The PDS-DS Parliamentary Discourse on Europe (1992—2005): The Cultural Challenge

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Abstract: Important work in comparative politics seeks to explain the pro-Europeanism of mainstream left-wing parties in the early 1990s as a response to global economic processes combined with a, simultaneous, continuing commitment to the social-democratic internationalist and universalist traditions. Yet, in view of the growing salience of anti-European narratives, a question arises: are mainstream left-wing parties still defending their support of cultural liberalism in the EU? This article addresses this question by focusing on the discourse on Europe of the mainstream Italian left-wing party, the PDS-DS. The findings presented in this article are based on a qualitative analysis of parliamentary debates on important European affairs (1992—2005). This article shows that although the mainstream Italian left-wing party remains lenient towards diversity and favourable to cultural openness, it has placed increasing stress on considerations of security and national concerns in recent years.

Keywords: social democracy, Italian Democratic Party, cultural challenge, discourse analysis, parliamentary debates, European integration

Introduction

Parties' responses to European integration have been studied in a growing number of political analyses (e.g. Hooghe et al., 2002; Gabel and Hix, 2002; Ladrech, 2010; Caramani, 2012). Within this literature, the mainstream left-wing party family, the social-democratic party family, has attracted particular attention, primarily due to its change in stance from being unenthusiastic about European economic integration to being amongst the stronger supporters (e.g. Marks and Wilson, 2000; Hough and Sloam, 2007). There is little mention, however, of 'what kind of Europe' parties of this party family desire, beyond their support for European integration.[1]

The application of comparative politics models to the study of social-democratic parties' responses to European integration has led some to construe the latter by taking a 'partisan line of interpretation', that is, by

looking to the main lines of conflict present at the domestic level (Bartolini, 2005: 321). The pro-Europeanism of the mainstream 'Left' is explained as 'an extension of domestic party politics', especially with respect to common challenges transforming the political competition across Western Europe (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002: 881; also Conti, 2007). The hypothesis proposed by comparativists is that the mainstream left-wing parties became more supportive of European integration as a means 'to disguise and correct a perceived failure of social-democratic policy output at the national level' in economic terms (Cramme, 2012: 161; Marks and Wilson, 2000: 443). Second generation studies, however, suggest that there are two areas of contestation on European integration. One regards preferences for social democracy as opposed to market liberalism and is subsumed within the traditional left–right spectrum of contestation. The other regards identity, cultural integration, and concerns about denationalisation, triggered by processes of globalisation (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Dimitrakopoulos, 2011). In the transformed political space, mainstream left-wing parties take a pro-European stance, and welcome political integration of the EU in connection with the social-democratic internationalist and universalist tradition (Kriesi et al., 2008).

Notwithstanding its valuable contribution in explaining attitudes of social democrats towards European integration, it is important to be aware that the afore-mentioned literature focuses on only part of the 'story'. It concentrates on the broad level of support for European integration, but does not address another important question: the question of the (conflicting) types of Europe that parties try to promote. In contrast, this article addresses this question. The focus is on the discourse on Europe of the mainstream Italian left-wing party at the time of important parliamentary debates on European affairs between the launch of the European Union in the early 1990s and the years preceding the financial crisis in the late 2000s.[2] This party is known for its 'principled support to the EU' (Conti and Verzichelli, 2005). The analysis therefore aims to explore changes in the discourse on Europe of the mainstream Italian left-wing party, particularly with respect to the kind of European polity and European policies this party voices. In interpreting the results, the analysis connects with a growing body of scholarly work on party positions on European integration, a literature that has evolved over the last decade vis-à-vis the transformation of the political space on economic and cultural dimensions (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002; Kriesi et al, 2008; see also Conti, 2007).[3]

In the subsequent sections, first, the framework used for the analysis is detailed. Here a definition and operationalisation of party discourse, as well as the theoretical approach guiding the analysis of the Italian left-wing party are presented. Also, methodological remarks are detailed. Second, results of the analysis are discussed. The analysis finds that, while concerns

with socio-economic policies are an important aspect of the PDS-DS discourse on Europe, the party is less faithful to the internationalist and universalist tradition of the 'Left' than is often believed. Finally, the article concludes by putting forward an interpretation of the results and main implications for future studies.

Framework

Studying party discourse on Europe

The dependent variable of the analysis is party discourse on Europe. Discourse is defined here as a 'group of related statements which cohere in a way to produce both meanings and effects in the real world' (Carabine, 2001: 268; see also Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 258). More precisely, the focus is on a specific discourse; namely, *political discourse*. This is formulated via semantic devices (e.g. topics), and it is expressed by political actors (such as parties), which aim to address various recipients, such as the public, the people, citizens, and the constituencies. According to Van Dijk (1997: 14) political discourse pertains to 'specific political aims and goals, such as making or influencing political decisions, that is decisions that pertain to joint action, the distribution of social resources, the establishment or changes in official norms, regulations and laws, and so on'. In this statement, one may distinguish two components of political discourse. One component pertains to values (solidarity or tolerance, for example) and political principles (such as the principles of decision-making). The other component is about policies, that is, purposes, instruments, and objectives (see also Schmidt, 2010: 18).[4]

Building on these works, parties' discourse on Europe is defined herein as follows. *Party discourse on Europe* has two components. First, it involves a *polity* component. This regards the nature, goals, and future of Europe. Second, it involves a *policy* component. This regards the purposes and the content of what is to be implemented by the European agenda.[5] The subsequent section maps the literature to identify aspects concerning European polity and policy which the social-democratic party family – the focal case of this study – might voice when they speak of Europe.

It is evident that what constitutes the European polity and policy's objectives is a diverse range of things. Nonetheless, while it is impossible to review the whole relevant research field, it is plausible to identify alternative polity and policy views by focusing on what Jenkins (2008: 155) refers to as a realistic description of Europe, 'which looks at the meanings of Europe that are out there'.

As far as the European polity component is concerned, the review of the literature on European studies and European integration allows one to group main contributions with respect to three dimensions (see also Schmidt, 2010). These dimensions are:

a) Representation of Europe vis-à-vis out-groups. That is, the external role of Europe as a global actor relating to external others (Manners and White, 2003; Diez, 2004; Howorth, 2010).
b) Scope of governance. This concerns the relation between the European institutions and the member states (Maier and Risse, 2003; Scharpf, 1999).
c) Societal inclusion. That is, the values and purposes of Europe as a collective (Leontidou, 2004; Leca, 2010).

It is plausible to distinguish two broad sets of preferences concerning the representation of Europe vis-à-vis out-groups (dimension (a)). These are as follows. One set of preferences considers Europe as an *autonomous* actor in the world, driven by a distinguished internationalism and solidarity. The other set of preferences supports the maintenance of the 'traditional' European bond with the US. Hence one may speak of Europe as *entrenched in the West*. Preferences for a somewhat internationalist Europe as opposed to a more limited European international role are found in studies of parties' preferences for European integration. In particular, it has been shown that social-democratic parties are, in general, more supportive of European autonomy in the international realm than rightist parties, which exhibit support for a more conditional European international agency (Conti, 2006; Dimitrakopoulos, 2011: 16).

Reviewing studies on the scope of European governance (dimension (b)) two sets of preferences can be identified. One set of preferences considers Europe as characterised by a *supranational* form of governance, which involves a large (or complete) delegation of political decision-making beyond the member-states and openness to individual participation in European institutions, especially the European Parliament. The other set of preferences entails aspects of the intergovernmental tradition. Europe is regarded as a polity *empowering nation-states*. This distinction (supranationalism vs. intergovernmentalism) is consistent with most analyses in the literature on European politics and parties' preferences with respect to European political legitimacy (Hix and Lord, 1997; Jachtenfuchs et al., 1998: 419–20). It is possible to account for these sets of preferences by analyses focused on the case of social-democratic parties' attitudes on the integration of the European political regime (e.g. Dimitrakopoulos, 2011).[6]

Finally, it is fair to argue, on the basis of the review of the literature, that preferences concerning the values of the European polity (dimension (c)) also fall into two sets. On the one hand, some preferences emphasise *inclusion* of internal others, such as immigrants or ethnic minorities. This perspective builds on cosmopolitan cultural commitments. On the other hand, some preferences suggest a 'desire' for *assimilation* and respect of an

allegedly European way of life, however one may define it.[7] This tension between outlooks emphasising inclusion and assimilation has proved to be an important axis of party competition in the domestic sphere (Kitschelt, 1994; Stoll, 2010: 450) and also with respect to European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Kriesi et al., 2008). Recently, these conflicts have increased in salience in the national programmes of social-democratic parties (Camia and Caramani, 2012).

Analytically, it is possible to categorise the above-described preferences in terms of whether they entail, so to speak, an 'autonomous or non-autonomous' way of organising the European polity. On the one hand, we can observe one position which supports an autonomous European role in the world, a Europe autonomous from nation-states, and autonomous from national traditions. On the other hand, we can observe a commitment to a Europe tied more closely to the US, largely based within a nation-state system, and more subsumed within the historical traditions of nation-states. To put this point another way, alternative sets of preferences fit into two 'polity views', which underline a fundamental divergence in outlooks with regard to the defence of traditional European international alliances, of the traditional sovereign role of nation-states, and of national traditions and values.[8] These polity views are: *open Europe* and *closed Europe*.

• *Open Europe*. This view places most stress on the autonomous role of Europe in the world. It stresses, for instance, the promotion of peace, taking moral responsibility for developing countries, and providing a safe haven for the persecuted (dimension (a)). It is comfortable with cultural diversity, social tolerance, and multiculturalism triggered by globalisation, as well as with individual freedom (dimension (c)). The emphasis on individual rights translates to support for individual participation in decision-making in European institutions, also via public debates and in the public sphere (dimension (b)).

• *Closed Europe*. This view favours traditional alliances (such as the 'special relationship' between the EU and the US) and it is more uncomfortable with a new role for Europe beyond this (dimension (a)). It also emphasises traditional forms of governance, such as the nation-state model, and tends not to welcome new forms of governance brought about by European integration. In other words, this view defends the political authority of nation-states, thereby opposing delegation of power to Europe (dimension (b)). The preference for boundary maintenance leads to acceptance of 'others' through gradual assimilation and participation in European traditions and norms. In fact, this view values the familiar and emphasises stronger relationships with those 'others' with whom the collective shares traditions and history (dimension (c)).

Let us turn now to the policy component. This concerns sets of concrete purposes and objectives, as well as specific functions, to be implemented by Europe (Schmidt, 2010). The framework proposed herein,

for the case of social-democratic parties, concentrates on the role of the EU in promoting economic and social policies (Dyson, 2002). Since the early developments of the EC, two sets of preferences, one close to the neoliberal project and one close to the regulated capitalism project, have been at centre stage in discussions of European policies amongst party families (Hooghe et al., 2002) and social-democratic parties in particular (Dimitrakopoulos, 2011).[9]

Building on these studies, it is fair to say that social-democratic preferences with regard to distribution of resources fall somewhere between two views: *liberal Europe* and *social Europe*. These views have to do with the divergence between policies which appeal to new liberal, graduate, voters of the Left and policies which are more appealing to the Left's 'traditional' working-class voters.

• *Liberal Europe.* This view favours a high degree of openness to the market and enhancement of competitiveness, a skilled work force and somewhat free enterprise. In this sense, the policies of Europe and European intrusion in the market are limited as much as possible.

• *Social Europe.* This view supports market regulations and favours European policies to regulate the free market. It aims to promote equal distribution of resources and social protection through welfare policies.

The definition and the operationalisation of political discourse on Europe detailed so far reflect the attempt to account for broader discussions about the nature of Europe and the policy to be promoted by the EU by categorising them into broader views, or 'camps'. It is important to remark that these views do not designate net typologies, primarily because people, and politicians, do not use them, and prefer to select and mix aspects of both views. It is the goal of the descriptive part of the analysis presented later in this article to reveal whether the mainstream left-wing party in Italy, between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s, is more comfortable with certain preferences than others or espouses both polity and policy views. Additionally, the analytical distinction between two polity views (*open Europe* and *closed Europe*) and policy views (*social Europe* and *liberal Europe*) is instructive for exploring the degree of partisanship in the discourse on Europe promoted by parties, as it is argued in turn.

In the literature of comparative politics, a focus on the main (cultural and economic) lines of conflict present at the domestic level has allowed for convincing interpretations concerning the attitudes of party families (e.g. Social Democrats, Catholics, and so forth) in favour of more or less European integration (see Hooghe et al., 2002; Marks and Steenbergen, 2002; Conti, 2007; Kriesi et al., 2008; Hellström, 2008).[10] What these studies share is a 'partisan line of interpretation', meaning the assumption that national cleavages and parties' ideologies explain the support for socio-economic and political European integration (Bartolini, 2005: 321). In particular, the model developed by Hooghe and Marks (2001; Hooghe et

al., 2002) explains contestation over European integration as being not only about economic left−right policies but also about 'old politics', that is, preferences for traditionalism, authoritarianism, nationalism (TAN policies), in opposition to 'new politics', that is, green, alternative, libertarian preferences (GAL policies). Parties on the 'Centre-Left' favour the GAL set of preferences and hence, overall, welcome political integration of the EU (see also, Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). The importance of cultural lines of conflict and their role in the transformation of Western European politics is central also in the work of Kriesi et al. (2008). As these scholars argue, party competition on European integration has changed to fit a new cultural cleavage between the winners of European integration (those who are supportive of liberal economic policies and cosmopolitanism) and the losers of European integration (those who hold xenophobic and nationalist preferences and who are, therefore, against European integration). Kriesi et al. (2008) expect that mainstream parties, both on the left and on the right of the left–right political spectrum, tend to adopt a winner programme therefore supporting European integration. However, mainstream parties on the left remain more concerned with 'the preservation of the social protection by the welfare state' and on the whole, more comfortable with the cultural impact of European political integration, than the mainstream parties on the right (Kriesi et al., 2006: 927).

The question which arises is whether over time and with the furthering of (economic and political) European integration, the mainstream 'Left' has redefined the 'kind' of Europe it supports, beyond the degree of European integration it favours. Especially in view of the rise of anti-European narratives, which seem to be electorally rewarding, does the mainstream 'Left' try to counter Euro-scepticism, by reminding people of the connection between European integration and internationalism? Or does the mainstream 'Left' try to dodge the 'cultural' quest, by moving back to traditional leftist economic concerns, or try to recognise the importance of de-nationalisation's claims (Bale, 2011; Bale et al., 2010)?

The (changing) preferences for the nature of Europe and policies to be implemented by the EU are explored in this article with a focus on the mainstream Italian left-wing party. Much has been written recently about the transformation of the mainstream Italian left-wing party, the Italian Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), created in the early 1990s and subsequently transformed into the Democrats of the Left (DS), in the late 1990s.[11] Analyses of domestic party politics show that the PDS-DS's domestic programme has been consistently diluting the party's communist past (Baccetti, 1997; Newell and Bull, 1997: 100), adopting a more *social-democratic line* by the 1990s (Abse, 2001), and increasingly building on the need to make alliances with the centre rather than with the extreme left (Pasquino, 2003; Giannetti and Mulé, 2006; Bordandini et al., 2008; Vampa,

2009). Indeed, rather than endorsing Eurosceptic and *altermondialiste* claims, the PDS-DS adopts a positive attitude towards European integration, a support which has been classified as a case of 'principled support to the EU' (Conti and Verzichelli, 2005; Conti and Memoli, 2010). Yet, beyond its committed pro-Europeanism, how does this party's discourse on Europe respond to the economic and, most recently, the cultural side of European integration? In the subsequent section, it is detailed how references to the nature of the European polity and recommendations for the direction of EU economic policies voiced by the mainstream Italian left-wing party are analysed; subsequently results and findings are presented.

Analysing party's discourse on Europe

The methodology of this study is entrenched in the above-described theoretical framework pertaining to discourse. The analysis of parliamentary debates offers not only a precise picture of the content of party preferences on Europe in the domestic area, but also of how the discourse is expressed by parties. Following previous studies (e.g. Wimmel and Edwards, 2011; see also Van der Valk, 2003), the analysis concentrates on parliamentary debates on important phases of European integration: the Treaty of Maastricht; of Amsterdam; of Nice; of the European Accession of Eastern member states; and of a Constitution for Europe.[12]

Debates are analysed qualitatively following the approach developed by Ritchie and Spencer (1994). This is chosen because it allows the researcher to make the process of the qualitative analysis visible and accessible to others. Accordingly, the analysis is essentially focused on indexing, annotating, charting, and exploring references to Europe. Building on this, it is possible to map the overall discourse on Europe. Bearing in mind that, as it was defined previously in this article, discourse on Europe entails a polity component and a policy component, the analysis concentrates on statements revealing of parties' preferences for the nature of the European polity and recommendations for the direction of EU economic policy. The unit of analysis is any statement on Europe voiced by parties' members of the parliament (MPs) during the analysed parliamentary debates. Statements are generally constituted by more than one sentence and can contain one topic or several sets of topics.

The documents are read and references pertaining to Europe mentioned during the debates are identified. This allows one to develop a thematic framework, constituted by a manageable number of polity and policy topics (or issue-areas) mentioned by the party's MPs at the time of the debates. Key issues and themes concerning Europe can be examined and referenced using an index of topics (as detailed in the next section of this article). Using the defined index, the analysis registers which of the topics are present in each debate. To this end, a chart is built with entries

made for each of the MPs speaking during the analysed debates. For each speaker, it is recorded whether a certain topic is mentioned. In the final stage of the analysis, the focus shifts from single topics mentioned by each MP to the party discourse, framed by the topics considered together. This allows one to abstract from specific issues to the general discourse and views on Europe expressed by the party. Associations of topics and patterns 'already noted and recorded during the indexing and charting phases' are then explored in a more comprehensive way (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994: 320).

Additionally, the analysis of parliamentary debates allows one to see the direct interplay between social-democratic parties and the other parties in the domestic space. That is, although the analysis covers mainly the discourse of the PDS-DS in each of the analysed debates, the reading of the complete debates allows one to explore how preferences for certain views constitutive of the discourse on Europe are opposed to the discourse of other parties, how other parties are addressed, how the arguments of other parties are accommodated or openly rejected, and so forth (Wimmel and Edwards, 2011: 296–97).

Results

In the following section, the main topics constitutive of references to Europe voiced by parliamentarians of the PDS-DS at the time of important parliamentary debates on European affairs are described and summarised. Subsequently, the overall discourse on Europe as a polity and policy is discussed, with particular attention to continuities and changes from one debate to the other.

How does the party speak about Europe?

As shown in Table 1, overall thirteen issues capture what the parliamentarians of the PDS-DS said about Europe in the analysed debates, but not all the topics are mentioned at the time of each debate.[13] With respect to the economic regulations to be implemented by the EU, the analysis finds references which support the role of Europe in regulating the markets (t1), workers' rights (t2), and inclusive social policies in Europe (t3). With respect to the nature of the European polity, there are references to the entrenchment of Europe in the Western collective (t4) and retaining power at the level of nation-states rather than further delegating power to European institutions (t5). There are also references to security issues – namely, law and order in Europe (t6) – as well as the protection of national traditions and interests in Europe (t7). At the same time, the analysis finds references to values such as peace (t8) and references to Europe as a new actor in the world (t9). General references to internationalism (t10) are also mentioned at the time of the debates. Finally, there are positive references

to empowerment of the European institutions via further delegation of power to Europe (t11), individual freedom and human rights (t12), and multiculturalism (t13). The documentation of the debates on the analysed Treaties on Europe shows a remarkable continuity of topics which are core to mainstream leftist parties; to wit, support for social policies (see topics t1−t3 in Table 1). However, references to Europe included also a form of communitarian-like politics, especially in most recent debates. This can be observed, for instance, in concerns for security and order. These points are shown by the subsequent syntheses of the debates.

Table 1 What the party says when speaking about Europe

EU Treaty discussed	Topics mentioned												
	t1	t2	t3	t4	t5	t6	t7	t8	t9	t10	t11	t12	t13
Maastricht	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N = 4	*(25*	*25)*	*75*	*(0)*	*(50)*	*(0)*	*(0)*	*(75)*	*(75)*	*(50)*	*(50)*	*(25)*	*(25)*
Amsterdam	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
N = 5	*40*	*0*	*80*	*0*	*0*	*40*	*0*	*20*	*100*	*20*	*100*	*40*	*80*
Future of Europe N = 9	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	11	*11*	*89*	*21*	*56*	*67*	*33*	*78*	*67*	*56*	*89*	*40*	*44*

Note. The first column in the table indicates the EU Treaty discussed and the number (N) of MPs of the PDS-DS party speaking at the time of each debate. The numbers in parentheses indicate the percentage (2 s.f.) of MPs making reference to a certain topic at the time of a certain debate.
Topic legend: t1 European economic market regulation; t2 workers' rights; t3 promotion of comprehensive social policies; t4 Europe as entrenched in the Western collective; t5 retaining power at the national level; t6 security issues; t7 traditional morality; t8 peace; t9 Europe as a new actor in the world; t10 internationalism; t11 empowerment of European institutions; t12 freedom (and human rights); t13 multiculturalism.

The analysis of the debate on the Treaty of Maastricht shows the PDS' support for European policies regarding employment rights and, more generally, market and capital regulations (28.10.1992: Petruccioli, 5252-5254). In fact, explicit references to the rights of 'the working-class' (*il mondo del lavoro*) were linked to references to Europe depicted as a means to stop the advancement of a global market economy and to regulate economic neo-liberalism (28.10.1992: Petruccioli, 5252).[14]

Furthermore, there is a sign of a strong interdependence between the promotion of social policies in Europe and the polity preferences of the party. The motto 'the social option' (*l'opzione sociale*) together with 'the

democratic option' (*l'opzione democratica*) infused the preferences of the PDS voiced at the time of the debate on the Treaty of Maastricht throughout (28.10.1992: Salvadori, 5281; 29.10.1992: D'Alema, 5353-5256). In other words, the analysis allows one to highlight a commitment to a federal European political union, centred on the active engagement of the people within European institutions, together with the development of economic policies accounting for 'the people' and not the capitalists (28.10.1992: Salvadori, 5278).

Remarkably, at the time of the analysed debate, the commitment to a federal Europe was justified by the intention to remain faithful to the long-term European project, as construed by the founding fathers of Europe (28.10.1992: Petruccioli, 5253; 29.10.1992: D'Alema, 5354).[15] The analysis attests to the party's support for the development of Europe as a strong polity as a means of preventing the return of nationalism in Europe (28.10.1992: Salvadori, 5279-5280). The long-term scope and achievement at the basis of European integration were also linked to long-term achievements of the Italian left against fascism in Italy (28.10.1992: Petruccioli, 5254). The promotion of peace, moreover, was detailed as a moral and international goal. In fact, regarding the role of Europe in the world, one can read calls for an international role of Europe, independent from the US (28.10.1992: Petruccioli, 5254) and able to compete with other international actors, such as Japan, Russia, and China (28.10.1992: Salvadori, 5278).

During the debate on the Treaty of Amsterdam, most of the party's speakers supported the deepening of European institutions and spoke about the need to enhance the people's knowledge of Europe (25.03.1998: Ranieri, 26; Pistelli, 42; Fassino, 65). Furthermore, arguments in favor of the development of European identity at the individual level and of the adoption of a common European currency as a means to foster such identity were also part of the debate (25.03.1998: Fassino, 62). As one may read in the words of Fassino, who was at the time the minister of Foreign Affairs:

> '[using the EURO] millions of European women and men will become aware and will experience in their daily life that a new polity, a new citizenship, a new space is being constructed' (25.03.1998: Fassino, 64).

Yet, there is no evidence of a critical attitude towards Europe. Rather, the impression is that of a party welcoming the development of an integrated European polity and policy without problematising integration itself. References to long-term European goals – such as the peace desired by the founding fathers of Europe – were more of an exception (25.03.1998: Occhetto, 20-21; Pezzoni, 71).

The analysis of the debate on the Treaty of Amsterdam also shows evidence of support for an autonomous role for Europe in the world

(25.03.1998: Occhetto, 21; Fassino, 64). For instance, there are references to the commitment to the development of a European common foreign policy (25.03.1998: 26). Additionally, during the debate another set of issues is often mentioned. This regards the fabric of European society. On this issue the party had contradictory preferences, which became more explicit in the debates on the future of Europe (as described later in this section).[16] Although the PDS's MPs called for the construction of Europe as 'an inclusive and open society' (25.03.1998: Ranieri, 28), avoiding 'the creation of new forms of discrimination or marginalisation' (25.03.1998: Fassino, 63), there is also evidence of initial concerns of the PDS for *European internal security*. For instance, most of the DS's speakers favoured more European cooperation vis-à-vis the internationalisation of threats such as international crime and trafficking (25.05.1998: Selva, 64). Furthermore, concessions of sovereignty to Europe were regarded as a means to protect the nation-states from threats triggered by processes of globalisation (25.03.1998: Fassino, 64; 25.03.1998: Pezzoni, 71).

With respect to economic policies to be implemented by European institutions, the analysis does not find any major departure from the preferences voiced at the time of the debate on the Treaty of Maastricht. The party continued its commitment to European economic regulations. Shared policies and a common currency were justified by the need to cope with economic devaluation and inflation (25.03.1998: Ranieri, 26-27). It is remarkable that while references to European policies guiding technological improvement and growth are found, the same does not apply to references in support of individuals' economic initiatives in Europe.

In the debates on the future of Europe, the DS's support for the deepening of a co-federal Europe became more explicitly linked to 'tactical' and short-term outputs. By the twenty-first century, Europe was regarded as an actor capable of giving to citizens what they desired, but the Government – the centre-right coalition in office at the time − could not provide: 'security and practical solutions' vis-à-vis transnational problems. European cooperation was advocated for 'delivering concrete solutions' on issues, such as immigration (25.03.2002: Magnolfi, 43; 25.01.2005: Bogi, 31), as well as tackling security issues, such as international crime and terrorism (25.03.2002: Magnolfi, 43-44; 27.11.2003: Spini, 9; 18.01.2005: Mattarella, 37).[17] At the same time, it is fair to notice that the defence of Europe as a long-term means of preventing a return to nationalism and war was not neglected by the DS's speakers. This is exemplified, for instance, by the words of the DS's parliamentarian Folena during discussions of a Constitution for Europe. This MP linked the creation of Europe to the trauma of the Auschwitz experience and to the effort to ensure that 'never again the people of Europe have to endure and are allowed to reproduce a system of death' (25.01.2005: Folena, 19).

There was much less variation with respect to the preferences for economic policies to be implemented by Europe. At the time of the debates on the future of Europe it is remarkable that the DS's commitment to a Europe capable of delivering social policies and economic redistribution, vis-à-vis the neo-liberal American ideology (25.01.2005: Bogi, 29), is relatively stable. The party's support for *social Europe* is revealed by references opposing the logic of the market (25.01.2005: Ranieri, 3) and favouring, instead, the promotion of social equality in Europe (25.03.2002: Magnolfi, 44; 27.11.2003: Spini, 9; 18.01.2005: Mattarella, 37).

Continuity and changes in the discourse on Europe

Throughout important phases of European integration (1990−2005), the preferences of the mainstream Italian left-wing party, the PDS-DS, towards Europe have been generally characterised by social-democracy's instinctive internationalism, solidarity with other countries, and concerns for social cohesion. Hence, by the operationalisation of polity and policy views provided previously in this article, it is possible to observe that the dominant narrative is focused on an *open* and *social Europe*. The party welcomes a Europe which supports multi-cultural, transnational linkages and exchange of peaceful co-existence, as well as a Europe which promotes economic policies that appeal to social solidarity. Remarkably, no references indicating support for economic policy objectives favouring private incentives and enterprises (which would be an indication of a commitment to *liberal Europe*) are found in the analysis.

On the one hand, the aforementioned results can be interpreted by the line of interpretation which dominates important contributions in the field of comparative politics and which explains the support of centre-left parties for economic and political integration of Europe as a means of increasing electoral appeal among the rising middle-class voters, sensitive to social and economic policies and cultural liberalism (Marks and Wilson, 2000; Marks and Steenbergen, 2002; Kriesi et al., 2008).[18] The attempt to speak to sections of the electorate that emphasise socio-economic solidarity and are most comfortable with cultural openness is visible in the PDS-DS's discourse on Europe largely in favour of European policies against free markets and European supranational cooperation and cultural inclusion.

On the other hand, there is evidence that the discourse on an open and social Europe is not unchallenged. While the mainstream Italian left-wing party remains lenient towards diversity and favourable to cultural openness, a new feature has emerged in the discussions of Europe, which underlines a tension between conceding or de-emphasising considerations concerning security and national concerns.

Indeed, about ten years after the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht, some important changes have occurred with respect to the emphases used by PDS-DS's MPs when referring to the nature of the European polity.

Although references concerning social justice, peace, and internationalism remained part of the discourse on Europe of the mainstream Italian left-wing party, issues concerning the impact of globalisation on society and identity have appeared in the debates in most recent years. Hence, the option of a somewhat *closed Europe* was not ignored. This view is found in references to Europe linked to non-economic security. During the debates on the future of Europe, in particular, the DS referred more explicitly to Europe as an optimal means to guarantee people security and provide protection against non-economic global threats, crime, and terrorism.

These findings challenge the line of interpretation, which does not question the mainstream left's commitments to internationalism and cultural liberalism in Europe (e.g. Kriesi et al., 2008). The analysis shows that the PDS-DS is most recently facing a new dilemma in the cultural dimension of its commitments and, as a result, is voicing a discourse on Europe which is less comfortable with cultural de-nationalisation. That is, in the age of globalisation, there is evidence that the party is facing a dilemma concerning how to address the increasing concerns of people who feel threatened by denationalisation and the decreasing significance of national borders.

Conclusion

To date, we know that support for European integration is an issue absorbed in domestic party politics (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002; Bartolini, 2005; Conti, 2007). However, we know much less about the way in which parties speak of Europe and how they deploy arguments speaking of Europe in the context of political institutions. This article concentrated on the discourse on Europe voiced by the main Italian social-democratic party, the PDS (then transformed into DS), between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s. National parliamentary debates on certain important European Treaties were the sources of the analysis. Despite its principled pro-Europe position (Conti and Verzichelli, 2005), there remains a question regarding which kind of Europe the mainstream Italian left-wing party has envisaged and defended. This question was addressed in the article by a qualitative analysis of polity values and policy objectives articulated by parliamentarians in their speeches on Europe.

What the analysis reveals are signs of a tension between conceding or de-emphasising questions of security (not only economic, but also 'cultural') which dominate populist narratives (Hooghe, 2007). Indeed, there is evidence of a position on Europe which becomes less defined, over time, exclusively by traditional leftist understandings (such as class rights). The traditional leftist preference for a European polity concerned with welfare and workers' rights (or '*social Europe*') has not been replaced by a preference for more liberal economic policies in Europe. Nonetheless, the

deepening of European integration, solidarity (class solidarity in particular), internationalism, and the primacy of politics have reached a point of coexistence with a preference for a communitarian-style politics.

Why is this so? It is plausible to argue that, to date, while new electoral constituencies of idiosyncratic compositions are bitterly divided along both economic and cultural divisions, and populism grows and is able to mobilise fringe economic or cultural Euro-sceptics, the main Italian social-democratic party has changed its discourse in the last decade accordingly. With the Right more prepared to give voice to anti-European feeling and the need to protect national identity and the radical left disillusioned by European economic integration (Diamanti, 2007), there is evidence that the DS's discourse on the European polity in the mid-2000s recognises the anger felt by those voters who fear integration and tries to depict Europe as a means to achieve what most voters want: security. Ultimately, this suggests that in order to understand the 'cultural dilemma' faced by the party (that is, the somewhat ambiguous discourse on the nature of the European polity), additional variables must be considered, variables which focus beyond the general restructuring of the political space, and in fact account for the interaction context and the dynamics of adjustment of social-democratic parties to domestic challengers.

Notes

[1] The analysis follows the use of the phrase 'social-democratic party family' that is used in Camia and Caramani (2012) and Kriesi et al. (2008) to indicate the mainstream parties of the (centre-)left in the left–right political space.

[2] For analyses of debates in the late 2000s, see the analysis of Cavatorto (2012) on the Italian parliamentary discussion on the Treaty of Lisbon.

[3] This perspective therefore differs from research on elites' views on Europe which has focused on national legacies and tried to show that national conceptions of political order affect preferences for models of European governance (Jachtenfuchs et al., 1998; Marcussen et al., 1999).

[4] The distinction between polity and policies is found also in research on attitudes towards Europe at the individual level (McLaren, 2006; Hooghe, 2007) and in studies on party families' support for European integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Helbling, et al., 2010).

[5] Polity is here understood as a politically organised society and not only a form of government.

[6] Therefore, despite other models of governance being possible (such as a confederal model), the identified sets of preferences for governance cover most of the possibilities considered in the literature.

[7] For discussions of Europe which emphasise collective boundary maintenance, as well as assimilation and blood rather than inclusion and soil, see Jenkins (2008). Also, Marcussen et al. (1999: 618) analyse national elites' discourse on Europe and find references to a 'wider *Europe as a community of values* embedded in geography, history and culture'.

[8] These polity views entail contrasting sets of preferences for the nature of Europe, but none of them challenges European integration itself.

[9] Hence, other policies, such as specific environmental policies are not addressed in the present work.

[10] The development of a two-dimensional space of contestation on Europe is related to the broader transformation of the political space in Western Europe. Structural socio-economic changes, manifested, for instance, in the shrinking of the working class (Padgett and Patterson, 1994; Callaghan, 2000), the rise of the (rather heterogeneous) middle class, and increasing globalisation and de-nationalisation processes have made possible the emergence of new post-materialist concerns amongst electorates, concerns that have been adopted by parties at the European level (Kriesi et al., 2008; Kriesi, 2010).

[11] In this article, the acronym PDS-DS is used for generic observations about the Italian social- democratic party. When specific observations are made concerning individual parties, this is made clear. The PDS-DS was not the only left-wing party in Italy in the post-Cold War period, but none of the other left-wing parties was more electorally successful than the PDS. This is the main reason why this party is the focus of the analysis.

[12] The analysis of Italian parliamentary debates includes debates of the Lower House (Camera dei Deputati) of the Italian Parliament, as listed in turn: debate on the Treaty of Maastricht, discussed on 26, 27, 28 October 1992; debate on the Treaty of Amsterdam, discussed on 25 March 1998; debate on the Treaty of Nice, discussed on 25 March 2002; debate on the Treaty of the European Accession of Eastern member states, discussed on 27 November 2003; debate on the Treaty of a Constitution for Europe, discussed on 18 and 25 January 2005. The time period selected for the analysis excludes the years of the recent financial crisis, in the late 2000s, which may have altered the configuration of party positions.

[13] Percentages of MPs which refer to a certain topic at the time of a certain debate are included in Table 1, but, for the purpose of this study, the analysis does not discuss how often certain topics are mentioned by parties when speaking of Europe. The main aim of the analysis is to explore how topics are used by MPs. Additionally, the low number of denominators, that is, the low number of MPs speaking at the time of each debate (between four and nine), makes statistical analyses somewhat unreliable.

[14] The following brackets contain: date of the debate, MP speaking, quotation page from the debate transcript.

[15] Additionally, the analysis accounts for references underlying continuity between the PDS's political vision of Europe and the European vision of illustrious Italian politicians, such as Einaudi, Silone and Parri (28.10.1992: Salvadori, 5280).

[16] It is not clear, from the analysis, which preference the party leadership held and whether there was a divide between the party leadership and the party's MPs.

[17] Additionally, a few MPs developed a 'strategic' argument in favor of transfers of national power to Europe. This focused on the importance of increasing European supranational power in order to protect citizens from 'abuses' and misconduct by national governments (25.03.2002: Magnolfi, 51; 18.01.2005: Montecchi, 41-42). It is relevant to emphasise this argument because it is found also in other studies focused on debates on Europe (such as debates on the Treaty of Lisbon) which occurred in the late 2000s (see Cavatorto, 2012: 101).

[18] Other models have emphasised the geopolitical location of parties, institutions (such as electoral systems and government-opposition status), and broad ideology to interpret the parties' preferences for Europe. To account for all of the factors mentioned would do more justice to the complexity of the parties' preferences and would be necessary to test which model has more explanatory power, but this discussion concentrates on the plausibility of interpreting the discourse of the party by the main lines of conflict present at the domestic level (see Bartolini, 2005).

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