

Academic Forum: Europe after the EP elections

*Conflict Diplomacy in a Digital World at the Link Campus University,
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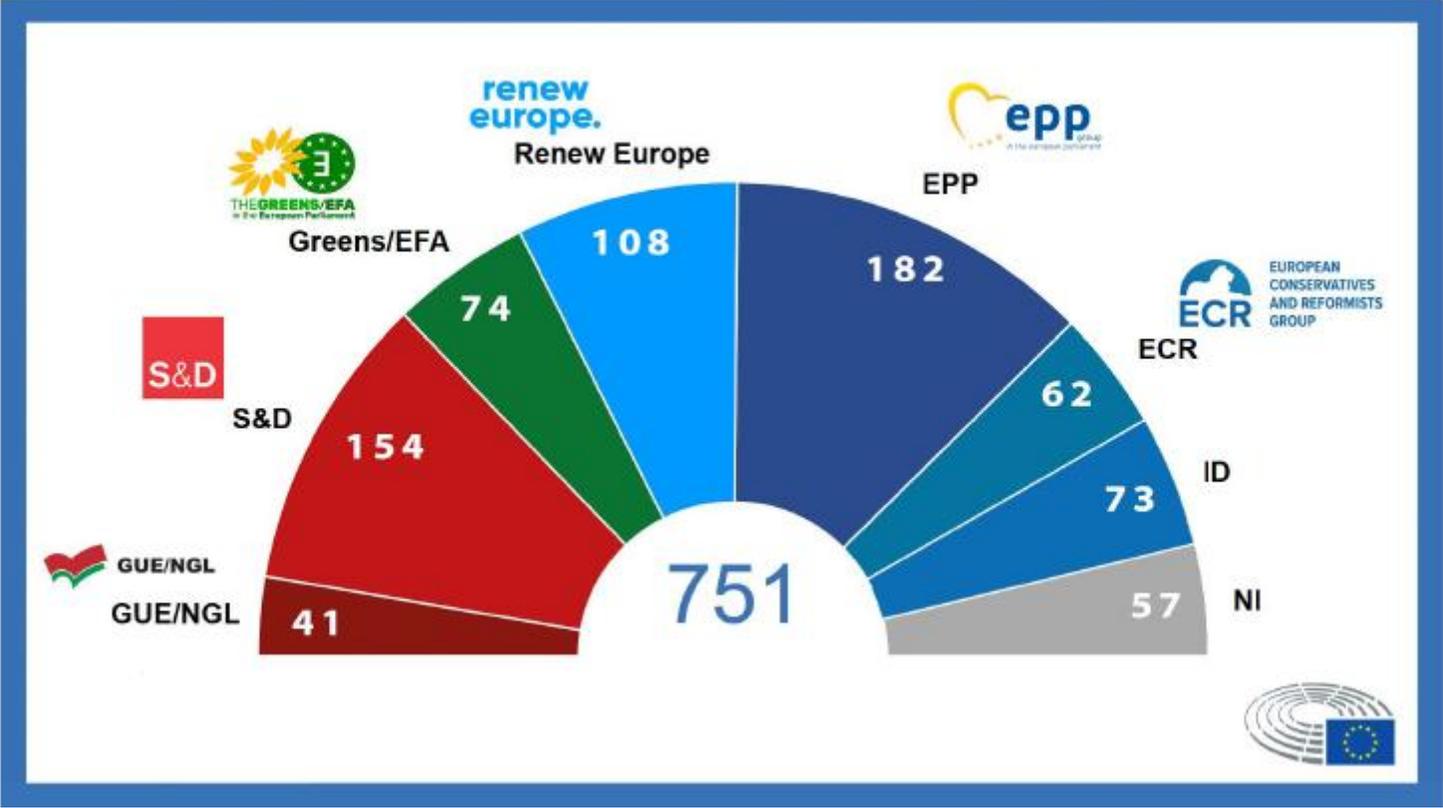
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2019 EP elections

- The 2019 European Parliament elections took place in a unique and challenging context for the European Union:
- Brexit
- global economic and geopolitical uncertainties
- managing mass migration from Africa and the Middle East
- growing support for “populist” anti-European forces in many countries across Europe
- Still “second order” elections?

The EP after the election of May 2019



Political groups in the European Parliament	Number of seats	% of seats
EPP - Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	182 ●	24.23%
S&D - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	154 ●	20.51%
Renew Europe - Renew Europe group	108 ●	14.38%
Greens/EFA - Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	74 ●	9.85%
ID - Identity and Democracy	73 ●	9.72%
ECR - European Conservatives and Reformists Group	62 ●	8.26%
GUE/NGL - Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left	41 ●	5.46%
NI - Non-attached Members	57 ●	7.59%

Changes in the composition of the EP

- Shrinking of the EPP (- 34), with the median MEP towards the left of the European People's Party
- A significant boost in support for groups on the right of the EPP, as a result of growing support for “populist right” parties in France (Rassemblement National, RN), Italy (Lega), and in other countries across Northern, Western, and Eastern Europe. *Identity and Democracy* that replaced *Europe of Nations and Freedom* has 73 seats (+ 36 if compared to former ENF). There are obvious policy differences, however these parties might create ad hoc alliances on many issues on the EU agenda, as they have done in the 2014–19 Parliament.
- A much larger representation for Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), as Macron's party, La République en Marche, joined ALDE in the new parliament
- The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) lost seats, as support for parties on the mainstream centre-left continues to decline in many countries across Europe.
- The Greens gained seats (+ 22)
- Increasing number of not affiliates including the 14 MEPs from Italian 5 Star Movement (In the past the M5S MEPs were closest to the Greens in their voting behaviour with a roughly 75 per cent matching score).

First Decision of the EP

- The first decision of the new European Parliament was to “elect” the next Commission President.
- Of the 733 votes cast, one of which was not valid, only 383 members voted in favour of Ursula von der Leyen, 327 against, and 22 abstained. The majority of EPP S&D and Liberals was 444.
- Pro Europe like Greens did not vote for her but she got the support of Orban and the Polish Law and Justice (PIS)
- The Italian 5 Star Movement voted for von der Leyen while the League voted against

Coalition formation

- The “grand coalition” between the EPP and SD that has been the dominant bloc in the European Parliament since 1994 is down below 50 per cent of the seats of the first time.
- The larger representation of Renew Europe may mean that it is in pivotal position in deciding whether a centre-left or centre-right majority forms.

Coalition formation

- We know from the past is that coalitions tend to shift by policy areas
- On average, in 69 per cent of the roll-call votes (where how each MEP votes is recorded in the minutes) in the 2014–19 European Parliament there has been a “super grand coalition”, where EPP, S&D and ALDE all voted together (Regional development, budgetary matters, culture and education etc)
- In 5 per cent of the votes there was a “grand coalition” between the EPP and S&D but without ALDE
- Of the remaining votes, in 14 per cent of the votes, S&D was in a minority against a “centre-right coalition” of ALDE together with EPP, usually with ECR supporting (Internal market, consumer protection, environment), while in 12 per cent of the votes EPP was in a minority against a “centre-left coalition” of ALDE together with S&D, usually with G/EFA and GUE/NGL supporting (civil liberties, gender equalities).
- Another important issue is the internal cohesion of EPPG also varying by policy areas (Hix and Noury 2007)

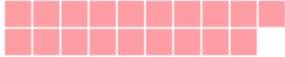
Where Italy stands

	2014 (EP elections)		2018 (national elections)		2019 (EP elections)	
	Votes	Percentage	Votes	Percentage	Votes	Percentage
League	1,686,556	6.2	5,584,927	17.7	9,153,633	34.3
M5S	5,792,865	21.2	10,251,695	32.4	4,552,527	17.1
PD	11,172,861	40.8	5,901,675	18.7	6,050,351	22.7
FI	4,605,331	16.8	4,502,558	14.2	2,344,465	8.8

Italy in the EP

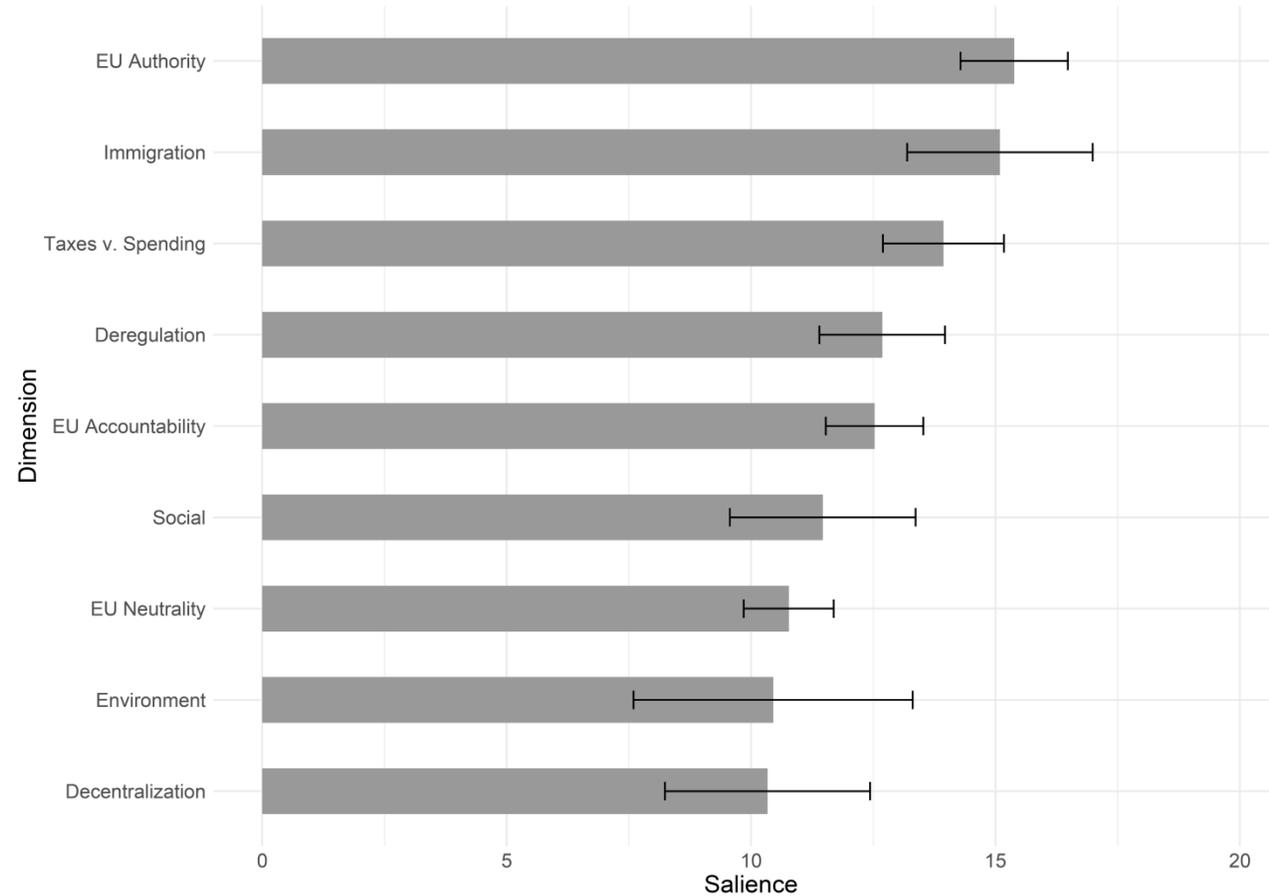
Italy 73 seats



National party	2019 Vote	2019 Seats	
League—Salvini Premier	34.3%	28	
Democratic Party	22.7%	19	
Five Star Movement	17.1%	14	
Forza Italia	8.8%	6	
Brothers of Italy	6.5%	5	
More Europe + Italy in Common + European Democratic Party + Other Parties*	3.1%	0	
Federation of Greens + Possible + Green Italy*	2.3%	0	
The Left*	1.7%	0	
South Tyrolean People's Party	0.5%	1	
Other parties	3.0%	0	

BL expert survey: Salience

(Giannetti, Pedrazzani & Pinto, the rising importance of non-economic policy dimensions and the formation of the Conte government in Italy *italian Political Science*, VOLUME 13 ISSUE 2, OCTOBER 2018)



BL Expert survey: Party positions

Table 1. Experts' placement of parties and salience of policy dimensions in the Italian general election of 2018

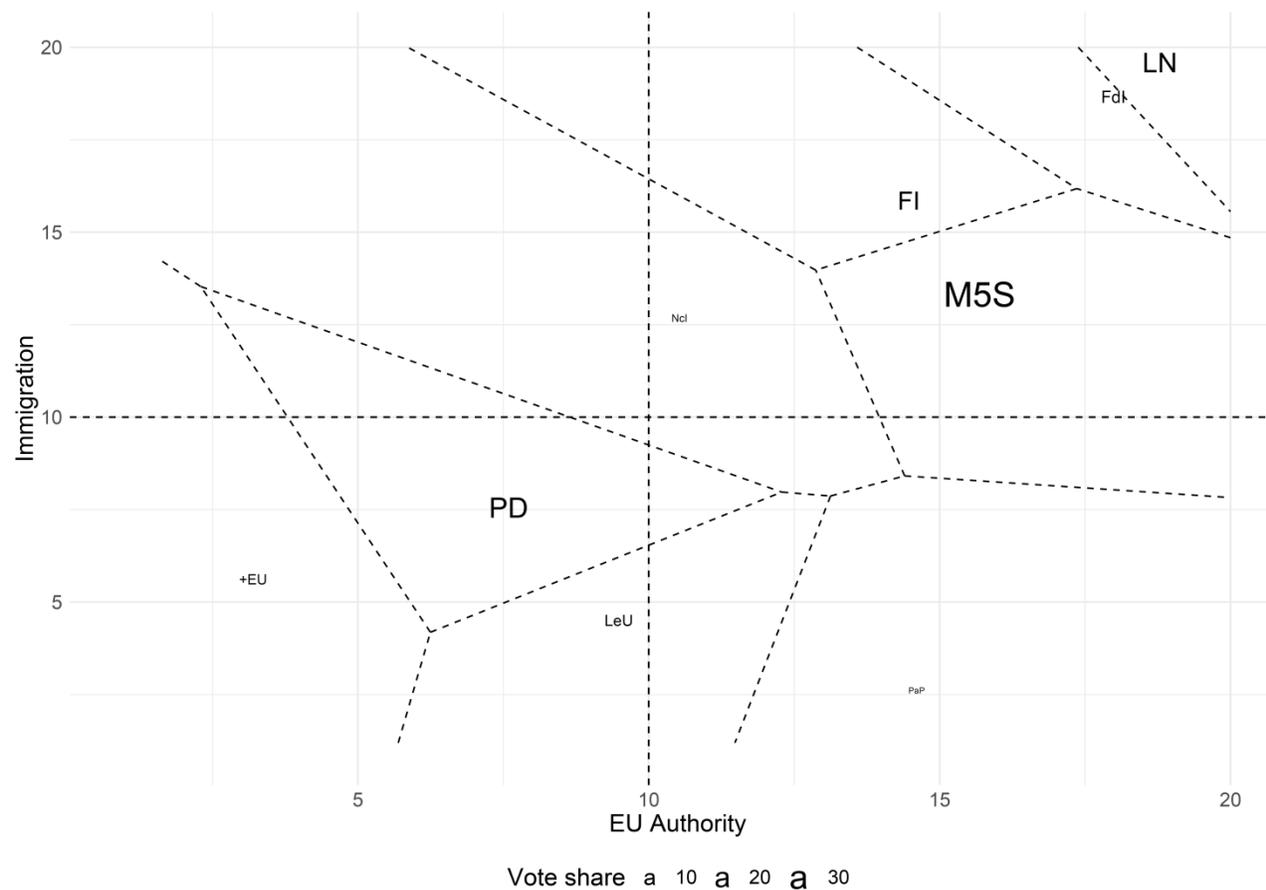
Votes/Policy dimensions		Importance	+EU	FDI	FI	LEU	LEGA	M5S	NCI	PAP	PD
<i>Vote share 2018</i>			2.56	4.35	14.00	3.39	17.35	32.68	1.30	1.13	18.76
Taxes vs spending	Mean	13.94	11.97	11.31	15.35	5.46	14.43	9.74	11.83	3.94	9.36
	SE	0.21	0.55	0.42	0.47	0.44	0.43	0.43	0.34	0.57	0.34
Deregulation	Mean	12.68	14.74	10.18	16.90	4.83	13.54	8.69	10.79	2.34	10.33
	SE	0.22	0.51	0.53	0.29	0.35	0.48	0.41	0.36	0.20	0.39
Decentralization	Mean	10.34	10.17	13.20	8.70	12.88	5.17	11.22	11.61	15.07	10.59
	SE	0.36	0.62	0.64	0.42	0.47	0.58	0.49	0.46	0.68	0.47
Civil rights	Mean	11.47	3.29	17.15	13.44	4.77	16.30	9.52	16.78	3.67	5.74
	SE	0.32	0.53	0.48	0.49	0.49	0.46	0.40	0.48	0.47	0.45
Immigration	Mean	15.09	5.28	19.00	16.30	4.11	19.43	13.82	12.41	2.85	7.13
	SE	0.32	0.44	0.17	0.30	0.38	0.13	0.39	0.47	0.34	0.43
Environment	Mean	10.45	9.68	15.25	16.94	6.44	16.49	5.76	13.64	5.67	9.34
	SE	0.48	0.47	0.45	0.35	0.44	0.39	0.51	0.41	0.62	0.36
EU Authority	Mean	15.38	3.20	17.99	14.47	9.48	18.79	15.69	10.53	14.60	7.59
	SE	0.19	0.48	0.37	0.41	0.39	0.32	0.42	0.47	0.72	0.42
EU Accountability	Mean	12.53	3.48	16.82	14.65	7.67	17.34	11.74	10.68	10.10	7.31
	SE	0.17	0.49	0.52	0.56	0.53	0.52	0.72	0.48	1.08	0.45
EU Security	Mean	10.77	3.71	11.98	7.46	11.98	13.52	14.74	8.00	17.59	4.96
	SE	0.16	0.51	0.72	0.51	0.66	0.69	0.64	0.56	0.72	0.40
Left-Right	Mean	–	9.66	18.38	15.27	4.31	18.32	11.52	12.71	1.92	7.99
	SE	–	0.34	0.29	0.21	0.36	0.29	0.38	0.25	0.30	0.25

Notes: Expert survey data gathered by the authors in March 2018 using Benoit and Laver's (2006) format. Vote share refers to the election of the Chamber of Deputies (source: Ministry of Interior).

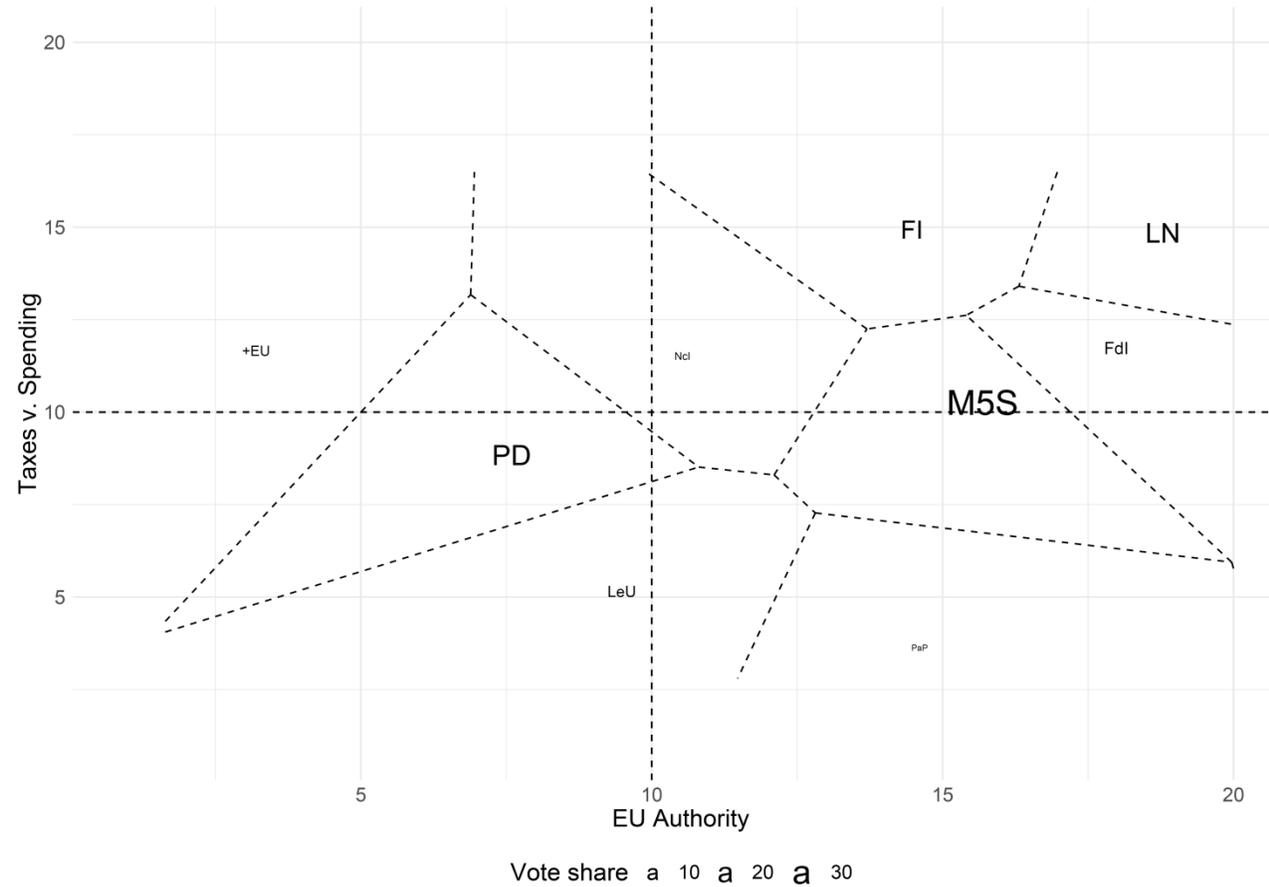
Salience

- As Table 1 shows, none of the two policy issues dealing with economic matters – *Taxes vs spending and Deregulation* – was judged by our sample of experts to be the most salient dimension in Italian politics during the 2018 general election.
- The two most important policy domains were *EU Authority*, measuring parties' propensity to increase/reduce the set of areas subject to European intervention, and *Immigration*, capturing parties' support for policies designed to help asylum-seekers and integrate immigrants into Italian society.
- While being far from each other on the *Taxes vs spending* domain, the M5S and the League were rather close on all the EU-related issues except for *EU Accountability*

Positions: EU authority/Immigration



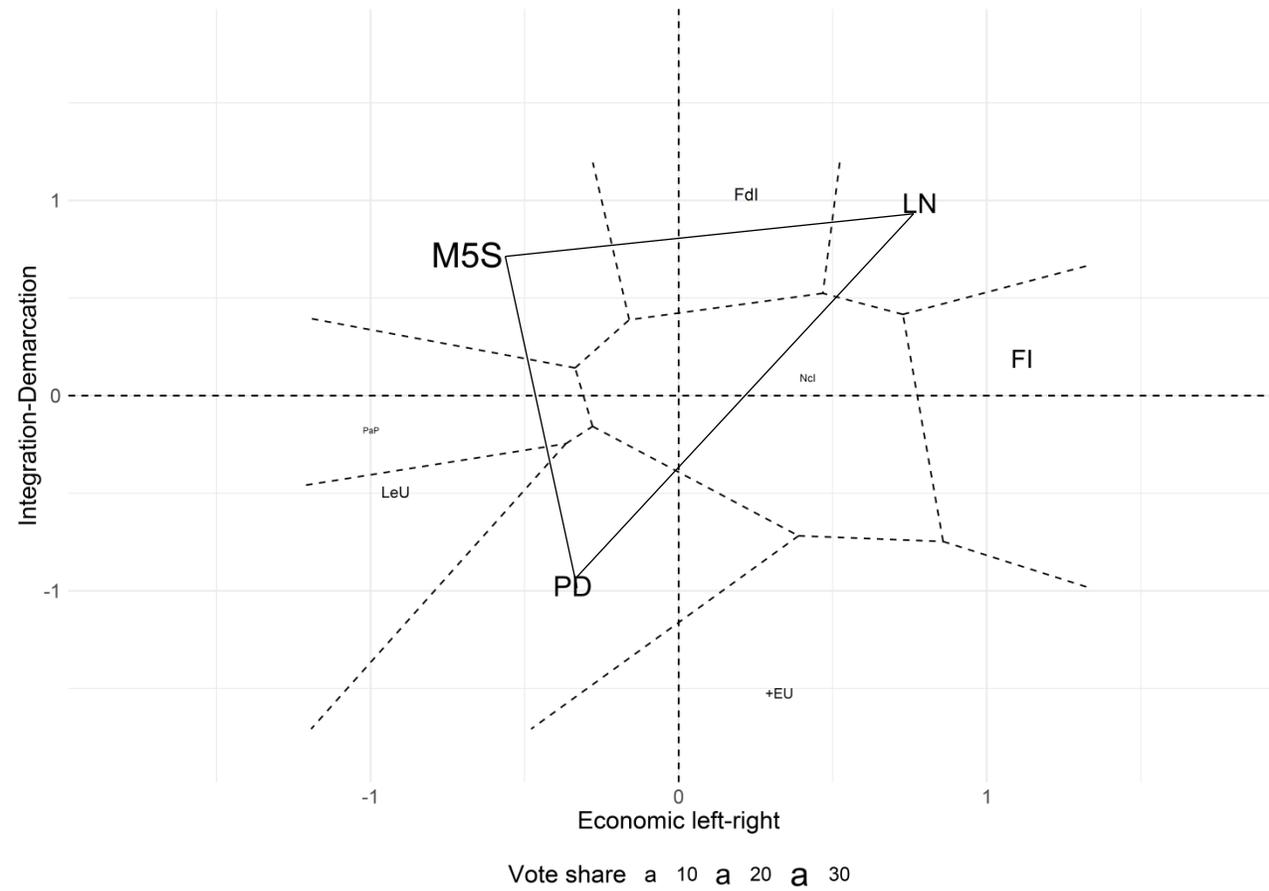
Positions: EU authority/Taxes v. Spending



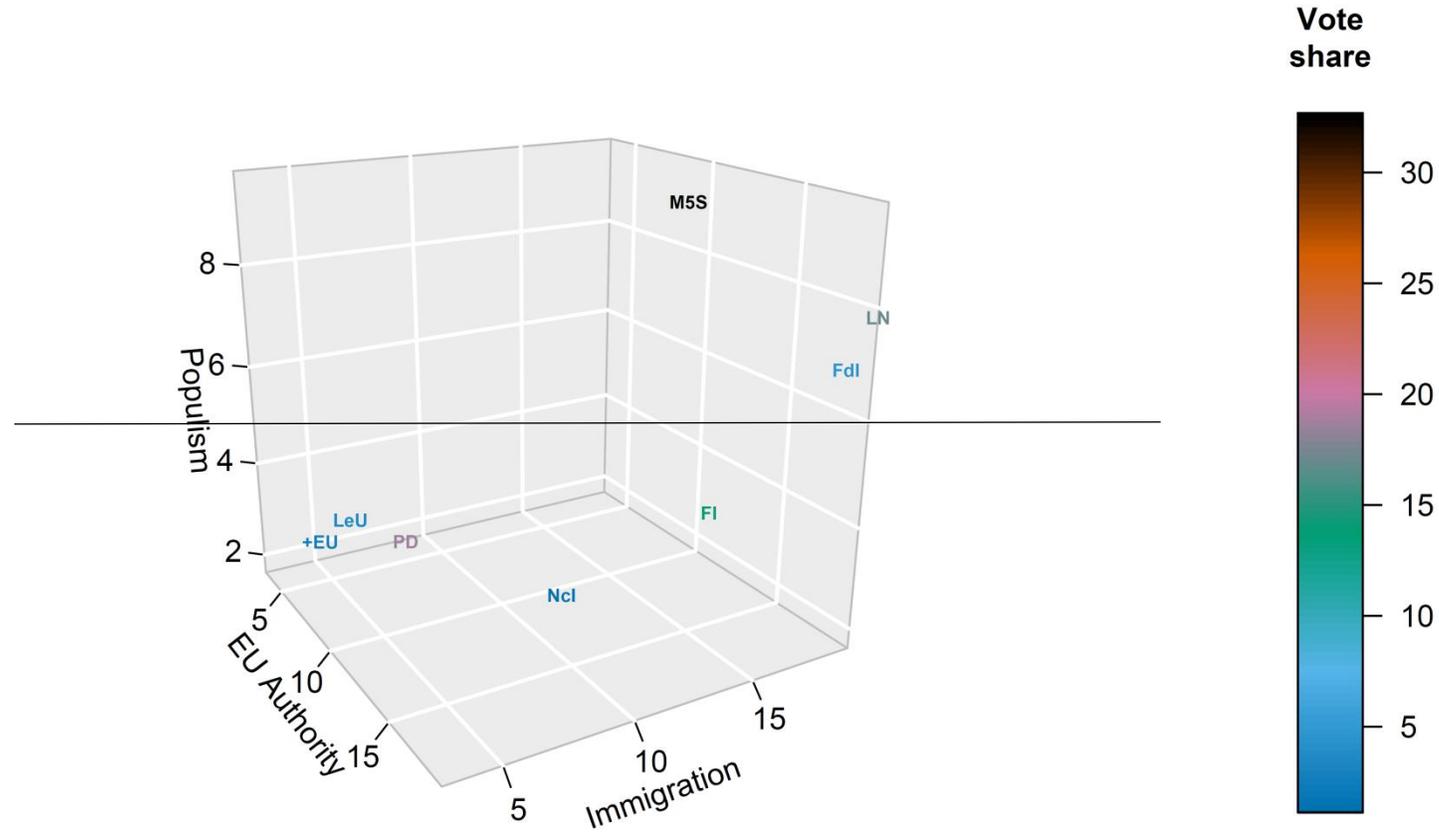
Factor analysis

	Factor 1	Factor 2
	economic left-right	integration-demarcation
Taxes v. Spending	0.74	0.19
Social	0.51	0.62
Deregulation	0.80	-0.03
Environment	0.79	0.18
Decentralization	-0.25	-0.05
Immigration	0.42	0.73
EU Authority	0.09	0.83
EU Accountability	0.36	0.60
EU Neutrality	-0.17	0.57

FA map



BL expert survey + CHS populism score



Final remarks

- The outcome of the May 2019 elections led to a more politically fragmented European Parliament
- Parties and political groups opposing further European integration are significantly stronger, although representation of centrist liberal also increased
- Higher unpredictability of policy outcomes, as majorities will be more volatile
- Focus on the policy dimensions structuring party competition in Italy