order not to be excluded by the singing competition) by all competitors at the Sanremo Festival, in which they declare: "I, the undersigned... having been invited to participate as a guest... declare and assure under my responsibility that I am not ... a candidate, a member of a party and/or a political movement, a member of the national or a local government... I also declare that I will refrain from statements, declarations or any behavior which could directly or even indirectly [my emphasis] affect or direct voters' preferences ...", see *Par condicio a Sanremo*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 25 February 2008, p. 31.

to what the centre-right leader foresaw, this did not prevent his coalition from obtaining a clear electoral success (just as it did not prevent his main ally, the Lega Nord, from achieving an even more marked success, proportionally much larger than the television time slots allocated to them). The *par condicio* acted in a “compensatory” and not only a proportionalist way. The effects of this compensation, however, seem to have been limited to the visibility of the main alternative parties and did not influence their electoral success. The second consideration relates to the Sinistra Arcobaleno. If the Sa wants to identify the reasons for its electoral failure, they should turn elsewhere and not to the television. Indeed, the quota of broadcast time that they received was much greater than the quota of votes that they obtained and it was also much higher than the one they received two years earlier. Also, thanks to the “compensation” effect of the *par condicio*, the strategy to run outside the two main aggregations led to their greater visibility on TV broadcasts, which, naturally, is not a guarantee of electoral success, nor of surviving the electoral thresholds. This is also because (and this is not a new finding) once media exposure has been obtained, it has to be used effectively in order to convince electors of the quality and usefulness of a party proposals.

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