

Trump's Victory As Seen by the Italian Media: A "Nightmare Come True" or "The Revenge of the People"?

Umberto Piscopo (November 10, 2016)



Donald Trump's electoral victory created much clamor in Italy as elsewhere. Two subjects seem to be particularly relevant to the Italian public opinion as reflected by the country's major media outlets: the populist revolt against the establishment and the disconnection of pundits and opinion makers from the true feelings of "the ordinary people." A cursory look at these first reactions shows both the differences and some striking similarities between the US and Italian political debates.

The first, immediate reaction came online from [Beppe Grillo](#) [2], the former comedian who constructed his successful populist-leaning [Movimento 5 Stelle](#) [3] via the web. In a video he posted on his widely followed blog, Grillo appeared very excited by the GOP candidate's victory: he stated that his own political movement has much in common with Trump's. The Movimento 5 Stelle built its support on an **anti-political-class agenda** and a total rupture with the **media establishment**. After comparing Trump's rise with the success of his own movement, Grillo interpreted Trump's unexpected victory as the living proof that, as Grillo himself has always asserted, the politicians, the intellectuals, and the journalists are completely disconnected from reality and from the public's needs.

While Grillo's comments spread from one media outlet to another, other newspapers reacted online



in several different ways. [The Fatto Quotidiano](#) [4], the newspaper that most closely aligns itself with Movimento 5 Stelle, commented that Obama was right when he said, "The sun will shine tomorrow." At the same time, the paper added, "several sunsets" are on their way too, referring to the decline of the "Fourth Power," including the media, marketing and polling industries.

L'Unità, the newspaper which represents the majority of Italy's [Partito Democratico](#) [5] (Democratic Party, or PD), the party of the Prime Minister [Matteo Renzi](#) [6], called the US President Elect a "**nightmare come true**," and commented: "Eight years ago the key feeling was hope, and it involved all the world. Now the keyword is worry." Mr. Renzi, however, who openly supported Hillary Clinton during the campaign, now obviously greets the 45th US president, and repeats his commitment "to the strong and solid friendship" that bonds the two countries. He was joined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs **Paolo Gentiloni**, who stated that the outcome of this election "doesn't change the friendly, collaborative relationship [of Italy] with the US". However, he added, "It also doesn't change our opposition to the purposeful exclusion of other cultures."

The Italian edition of the **Huffington Post** explained [Hillary Clinton](#) [7]'s defeat as the **defeat of an entire political class**, the "post-materialistic left". According to the paper the outcome of the election suggests that the rights of the minorities, of the LGBTQ community, and of women could be appreciated by a large majority, but only "on a full stomach."

Luciano Fontana, editor-in-chief of the authoritative **Corriere della Sera**, traditionally the voice of the Northern Italian upper-middle class, emphasized the impact of the American elections on Europe. Trump's triumph represents an "**alarm bell**" for Europe, the same bell that actually started ringing quite some time ago with the rise of Marine Le Pen in France, and continued to ring, unheard, with Brexit. All of this suggests, at the very least, that we should be much more careful with our predictions from now on, Fontana added.

Also on Corriere Della Sera, [Beppe Severgnini](#) [8] (an Italian journalist who wrote a series of articles for The New York Times regarding the presidential campaign) describes the US after the election as a "**wounded country looking for a truce**." "Donald Trump bet on Clinton's antipathy," Severgnini adds, "But a President, besides being cordial, should also be qualified. From this point of view the distance between the two candidates was - and continues to be - huge." He concludes by saying that it is the "armed, white America" that made its decision. Accepting it is difficult, but it must be done.

The center-left paper **La Repubblica**, the most read of the country, describes Trump as the "president-contractor who destroyed the politicians and persuaded the American people." **Federico Rampini**, the paper's New York correspondent, added that we are facing a disaster, not only in regards to the polling system, but also in regards to the most eminent American media outlets. CNN, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and even online newcomers like Politico.com completely failed, in Rampini's opinion, in communicating Trump's lies, his fraud, and his tax evasion. This failure also extends to the "big intellectuals" who warned to the dangers of electing Trump. Rampini added that this was a victory for the **Lords of the Web**, who spread their voices loud through the social media and "selected the sources that best aligned with their views."

Regarding the right-wing of Italian media, reactions were increasingly positive, and a triumphant tone was adopted. **Il Giornale**, which belongs to the family of former Italian Premier **Silvio Berlusconi**, focused its attention on "what kind of America Obama left behind." The article affirms that the United States is better off in 2016 as compared to 2008, but it happened "unbeknownst to Obama." The paper describes Trump as the man who "**beat everyone, punishing the political, financial, and media establishments for their arrogance**."

[Vittorio Feltri](#) [9], the editor-in-chief of the **Libero**, never hid his extreme right-wing sympathies and has always supported Trump. Feltri predicts that something similar to the **Trump phenomenon will happen in Europe**, starting with Le Pen in France and continuing on through Poland, Hungary, and Holland. He also hopes that a new player, similar to Trump, will enter the game in Italy. Feltri fears, however, that the new US president "won't be available to finance the defense of Italy."

Il Sole 24 Ore, the official paper of the Italian Industrialists Union, described the victory of Trump as



the result of a “protest against the unfulfilled promises of change and, more generally, against the political establishment, both republican and democrat.” People have **voted “against,”** the paper continues, “and Trump, despised and mocked by the establishment, has become **the anti-establishment hero that will fight in name of the people.**”

That is in fact what [Matteo Salvini](#) [10] said on-air at a local radio station. The leader of **Lega Nord**, an ex-separatist party which now represents the most extreme nationalist and xenophobic tendencies of the Italian right, was enthusiastic and defined Donald Trump’s victory as a “severe strike to globalization” and as a “**revenge of the people.**”

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