
Biden, Trump and the opposition of Europe's populist movements

Trump's defeat in the USA is unlikely to mark the definitive end of populism in Western countries. Unfortunately, analysts are right in urging caution when assessing the implications of the American vote in this respect. Populism - in its expression of "sovereignism" that characterized the latest resurgence of this phenomenon - and the pandemic, which over the past months somewhat overshadowed its progress, could have unpredictable consequences in the short term, especially on this side of the Atlantic. Donald Trump's stubborn refusal to accept the election results not only cast a shadow over the democratic transition in that great Country, crucial to global balances, it also somewhat symbolizes populist opposition in broad segments of public opinion. President-elect Biden is the most voted president ever in American history and has won many more popular votes than his opponent, although the State-based electoral system narrows the gap. In 2016, Hillary Clinton got almost three million more votes than Trump, but the latter was legitimately elected president by virtue of the electoral regulations in force.

For populists, invoking the will of the people that transcends every rule and makes every decision lawful is an ideological fiction.

It is only valid inasmuch as it is instrumental to personal motivations. Nevertheless, the outcome of the American elections is likely to have a significant impact on the rest of the world, especially in those regions that have historical ties with the United States. For Italian politics, the most substantial impact concerns the positioning of its various political parties with respect to the new international balance. These dynamics are bound to outweigh what we have previously experienced with regard to the European Union. In fact, only the sovereignist delusion could suggest that each country can manage on its own in a world where even giants need alliances. Take for example a relatively small reality like Italy and imagine what its economic situation would be like today without the support of the European Union. Indeed, it's a far cry from mere "tax cuts." And it is not just a question of money. *It is no coincidence that the Country's current political situation originates from what could be defined as the pro-European criterion.* The M5S-PD coalition forming the basis of the incumbent government was in fact brought about by a suffered - and not fully developed - transition of the M5S to the majority, group that backed the formation of the new European Commission. While Fdl and especially the Lega party have found themselves and still are virtually "out-of-play", Forza Italia - which on the contrary has solid European ties - preserved its centre-right political positioning, especially at local level. However, at parliamentary and political level in general, it retained a degree of freedom of movement, proving reluctant to join its allies' extremist tendencies and occasionally backing the Government in some delicate stages.

The result of the American vote further consolidates this scenario.

This is further corroborated by the response of Italian political parties: the PD was enthusiastic, the M5S responded positively with some awkwardness, Forza Italia was very positive, while from the Lega party and Fdl came strongly negative responses. In essence, the attitude towards Biden corresponds to the attitude towards Europe, and this is only natural as it is legitimate to expect a firm resumption of relations between the two sides of the Atlantic after Trump's aggressive isolationism. The message of Italian President Sergio Mattarella to the US President-elect echoes this outlook, in harmony with other European leaders. "Under your presidency - wrote, among other things, Italy's Head of State - I am certain that the United States and Italy, and the entire European Union, will further strengthen their deep-rooted friendship, in the name of the shared values of freedom, justice, democracy, which unite them."

