

Who Has the Power?



IN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM, AS IN OTHERS, THE POWER RESIDES in political institutions. But who within these institutions makes the real decisions? In the past, the correct answer would have been, first, the political parties and second, labor unions, professional organizations, cooperatives, banks, and interest groups. But since 1992 other actors have joined the club, especially the individual leaders of the two contending coalitions. In Italy, as in other countries, political contests have become more personalized, and once in office the leaders of the winning coalition are in a position to exercise a considerable amount of personal power.¹ Three of the five last parliamentary elections (1996, 2001, and 2006) were fought largely as a duel between the two personalities who have dominated Italian politics during the last decade, Silvio Berlusconi and Romano Prodi. The fourth and fifth in 2008 and 2013 witnessed the clash between Berlusconi and the leaders of the Democratic Party (PD), Walter Veltroni in 2008 and Pier-Luigi Bersani in 2013. The nature of these duels has highlighted the role of voters in the Italian political process. In the last analysis, it is the voters and their choice of parties that determine the outcome of the elections—that is, who wields power in their name and to achieve which objectives. This chapter looks at the changing nature of popular choices, the parties and interest groups that operate within the Italian political system, and how the party system has changed in response to the digital revolution that has taken place in political communication.

Political Parties

Since 1992 the Italian party system has undergone a sweeping realignment. From 1946 to 1990, however, the party system appeared to be relatively stable, with few shifts in party identity, party strength, and voting behavior. A brief survey of some of the principal features of the traditional pre-1992 party system will help to put contemporary changes in perspective.

The Pre-1992 Italian Party System

The Italian multiparty system has been more complex than that of France or Germany.² In 1992 no fewer than nine national parties (parties that presented lists of candidates in all or most constituencies) were represented in the Italian Parliament:

1. Democrats of the Left (DS)—a party known until 1991 as the Italian Communist Party (PCI) (which was the strongest Communist Party in western Europe) and later as the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). The DS was usually referred to as the ex- (or post-) Communist Party

2. Communist Refoundation Party (PRC)—a party of orthodox Communists who objected to the moderate course and symbolic change of label adopted by the DS in 1991
3. Green Party—a party that tends to emphasize environmental and civil rights issues
4. Italian Socialist Party (PSI)—a party once allied with the Communists but after 1963 closer to the Christian Democrats
5. Italian Social Democratic Party (PSDI)—a party even more cautious and moderate than its Socialist cousin
6. Italian Republican Party (PRI)—a party moderately left of center and very prestigious, despite its small size and voting strength
7. Christian Democracy (DC)—a party that had played a dominant and usually hegemonic role in Italian politics since 1946
8. Italian Liberal Party (PLI)—a party that was moderately conservative at the center-right
9. Italian Social Movement (MSI)—a neo-Fascist party that was something of an outcast among the national political parties

In addition to these national parties, various regional, ethnic, or splinter parties were represented in parliament: the newly powerful Northern League (NL); the Venetian League; the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), a German-speaking party in Bolzano Province; the Valle d'Aosta List; the Network, representing an anti-Mafia movement in Sicily; the Pannella List, an assortment of former Radicals concerned with postmaterialist lifestyle issues; and the Party of Pensioners.

One set of characteristic features of the post-World War II Italian party system was the relative strength of the parties in the system. The dominant party—DC—had headed every Italian cabinet between 1946 and 1981. The second-ranking party—the Communist Party (now the DS)—was the strongest Communist Party in western Europe (and the DS became the strongest former Communist Party). The PSI had been split since 1947, with the exception of a brief interval from 1966 to 1969, so that Italian socialism was weaker than in most other western European countries. Nowhere else in western Europe except in France was there a neo-Fascist movement whose strength even remotely approached that of the MSI. The MSI underwent a schism in 1972, but since then it functioned as the main electoral home of far-right voters.

Of those scholars and others writing about Italy's party system, some, such as Giovanni Sartori, stressed the polarization of the system, which included powerful extremist parties (the Communists and the neo-Fascists) at its left and right poles.³ Others referred to its remarkable stability. Parties experienced only minor gains or suffered only minor losses in general elections, and voters rarely shifted far along the political spectrum, moving, perhaps, from extreme left to moderate left or from center to center-right. This stability was attributed in part to the high degree of party identification, in part to the existence of strong one-party regions such as the Catholic Veneto or Communist Emilia-Romagna,

and in part to the remarkably large turnout that reduced the number of undecided voters to be mobilized. Finally, some authors pointed out that two of the parties in Italy's multi-party system tended to corner the lion's share of the vote.⁴ Between them, the Communists and the Christian Democrats polled above 60 percent in every election from 1953 through 1987, reaching a high point of 73.1 percent in 1976 before their numbers began to ebb (see Table 4-2).⁵ (The outcomes for party representation in the Chamber of Deputies are shown in Table 4-3.⁶) This situation led to the conclusion that Italy had an "imperfect two party system," with one of the two major parties permanently in the cabinet and the other permanently in the opposition.⁷ The events of 1983–1992 cast considerable doubt on this thesis, however. The combined vote of the Communists and Christian Democrats dropped to 62.8 percent in 1983, 60.9 percent in 1987, and a startling 51.4 percent (counting the votes of both the PDS and PRC in 1992 (Table 4-2).

Another view of the Italian political system stressed the overall stability of the parties but also the significant depolarization in the system of values, attitudes, and policy positions experienced by both the electorate and the party leaders.⁸ The level of depolarization became evident as the old party structure collapsed and new parties emerged. Under the post-1992 party system, the ideological conflicts and differences that had characterized leftist versus rightist or government versus opposition parties quickly evaporated, revealing the substantial overlap in programs and policies shared by political elites after 1994.

Italian parties also possessed some organizational traits that endowed them with a distinctive character. They were highly centralized, and the central party organization did not hesitate to intervene in nominations at the local level. They also were cohesive: members of the party in parliament generally voted together as a solid bloc, with some deviations. And they were relatively disciplined: legislators who failed to follow the instructions of their party leaders and whips might be courted severe disciplinary sanctions, not excluding expulsion from the parliamentary party group. As for the party outside of parliament, it played an important role in its relationship with the parliamentary party. Many cabinet crises originated outside parliament by means of decisions reached by party secretaries or party directorates (executive committees). Yet the overlap between the parliamentary and extraparliamentary party organizations was extensive. The secretaries and members of party directorates were frequently themselves also members of parliament.

Perhaps the most interesting property of Italian political parties was the presence within their ranks of highly organized competing factions. These intraparty groupings reflected more than mere tendencies or currents of opinion. They had, in many cases, a well-defined organizational structure, press, and research organs to formulate and disseminate their views, their own sources of financing independent of the party organization, and their own leadership hierarchy. Factions vied with one another for control over the party organization and over patronage appointments, and they demanded appropriate representation when cabinets and regional and local junta were being formed.⁹ On numerous occasions, the formation of a cabinet or a regional or municipal junta was held up while negotiations proceeded to determine which Christian Democratic or Socialist factions were to be assigned which executive posts.

Table 4-2 Percentages of Total Vote Polled by Italian Parties in Elections for the Chamber of Deputies, 1948–2008

MSI/DN/AN ⁹	2.0	5.9	4.8	5.1	4.5	8.7	6.1	5.3	6.8	5.9	5.4	13.5	15.7	12.0	12.3	—	
Right	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.4	
New PSI SI															0.9	0.7	1.0

Sources: 1948–2001 elections: Francesco Malgeri, ed., *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana*, vol. 5 (Rome: Edizioni Cinque Lire, 1989), 451–458; and issues of *Italian Politics*, 1994, 1996, 2001; 2006 elections: *La Repubblica*, April 10–12, 2006; 2008 data: Simona Guerra and Emanuele Masetti, ‘The Italian Parliamentary Election of 2008’, EPERN. Downloaded from www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/accounts/epern-election-briefing-no-41.

Note: “—” = no data. An empty cell indicates not applicable. PLIUP = Democratic Party of Proletarian Unity; PRC = Party of Communist Reformation; PCD¹ = Communist Party of Italy; PC/PDS = Italian Communist Party/Democratic Party of the Left; PD = Democratic Party; PSI/PSU = Italian Socialist Party/United Socialist Party; PSDI = Italian Social Democratic Party; PRI = Italian Republican Party; DC/PPDI/Marg. = Christian Democracy/Italian Popular Party/Margherita List; CCD/CDU/JUC = Christian Democratic Center/United Christian Democrats/Union of the Christian Democrats; UDEUR = Union of the Democratic European Reformers; MPA = the Autonomous League of southern Italy; PLI = Italian Liberal Party; LN = Northern League; FI = Forza Italia (Go Italy); PdL = Partito della Libertà; PNW = National Monarchist Party; MSI/DN/AN = Italian Social Movement/National Right/National Alliance.

^aIn 1948 the Communists and Socialists formed a single electoral bloc, the People’s Democratic Front (FDP). The experiment was not repeated. In 1992 the Italian Communist Party (PCI) changed its name to the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS). An orthodox minority seceded to form the Party of Communist Reformation (PCR).

^bIn 1968 the Socialists and Social Democrats ran as a unified party, the United Socialist Party (PSU). The party split in 1969.

^cIn the 1996 election, the Prodi List consisted of the Italian Popular Party (see note f), the South Tyrolean People’s Party, the Republican Party, and the Democratic Union.

^dThe Dini List of candidates, which was headed by caretaker prime minister Lamberto Dini, sought support during the 1996 campaign from various moderate members of various right-wing parties. Also known as the Italian Renewal Party.

^eIn 2001 the Margherita List included the former PPI and the Prodi and Dini Lists.

^fIn 1994 the Christian Democracy (DC) disintegrated. It was replaced by two Christian Democratic parties: the Italian Popular Party (PPI) in the center and the much weaker Christian Democratic Center on the right. In the 1996 election, the PPI campaigned as part of the Prodi List of candidates.

^gIn December 1976, the Italian Social Movement (MSI) split, with about half of its deputies joining a new right-wing party, the National Right (DN). The DN failed to gain any representation in 1971. Between 1982 and 1994, Gianfranco Fini formed a broader National Alliance (AN). The AN included most of the old MSI (which was later dissolved as a party) and other right-wing factions. It claimed to have put the fascist experience behind it and to be a mainstream conservative alternative, committed to the preservation of democracy, but it is actually neo-fascist.

^hThe CCD formed part of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia electoral slate in both the 1994 and 1996 elections. In 2006 “other” included 1.2 percent for the center-left—the South Tyrolean People’s Party (SVP) plus other parties. In the center-right, it accounted for 1.6 percent of the vote. Only 0.4 percent of “other” represented parties not affiliated with either bloc. The breakdown for the twelve overseas constituencies is not included in this calculation of percentage votes for the parties.

ⁱIn 2006 the Rose in the First list included Radical and Italian Socialist voters.

^jIn 2006 the Democrats of the Left (DS) and the Margherita List ran together under the Ulivo (Olive Tree) list.

Table 4-3 Seats Won by Various Italian Parties in Elections for the Chamber of Deputies, 1948-2008

	1948	1953	1958	1963	1968	1972	1976	1979	1983	1987	1992	1994	1996	2001 ^a	2006	2008
PDUP	—	—	—	—	—	23	0	6	6	7	8	—	—	—	—	—
PRC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35	39	—	—	—
Pcd ^b	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rainbow Left	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Radicals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	18	11	13	16	16	7	15	—
Greens	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PCI/PDS/DS	131	143	140	166	177	179	227	201	198	177	107	174 ^c	171 ^c	136	220 ^d	217
PD	—	—	75	84	87	91	—	—	62	73	—	—	—	—	—	—
PSI/PSU	52	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	—	—
SD	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Di Pietro	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
New PSI	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DC-PSI	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PSDI	33	19	22	33	—	—	—	29	15	20	23	17	16	—	—	—
PRI	10	5	6	6	9	15	14	16	29	21	27	—	—	—	—	—
DCPP/Marg.	306	263	273	260	266	266	263	262	225	234	206	46	71	77	—	—
Dini List	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	33	30	30	39	36
CCD/UDC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
UDEUR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MPA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PLI	15	13	17	39	31	20	5	9	16	11	17	—	—	—	—	8
LN	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	117	59	30	26	60
FI	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	107	123 ^e	176	137	276
PdL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PNM	13	40	25	8	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
MSI/DN/AN	6	29	24	27	24	56	35	30	42	35	34	109	93	99	71	0
Right	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	6	6	6	25	5	6	9	5	4
Other	8	3	5	4	3	4	3	4	6	6	630	630	630	630	630	630
Total	574	590	596	630	630	630	630	630	630	630	630	630	630	617	630 ^f	630

Sources: 1948-2001 elections: Francesco Malgeri, ed., *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana*, vol. 5 (Rome: Edizioni Cinque Lire, 1989), 452-453; and issues of *Italian Politics*, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2006 election: *La Repubblica*, April 10-12, 2006.

Note: “—” = no data. An empty cell indicates not applicable. PDUP = Democratic Party of Proletarian Unity; PRC = Party of Communist Refoundation; Pcd^b = Communist Party of Italy; PCI/PDS/DS = Italian Communist Party/Democratic Party of the Left/Democrats of the Left; PD = Democratic Party; PSI/PSU = Italian Socialists Party/United Socialist Party; SD = Democratic Socialists; New PSI = party created by Gianni De Michelis and Bobo Craxi for the 2001 election. In 2006 Bobo Craxi joined the Prodi coalition and De Michelis joined up with a new DC to form the DC-PSI list; PSDI = Italian Social Democratic Party; PRI = Italian Republican Party; DC/PPIMarg. = Christian Democracy/Italian Popular Party/Marchenna List; CCD/UDC = Christian Democratic Center/Union of Christian Democrats; UDEUR = Union of the Democratic European Reformers; MPA = the Autonomous League of southern Italy; PLI = Italian Liberal Party; LN = Northern League; FI = Forza Italia (fö Italy); PdL = Partito della Libertà; PNIM = National Monarchist Party; MSI/DN/AN = Italian Social Movement/National Right/National Alliance. The Dini List is also known as the Italian Renewal Party.

^a In 2001 thirteen seats were not attributed, because election officials could not decide whether they were votes for the government majority or the opposition.

^b In 1994 the entire leftist bloc—that is, Progressive Bloc—included the PDS, Greens, and Socialists.

^c The Olive Tree Alliance, made of the Democratic Party of the Left, the Greens, the Italian Popular Party/Prodi List, and the Dini List, polled 284 seats.

^d The Freedom Pole Alliance, composed of Forza Italia, the Christian Democratic Center, and the National Alliance, polled 246 seats.

^e In 2006 the Rose in the Fist list included Radical and Italian Socialist voters.

The Elections of 1992 to 2008

The 1990s proved to be a decade characterized by radical change and significant turmoil in the Italian political system. Between 1992 and 1994 traditional parties, such as the Christian Democrats, Socialists, and the Communist parties, disappeared, and new parties appeared. What was even more striking was the substantial change in political elites and their replacement, in many cases, by a new brand of politicians who had not come up through the party ranks, had not held office in an institution at the subnational level, and had no previous political experience. A new link was therefore established between individual voters and politicians and between organized groups in civil society and the political parties. Politics were moving from a face-to-face form of interaction to a more detached form of interaction where the link was provided by the electronic media in the 1990s and Internet later on.

The Election of 1992

With the Italian parliamentary elections of 1992, some of the traditional features of the Italian party system seemed to be undergoing major alterations. For one thing, DC appeared to be in serious danger of losing its hegemony over the Italian party system. It had already lost considerable ground in 1983 and 1987, but the 1992 election results were disastrous for the DC. With 29.7 percent of the total vote, it plumbed new depths of electoral failure, 3.2 percentage points below its 1983 all-time low (see Table 4-2).

The PDS (formerly the PCI) was still the second-ranking party on the Italian political scene. But the hitherto consistent forward progress of Italian communism had been halted as early as 1979, when the PCI captured only 30.4 percent of the vote as compared with its 1976 high-water mark of 34.4 percent (Table 4-2). This backsliding continued in the 1983 elections and, more sharply, in 1987, when the Communist Party received only 26.6 percent of the vote, its weakest showing since 1968. This was the “second most serious defeat in its history [as of that time].”¹⁰ But the worst was yet to come.

In 1991, in response to an initiative launched by PCI secretary Achille Occhetto to dissociate the Italian left from the collapse of communism in eastern Europe, the PCI split into the PDS and the PRC. The PDS, led by Occhetto and representing the bulk of the former PCI, was committed to a moderate leftist posture. The PRC was a party of diehards rebelling against the triumph of reformist tendencies in Italian communism. In the 1992 election, the PDS received 16.1 percent of the vote, and the PRC mustered only 5.6 percent. The combined total of 21.7 percent was 4.9 percentage points below the already deplorable 1987 mark of 26.6 percent and was the worst showing since 1946.

The Socialist movement was still divided between Socialists (PSI) and the slightly more centrist-oriented Social Democrats (PSDI). Both parties were somewhat on the weak side, especially the PSDI, and their combined vote since 1968 had always oscillated between 12 percent and 18 percent of the total votes cast. In the 1987 election, after four years of relative stability under the commanding leadership of Socialist prime minister Bettino Craxi, the Italian electorate rewarded the PSI with 14.3 percent of the total vote—its highest percentage as an independent and distinctive party since 1946 (Table 4-2). In 1992, however, the PSI dropped back to 13.6 percent, undergoing its first loss of votes in relation to the previous election in twenty years. As for the PSDI, it steadily lost ground after 1983, receiving 3.0 percent in 1987 and 2.7 percent in 1992.

The other two minor center parties—the Republicans (PRI) and the Liberals (PLI)—chalked up very modest electoral achievements, with their combined vote since

1968 ranging from 4.4 percent to 8.0 percent of the votes cast (see Table 4-2). In 1992 they again registered modest gains: the PRI rose to 4.4 percent and the PLI rose to 2.8 percent. As for the neo-Fascists of the MSI, they had been in a state of decline since 1983, and despite the presence of Benito Mussolini's granddaughter on their ticket, in 1992 they polled only 5.4 percent of the total vote. The MSI, along with the centrist PRI and PLI, appeared to be facing a very unpromising electoral future.

After the 1992 election, Italy's "imperfect two-party system" seemed to be in critical condition. As noted, the combined DC, PDS, and PRC vote dropped to 51.4 percent of the total vote (see Table 4-2). By contrast, if the Socialist (PSI) vote is added to that of the three minor center parties (PSDI, PRI, and PLI), the bloc of secular democratic parties or the "lay bloc" won 23.5 percent of the vote in 1992. The "imperfect two-party system" was showing signs of unraveling, while the lay bloc seemed to be emerging as a powerful third force in Italian politics, reaching its highest levels in twenty years. It also appeared that the 8.7 percent of the vote garnered by the regionalist NL (dominated by the Lombard League) and the 5.6 percent captured by PRC had been won at the expense of the DC and the PDS, not the lay bloc. Yet the apparent renaissance of the lay bloc was to prove a short-lived phenomenon.

The emergence of the NL, with 8.7 percent of the vote, as a major protagonist on the Italian political scene was one of the more striking outcomes of the 1992 election. With its clearly expressed anti-southern, anti-immigrant biases and with its demands that a federal Italy be created and that major functions and a significant share of national revenues be shifted from the central government to the regions, the NL represented a new and possibly centrifugal force in Italian politics. Like the split in Italian communism, the NL's appearance made it clear that the Italian party system of 1946–1991 was a thing of the past.

The 1992 election also called into question the stability so often ascribed to the Italian party system. Both of the factors that had contributed to this stability in the past—strong party identification and high voter turnout—seemed to be declining. In 1979 voter turnout dipped below 90 percent for the first time and never regained that level. Moreover, greater numbers of voters were casting blank and invalid ballots. Italian voting traditions seemed to be eroding under the impact of the social and cultural changes. One result was the remarkable downward dip in the Christian Democratic vote, and that downward slide was repeated two years later.

The Election of 1994

Between April 1992 and March 1994 the Italian party system underwent a series of massive transformations that altered the political map of Italy, decimated the ranks of Italy's political elites, and brought a new cohort of political leaders to power. The precipitating factor was the public's revulsion at the revelation that large segments of the Italian governing class had accepted kickbacks from business firms in exchange for government contracts and licenses or had cultivated and maintained illicit connections with the Mafia and other criminal organizations. As a result of these scandals and the ensuing prosecutions, many Christian Democratic and Socialist political leaders at the national, regional, and local levels, including two former prime ministers, Socialist Bettino Craxi and Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti, came under criminal investigation. The disgrace befalling the PSI and the DC led to the virtual disintegration of these parties and the formation of successor rump parties under new leadership. Although fragments of

the PSI and DC did survive and soldier on, the Social Democrats, Republicans, and Liberals virtually disappeared.¹¹

The parties of the left, led by the PDS, had hoped to win the general election of March 27–28, 1994. After all, they had won against a divided right in a majority of the mayoral elections held in November 1993, and they had not been implicated to a great extent in the kickback scandals that had overwhelmed the governing parties. Only four months later, however, the left alliance confronted a newly formed right alliance, led by the charismatic media magnate Silvio Berlusconi, and a new center alliance as well.

In the 1994 election, the Progressive Alliance, formed by the parties of the left, suffered a clear-cut defeat. This alliance, designed to maximize the leftist probabilities of carrying single-member districts by the necessary plurality, was made up of the PDS; the PRC; the Greens; the moribund rump of the PSI (which was disbanded shortly after the election); the anti-Mafia Network Party, headed by Leoluca Orlando, mayor of Palermo; the Democratic Alliance, composed mostly of former supporters of the minor center parties; the Christian Socialists; and one or two additional splinter movements. The alliance received only 34.4 percent of the total proportional representation (PR) vote.¹² Of this total, the PDS contributed 20.4 percent (compared with 16.1 percent in 1992); the PRC 6.1 percent (5.6 percent in 1992); the Greens 2.7 percent (2.8 percent in 1992); the Network 1.9 percent (no change since 1992); the Democratic Alliance (which had not existed in 1992) 1.2 percent; and the hapless Socialists, who had received 13.6 percent of the vote in 1992, a meager 2.2 percent (see Table 4-2).¹³ The decline of the left as a whole from more than 40 percent of the vote in 1992 to 34.4 percent of the vote in 1994 may be attributed almost entirely to the collapse of the scandal-ridden PSI, some of whose supporters migrated to the PDS and others to Berlusconi's Forza Italia or to the NL. In general, the Italian Left suffered a severe defeat, but, within the left, the PDS recovered from its debacle of 1992.

The four center parties—the PSDI, the PRI, the PLI, and the DC—had totaled 39.6 percent of the vote in 1992, but in 1994 they suffered a defeat of staggering proportions: they went down to 15.7 percent of the vote. The minor center parties (the PSDI, PRI, and PLI) simply disappeared, obliterated by the scandals and by the 4 percent threshold imposed by the new election law as a precondition for receiving seats under PR. The DC was replaced by two Christian Democratic parties: the Italian Popular Party (PPI) in the center and the Christian Democratic Center (CCD) (which formed part of Berlusconi's Forza Italia slates) on the right.

The centrist alliance in 1994, the Pact for Italy, was composed of two parties: the just-mentioned Popular Party and the Segni Pact headed by Mario Segni, a former Christian Democrat. Segni had led several successful referendum campaigns for electoral reform since 1991, including a drive to change and simplify the system of preferential voting and a movement to virtually eliminate the system of PR in Senate elections. In 1994 the Popular Party received only 11.1 percent of the vote, and the Segni Pact, which contained former supporters of the minor center parties and some former Christian Democrats, received the other 4.6 percent for the total of 15.7 percent that went to the Catholic centrist bloc. Of the three major political alliances in Italy, the centrist alliance was the weakest.

The winner of the 1994 election was the rightist bloc, called the Freedom Pole in the north (where Forza Italia was allied with the NL) and the Pole of Good Government in the south (where Forza Italia was allied with the National Alliance). This curious binomial

bloc consisted of three major political forces and two minor parties. The first major political force was Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, a new center-right mass movement revolving around the charismatic business leader. Its electoral lists included candidates of a minor center-right Christian Democratic grouping called the CCD and of a centrist splinter movement called the Center Union. The second was Umberto Bossi's NL, particularly powerful in Lombardy. And the third was a self-styled post-Fascist party, the National Alliance, led by Gianfranco Fini, formerly the leader of the neo-Fascist MSI. The Pole of Liberty and the Pole of Good Government amassed the largest number of votes: 42.9 percent of the total. Twenty-one percent of the electorate voted for the Forza Italia list (including about 3.5 percent for the CCD); 8.4 percent (compared with 8.7 percent in 1992) voted for Bossi's NL; and 13.5 percent (compared with only 5.4 percent in 1992) voted for Fini's National Alliance (see Table 4-2). The NL had barely held its own since 1992, but the National Alliance had more than doubled the strength of the neo-Fascist MSI, and Forza Italia had carved out spectacular gains at the expense of the discredited old parties of the center and moderate right.

This election produced some striking results. First, the Pole of Liberty and the Pole of Good Government won a clear majority in the Chamber of Deputies (366 of 630 seats) and a near majority in the Senate (156 of 315 seats). Berlusconi was therefore able to form a cabinet composed of members from Forza Italia (nine), the NL (six), the National Alliance (six), the Center Union (two), and the CCD (one), plus three independents. Second, the complexion of parliament had changed remarkably since 1992. Of the nine national parties listed at the beginning of this chapter, the DC had vanished and was partially replaced by two weak successor parties; the PSI had been reduced to a mere fragment; the three minor center parties were no more; and the MSI had expanded into a watered-down post-Fascist movement whose leader preached moderation. On the right, the NL had become a major national actor rather than a regional protest movement, and Forza Italia had emerged as a new and possibly dominant protagonist on the national scene. Third, the composition of Italy's governing elite had undergone a bewildering metamorphosis. Of the 945 members elected to the two chambers of parliament, 645 were new—only 300 had prior service in parliament.¹⁴ And most of the big political names that had dominated the headlines for so many years—Giulio Andreotti, Arnaldo Forlani, and Antonio Gava for the DC, Bettino Craxi and Gianni De Michelis for the PSI—vanished from the front pages and from parliament.

The results of the 1994 election were inconclusive and somewhat deceptive for two reasons. The first is that the election was conducted under a complex electoral system devised by the outgoing lame-duck parliament in 1993. The second and more compelling reason is that the center-right coalition that assumed power in the spring of 1994 proved to be fatally split by conflicting policies and personalities. In December 1994, under a hail of criticism, much of it coming from his coalition partners of the NL, Berlusconi was compelled to resign as prime minister.

The Election of 1996

On April 21, 1996, after Berlusconi's 1994 victory had been dissipated by dissension among members of his center-right coalition and after Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's cabinet of technocrats had outlived its legitimacy and could no longer deal with a deadlocked parliament, new elections were called by President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, even

though parliament's term still had three years to run. Because no agreement could be reached on a new election law, the complex election law used in 1994 was retained. Impeded by the bewildering electoral alliances spawned by this law, the media were unable to report promptly on the exact distribution of seats in parliament.¹⁵

In the election, the Olive Tree coalition received a plurality of the vote (43.3 percent) and a bare majority of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies (319 of 630) and in the Senate. But one party in this alliance, the PRC, which polled 8.6 percent of the vote and won thirty-five seats in the chamber, indicated that it would support Olive Tree initiatives only on a case-by-case basis and that its loyalty to the alliance would depend on the policies the alliance chose to adopt. The leading party in the alliance, the ex-communist PDS, polled 21.1 percent of the vote, a gain of 0.7 percentage points since 1994, and the PRC picked up 2.5 percentage points over its 1994 showing (see Table 4-2). In terms of seats, the PDS far outnumbered the PRC: 172 seats to 35 (see Table 4-3).

The other three parties in the Olive Tree coalition were the Greens, who won twenty-one seats with 2.5 percent of the vote compared with 2.7 percent in 1994; the Prodi List, led by the alliance's candidate for prime minister, Romano Prodi; and the Italian Renewal Party, led by the outgoing prime minister and former top official of the Bank of Italy, Lamberto Dini. Neither the Prodi List nor the Italian Renewal Party was on the ballot in 1994 (see Tables 4-2 and 4-3). In 1996 the Italian Renewal Party received 4.3 percent of the total vote and twenty-four seats. The Prodi List, which received the support of the Popular Party of former Christian Democrats, the SVP, and the Republican Party, plus that of some even smaller splinter groupings, received 6.8 percent of the vote, compared with 11.1 percent polled by the Popular Party in 1994 (part of that vote had obviously been captured by Italian Renewal). Virtually all the seats won by the Prodi List went to the Popular Party, which picked up sixty-seven seats, while "Other" received five. Together, the Prodi List and Italian Renewal polled 11.1 percent of the vote, compared with the 15.7 percent received by the centrist alliance (Pact for Italy, composed of the Popular Party and the Segni Pact) in 1994.

The centrist alliance of 1994 had simply converged with the leftist Progressive Alliance of 1994 to form a center-left bloc, the Olive Tree coalition. The Olive Tree voting totals of 43.3 percent were actually less than the combined total polled by the leftist and centrist alliances, running separately in 1994 (50.1 percent).

Why, then, did the Olive Tree coalition win an electoral victory over the center-right? It won because the center-right alliance (the Freedom Pole) had lost one of its most electorally powerful members, the NL. The NL ran as an isolated list in 1996 and received 10.1 percent of the vote and fifty-nine seats, compared with 8.4 percent of the vote and 122 seats in 1994 (see Tables 4-2 and 4-3). As for the Freedom Pole, it racked up very respectable totals of 42.1 percent (42.9 percent in 1994). Of these voting percentages, 20.6 percent was accounted for by Forza Italia (21 percent in 1994), 15.7 percent by the ex-Fascist National Alliance (13.5 percent in 1994), and 5.8 percent by the CCD/United of Christian Democrats (UDC) (3.5 percent in 1994). Of the 246 seats won by the Freedom Pole, 123 went to Forza Italia, 93 to the National Alliance, and 30 to the CCD/Christian Democratic Union (CDU)—a respectable showing. But the split with the federalist NL cost the Freedom Pole what would otherwise have been a popular majority and a probable majority in parliament.

In the Chamber of Deputies, with its total membership of 630, the 319 seats won by the Olive Tree coalition constituted a slender majority. But the orthodox communists of the PRC had declared their independence. Subtracting their thirty-five seats would leave the Olive Tree coalition with only 284 seats, short of a majority. The Olive Tree coalition would therefore have to court the support of the PRC or the NL (fifty-nine seats) to muster a majority on controversial legislation. But as noted earlier, the Olive Tree itself was a rather loose-jointed alliance of leftist and centrist parties, and its future cohesion was in doubt.

The Election of 2001

The Olive Tree coalition was indeed fragile, but it did manage to remain in office for the duration of its five-year term. Romano Prodi served as the first of the three Olive Tree prime ministers. He resigned in October 1998 after PRC deputies rejected his government's austerity budget, and in March 1999 he was chosen president of the European Commission. His successor was Massimo D'Alema, a leader of the DS and Italy's first postcommunist head of government. D'Alema stepped down a year later after the Olive Tree coalition parties suffered losses to the center-right opposition in the regional elections in April 2000. Giuliano Amato reconstituted the Olive Tree coalition, but he failed to mobilize popular enthusiasm for either himself or the government's policies.

Silvio Berlusconi emerged early as the leading contender to wrest the premiership from the center-left in the campaign leading up to the national election in May 2001. He forged a more disciplined coalition between his own party, Forza Italia, and the NL and the National Alliance than had been the case in 1994, and he succeeded in casting himself (thanks in large part to his virtual monopoly ownership of private television in Italy) as a man of vision and action. Indeed, Berlusconi seized on his honorary title of *il Cavaliere* (the knight) to proclaim himself "the greatest politician in the world."

Campaigning jointly as the "Freedom House," the center-right parties relentlessly attacked the Olive Tree coalition for its internal dissension and alleged adherence to the status quo. Advocating radical changes in domestic policies through a much televised campaign that borrowed from the Republican Party in the United States with its promises made directly to the electorate and centered on a "contract with Italians," Berlusconi called for tax reform (including abolition of the inheritance tax), greater flexibility in the labor market, higher pensions, modernization of Italy's transportation and infrastructure system, and safer cities. Members of the Olive Tree coalition responded by nominating Francesco Rutelli, the popular mayor of Rome, to oppose Berlusconi in what became an electoral contest more between strong personalities than between competing ideologies. The center-left's criticism of *il Cavaliere* focused on the corruption charges that he faced but that had been dismissed because of the statute of limitations on the length of trials, and his collusion with the National Alliance and extreme right organizations such as Fiamma Tricolore, headed by Pino Rauti.

Berlusconi and his allies swept to a solid victory in both houses of parliament on May 13. The Freedom House parties won 42.5 percent of the popular vote and 366 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, compared with the Olive Tree's 38.7 percent and 242 seats. Had the Olive Tree coalition been allied with the PRC and Antonio Di Pietro, as it was in 1996, it would have easily defeated the center-right coalition in the Chamber of Deputies.

Instead, Berlusconi was able to return as prime minister. The electoral outcome dismayed many Europeans, who were concerned about the rightist tilt of the winning coalition, but Italian president Carlo Azeglio Ciampi duly appointed Berlusconi premier in accordance with established democratic norms.

The Election of 2006

The April 9–10, 2006, election proved to be another hard-fought campaign between Italy's two most prominent political personalities of the last decade. Romano Prodi led the center-left coalition, made up of a variety of parties that in the past had been aligned or had run independent lists. In the Prodi coalition were the Democrats of the Left, the Daisy Coalition (headed by Francesco Rutelli), the Greens, the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I), Antonio Di Pietro's Italy of Values party, the Rose in the Fist (made up of the Radicals and Italian Socialists [SI]), the PRC, and a variety of other minor parties (SVP, Valle d'Aosta party, Pensioners, European Republicans, and the Socialists, led by Bobo Craxi, Bettino Craxi's son). These parties were brought together for the purpose of defeating Berlusconi's coalition and ending what many considered the "Italian anomaly," in which Italy's wealthiest man was in a position to control national public policy and use public resources for his private benefit. The other major motivating factor behind the unity of the center-left coalition was the desire to reverse Italy's economic decline under the Berlusconi government. Italy was suffering zero growth, a fall in real income, a decline in competitiveness, and an increasingly precarious labor market. Internationally, what motivated the opposition was the desire to place Italy once again at the center of European integration and to disengage from Iraq in light of the unraveling political and security conditions there. Prodi promised to get Italy working again by investing in education, lowering the cost of labor, and reinforcing the system of health and social services.

The Berlusconi center-right coalition kept on board all the parties that had enjoyed ministerial posts during the previous five years. In addition to Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, the coalition was able to count on Gianfranco Fini's National Alliance, the NL, and the CDU. Because the election was expected to be close, Berlusconi also succeeded in bringing into the coalition the remaining right-wing parties (Alessandra Mussolini's Social Alliance Party and Fiamma Tricolore's neo-Fascists). The center-right campaigned mainly on three planks: (1) the center-left could not be trusted with power because it was a loose-knit coalition that would fall apart upon facing its first difficult measure and because Prodi's own political support within the coalition represented only a small minority; (2) the center-left coalition was dominated by extremist parties such as the PRC and the Italian Communists, which were nostalgic for the past and would betray Italy's ties with the United States and Europe; and (3) "Italy had never had it so good" as under the Berlusconi government—employment was rising, and Italy had experienced an unprecedented period of consumer spending and national investments in infrastructure projects. In addition, Berlusconi promised to abolish the property taxes and other taxes levied by local governments.

A new electoral law, passed by the center-right government a month before the election, had a profound influence on the results. In anticipation that the center-right and center-left would run neck and neck in the elections for the Chamber of Deputies, the center-right had abolished the single-member districts and based the distribution of seats completely

on PR. In the previous three elections, the center-left had always fared better in the single-member-district portion of the election used to distribute three-quarters of the seats based on the quality of its individual candidates, whereas the center-right did relatively better in the PR system used to distribute the remaining quarter of the seats. To prevent a deadlocked Chamber of Deputies, the new PR law provided the winning coalition (no matter how small the winning margin) with 55 percent (340) of the total of 630 seats. In the Senate, where the center-left was expected to do better, a national PR system was abandoned in favor of distributing votes according to the vote in Italy's twenty regions. Therefore, the coalition that received the most votes in a region was awarded 55 percent of the seats allocated for that region. If a coalition gained more than 55 percent of the total vote in the region, it would be allocated that portion of the seats. One final innovation introduced by the center-right was the creation of "overseas" electoral districts for Italians living abroad. In the Chamber of Deputies, twelve seats were allocated to these overseas districts, and in the Senate six. Of the six seats in the Senate, Prodi's coalition won four. Of the other two, one went to Forza Italia and the other to a Latin American independent. In the Chamber of Deputies, the center-left won seven of the overseas seats, Forza Italia won three, and one went to the independent list in Latin America and one to the National Alliance.

The new electoral law proved to be a godsend for the center-left (see Tables 4-2 and 4-3). In the Chamber of Deputies, the center-left won the national PR competition with 49.8 percent of the vote, but picked up a solid 349-seat majority by putting together the 340-plus-one (Valle d'Aosta) seats allocated automatically by the electoral law to the winning coalition and 8 more seats from abroad (the 7 center-left seats and the 1 independent). By contrast, the center-right with 24,755 fewer votes and 49.7 percent of the total vote received only 277 seats within Italy and 4 more from the overseas constituencies for a total of 281 seats. An even clearer indication of how the center-right miscalculated the vote was provided by the result in the Senate. There, the center-right received 49.9 percent of the votes versus 49.2 percent for the center-left, but it received only a one-seat majority, which was quickly overturned into a three-seat minority once the overseas tally was factored in. In the Senate, the Prodi coalition garnered 154 seats within Italy and 4 overseas for a 158 majority compared with the 155 Italian seats and the 1 overseas seat, for 156 seats, allocated to the center-right. In the Senate, the seven "senators-for-life" were important in beefing up the center-left majority (most had been former prime ministers or prominent intellectuals who were not welcome to the center-right). The center-right did not do as well in the distribution of the Senate seats, because the center-left votes were more evenly distributed throughout the country and the center-left was able to draw from a much broader regional base of support.

The first comments to emerge from the traumatic election results suggested that Prodi would find it very difficult to govern with such a thin majority, but the nature of his coalition suggested the existence of a strong base and the ability to mobilize his coalition in the coming years. In 1996 he had only a four-seat majority in the Chamber of Deputies with the PRC supporting the government on a case-by-case basis. This time, the PRC was an integral part of the coalition, and the hope was that the strong attacks from the opposition would help to keep the coalition on track in implementing its electoral program. Once parliament was convened, the center-left coalition was able to elect the presidents of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate and then the president of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano,

in contests in which the center-right did not effectively wield either power or influence. The hope of keeping a stable majority was, however, short-lived. After a few months the Prodi government was in trouble. The bulk of the PRC remained loyal (even though in December 2007 Fausto Bertinotti, the charismatic leader of the PRC and president of the Chamber of Deputies, defined Prodi as “a great dead poet” of Italian politics), but a few (in fact, two) refused to follow the party’s and the coalition’s indication on voting. The result was that the days of the Prodi government were limited. The coalition’s defeat was initiated by Clemente Mastella’s withdrawal of UDEUR (Union of the Democratic European Reformers) support. Mastella took the pretext of what he termed less-than-enthusiastic support for his wife, who had been indicted in a scandal involving regional councilors in the Campania region where she was president of the regional assembly. On January 24, 2008, the bulk of the UDEUR voted against the government, inflicting a defeat in the vote of confidence in the Senate by 161 to 156. The second Prodi experience as prime minister was brought to an end due to internal dissension within the governing coalition.

The Election of 2008

The election of 2008 was conducted by rules set for the 2006 election because the parties of the governing coalition and the opposition were unable to agree on an alternative formula. Different from the 2006 contest, however, the 2008 election was not a contest between two broad catchall coalitions of the center-right and center-left: in the intervening two years, the leading political forces in both groupings had undergone significant change. On the center-left, the PD had been formed in October 2007 through the merger of the DS and Margherita parties that had run united slates in the 2004 European elections (Uniti per l’Ulivo) and 2005 regional elections. Walter Veltroni, the mayor of Rome, was the new party’s leader. On the center-right, on November 18, 2007, Berlusconi and Fini merged Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale into one party called the People of Liberty (Popolo della Libertà, or PdL). The two newly emerged parties shunned any alliance with parties too far from their centrist positions, aligning themselves, instead, with parties close to them from a programmatic perspective. The PD aligned itself with Di Pietro’s Italy of Values, and the PdL with the NL and Lombardo’s MPA. The vote (see Table 4-4) produced an overwhelming victory on the part of the PdL and its allies with 46.8 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies and 344 seats to the 37.6 percent for the PD and Di Pietro grouping with 246 seats. In the Senate the alignment of forces was similar with a 174 to 132 majority on the part of the center-right. The new Berlusconi government was sworn into office on May 5, 2008.¹⁶

Overall, the center-left parties (PD and DiPietro) lost a considerable number of votes (more than 2 million) in addition to its overall political cohesion. The real losers, however, proved to be the “hard” left, with only 3.1 percent of the vote representing the Rainbow Coalition (PRC, PDC, and Greens) that had triggered the crisis that ended the Prodi government. As a consequence, the hard left practically disappeared from the political scene. It no longer had political representation in parliament, and its role in the debate on national issues or issues of welfare and strategic economic choices was cancelled. The hard left’s electoral woes continued into the 2009 elections for the European Parliament, where it once again presented itself split into two electoral groups: the anticapitalist List (i.e., PRC and PCd’I), which received 3.4 percent of the vote, and a new group—Sinistra

e Libertà, or Left and Liberty (SEL)—organized around Nichi Vendola, the president of the Puglia regional government.¹⁷ In 2008 Vendola had been narrowly defeated by Paolo Ferrero in the contest for the leadership of the party. The new party organized by Vendola attempted to unify leftist objectives with those of environmentalist groups, and its overall result of 3.1 percent was less than that received by the two leftist groups—PRC and PCd'I—in 2006 (respectively 5.6 percent and 2.3 percent) but the same as received by the leftist group in 2008 (i.e., the Left Rainbow Coalition) that included the PRC, PCd'I, Greens, and opponents who left the PD after Veltroni's victory as party secretary.

The 2009 results of the elections to the European Parliament confirmed PRC's isolation in the political spectrum. Its leaders stated that they would be willing to coalesce in an electoral alliance with other leftist parties in an attempt to defeat the center-right in the 2010 regional and local elections, but they would not consider the prospect of joining governing coalitions at the national, regional, or local levels, thereby relegating the center-left to a permanent minority status. As a result the center-right went on to make strong gains in the European parliamentary elections of 2009¹⁸ and the regional elections of 2010.¹⁹ As a result, the center-left was in full retreat.²⁰ The leadership had to be completely renewed.

Just as in 2001, the new 2008 Berlusconi government was greeted in September of that year with the full force of a world financial crisis. As a result, economic activity melted away and with it government revenues. In 2006 the Prodi government had enjoyed larger than expected levels of tax revenue. In 2008 the opposite was true for Berlusconi. With declining economic activity (−1.3 percent fall in GDP in 2008 and −5.0 percent in 2009), the size of the annual deficit went from −1.5 percent in 2007 to −2.7 percent in 2008 and over 5 percent in 2009. A similar pattern emerged in the size of the overall debt, which went from 103 percent of GDP in 2007 to 106 percent in 2008. That the deficit and debt did not spiral out of control as in some other countries, such as Greece, served to cushion the negative consequences of Italy's position in the euro. Giulio Tremonti, the minister of the economy, was given the political support necessary to rein in spending and keep the nation's financial accounts under control. But by November 2011 the patience of the international markets that were waiting for a decisive change in Italian fiscal and economic policies came to an end. Berlusconi had run out of political capital as a result of his personal weaknesses when it came to underage women and wild parties. At the first sign that his majority in the chamber was sliding below the 315 votes necessary to remain in office he was forced to resign. The president of the Republic appointed a new prime minister, Mario Monti, and brought into existence a cross-party coalition (PD, PdL, UDC) in support of a cabinet composed of non-political technocratic appointees. The political parties provided the support in parliament but did not have any of their leaders participating in the cabinet. The strain of having to accept the responsibilities for the actions taken by the Monti government in the middle of a recession led, after twelve months, to the end of the cross-party agreement. New elections were held to find a solution to the growing economic crisis: unemployment had reached over 11 percent and the recession continued to contract economic activity at over 2 percent in 2012.

The Election of 2013

The 2013 elections represented a new watershed in Italian politics. For the first time, a true “flash party” entered the arena, the Five Star Movement (M5S), which displayed a strong

drawing power based on its use of the Internet, blogs, and social networks to get its message across to the voters. The message was “send the old politicians home before they do further damage.” However, at the beginning of the electoral campaign the expectation was that the center-left would win comfortably and that the Berlusconi center-right coalition would poll a distant second. Polls had predicted a six to eight percentage point difference between the result for the PD and its leftist ally, SEL, vis-à-vis Berlusconi’s alliance with the NL and a motley array of small right-wing parties. A good chunk of the Berlusconi’s previous moderate centrist vote was expected to be garnered by Monti’s political movement (Civic Movement) bringing together the UDC with Gianfranco Fini’s Future and Liberty (FLI) and Montezemolo’s “Italy’s Future” movement. Grillo’s M5S was expected to poll less than 20 percent. The results that emerged on February 26th were completely unexpected and sent the country’s political system into a tailspin. It became impossible to form a governing coalition.

The center-left coalition did win a comfortable majority in the chamber of deputies, but barely. The difference between the center-right coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi and the one led by PierLuigi Bersani was 124,958 votes. And only 1.3 million votes separated the center-left from Beppe Grillo’s M5S. As illustrated in Table 4-4 on a strict party-to-party comparison Grillo’s M5S outpolled the PD (8,689,458 versus 8,644,523) in Italy, but the PD did much better than M5S in the electoral districts abroad (95,041 for the M5S versus the 288,092 votes for the PD). The electoral districts abroad added five extra seats to the center-left tally in the Chamber of Deputies of 345 deputies.

What was, however, most destabilizing for the political system and the prospects of creating a stable government after the elections was the result in the Senate (see Table 4-5). Here, the center-right and the center-left coalitions did slightly better than in the chamber, but the 54 seats won by the M5S prevented the center-left from creating a majority, even with the nineteen seats attributed to the Monti list. The total for the two groups would still have been sixteen votes shy of an absolute majority in the senate. Thus, the few “life senators” were not in a position to tip the balance in favor of an eventual alliance between Monti and Bersani. As a result, when Bersani was asked to form a government he had two choices. The first was to form an alliance with the M5S, but M5S refused to consider any form of alliance with the center-left or with any other party or group in parliament. The other choice, an alliance with Berlusconi, was not considered to be possible by Bersani due to the bruising nature of the electoral campaign and the high price asked by the PdL in return—that is, the election of Berlusconi or his closest aide, Gianni Letta, to the presidency of the Republic. Without any other alternative Bersani decided to postpone the creation of a new government until after the election of the new president of the Republic. Giorgio Napolitano’s was scheduled to step down in mid-April, and his successor had to be chosen before new elections could be called. However, the lack of unity of the center-left in the support of its candidate—that is, Romano Prodi—after the third ballot restricted the alternatives that were available. Unable to break the deadlock within his own party and unable to reach an agreement with the other two major parties in the political system, Bersani announced his resignation from the leadership of the PD once the new president was elected. That left the PD with only one possible choice: the reconfirmation of Giorgio Napolitano. Prior to the February elections Napolitano had rejected all requests for him to remain

Table 4-4 Percentages of Total Votes and Seats Allocated in the Elections for the Chamber of Deputies, 2013

Party	% of Vote	Seats Allocated		Total Seats
		Within Italy	Abroad	
PD	25.4	292	5	297
SEL	3.2	37	0	37
Centro Democratico	0.5	6	0	6
Sudtiroler VP	0.4	5	0	5
Total Bersani	29.5	340	5	345
PDL	21.6	97	1	98
NL	4.1	18	0	18
FI	2.0	9	0	9
Others C-R	1.4	0	0	0
Total Berlusconi	29.1	124	1	125
Five Star Movement	25.5	108	1	109
Civic Movement	8.3	37	2	39
UDC	1.7	8	0	8
FLI	0.5	0	0	0
Total Monti	10.5	45	2	47
Civil Revolution-Ingroia	2.2	0	0	0
Fare-Giovannino	1.1	0	0	0
Others	1.7	0	4	4
Total	100.0	617	13	630

Source: Repubblica.it, February 26, 2013.

Notes: PD = Democratic Party; SEL = Left and Liberty; PDL = Peoples Liberty Party; NL = Northern League; FI = Brothers of Italy; UDC = Union of Christian Democrats; FLI = Future and Liberty.

Here we are still referring to the 2008 election results and not to 2013.

as president. But given the events of the previous month, he agreed to accept the nomination. Napolitano's candidacy immediately drew the support of Berlusconi's party that in this manner closed off any option of forging an alliance between the PD and the M5S in support of Stefano Rodota and a government that could assume a powerful anti-Berlusconi direction. Napolitano was able to assemble an overwhelming majority and therefore became the first reelected present of the Republic. Immediately after his election, a governing majority was formed with the support of the PD, PdL and Monti's party, and Enrico Letta (PD) was asked to form a government. The new government was for all practical purposes a creation of the reconfirmed president of the republic who in the bargain agreed to remain in office as long as Letta was allowed to govern. Otherwise, an institutional crisis of vast proportions would have ensued: the government would have resigned, new elections would have been held, and the president of the republic would have resigned. Under these circumstances that could have been disastrous for everyone concerned, the political waters were calmed down. The Letta government was able to come into office and begin facing Italy's economic and financial problems.



President Giulio Napolitano (left) and Prime Minister Enrico Letta during a press conference at the Quirinale presidential palace, in Rome, Saturday, April 27, 2013.

Source: AP Photo/Domenico Stinellis

Table 4-5 Percentages of Total Votes and Seats Allocated in the Elections for the Senate, 2013

Party	% of Vote	Seats Allocated Within Italy	Seats Allocated Abroad	Total Seats
PD	27.4	105	4	109
SEL	3.0	7	0	7
Others C-L	2.2	7	0	7
Total Bersani	32.6	119	4	123
PDL	22.3	98	0	98
NL	4.3	17	0	17
Others C-R	4.1	2	0	2
Total Berlusconi	30.7	117	0	117
5 Star Movement	23.8	54	0	54
With Monti	9.1	18	1	19
Civil Revolution-Ingroia	1.8	0	0	0
Fare-Giovannino	0.9	0	0	0
Others	1.8	1	1	2
Total	100.0	309	6	315

Source: Repubblica.it, February 26, 2013, and Senato della Repubblica, Elenco eletti per liste elettorali.

Notes: PD=Democratic Party; SEL = Left and Liberty; PDL = Peoples Liberty Party; NL = Northern League.

However, from the beginning the choices made by the government were constantly criticized and even blocked by Berlusconi and his immediate entourage who used the survival of the Letta government as potential leverage for changing the PD's stance on Berlusconi's tenure as senator. The confirmation of his conviction for tax fraud by the Court of Cassation (the third level of adjudication) in August 2013 set into motion a process that would eventually force him to lose his parliamentary immunity and Senate seat. According to Italian law (Severino law passed with support of the PDL in 2011) a member of parliament who is convicted and sentenced to more than four years of incarceration automatically loses his seat on the basis of a two-step process: first a majority of the special committee created for this purpose must rule on his expulsion and secondly a majority of the chamber where the parliamentarian is present must also rule against him. These two steps were completed at the end of 2013.

The Changing Nature of Italy's Political Parties

Since the beginning of the Italian republic, the national organized parties have been the dominant political forces in Italy, although the names and leadership of the parties that have become the dominant forces on the left and right of the political spectrum have changed significantly. Since the early 1990s, the Italian political system has converged toward the center, with the result that election outcomes have depended on the ability of parties to occupy the center. It is also true that today political campaigns are contested by coalitions (center-right versus center-left) rather than by individual parties trying to stake out their own individual niche in the political spectrum. The electoral rules and evolving political culture have moved the party system to a more competitive approach.

The Ex-Communists and Orthodox Communists

The PDS (now known as the Left Democrats) was founded in February 1991, only thirty-two months after Achille Occhetto became secretary of the PCI in June 1988. Almost immediately after becoming party secretary, Occhetto, aided by a new generation of leaders of middle-class origin, began to campaign for radical changes in the structure and goals of the PCI. In doing so, he was continuing and accelerating the reformist course set by his predecessors, Enrico Berlinguer and Alessandro Natta. But Occhetto went further; he proposed breaking with the Marxist tradition, establishing close links with the western European Socialist parties, democratizing the internal organization of the PCI, and, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, changing the name of the PCI. At a special party conference held in March 1990, he won approval of his proposal for a party constituent assembly to debate and approve a statute for the new party he intended to create. Despite considerable internal opposition, his motion prevailed by an almost two-thirds majority. After much wrangling over the name, symbols, and goals of the new party, a party congress at Rimini in early 1991 voted to terminate the existence of the old PCI and to establish the new PDS. A week or so later, many of Occhetto's opponents convened to found another new party, the PRC. It pledged to continue the communist tradition.²¹

In one sense, the establishment of the PDS was not a complete break with the past in the history of Italian Communism. Since 1956, when the PCI, responding to the invasion of Hungary by Soviet troops, had shifted from all-out opposition to constructive opposition within the system, the Communist Party had moved in the direction of greater

moderation.²² From 1973 to 1979, under Secretary Berlinguer, the Communist Party had proposed a “historic compromise” that would include all Italian parties willing to uphold the Italian constitution but would emphasize an alliance between the Communists and the Christian Democrats. It had also pledged to come to power through free elections, to maintain a multiparty system, to allow itself to be voted out of office, to enforce the constitution, to forego further nationalizations, and to crack down on both left-wing and right-wing terrorism. Its leaders had occasionally, albeit rather tentatively, spoken out for wage restraint and austerity. And in foreign affairs, the PCI had clearly and repeatedly asserted its independence from Soviet influence. Forcefully and almost prophetically, Berlinguer had raised the “moral question” in Italian politics, asking that his party conduct a sustained fight against systemic corruption and collusion, with organized crime as a top priority. This stance attracted the support of many leading intellectuals, who lent their support to the PCI, in the mode of Antonio Gramsci’s “organic intellectuals.”²³

The PCI’s independent and moderate stance had paid off in electoral terms as well. Practicing Gramsci’s “politics of presence” by offering sensible pragmatic solutions to concrete problems in every area of Italian life, the PCI had won many positions in local, provincial, and regional government. Indeed, some of Italy’s largest cities had Communist mayors. In national elections, the Communist voting percentages peaked in 1976, but as late as 1987, the PCI still commanded 26.6 percent of the Italian vote.

The PCI was, however, facing serious difficulties. Its moderate policies had somewhat dissipated the feelings of distrust that animated many Italians, but at the cost of arousing PCI rank-and-file discontent with its lack of militancy. Its collaboration with the Christian Democrats during 1976–1979 had laid it open to charges that it had joined the establishment and saddled the establishment with part of the blame for hard times. And if the PCI tried to halt the desertion of marginals and students on its left by making militant noises, it lost some moderate votes on its right.

The disintegration of the PSI from 1992 to 1994 gave the PDS a new lease on life. It became, in effect, the only remaining standard-bearer for the moderate left. In the 1994 election campaign, the PDS advocated a program of economic austerity and privatization of state industries; supported reducing taxes and shifting control of tax revenues from the central to the regional and local governments; demanded that pensions be equalized; and called for further progress toward European integration and strengthening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a force for peace. It also promised to back the outgoing prime minister, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, a former director of the Bank of Italy and champion of austerity.²⁴ By contrast, the PRC, its ally in the Progressive Alliance, favored a pump-priming program of decreasing work hours and increasing pensions, and it expressed opposition to NATO. Although its more radical ally cast some doubt on the credibility of the PDS, the PDS nevertheless gained considerable ground in 1994.

At the end of 1994, after the resignation of Achille Occhetto and the rise to power of a new PDS leader, Massimo D’Alema, the PDS appeared to have taken over the moderate left area of the political spectrum once occupied by the PSI. In the 1996 election, it was the leading party in Prodi’s Olive Tree coalition, and when Prodi became prime minister, it became a leading protagonist in the Prodi cabinet. After Prodi was forced to resign in October 1998, D’Alema formed a center-left cabinet that was broadened to include both the PCd’I, a new orthodox Communist Party that had seceded from the PRC to support

the Olive Tree coalition, and the center-right Democratic Union for the Republic (UDR), headed by former president Francesco Cossiga.

The D'Alema government continued to pursue monetary stability, controlled public spending, and austerity to pave the way for Italian admission to the euro area in early 1999. The PRC, headed by Fausto Bertinotti, supported instead heavier government spending (especially in the south), a thirty-five-hour workweek, the perpetuation of the existing cumbersome and expensive welfare structures, and opposition to NATO and the European Union. It was clear that the PDS and its leader faced a difficult balancing act, and that the policy cleavage between the PDS, on the one hand, and the PRC and PCd'I, on the other, posed a critical threat to the future of the Italian left.²⁵

After heavy losses in the April 2000 regional elections to the center-right parties, D'Alema resigned and was succeeded by Treasury and Budget Minister Giuliano Amato. Amato reconstituted the center-left coalition, resisting opposition demands to call an early election. The party returned to a prominent position within the center-left in the 2001 and 2006 elections. Its position as the largest party in Prodi's Olive Tree coalition remained uncontested. But it also remained a supporter of center-left unity and recognized the need to find new organizational forms to unite the center-left. Under the leadership of Piero Fassino, who became secretary of the party in 2001, it continued to push tirelessly for the unity of Socialist parties within Italy and Europe and to extend the center-left coalition as much as possible by offering in 2001 a few of its safe seats under the previous single-member districts and offering in 2006 places on the party lists in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Olive Tree list in the Senate. The strategy of working in the direction of keeping the center-left unified paid off in May 2006 with the election of Giorgio Napolitano, the historic leader of the reformist wing of the former PCI, to the highest post in the country. In 2007 the drive to unite the moderate parties of the left found its point of arrival with the creation of the Democratic Party (PD). After the experimentation with a unified party list in the 2004 European elections and 2005 regional elections, the leaders felt that the time was ripe to create a unified party. On October 14, 2007, a new leader of the party, Walter Veltroni, was elected overwhelmingly through a party primary with 75 percent of the vote on the part of 4 million party supporters.²⁶ As a consequence, the split with the dissenting voices in the old DS—the leftist minority led by Fabio Mussi and Cesare Salvi—and the Socialist-aligned fringe led by Gavino Angius and Mauro Zani remained outside of the new party. Mussi and Salvi brought their dissenting leftist group into an electoral alliance with the PRC, PCd'I, and Greens in preparation for the 2008 elections and came away with a very disappointing 3.4 percent of the vote for the entire Left-Rainbow alliance. The other dissenters joined Boselli's Socialist SDI and stopped at 1.0 percent of the vote. The vast bulk of center-left voters backed the PD with 33.7 percent of the total vote.

In the run-up to the 2013 elections the PD undertook to hold primaries to choose the party leader. In 2009 PierLuigi Bersani won over Dario Franceschini who had taken over after Walter Veltroni had resigned after failing to win the 2008 elections. In 2012 primaries were held again to select the center-left's candidate for the premiership. This time Pier Luigi Bersani won a close race with Matteo Renzi, the mayor of Florence, and became the center-left's candidate for prime minister in the 2013 elections. After his inability to put together a governing majority, Bersani resigned as secretary of the party

and opened up prospect that Renzi would become the new party leader, which took place at the end of 2013

The Death of the Socialist Party

After the returns were in for the election of 1996, it was clear that the PSI was, to all effects and purposes, history. A tiny splinter group, the SI, had been allotted twelve single-member district candidacies under an electoral agreement with the predominantly ex-Christian Democratic Dini List. Thanks to the Dini List's support, it carried three of those twelve districts. But because more than three deputies are needed to form a parliamentary group, the three lonely Socialist deputies had to join a group of unaffiliated members of the Chamber of Deputies.

The demise of the PSI severely disappointed those who had hoped that this party would lead Italy to a brighter future along the lines of the Labour Party in the United Kingdom, the Socialist Party in France, or the Social Democrats in Germany. Its gradual disengagement from its 1946–1956 alliance with the Communist Party and its entry into a center-left cabinet with the Christian Democrats in 1963 had seemed to usher in a new and progressive era in Italian politics, but this “opening to the left” had a disillusioning outcome. The Socialist Party simply became a captive junior partner in Christian Democratic-dominated center-left cabinets. It proved unable to have much impact on government policy or to spur the Christian Democrats into speeding up progress toward social reform. By contrast, it proved very adept at obtaining its share of patronage. Just as the PSI’s reputation had been seriously damaged by its earlier dependence on the Communist Party, similarly, its post-1963 alliance with the ruling Christian Democrats had overtones of dependency and opportunism. The result was electoral decline.

Efforts by the PSI to stem that electoral decline and establish a separate identity were partly successful in electoral terms, especially after Bettino Craxi took over as party leader in 1976. But the PSI’s attempts to formulate attractive policies had a reactive quality to them. It almost seemed as if the Socialist leaders were more interested in distinguishing their party from its giant neighbors on the political spectrum (the PCI and the DC) than in developing a coherent policy line of their own. This tactical opportunism seemed to pay off at the polls, especially after Craxi became prime minister and pursued moderate, pragmatic policies in the domestic and foreign spheres from 1983 to 1987. In 1987 the PSI polled an almost unprecedented 14.3 percent of the vote—its high-water mark since 1946 (see Table 4-2). And in 1992 it dipped only slightly—to 13.6 percent—but that result proved to be a huge disappointment vis-à-vis what the party expected to achieve in the elections.

By 1994 the PSI was reduced to the status of a discredited splinter party that desperately needed an alliance with the PDS to pick up a handful of seats in parliament. After the 1994 election, the PSI, thoroughly disgraced by the scandals of “Kickback City,” closed up shop. To avoid a prison sentence after a conviction for corruption, Craxi fled into exile to Tunisia, where he died of heart failure in January 2000.

Some new movements were founded to succeed the defunct PSI, but the election of 1996 seemed to indicate that the old PSI tradition, so thoroughly tainted by Craxian opportunism and corruption, could not be revived. If there was to be a renaissance of Italian socialism, it seemed more likely that it would be led by the PDS, which had staked a powerful and rather credible claim to the moderate left space on Italy’s new political

spectrum. In 2001 many of the old PSI leaders, such as Gianni De Michelis and Bobo Craxi (Bettino Craxi's son), who had fled to Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, came together to form the "New PSI," but in the PR part of the ballot it garnered only 0.9 percent of the vote. In 2004 another attempt was made to extend the new PSI to include other parts of the Socialist diaspora (e.g., Claudio Signorile) with greater leftist tendencies and a desire to assume an intermediate position between the two large coalitions, but the attempt was hijacked by De Michelis, who continued to support the center-right coalition in exchange for an undersecretary position in the Berlusconi government. Finally, during the 2005 regional elections the Signorile group of Socialists joined with autonomous Socialist forces and the SI to create the foundation of a revised, leftist-leaning Socialist Party that could be part of the new center-left coalition. In regions such as Puglia and Calabria, they were instrumental in bringing the center-left to victory. In the run-up to the 2006 parliamentary elections, Bobo Craxi and Signorile joined the center-left coalition (De Michelis remained allied with Berlusconi's center-right bloc) and put the center-left over the top with their 115,105 votes. Had Craxi and Signorile not shifted their allegiance to Prodi, the center-left would not have won the election. In 2007, even though the PD had as one of its main objectives the unity of social democratic forces in Italy, the official Socialist Party never became an integral part of the new political formation. Instead, it preferred to remain aloof. In 2008 it eventually succumbed to the dictates of the electoral law and disappeared from the Italian parliament along with the non-PD left. In the 2008 election the PD made a relatively good showing with 33.2 percent of the vote, but the rest of the left—extreme left (PRC and the Left-Rainbow Coalition) and moderate left (PS)—ceased to enjoy parliamentary representation and effectively disappeared from the national political debate.

The Successors to the Christian Democrats

From 1992 to 1994 the DC suffered the same fate that had befallen the PSI. Both parties, along with their minor center allies, were irrevocably damaged by the series of judicial inquiries that revealed how corrupt, and in some cases how closely linked to organized crime, many of their more prominent leaders had been. The growing competition from the NL also played a role in shaking Christian Democratic morale. Heavy Socialist and Christian Democratic losses in the local elections of December 1993 revealed the extent of public disaffection and induced the DC to terminate its own existence. On January 18, 1994, the DC was officially dissolved, to be replaced by the PPI, a title meant to conjure up memories of priest Don Luigi Sturzo's Popular Party, which had led a brief but relatively honorable existence from 1919 through most of 1926. The leader of the new party, Mino Martinazzoli, had not been one of the top DC hierarchs and was untainted by the Kickback City scandals. Under his leadership, the Popular Party steered a resolutely centrist course, rejecting overtures from both the left and the right alliances. Its only ally was also centrist: the Pact for National Renewal, led by Mario Segni, a former Christian Democrat. In 1994 the two parties polled only 15.7 percent of the total vote (see Table 4-2). Another group of former DC members—the CCD—rejected Martinazzoli's glorious isolation and chose to run candidates for parliament under Berlusconi's center-right Forza Italia.

The PPI and the Segni Pact center parties were able to poll a combined total of only 15.7 percent of the vote in the parliamentary election of 1994.²⁷ Their numbers were an unmistakable sign of the sharply reduced influence of the Catholic Church and the interest

groups that used to revolve around the old DC, such as those representing farmers, trade unions, shopkeepers, and artisans (these groups are described in more detail later in this chapter). To be sure, there were a few other splinter Catholic lists (the vote of the CCD could not be ascertained, because it formed part of the Berlusconi Forza Italia lists), but the total Catholic vote was well below 20 percent.

As a party, the DC was, first and foremost, heterogeneous and catchall in nature: it ranged across a large part of the Italian political spectrum, from moderate left to moderate right, and it included in its ranks supporters of virtually every type of alliance or cabinet combination. Among those who voted for the DC were industrialists, workers, small farmers, housewives, pensioners, the unemployed, and shopkeepers—a mixed bag, indeed.

The collapse and fragmentation of the DC constituted a revolutionary development in Italian politics. From 1946 through 1993, the DC had been the country's leading party. From 1946 to 1981, every Italian prime minister had been a Christian Democrat, and unlike the Communists and the Socialists, the Christian Democrats had formed a major part of every cabinet. But the question of what alliances the party should form had been a perpetual bone of contention and had helped to keep the DC divided into warring factions.

Not only was the DC faction-ridden, but also the factions were bewilderingly volatile. After the “historic compromise” of 1979, the factions quickly began to shed their ideological, social, and policy positions, and within the space of one or two years, a faction might have completely reversed its position on an issue involving party policies or party alliances. Party competition was then transferred from the ideological and programmatic arena to the accumulation of financial resources for the party organization and leadership through kickbacks on public contracts but to the point that it became unsustainable on the part of small and medium-level contractors. In other words, the DC’s system of corruption collapsed because of the need to generate increasing amounts of money for the party elites. Once the judicial system began to investigate the corruption, the party was doomed to dissolution.²⁸ The impact was particularly devastating in northern Italy, where the Christian Democrats had mobilized support on the basis of Catholic social and moral values and the Socialists had done the same on the basis of their lay and reformist goals. Yet even before the investigation into the financial kickbacks collected by the party, Christian Democratic support had already begun to drain off in the north.

Policy matters also divided the DC—and more so than for other Italian parties. Party members included strong supporters of private enterprise and champions of the state sector, representatives of management and spokesmen for organized labor, diehard opponents of divorce and advocates of a more liberal set of moral codes for Italian society. In fact, the party had essentially tried to be all things to all people. As Christian Democrat Aldo Moro once put it in a revealing slip of the tongue, “The DC emphasizes everything.”²⁹ Perhaps the one common denominator of the DC was its distributive approach to public policy. The party had built its strength, especially in the south, by judiciously allocating contracts, jobs, and public money among party supporters, but prior to 1979 it had not instituted a systematic kickback operation. The party was adequately supported by party members and financing from the state and parastate sectors.

The ambiguity and ambivalence of the DC had already taken their toll in election results. Even before the electoral debacles of 1983 and 1992, the DC had been unable, all through the 1960s and 1970s, to regain the 40 percent level it had once attained.

In addition to voter reaction against its lack of a clear sense of purpose, the DC had suffered the inevitable erosion that affects any dominant party after an extended period in power. In the 1980s party leaders had tried to commit the party to a program of public austerity, to an abandonment of excessive reliance on the spoils system, and to an emphasis on productivity gains rather than purely distributive policies. But this initiative failed to be convincing in a system in which all of the governing parties had begun to use public contracts to systematically generate financial resources. One of the main causes of the collapse of the DC and the other parties of the five-party center-left coalition was the inability of the party elites to distance themselves from those accused and convicted of taking bribes. By 1994 the inability to purify the internal party apparatus had led to the disappearance of the Socialists, Social Democrats, Republicans, and Liberals (PSI, PSDI, PRI, and PLI) from the political scene. As for the DC, it led to schisms and the birth of new Catholic parties.³⁰

The Catholic camp was still divided and weak in the 1996 election. The center-left Prodi List, Popular Party, Italian Renewal, and CCD/CDU polled together only 16.9 percent of the vote.³¹ After the election the Catholic forces underwent a further repositioning. Francesco Cossiga, a former president of Italy, and Clemente Mastella, labor minister in the 1994 Berlusconi cabinet, formed a new party of ex-Christian Democrats called the UDR. This center-right party apparently received much of its support from legislators elected on the CCD/CDU party lists. In October 1998, of the 630 members of the Chamber of Deputies, 67 adhered to the Popular Party (same number as in 1996), 21 adhered to Dini's Italian Renewal (24 in 1996), and 31 identified with the UDR (the CCD/CDU had elected 30 in 1996, but it was not listed as a party group in October 1998). Apart from a few splinter deputies, the Catholic deputies totaled 119, or 18.9 percent of the membership.

Although the presence of political Catholicism in parliament was dramatically reduced by the electoral revolution of the 1990s, it was still a formidable force, despite its internal divisions. In 2001 they continued to align themselves with the two opposing coalitions. The UDC that brought together the CCD of Pier Ferdinando Casini and the CDU of Rocco Buttiglione was placed under the organizational leadership of Marco Follini and continued to operate as a political ally of the center-right. In fact, after the 2001 election Casini was elected president of the Chamber of Deputies and Buttiglione was appointed minister for EU affairs and then, in 2004, minister of culture. After the debacle of the center-right in the 2005 regional elections, however, Follini and a part of the UDC began to openly criticize Berlusconi for continuing to insist on passing the regional devolution bill championed by the NL and the minister for administrative reform, Umberto Bossi. According to Follini, the collapse of support for Forza Italia and the National Alliance in the south was traceable to their support of Bossi's initiative, whereas the overall strength of the UDC lay in its criticism of the bill and its expected negative impact on the financial stability of southern regions and local governments. The reaction of Forza Italia and the NL encouraged the UDC to oust Follini as party secretary and replace him with Alberto Cesa, a member of the European Parliament supported by Casini. In the 2006 election, the UDC did quite well, garnering 6.8 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies and thirty-nine seats versus the 3.2 percent it received five years earlier. In 2007 the UDC became increasingly critical of the radical opposition to the Prodi government encouraged by

Berlusconi, and as a consequence in November of that year Casini rejected Berlusconi's offer to join the PdL. In the 2008 election the UDC was the only party not aligned with either the PD or the PdL to gain parliamentary representation. The party polled a respectable 5.6 percent in the Chamber of Deputies with thirty-six seats and 5.7 percent in the Senate with three seats. In the 2009 European parliamentary elections the party increased its support to 6.5 percent of the vote and in the 2010 regional elections promised to become the "kingmaker" by aligning itself with either the PD or PdL in a completely ad hoc manner based on expected electoral results. In 2013 Casini's UDC joined with Monti to form the centrist alliance, Civic Movement, but the union of centrist parties (the dream of Catholics since the demise of the DC) proved to be, once again, a disaster. The UDC list came away with only 1.8 percent of the vote while the overall coalition polled a disappointing 10.5 percent. At the end of 2013 the Civic Movement was dissolved as a unitary bloc and each component group broke off to form its own political formation.

The Minor Parties: A Forest of Shrubs

Before 1994 the minor center parties included the Social Democrats (PSDI), whose commitment to social democracy appeared to focus on public works, social welfare measures, and a preoccupation with the interests of pensioners; the Republicans (PRI), a moderately left-of-center party committed to fiscal austerity and honesty in government, whose leader, Giovanni Spadolini, was the first non-Christian Democratic prime minister since 1945; and the Liberals (PLI), a party of the moderate right, competing with the Christian Democrats for the votes of business owners and large landowners. The one common strand connecting these three parties was their commitment to democracy and to a secular society. They tended to side with the DC on many issues but not on matters having to do with church-state relations.

In the years after 1946 the minor center parties registered very modest electoral performances: their combined share of the total vote was usually less than 10 percent. But the scandals of Kickback City and the new election law of 1993 sounded the death knell for these parties, which disappeared from the Italian parliament. They were replaced by a multitude of "shrubs"—a large number of splinter parties that allied themselves with major parties such as the PDS and Forza Italia in the hope of being allotted a few safe seats. Once such "shrubs" enter parliament, they join the group of unaffiliated deputies, because their respective splinter parties are not strong enough to be allowed to form parliamentary groups of their own.

In February 1999 former prime minister Romano Prodi formed yet another shrub party, the Democrats for the Olive Tree. Prodi was seeking to strengthen the center-left coalition, but critics feared that his initiative would further fragment the center-left. Once Prodi became president of the European Commission in March 1999, the Democrats joined with the PPI and the Dini List to form the Margherita (daisy). This Catholic party did quite well in the 2001 election by becoming the third-largest party in the country and shifting the focus of the Catholic vote from the center-right to the center-left coalition. Party head Francesco Rutelli also became the prime minister-designate for the center-left coalition in the 2001 election. Despite his defeat by Berlusconi, Rutelli remained president of the Margherita and a major actor in center-left politics until Prodi, at the end of his presidency of the European Commission, returned as leader of the center-left and as

prime minister-designate for the 2006 election. In the Chamber of Deputies, the Margherita joined the Democrats of the Left to form the Olive Tree coalition, which received 31.3 percent of the vote. In the Senate elections, however, the two parties ran separate lists, and the Margherita received 10.5 percent versus the DS's 17.5 percent, a level 3.3 percent below their Olive Tree total. In the 2008 elections the only parties that gained seats in the Chamber or Senate were the regionalist parties representing Trentino-Alto Adige (SVP), Valle d'Aosta, and Sicily (MPA). In the first two cases the seat allocation was not bound by the electoral rules applying in the rest of the country. In the case of the MPA, the party received two seats in the Senate and eight seats in the Chamber because it was allied with the PdL along with the NL. None of the other minor parties received parliamentary representation. The MPA presented itself in the 2009 European parliamentary elections allied with the Right of Storace and Santachè, but the result was much lower than what both parties received individually in the 2008 elections. The MPA electorate seemed to have remained solid, but the right-wing voters did not respond positively to this pragmatic electoral alliance. In 2012 with the resignation of Raffaele Lombardo from the presidency of the Sicilian regional government, the MPA went into a tailspin and quickly disintegrated. One year later the combined vote for Lombardo's MPA and Gianfranco Micciche's Great South (Grande Sud) fell to 0.6 percent.³² The dream of an autonomous political force in the south similar to the NL was cut short by Lombardo's mismanagement of the Sicilian regional government during his tenure and the rise of the new populist force represented by the M5S.

The Northern League

In the local and regional elections of 1990, a newcomer appeared on the Italian political scene: the Lombard League, which polled 19 percent of the vote in Lombardy (equivalent to 4.8 percent of the vote in Italy). Far outnumbering similar regional leagues elsewhere in northern Italy, the Lombard League stood for greater regional autonomy, restrictions on immigration from foreign countries, and an end to the "colonization" by southern Italians of the bureaucratic field services in northern Italy. It also demanded that the northern regions have greater control over their own revenue base instead of being taxed heavily by the central government to finance allegedly unproductive public investments in the south. In the election of 1992, the Lombard League formed an electoral bloc—the NL, in which it was the preponderant element—with several other regional leagues in northern and north-central Italy. Its showing in the election of 1992 was little short of spectacular for a new competitor in Italian party politics. With 8.7 percent of the vote in Italy as a whole (see Table 4-2), the NL received more than 30 percent of the vote in Lombardy, allowing it to replace the DC as the leading party in some Lombard provinces. And it won no less than fifty-five seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In short, it had rapidly become the fourth-largest party in the Italian party system.

The NL made further progress at the local level when the PSI and the DC, hitherto dominant in Lombard local government, were brought to their knees by the wave of scandals and resulting indictments that captured public attention in 1992 and 1993. In local elections held in several Lombard provincial capitals in 1992, the NL outpolled both the DC and the PSI. In September 1993 Marco Formentini of the NL was elected mayor of Milan, a city in which the PSI had held sway for the previous twenty years.

In the 1994 election, after considerable vacillation, the volatile leader of the NL, Umberto Bossi, formed an electoral alliance in northern Italy with Berlusconi's Forza Italia and with the CCD. In the election of March 27 and 28, 1994, the NL polled not only 8.4 percent of the vote cast in Italy (see Table 4-2) but also about 30.0 percent of the vote cast in northern Italy, where the great bulk of its strength was concentrated. Thanks to the NL's electoral alliance with Forza Italia, its candidates won far more single-member district seats, 111, in the Chamber of Deputies than would have been possible under a system of PR. By contrast, Forza Italia and its CCD allies won 139 seats, and the National Alliance won 109.

After the election, both the NL and the National Alliance of former neo-Fascists entered the Berlusconi cabinet. This center-right coalition, however, was internally divided from the start. Bossi disliked and distrusted both Berlusconi and the former neo-Fascists. He accused Berlusconi of not taking sufficiently bold steps toward a federal or quasi-federal Italy, of making some very questionable appointments to the regulatory boards charged with supervising the public sector in the field of mass communications, and of attempting to interfere with the way the judiciary was handling the investigations of corrupt practices by politicians and business leaders. As for the former neo-Fascists, Bossi claimed they were still untrustworthy because of their past connections with fascism. He also wanted privatization to be stepped up and was antagonized by the National Alliance's insistence that the public sector remain strong so that it might continue to transfer subsidies and public contracts to the south. As a result of Bossi's attitudes, the Berlusconi cabinet was paralyzed by internal conflicts, and in December 1994 Berlusconi resigned as prime minister, bitterly denouncing Bossi after he joined with the PPI in tabling a vote of no confidence against the government. With the creation of the Dini government, the NL continued to vote with the center-left, and it denounced Berlusconi for ties with the Mafia.

In 1996 the NL obtained 10.1 percent of the vote but only fifty-nine seats in the Chamber of Deputies (see Tables 4-2 and 4-3). Its percentage of the total vote had risen from 8.4 percent, but it won far fewer seats (59 instead of 111) because it was no longer part of an alliance with other center-right parties. Consequently, its candidates in single-member districts could no longer count on the help and support of the center-right alliance. By late 1998 the NL had fifty-eight members in the Chamber of Deputies—less than half of its 1994–1996 delegation.³³

During the campaign preceding the April 21, 1996, election, the NL adopted a more militant and dramatic posture. Instead of speaking of autonomy and a federal Italy, its leader, Bossi, spoke of the establishment of a northern state of Padania, which would secede from the rest of Italy and proclaim its independence. Lacking allies, the NL expected to lose many seats in parliament—as, in fact, it did. But it expected to play a balance of power role, because it believed that neither the center-left nor the center-right would be able to command a majority in a deadlocked parliament.

These hopes, however, were doomed to disappointment. Facing an unanticipated center-left majority in the new parliament, the NL launched a series of demonstrations along the entire length of the Po River. But mass participation in these demonstrations fell far short of expectations, and in the next few years the power and prestige of the NL visibly waned. It suffered losses in local and provincial elections, including the mayoralty election in Milan, and its strength was increasingly confined to the midsize cities and small

towns of the Alpine foothills. Under these circumstances, Bossi had to modify his message. In early 1998 independence was abandoned as an immediate goal and presented as a long-range possibility, to be preceded by experimentation with a federal system under which the north would enjoy a high degree of fiscal autonomy.³⁴

The waning electoral fortunes of the NL at the end of the 1990s forced the leadership to reconsider its go-it-alone strategy, and by the regional elections in 2000 it had decided to go back to the creation of an electoral bloc with the center-right parties. This shift in strategy helped the party to prepare for the 2001 election on the basis of a strong relationship with Berlusconi and guarantee of ministerial posts, but the move also disoriented a large number of followers who had supported the party in the past because of its antagonist position in relation to both electoral blocs. As a result, the party polled 3.9 percent in the 2001 election. Yet even though the party lost almost two-thirds of its previous electoral base, it was awarded powerful ministries in the new Berlusconi government. It is clear that the Berlusconi–Bossi relationship underpinned the center-right coalition; Berlusconi repeatedly demonstrated his reluctance to oppose policies and actions supported by Bossi, especially constitutional reform aimed at extreme federalism. The radical reform of the constitution championed by Bossi was finally passed in parliament at the end of 2005, but it was opposed by most regional governments in its proposal to devolve from the national to regional level powers over the provision of health services, education, and the police. What most disturbed the regions was that the reform transferred the responsibilities for the delivery of these services to the regional level but without adding to the regions' revenue or taxing powers. The central state remained in control of the country's purse strings. During the spring of 2005 Bossi suffered a stroke that left him significantly incapacitated, and the control of the party passed to a group of leaders who vied for control. In 2006 the NL teamed up with the Autonomous League of southern Italy (MPA) in the hopes of making major inroads, but the new alliance gained only 4.6 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies, a slight increase from the NL's 3.9 percent in 2001. In 2008 the NL returned to political prominence with 8.3 percent of the vote in the Chamber, and with sixty seats in the Chamber and twenty-five seats in the Senate the party was able to dictate to a great extent the government's program on institutional reform and the economy during the following years. In essence, as a result of the 2008 election Berlusconi's majority was dependent on the votes of the NL in both houses of parliament. In the 2010 regional elections the NL was able to elect two of its leaders (Roberto Cota in Piedmont and Luca Zaia in Veneto) to the post of regional presidents in alliance with the PdL, and the party represented a powerful force within the fourth Berlusconi government (2008–2011). However, with the loss of power in 2011 by Berlusconi the NL became one of the few parties voting consistently against the Monti government. One year later the party was racked by a series of scandals revealing a systematic misuse of electoral refunds from the state for the financing of Bossi's family and immediate entourage; they were accused of using party funds to purchase cars, boats, and diamonds for their own use and pleasure. The scandal significantly weakened the NL in the 2013 elections where it gained 4.1 percent of the vote. However, in compensation the Lega's candidate for president of the Lombard regional government, Roberto Maroni, succeeded in being elected with the support of Berlusconi's PdL. However, Maroni and Bossi had a falling out over the direction of

the party in June 2013, and it became clear that the NL was going to remain in turmoil for the foreseeable future.

Forza Italia

Unlike the other parties discussed in this chapter, Forza Italia (Go Italy) was created only a few months before the 1994 election as the personal political vehicle of one man, Silvio Berlusconi, head of a vast private media, publishing, real estate, and retail merchandising empire held together by the giant holding company Fininvest and owner of the Milan soccer club. Alarmed by the victory in the municipal elections of December 1993 of the left bloc against a demoralized and discredited right-center that was all too often represented by neo-Fascist candidates, Berlusconi decided to launch his own party and pick up votes from former Christian Democrats and former Socialists. With the aid of his media properties, he created and funded a network of about 1,200 Forza Italia clubs, which attracted about 1 million members.³⁵ These clubs were established to give Berlusconi a base of popular support and were not really designed to exercise policymaking or control functions or to practice internal democracy.

Unlike the uninspiring and rather pedestrian platform of the born-again moderate leftists of the PDS, Forza Italia presented the disillusioned Italian electorate with a series of right-wing populist appeals. It promised not austerity but a “new Italian miracle” in the form of tax cuts and a single income tax bracket at 33 percent, reductions in the deficit, privatization of health care and pensions resulting in lower costs and higher benefits, a million new jobs, and a quasi-presidential system resembling the French Fifth Republic. In short, it offered new vistas rather than the humdrum moderate formulas put forth by the PDS.³⁶ In the 1994 election, Forza Italia received 21.0 percent of the votes cast for PR candidates in the Chamber of Deputies (including 3.5 percent cast for the CCD) and gained 111 seats (27 additional seats were allotted to the CCD candidates, who were allowed to represent the Forza Italia slate in far more than their proportionate share of single-member districts). Because Forza Italia’s 21 percent represented a plurality of the votes cast, Berlusconi was asked by President Scalfaro to form a cabinet.

The Berlusconi cabinet, like most Italian cabinets, was never a united team. Two of its most important component parties, the NL and the National Alliance, bickered constantly. And the NL’s Umberto Bossi sniped continually at Berlusconi and his policies from a vantage point outside the cabinet. Berlusconi himself proved to be a disappointing and vacillating leader, unable to meet the far-reaching expectations he had raised during the election campaign of March 1994. Also, only a few months after taking office he came under judicial investigation for bribery and conflict of interest in relation to his vast private holdings of which he had failed to divest himself.

During Berlusconi’s seven months in office, he attempted unsuccessfully to restrict the power of the judiciary to conduct investigations into political and business corruption and to place suspected culprits under preventive detention. Because the ongoing investigations were affecting his own Fininvest holding company and were implicating his own brother in a bribery scandal, Berlusconi’s actions aroused a great deal of suspicion about his motives. His long-delayed budgetary proposals for deep cuts in health and pension benefits resulted in a storm of popular protest and had to be watered down. And he provoked

widespread criticism for his efforts to intervene in the internal management of RAI, the state-owned broadcasting organization, and of the Bank of Italy.

The November 1994 municipal elections in various parts of Italy revealed a highly adverse voter reaction to the Berlusconi cabinet. In those elections, Forza Italia, which had polled 21.0 percent of the vote in the general election of March 1994 and had risen to 30.6 percent of the vote in the elections to the European Parliament in June 1994, dropped to a mere 8.4 percent. Under the pressure of judicial investigations, economic and political unrest, and constant bickering among members of his unwieldy coalition, Berlusconi finally resigned as prime minister in December 1994 once the NL joined the opposition in a vote of no confidence in the government. After the vote, President Scalfaro refused to accede to Berlusconi's request to dissolve parliament and call new elections. Instead, Lamberto Dini, an independent who had served as minister of the Treasury in the Berlusconi cabinet and second-ranking administrator of the Bank of Italy, was designated to form a cabinet. Dini was able to secure a parliamentary majority through the combined support of the left and center parties along with the NL.

The fall of the Berlusconi cabinet, and the strong possibility that Berlusconi might eventually be indicted and even convicted for corrupt practices, raised serious questions about the future of Forza Italia. The party had been compared to the Gaullist Party in France. But the Gaullists had been led by an incorruptible and untarnished military hero—a far cry from a business magnate like Berlusconi, whose actions and associations were far from immaculate. It appeared conceivable that the decline of the DC in 1993–1994 might be followed by the similarly dramatic decline of Forza Italia.

The decline did arrive, but it was not as far-reaching or as sustained as many predicted. In the 1996 election, Forza Italia suffered a very slight setback. It garnered 20.6 percent of the vote, compared with 21.0 percent in 1994, and it won 123 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, compared with 112 in 1994. The gain in seats was illusory: it simply represented the number of single-member districts that had been allotted to NL candidates by the Pole of Liberty alliance in 1994 and were now allotted by the same alliance to Forza Italia candidates. But with the defection of the NL, the center-right alliance had suffered a clear-cut defeat, and the center-left came to power.

Yet Berlusconi remained the leader of Forza Italia, and he continued to survive both his legal problems stemming from his 1998 conviction on bribery and fraud charges and the increasing debts of his business empire, for which he frequently sought special privileges from the Italian state. But after Fininvest (or the holding company Mediaset) was floated on the Milan stock market and the stock rose quickly, Berlusconi's financial problems vanished.

Despite his faults and legal problems, Berlusconi retained the support of the middle-class masses that backed him in 1994 and 2001. The polls showed that about one-third of the electorate expressed hostility to him because of his fraudulent record, one-third felt he was unjustly accused, and one-third was neutral and believed that the judges may have gone too far. Whereas the NL is a populist middle-class party that appeals to the industrialized small towns and small business owners of the Alpine foothills, Berlusconi's Forza Italia is a populist middle-class party that appeals to the great metropolitan areas of the north.³⁷ In 2001 it polled 29.4 percent of the vote and was by far the largest political party group in parliament with 176 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In the 2004 European

parliamentary elections and 2005 regional elections, its electoral fortunes waned, but it remained the top party and the leading force of the center-right coalition. In 2006 it bounced back to 23.6 percent of the vote on the heels of Berlusconi's media blitz during the electoral campaign. He appeared continually on news programs and on variety shows, and he called in to make his presence felt on the commentaries to the weekend soccer matches. Through his constant presence on television, he was able to keep the campaign focused on himself and his coalition as the champions of the middle class against the encroachments of the state and the privileges of the "power brokers." In his attacks against the judiciary and those who would impose "rules" on the country's entrepreneurs, he alienated a good part of the business establishment, organized labor, the cooperative movement, and artisans, but he still was able to retain in his coalition a good part of northern Italy (Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Piedmont) and slim margins in some of the southern regions such as Sicily and Puglia. In the rest of the country, the party was not able to return to its strong 2001 result and lost significant support in central and southern Italy. After the creation of the PdL in November 2007 and the collapse of the second Prodi government in January 2008, Berlusconi had the opportunity for making a significant electoral comeback. In the April 2008 election his unified party succeeded in gaining 37.4 percent of the vote, the most any single party had won since the 1979 election result for the DC. That result was repeated in the 2009 European parliamentary elections with 35.3 percent of the vote.

Despite all of the socioeconomic difficulties that have characterized Italy in 2008 and 2009, Berlusconi continued to enjoy widespread public support. Prior to 2011 his coalition projected a solid front in both houses of parliament, and there was absolutely no doubt that Berlusconi was in charge of both his party and his government. With its hands tied by the overall level of government debt, Berlusconi's government did little to stimulate the economy, nor did it undertake to introduce serious changes in the system of welfare or education. In fact, most of the attention during his first years in office was focused on his attempts to avoid appearing in court in cases dealing with the corruption of judges (SME trial), the diversion of funds abroad (the conviction of David Mills), and funding of his initial real estate investments by the Mafia (Dell'Utri and Spatuzza trials). When the first law shielding Berlusconi from appearing in court (Alfano law) was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court, Berlusconi's majority introduced a new one to gain time and avoid damaging court appearances. But the courts have been finally able to catch up with Berlusconi. In 2013 a number of the trials he has been unable to avoid have produced verdicts that were no longer avoidable.

At the beginning of 2009 a lot of public attention was focused on Berlusconi's private life, including his affairs with call girls (Patrizia D'Addario), his friendship with minors (Noemi Letizia and Karima el-Mahroug), and the request of a divorce from his wife (Veronica Lario). From 2008 to 2011 these stories dominated the headlines and gossip columns. In Italy's male chauvinist culture such developments are not considered necessarily harmful to a politician's reputation but rather a confirmation of the virility and determination of the leader. Berlusconi's ability to use natural disasters (the Abruzzo earthquake), international meetings (G-7 and G-20 in 2008), and sporting events for his own purposes are legendary and have transformed him into a political leader with a huge and loyal following.³⁸ His resilience and political genius was proven again by bringing his

center-right coalition from a disastrous beginning to almost victory in the 2013 elections and being one of the three pillars supporting the Letta government. But it is clear that the PdL has to face the problem of the post-Berlusconi period: What will happen to the party once Berlusconi is gone? Will it crumble or will it gain a new life as Italy's main center-right party?

That turning point seems to have arrived on October 2, 2013, when at the last minute Berlusconi changed his mind in declaring his party's support of the Letta government. During the previous week he withdrew all of his ministers from the government and threatened resignation of all of the parliamentarians elected by the party in February 2013. His position had been opposed by Angelino Alfano, the party secretary, and all of the five ministers in the Letta government. The threat of a schism in the party forced Berlusconi to back down and accept the fact that his twenty-year grip over the party had come to an end. The new crop of party leaders had succeeded in calling Berlusconi's bluff. With the cancellation of Berlusconi's election to the senate his days as party leader were numbered.

The "Post-Fascists"

National Alliance. From the late 1940s until 1994, the neo-Fascists of the MSI were little more than a minor irritant on the right flank of DC. They reached their peak in 1972 with 8.7 percent of the vote, whereas they usually polled between 5.0 percent and 7.0 percent (see Table 4-2). Their positions on public issues seemed conventionally ultraconservative but contradictory in nature. On economic issues they opposed national economic planning but were in favor of a national public sector and heavy defense spending, and they favored restrictions on free enterprise. On social issues they have also been very conservative. They favored repeal of the divorce law in the 1974 referendum campaign and were against abortion. Nevertheless, their commitment to a corporate state based on functional representation, as well as the undercurrent of violence that seemed to lurk behind their speeches and their party rituals, placed them under much suspicion. The other Italian parties generally treated them as untouchables, and their external backing for a coalition cabinet was considered tainted and unacceptable.

Between 1992 and 1994, under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini, a serious effort was made to transform the MSI into a mainstream conservative party, the National Alliance, committed to maintaining liberty and democracy. The party's Fascist past was soft-pedaled. Although some diehards still uttered racist and Fascist statements, Fini rejected anti-Semitism, said that fascism belonged to the past, and projected a moderate and reasonable image. His new party advocated a centralized Italy (rejecting Bossi's federalism in concept, although voting for all of the Bossi proposals in parliament), a unified national health service, a revamped pension system but with adequate safety nets to protect the neediest cases, a reformed policy of public investment in the south (again, contrary to the demands of the NL that such investment be drastically reduced), and retention of the big public corporations that have conducted investment programs in the south (disagreeing with both Bossi and Berlusconi on this score). As for Europe, Fini supported NATO and the European Union. But there was one note of nostalgia: the National Alliance favored renegotiating with Slovenia the status of the Istrian peninsula, which was annexed by Yugoslavia after World War II.³⁹

With its new message, in 1994 the National Alliance was able to more than double the votes cast for the MSI in 1992. With the collapse of the patronage-nourished DC machine in the south, the National Alliance received in the 1994 election 13.5 percent of the vote and 109 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (versus 5.4 percent and 34 seats in 1992)—see Tables 4-2 and 4-3. It also was allotted six portfolios in the Berlusconi cabinet (the MSI had never been admitted to any cabinet). In the 1996 election, the National Alliance continued to advance in terms of votes, to 15.7 percent, but lost 16 seats because of the NL's defection from the Pole of Liberty electoral alliance.

After 1996 Fini steered an ever more moderate course. He worked closely with Massimo D'Alema on the bicameral commission for constitutional reform, which was instead sacked by Berlusconi; he disavowed Mussolini and edged the younger firebrands of Fascist leanings (e.g., Fiamma Tricolore) out of the National Alliance, he supported privatization and approved of Italy's entry into the euro area, he softened his stand on immigration, and he sought to identify with foreign conservative parties such as the Gaullists and the British Conservatives rather than with Fascist parties such as Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in France.⁴⁰

Fini's increasingly moderate stance was well illustrated by his tenure as minister of foreign affairs during 2004 and 2005, when he reemphasized all of Italy's traditional foreign policy positions in favor of Europe, the United States, and world peace. He was the first government official to distance himself from Italy's presence in the US-led conflict in Iraq, and he was an ardent supporter of the European constitution. In domestic politics, he supported two of the three June 2005 referenda on in vitro fertilization (the Catholic Church was against all three) and was the first government minister to ask for the resignation of the director of the Bank of Italy, Antonio Fazio, when it was revealed that he personally favored and worked behind the scenes to help one of the consortia trying to gain control of the Antonveneta bank. In assuming these positions, Fini was not backed by the majority of his party. Indeed, when other party leaders were on the verge of organizing a coup, he exercised his prerogative as president of the party and sacked all of them. As a result, Fini became one of the most respected leaders of the center-right in the country, eclipsing at the end of 2005 the popularity enjoyed by Silvio Berlusconi. Fini fully expected to participate on a par with Berlusconi in the 2006 electoral campaign, but the frenetic campaign unleashed by the former prime minister served to overshadow Fini as a potential alternative leader of the center-right coalition. With 12.2 percent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies, the National Alliance remained stable in relation to its result in 2001, but fell behind its result in the 2004 European parliamentary elections and the 2005 regional elections. The merging with Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia in November 2007 brought the National Alliance into the European democratic fold of center-right parties organized under the banner of the European Popular Party. In 2008 Gianfranco Fini was elected president of the Chamber of Deputies and operated as a moderating force in managing potential conflicts between the Berlusconi government and the president of the republic. In this role he raised his stature as both a supporter of the state institutions and a balancing force between the government and opposition blocs. On numerous occasions he sought to differentiate his position from that of Berlusconi when he felt that the prime minister had gone too far in assuming a personal position that did not have widespread public support.⁴¹

The increased tensions between the two leaders led to a final break in 2010. Fini left the PdL to create the FLI as a moderate center-right party. During the 2013 elections Fini joined Monti in his centrist alliance, but the voters did not respond positively. FLI received only a half of a percent of the vote and none of the party candidates were elected to parliament. The other former Fascists (e.g., Ignazio La Russa and Mimmo Nania) who remained with Berlusconi as part of the Fratelli d'Italia party received 2.0 percent of the vote and elected nine members to the chamber of deputies. After the creation of the Letta government, there were indications that La Russa's party had begun talks with Francesco Storace's Right party for the creation of a unified right-wing list in the next round of local and European elections, otherwise the far-right would follow the path traced by the far-left in becoming a memory of the past.

The Five Star Movement

The major surprise of the 2013 elections was the overwhelming success of the M5S led by Beppe Grillo. Before the election the M5S had only succeeded in electing the mayor of Parma, Federico Pizzarotti, the year before, but in the meantime a significant protest movement had mounted in reaction to the Monti government's inability to respond adequately to the economic crisis. The rise in unemployment, the lack of funding from the banks, the nonpayment of debts incurred by the public sector (amounting to a staggering 100 billion euros) forced many firms to close or to go into receivership. The steep drop in consumer spending and the scandals tied to the use of election refunds for personal gain led to a general disillusion with the existing political status quo. How big that disillusionment was became clear only after the 2013 votes were counted, and its consequences would long characterize the Italian political system.

The rapid rise of the M5S raises the question of whether it represents the emergence of a new major party in the Italian political spectrum (such as was the case with Berlusconi's Forza Italia in 1994) or whether the M5S reflects the emergence of what Giovanni Sartori has referred to as a flash party produced by the "fragmentation" of the party system—that is, the inability of the existing parties to adequately respond to growing citizen concerns in relation to particular economic and social crises.⁴² Much of the language used by the M5S leadership referred to the inability of the traditional parties to understand or respond to the current emergency situation. In 2012 Beppe Grillo wrote that "the old type of politics is on the wane. Today the politician has become an extraneous element that has nothing to do with the real world and its real problems."⁴³

The questions that were raised by the success of the M5S dealt with the following:

1. Where does the party stand on the political spectrum? Is it a party of the left or right? The answer provided by Grillo is that the M5S is not on the left nor is it on the right.⁴⁴ Thus, the M5S presents itself as being off the left-right scale and that the scale no longer has a meaning for the Italian voter who finds himself submerged in a system of corruption and mismanagement that is out of control.
2. Can the M5S cooperate with other parties in forming coalitions to promote its political agenda? The answer so far has been that the M5S completely rejects the party system; it does not want to compromise itself in dealing with the other parties in

parliament. The objective of the M5S is to fundamentally change the system, and to do so it cannot use its political capital to find solutions to the existing problems (which it says were created by the traditional parties).

3. Can the M5S work within the existing political system? The M5S represents an anti-system party that has succeeded in electing 109 deputies and 54 senators, but it has continually refused to become part of the give-and-take of a traditional parliamentary system. As a consequence, the M5S is both an anti-system and an anti-parliamentary party in a manner that has been uncommon in the Italian politics⁴⁵ but that is not uncommon in other political systems where flash parties (e.g., Denmark and Holland) come and go in a regular fashion. From the moment that its representatives entered parliament the M5S has refused to participate in the discussions to form a government or to formulate a set of policies in response to the burning issues of the day; and
4. What kind of party is the M5S? It is argued that Grillo's movement is a new type of "fluid" party that does not depend on a territorial party structure. It exists exclusively on the Internet. Beppe Grillo is not a member of parliament. Instead, he spends his time giving speeches, moving from one city to another in his caravan to drum up support for the party in whatever election is taking place, and every day he posts a new article for the blog. For the M5S party the means of interacting with its followers is through the speeches delivered by the leader (and the way they are delivered to the general public as sound bites denouncing this or that politician, group or journalist and through his blog (beppegrillo.it). For the M5S it is the Internet (*la rete*) that provides a constant and direct source of participation. According to M5S the Internet provides everyone with a chance to participate and within which each person is equal to the other. Through Grillo's blog party's activists are able to submit their own thoughts and reactions to what are considered to be the important issues of the day by the leadership. Therefore, according to Grillo the participation of the M5S supporters through the blog is not filtered by a party structure or party leadership. Everyone becomes a protagonist and can have his or her voice heard. The contributions to the blog become immediately available to other supporters. However, the transformation of the views expressed on the blog into political action remains the exclusive prerogative of Grillo and the M5S leadership. In addition, the gap between those who participate in submitting their views to the blog vis-à-vis the electoral support gained in the February 2013 elections remains huge.

The immediacy of the information that is provided to citizens by the Internet has become a major demand made by the M5S on the institutions. All of the direct talks between the M5S delegation with, first, PierLuigi Bersani and then Enrico Letta were streamed on the Internet. A similar request has been made with regard to the deliberations on the floor of the two houses and in the standing committees. The former has been immediately accepted while the latter cannot be accepted given the long-standing rules on the confidentiality of standing committee deliberations.

Grillo's blog represents an effective instrument in keeping his supporters informed vis-à-vis his daily appearances and thoughts, but it is also a clear moneymaker given that it carries a constant flow of advertisements—for example, British Airways and other well-known

companies. If one tries to download a party document or contributions from prominent officials, it can be done through Amazon Whispernet at a “discounted” price. Thus, the line separating the blog as a commercial enterprise from its political message is difficult to discern.

Analyses conducted during the electoral campaign reveal that Italian voters are becoming much more flexible in their choice of parties during elections and that the traditional voter who expressed his vote as a sign of solidarity with a particular subculture (Catholic, Marxists, Liberal) has given way to an “opinion” voter who makes up his mind a couple of weeks or even on the day of the election. In February 2013 such an approach to voting behavior greatly favored Grillo’s M5S movement: it was new, it spoke a different language, and it was not afraid to denounce the political status quo. It represented the novelty in the campaign, and it seemed to promise radical change. In addition, the M5S was also the only party that systematically exploited the Internet revolution and the new types of social media. Those who turned on to this new source of political information tended to be more educated, younger, and socially frustrated. Grillo also exploited the use of the traditional news media (newspapers and television) by organizing daily mass rallies in different parts of the country that were picked up by the news media. Grillo’s rallies were conducted as political theatre by mixing together humor, giving voice to common grievances, denouncing those in power, and projecting a new utopia of direct democracy and a clean political class.

The question that is always posed by flash parties is the following: How long will they last? The results of the May 2013 local elections show that the M5S does less well in local elections than was the case with the 2013 national elections conducted on the basis of a national PR system. Such was the case in the regional elections held in Friuli-Venezia Giulia where Grillo’s party polled 27.2 percent in the February parliamentary elections and two months later (April 21–22, 2013) fell to 19.2 percent. In the May 2013 local elections the M5S lists and mayoral candidates polled less than half of the votes received in those same cities three months before. In all of the medium to large cities, the M5S should have emerged as the largest or the second largest party, but the results showed that it always ran third and greatly outdistanced by the PD and PdL. In the 2013 local elections the instruments for mobilizing voters used by M5S (the blog and the speeches by Grillo) demonstrated all of their shortcomings: they were no longer new and they had little to do with local developments. If the M5S is able to survive into the 2014 European elections—once again conducted on a strict PR basis—it may bounce back, but in the meantime it will be evaluated on how it has used its existing power of representation in the political system. Major splits have begun to appear in the M5S group in the Senate regarding immigration and social welfare policies.

The Voters: The Electoral System and Voting Behavior

Although Italy’s major political parties hold the reins of government power, they are only as powerful as the support they receive from Italy’s voters, another set of actors in the political process. As this section explains, elections in Italy are organized in ways that have important consequences for voters and the party system.

The Electoral System

Until 1994 members of the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, were elected by a list system of PR from multimember districts. The number of seats awarded

to a party in an electoral district was determined by dividing that party's total vote by an electoral quotient (total number of seats plus two). The remainders resulting from this operation (if a party received no seats, its entire vote was treated as a remainder) were then sent to Rome to be totaled up for each party in the Single National College, which then proceeded to allocate several dozen additional seats on the basis of PR.⁴⁶ A system of preferential voting gave the voters a chance not only to support their party list but also to express their preferences among the names on the party list. A more complex system, relying mostly but not entirely on PR, was employed in electing members of the upper house, the Senate. By means of this electoral system, each party obtained a share of parliamentary seats roughly proportional to its share of the total vote. Moreover, under the distribution of remainders for the Chamber of Deputies by the Single National College, even a party with between 1 percent and 2 percent of the vote might be able to win a few seats.

The Italian electoral system had some important consequences for the party system. First, it favored the proliferation and survival of splinter parties with as little as 1 or 2 percent of the vote, because even such tiny parties were able to win a few seats. Second, the Italian electoral system prevented any landslide in parliamentary elections, and consequently made it all but impossible for one party to achieve a majority in parliament. Under PR, small shifts in voting behavior only resulted in equally small shifts in legislative representation. Third, the system of preferential voting encouraged factionalism by giving minority factions in a party a chance to appeal to party voters over the heads of party leaders. It also encouraged corruption by compelling candidates on the same party lists to launch very expensive personal campaigns for preference votes and to solicit funds from private interests for that purpose.

In April 1993 Italian voters approved a referendum proposal to elect three-fourths of the members of the Senate from single-member districts by plurality vote (first-past-the-post). A parliamentary committee then prepared a bill to adopt a plurality system for both houses of parliament. The committee presented its proposal on August 5, 1993, and it was adopted by parliament later that year.

Under the law, about three-fourths of the members of each house were to be elected from small single-member constituencies by plurality—that is, the candidate with the largest number of votes would win the seat even if he or she did not gain an absolute majority of the votes. There was no provision for a second ballot. The remaining one-fourth of the members of each house would be elected from somewhat larger multimember districts on the basis of PR. To be awarded any of the PR seats set aside for the Chamber of Deputies, however, a party had to poll at least 4 percent of the total votes cast for the PR lists nationwide.

The effect of the 1993 law, combined with the public revulsion engendered by Kick-back City, was to eliminate the three minor center parties (Social Democrats, Republicans, and Liberals) that had played a supporting role in so many coalition cabinets. Even the Greens, the Network, the PSI, and the Democratic Alliance were unable to scale the 4 percent barrier. Nevertheless, they were able to win single-member seats by taking advantage of the law's provision for the formation of electoral alliances, which for them meant entering the Progressive Alliance led by the PDS. Even the PRC was able to carry twenty-nine single-member districts by representing the Progressive Alliance, while the PDS obligingly stood aside. Meanwhile, by entering into an electoral alliance (the Pole of Liberty) with Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the NL and the CCD were rewarded by being

allowed to have their candidates run as the sole standard-bearers for the Pole of Liberty in some single-member districts. In this way, they were able to “win” more single-member districts than would have been possible had they contested those districts without allies. For this reason, the move to single-member districts with plurality voting did not result in a transition to a two-party system.⁴⁷

How did the majoritarian electoral law affect the Italian party system? Not as much as was hoped. For example, the previous electoral law favored the proliferation of splinter parties, but under the majoritarian provision such parties could still gain entry to parliament by forming alliances with major parties. The previous PR law prevented landslides in parliamentary elections and made it virtually impossible for a single party to win a parliamentary majority. The majoritarian law permitted landslides, but they were landslides for electoral alliances rather than single parties, and the parties in the Berlusconi alliance were soon at loggerheads and generating political gridlock.

One major achievement of the first-past-the-post system was to eliminate preferential voting, which made it more difficult for minority factions to appeal to party voters over the heads of party leaders. Another achievement of the law was that it seemed, at first glance, to encourage a kind of moderate pluralism, with center-left and center-right alliances alternating in power—that is, a bipolar system. But the bargaining power of splinter parties was enhanced: their refusal to join an alliance could actually cost the alliance crucial single-member districts. In 1996 the extremist Fiamma Tricolore (Social Movement Tricolored Flame, MFST), which polled only 0.9 percent of the vote, cost the Pole of Liberty several highly competitive seats simply by running its own separate candidates.

It was suggested that the majoritarian election law confers greater political weight prior to the election on smaller and midsized parties and offers a positive incentive for parties occupying the same part of the ideological spectrum to form an alliance. If small parties did not form alliances with the larger parties, it was highly improbable they would be able to overcome the 4 percent requirement to participate in the distribution of proportional seats (25 percent of the total). Both the center-right and center-left coalitions came to understand the need to partner with small parties prior to the election rather than fall prey to the whims of the electorate and iron-tight electoral rules after the vote. Such a shortcoming cost the center-right the 1996 election and the center-left the election in 2001. In the last analysis, then, the electoral law changed the nature of preelectoral party strategies and created the need for the broadest electoral coalitions, but it did not reduce the number of parties remaining in the system. As a result, the party system remained highly fragmented.⁴⁸

Because the electoral law just described was generally regarded as unsatisfactory and provisional at the time of its passage in 1993, many observers speculated that a new election law would be enacted before very long. In fact, fearing that the previous rules would disproportionately favor the center-left, before the 2006 election the Berlusconi government changed the electoral rules back to PR. Instead, the return to PR based on national coalition lists in the Chamber of Deputies and regional coalition lists in the Senate served to favor the center-left. It allowed the center-left to transform its 23,000-vote majority in the Chamber of Deputies into a solid majority (349–281) and its minority status among voters in the Senate election into a majority of seats (159–156). In this result, the center-left

was also helped by the allocation of 12 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 6 in the Senate to Italians overseas.

The new electoral law did not help to reduce the number of political parties present in the Chamber of Deputies or Senate elections, but it did reduce the number of parties presenting themselves without an affiliation with either of the two major coalitions. In the chamber elections of 2006, only 0.4 percent of the vote was represented by parties outside of the two main blocs, compared with 6.7 percent in 2001 and 4.5 percent in 1996.⁴⁹ Also, the new electoral law and the electrified nature of the national campaign helped to raise the level of voter participation. In 2006, 83.6 percent of the eligible electorate cast ballots versus 81.4 percent five years earlier, signaling a major increase in the number of voters between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five going to the polls. In 2001 a higher percentage of older voters turned out for the Senate elections (82.7 versus the 81.4 for the Chamber of Deputies). The percentage turnout for Chamber of Deputies and Senate elections in 2006 was practically the same (83.6 and 83.5 percent, respectively), and it was the center-left that disproportionately gained from the increase in young voters. In 2008, with the same electoral law but a different logic in the creation of the major party alliances, the number of parties succeeding in achieving parliamentary representation was severely reduced, as was the case for voter turnout, which declined by almost 3 percent. The parties that did not align themselves with the two major blocs—the Left Rainbow coalition bringing together the dissident DS group with the PRC, PDCdI, and Greens achieved only 3.1 percent of the vote in the chamber; the Right (Destra) of Storace and Santachè polled 2.4 percent of the vote; and the Socialists won only 1.0 percent—were barred from the allocation of seats by the 4 percent ceiling dictated by the electoral law. In 2013 the voter turnout declined once again. This time it dropped to 75.2 percent in the elections for both the chamber and senate.

Voting Behavior

Voting patterns in Italy have been based to a considerable degree on the traditional social, economic, or religious cleavages. The prime example of a socioeconomic cleavage is social class. Before the political earthquake of the 1990s, the Communists had a plurality of the working-class vote, but substantial minorities were being polled by the Socialists and Christian Democrats. Among middle-class voters, a majority of shopkeepers and artisans and at least a plurality of business and professional people voted for the Christian Democrats, and the Liberals and neo-Fascists were their chief competitors. The Communists and Socialists had substantial success in penetrating one stratum of middle-class voters: white-collar workers and lower-level civil servants. Social class also served to divide the agricultural electorate, with large landowners mostly supporting Liberals and neo-Fascists, medium and small landowners voting overwhelmingly for the Christian Democrats, and sharecroppers and farm laborers backing the Communists and Socialists.

Other cleavages reduced the impact of social class. One such division was religious practice as opposed to anticlericalism. The Christian Democrats polled a substantial share of the working-class vote, especially in the devoutly Catholic areas in the northeast. Communist and Socialist successes among a substantial minority of middle-class voters in north-central Italy could be explained in part by the anticlericalism characteristic of regions such as Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany.

Region was another line of demarcation. Regional voting traditions cut across class lines in influencing voting behavior, but such regional traditions may have been simply expressing or reinforcing religious cleavages.

Finally, union membership may have been a more reliable factor than mere social class in predisposing voters to cast their ballots for leftist parties.

These traditional patterns of the 1950s and 1960s have been undergoing some major changes. For one thing, the rural exodus has uprooted great numbers of small landowners, sharecroppers, and farm laborers from their traditional political and social networks and often from their home regions as well. Second, the rise of the services sector has injected a new element of ambiguity into the Italian class structure. Third, families and social networks such as the Catholic Church and its lay organizations seem to be losing their ability to socialize young voters into traditional patterns of voting behavior. As a result, greater numbers of voters are making their choices less on the basis of traditional party identification (vote of *appartenenza* or belonging) and more on the basis of the parties' positions on the issues (vote of opinion). At the same time, the number and variety of voters who cast ballots on the basis of how happy or frustrated they are with how the incumbents are satisfying their personal needs (vote of exchange) are growing, especially now that the Christian Democrats have lost their monopoly over sources of patronage. Although the urban middle classes are most likely to cast a vote of opinion, the vote of exchange characterizes the precariously employed service workers of the urban subproletariat.⁵⁰

Some early assessments of voting patterns in 1994 indicated more stability on the left than on the right. The PDS, like the PCI before it, continued to be the dominant party in the four regions of north-central Italy—Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, and the Marches—but the defection of most PSI voters reduced the strength of the left even in these historic strongholds. The PDS also showed a great deal of strength in parts of the south: Campania, Basilicata, and Calabria. The NL was particularly strong in Lombardy and the Veneto, but Forza Italia carried most of the north and also led in Sardinia and Sicily (where it was rumored to have Mafia support). In large parts of the continental south, especially Latium, Abruzzi, and Apulia, the National Alliance led the field. Therefore, the chief beneficiaries of the Socialist and Christian Democratic collapse have been the National Alliance and, to a lesser degree, the PDS in the south, and Forza Italia and, to a lesser degree, the NL in the north.⁵¹

After the 1996 election, some observers pointed out that the NL was becoming the dominant force in northeastern Italy, especially eastern Lombardy and the Veneto, which is an area of flourishing small and midsize industry and bustling small cities. In this area, which was once known as the “white” (i.e., devoutly Catholic) northeast and in which DC had once enjoyed hegemony, the NL's appeal grew with all classes and segments of the population. By contrast, Forza Italia was outstripping the NL in the big metropolitan centers of the north, which is a more competitive political milieu with many service workers. The old class alignments were losing their hold in the north.⁵²

It is much too early to speak of a permanent party realignment or stable voting bases for the new parties. In fact, another political earthquake took place in 2005 when both Forza Italia and the NL lost substantial support in the regional and local elections in favor of the center-left. But the deeply rooted class and regional allegiances of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s seem to have been seriously weakened in Italy and other parts of the

Western world as the postindustrial age brings social and class redefinition in its wake. The regional distribution of the vote in 2006 demonstrated that the center-right led by Forza Italia remained the dominant political party in four northern regions (from Piedmont to Friuli-Venezia Giulia), but it was never able to break through in Valle d'Aosta and Trentino-Alto Adige. It also lost support in Liguria. In the south, both Forza Italia and National Alliance parties lost their previously dominant positions, with the exception of Sicily. In the rest of the south, Forza Italia has given way to the Olive Tree coalition. In 2008 the PdL made major gains throughout the country and especially in the south. In the 2009 European elections, however, the PdL lost important support in the south, especially in Sicily, due to its less-than-friendly stance on the effective allocation of regional development funds for southern infrastructure projects. In 2010 the center-right made major gains in the regional elections, picking up the control of Abruzzi, Campania, and Calabria. In 2013 it was able to confirm its strong support in the northeast and the large regions in southern Italy.

Interest Groups

The changes in the party system in the 1990s were not paralleled by changes in the nature and structure of interest groups. What did change, however, was how interest groups interacted with the parties. Gone were the days when interest groups functioned as "conveyor belts," linking the political parties with civil society. Now through the media, political parties were in a position to speak directly with the voters, and interest groups became freer in choosing their preferred interlocutors for policy decisions that mattered to their members and leaders. In the past, interest groups such as trade unions, associations of shop owners, employers associations, artisan groups, farmers associations, pensioners groups, youth organizations, women's groups, environmental groups, cultural associations, cooperatives, and even sporting clubs had clear political affiliations and were part of the ideological subcultures that pervaded Italian society. But since the early 1990s these clear political affiliations have waned, and the policymaking process has been opened to some new actors and interests.

Postwar Italy's interest group system resembled the French system but with some significant differences. Like France, Italy has had an ideologically divided labor movement that included a Communist-dominated labor confederation (the Italian General Confederation of Labor, or CGIL) that contained some Socialist members, a labor confederation (the Italian Union of Labor, or UIL) made up predominantly of Socialists and Republicans, and a Catholic-dominated labor confederation (the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions, or CISL). The Italians and the French have also been somewhat more accepting of anomie group behavior (riots and demonstrations) than the citizens of Northern Europe.

There have also been some notable contrasts. Because the Italian Parliament exerts greater influence on policymaking than does the parliament of the Fifth Republic, Italian interest groups have expended more effort in the legislative arena. They have found the powerful standing committees, which are able to enact minor bills directly into law, a most rewarding site for their endeavors. Many interest groups, going beyond mere lobbying, have tried to secure the election of their own officials to parliament on some party's list. These so-called *parentela* (kinship) groups have had close official ties with a political party

and have acted openly as organized factions within that party in parliament. By contrast, the *clientela* (customers) groups have been regarded by government agencies as the sole official representatives of a given set of interests. An example of a past *clientela* group was the Italian General Confederation of Industry (Confindustria), and an example of a *parentela* group was Catholic Action in DC. With the disappearance of the formerly dominant mass parties, such as the DC and the PCI, the *parentela* groups have been able to strike out on their own. The rest of this section describes the interest groups representing various sectors of the Italian economy and organized religion.

Agricultural Interest Groups

Because Italian family farms have tended to be much smaller than French or German family farms, the Italian General Confederation of Agriculture (Confagricoltura), which speaks for medium and large landowners, represents only a minority of Italian agricultural proprietors. The more powerful farm organization is the National Confederation of Direct Cultivators (Coldiretti), whose members live mostly on smaller farms. Coldiretti used to be a *parentela* group directly affiliated with the Christian Democrats. By virtue of its control over the Federation of Agricultural Consortiums (Federconsorzi), a quasi-public organization that furnished credits, subsidies, storage facilities, and other services to farmers, Coldiretti was once one of Italy's most powerful pressure groups. With the disappearance of DC, Coldiretti has had to reposition itself in the political spectrum and redefine its role as a representative institution. This need has led Coldiretti to join with what in the past were farm organizations affiliated with other parts of the ideological spectrum and become more visible to their members and the general public in championing certain causes, such as organic farming, and policies encouraging the traceability of agricultural products to their source.

Since the 1980s Italian agricultural pressure groups have become remarkably weaker. This trend is understandable in view of the steady movement of agricultural workers to cities and towns. With the farm population rapidly diminishing, groups such as Coldiretti have suffered a loss of clout. Indeed, farm organizations are still powerful, but the curve plotting their influence definitely slopes downward. One of the difficulties faced by farm organizations has been the shift of the policymaking from the national to the European level. The past dominance of the DC allowed farm organizations to remain influential at the national level and depend on the government linkages provided by the Ministry of Agriculture to represent the organization at the European level. After the implosion of the DC and the old party system, however, organizations such as Coldiretti have had to forge their own autonomous links to Europe and build at the national level alliances across party lines with other agricultural organizations. The strategy seems to have worked, because during the last few years many Italian agricultural products, from Sicilian blood oranges to Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, have received the EU "protected designation of origin" label, thereby shielding local products from imitations from other parts of Europe or abroad. The agricultural interest groups have benefitted from both the ecological movement emphasizing the "traceability" of the origin of meat, fruit and vegetables, olive oil, and wine and the "slow food" movement, which has made the selection of quality products and traditional approaches to cooking among its main objectives. The result has been the creation of niche markets and the increase in the value added for many agricultural goods and the search for

a closer relationship between the producers and the consumers. This has been the case in both small shops as well as large supermarket chains that are in many cases controlled by the cooperative movement. In both cases the objective is to provide quality products to consumers whose origin can be traced to specific territories and process. The dominance of the food chain by large agro-food producers has been avoided in Italy.

Labor Interest Groups

Italian organized labor has been weakened in the past by its division into the three politically affiliated organizations. Italian unions also have been chronically weak in recruiting members, collecting dues, and amassing the economic resources needed to support possible strikes. Lack of leadership at the plant level has been another disability. Heavy unemployment in the post–World War II era weakened the bargaining power of Italian unions and resulted in persistently low wages for Italian workers. But it also resulted, it must be admitted, in lower prices and other competitive advantages for Italian exports, thereby encouraging expansion of the Italian economy.

After 1968, new tendencies developed within the Italian labor movement. First, the three labor confederations manifested greater independence from their respective parties and showed a marked tendency to cooperate with each other on many issues. Second, the unions no longer allowed their officials to hold a parliamentary seat and a trade union office simultaneously. Third, in the 1970s labor became more powerful, and the CGIL, CISL, and UIL confederations were much more militant in pushing their demands. In fact, at times, particularly in 1976–1979 when the Communist Party was supporting austerity, the Catholic unions made more far-reaching demands than the Communist unions. Labor's greater intransigence reflected pressure from newly employed southern migrants and semiskilled workers, who demanded rapid progress to make up for past deprivations.

Developments in the trade union field were by no means marked by linear progression, however. After greater expansion, intransigence, and decentralization of authority to the plant level in 1968–1972, trade union memberships began to decline, union authority was recentralized at the national level, and unions began to pursue a more cooperative relationship with employers and with the state during the 1980s. Meanwhile, the problem of selling Italian products in increasingly competitive export markets, the impact of free collective bargaining on improving the lot of skilled workers while raising economic hurdles against the employment of marginal workers, and the rising burden of inflation greatly weakened the unions and persuaded union leaders to moderate their demands. The January 1983 agreement by the non-Communist unions to accept a slight downward modification of the system of wage indexation (the so-called *scala mobile*, or escalator, that ties wages to the price index) was a straw in the wind. The failure of the Communist attempt to challenge the government's settlement with the non-Communist unions by appealing to the voters in a referendum was a clear indication of labor's diminished influence. In July 1992 the Amato cabinet was able to reach an agreement with the three principal labor confederations and the representatives of organized business to abolish the system of wage indexation altogether. This achievement marked the beginning of a new and more positive decade in labor–government relations.

What seemed in the late 1980s to be dismal prospects for organized labor improved considerably in the 1990s. In 1992 and 1993 the Amato and Ciampi cabinets, in which

nonpolitical technocrats were prominent, showed a new willingness to bring the unions into the decision-making process as equal partners. The ongoing disintegration of the major political parties made this kind of close cooperation more feasible, because neither the labor confederations nor the cabinet could be viewed any longer as mere mouthpieces of the party machines. The improved climate in government-labor relations was temporarily interrupted in 1994 during the short-lived Berlusconi cabinet. When Berlusconi attempted to push through pension reform without eliciting sufficient input from the labor confederations, the unions launched a wave of massive protest demonstrations that helped to bring down the government. When the Dini cabinet took office in early 1995, the unions showed their willingness to collaborate closely with Dini, another nonpolitical figure, in drawing up a plan for pension reform.

The position of organized labor in Italy, therefore, has improved substantially. The three labor confederations, frequently referred to as the Triple Alliance, are more inclined to cooperate with each other now that they are no longer party-dominated. Their moderation, and their willingness to accept industrial, economic, and social change as long as they are given a major voice in shaping that change, has made the government willing to use them as virtual coalition partners. Their greater readiness to consult their rank and file at the plant level through a newly established system of works councils has made it easier for them to obtain rank-and-file support for whatever bargains they strike with the government. Their new authority and credibility have induced the center-left government to use them as unofficial coalition partners to counterbalance the extreme demands of the PRC. The trade unions have remained powerful among socioeconomic organizations in Italy, because they have carved out an important role as public rather than membership-based social service organizations. Through their *Patronati*, or social service offices, the trade unions help Italian and immigrant workers, and their families when the laws apply to them, to do their taxes, apply for pensions, determine eligibility for unemployment compensation, and access home health care and other social services made available by Italy's welfare system. Therefore, Italy's trade unions are important not only in organizing workers to deal with industrial relations and wage demands but also in acting as a preferred channel by many to navigate the waters of Italy's welfare state.

The increasing internationalization of management and production has had a significant impact on the trade unions. Since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2008 there has been an increased pressure on wages in both the private and public sectors and in the creation of new jobs. The result has been a decline in the number of Italians who are employed as well as in the prospect for the increase in wages. Given the decline of inflation below 2 percent over the last few years, there is not the same urgency in demanding wage increases by the labor unions. What is important, instead, to the unions is to maintain the existing levels of employment and wages. A case in point is presented by the Pomigliano Fiat plant where the management has proposed a new contract where the company pledged to expand production and increase the number of workers if the trade union pledged to keep absenteeism, sick leaves, and strikes under control. The trade union, FIOM, rejected this agreement, but a majority of the workers decided to accept the terms presented by the Fiat management.⁵³ At the end of May 2013 the trade union movement came to a new agreement with Confindustria on representation and the need to work

together to get the economy moving. The old cleavages (the right to strike, dismissal of workers, union representation, etc.) were put on hold to be discussed once the economy was back to growth.

Business Interest Groups

In the first few decades after World War II, Italian business was characterized by a higher degree of concentration and less distrust of big business than business in France. Also, small business lacked the autonomy and self-assertiveness of the big firms of the Genoa–Milan–Turin industrial triangle. Confindustria, representing the great majority of industrial firms, tended to speak for big-business interests. During the 1980s and 1990s that relationship changed, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) began to have more influence in shaping the relationship between business and trade unions and participation in the design of government policies.

Confindustria had a classic lobbying relationship with the DC. Its efforts to transform this *clientela* relationship into a *parentela* bond, however, were not successful. It was also unsuccessful in preserving a united front among Italian employers. Some industrial giants such as Fiat preferred to pursue their own policies, independent of Confindustria guidance. Far more important was the position taken by the public corporations, which had their own employers association, Intersind. Although Confindustria tended to be allied with the Liberals and with the right wing of the Christian Democrats, Intersind seemed more inclined toward a kind of Italian New Deal, based on welfare capitalism and social reforms. In this, it had much in common with the Socialists and with the left-wing Christian Democrats.

Recent developments have changed this picture, however. First, the public sector enterprises were discredited by their partisan connections and by the gross inefficiency that increasingly reigned in their factories. By the 1970s they had lost the aura of infallibility they had acquired in the 1960s. With the disintegration of the Christian Democratic and Socialist parties in the early 1990s, public sector enterprises were deprived of their principal political allies. Their current situation has changed considerably through the government's privatization campaign, which has significantly taken the state out of the role of entrepreneur and owner of the country's major industrial assets. Second, Confindustria staged something of a comeback in Italian public opinion in the 1970s, profiting from the backlash against the "Hot Autumn" of 1968 and 1969. Third, small business owners are playing a more decisive role in Confindustria. This development reflects the economic slump that hit the traditional heavy industry of the northwest triangle, while SMEs brought great prosperity to the central Italian regions of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, Latium, and beyond. And finally, Confindustria has become larger and more heterogeneous; indeed, it has virtually absorbed Intersind. The other business organizations representing SMEs and the artisan sector, such as the Confederation of Small Firms, the Artisan Confederation, and the National Confederation of Artisans, have become quite important in determining national wage levels and industrial relations. For example, Antonio D'Amato served as president of Confindustria from 2000 to 2004. During his tenure, D'Amato, who had close ties with Berlusconi, took positions that increased the conflict between business and the trade unions. But the SMEs and artisan trade associations did not agree with Confindustria's hard stance against the unions and went ahead and signed a labor

agreement with them. Eventually, Confindustria had to back down from its position. Luca di Montezemolo, the head of Ferrari and Fiat who took over Confindustria from D'Amato in 2004, quickly abandoned his predecessor's policy by detaching himself and his organization from the Berlusconi government. He reestablished a good working relationship with the SMEs and artisan organizations and began to cooperate with the trade unions in pushing the government to formulate policies spawning investments in a variety of innovative sectors from technologically advanced industries to sustainable tourism.

During the 2008 election campaign Berlusconi succeeded in alienating most of the organized interest groups from Confindustria to the labor unions and agricultural interests. In his vitriolic attacks against the "establishment" and organized interests, he claimed that they were attempting to block the entry of new actors in the economy and social system. Berlusconi has always seen himself as a "new man" fighting the establishment, while his predecessor, Romano Prodi, presented himself as one able to work with organized interests in seeking common solutions. The election on March 13 of Emma Marcegaglia as the first female president of Confindustria helped to heal the rift between the employers' organization and the Berlusconi government. Confindustria was particularly concerned about the need for concerted government action in response to the mounting economic crisis that had drastically cut production and exports. The government, however, could only repeat that because of the size of the overall public debt, it was restricted in undertaking any bold action other than providing unemployment compensation to laid-off workers. In retrospect, the economic crisis proved to have a silver lining in that Italian business and financial institutions were able to make significant inroads into markets where they had previously been absent. The best example of this outcome was the case of Fiat and the bailout of Chrysler in the United States and the repositioning of Fiat as an important European and global actor in the automobile industry.

Despite their initial close rapport between the PdL and the employers' organization, the Berlusconi government was increasingly criticized by Confindustria for its lack of action during 2010 and 2011 in spurring development and lessening the tax burden on companies and their employees. In November 2011 Confindustria and its daily newspaper, *Il Sole-24 Ore*, were among the major supporters of a change in government. According to Confindustria, Berlusconi had to go for the good of the country. The creation of the Monti government did not quiet things down within Confindustria. In fact, at the end of the year a long simmering conflict between Confindustria and Fiat came to the surface.⁵⁴ During the autumn of 2011 Sergio Marchionne, the CEO of Fiat, announced that the company would no longer renew its membership in Confindustria due to the latter's less than favorable response to the introduction of the decentralized labor bargaining that Fiat was pursuing in its Italian plants. In the middle of this crisis, Emma Marcegaglia's term as president of Confindustria came to an end, and she was replaced by Giorgio Squinzi, the head of one of Italy's most important private chemical companies. Squinzi tried to assume a softer line vis-à-vis Marchionne and a more distant role from the Monti government. This allowed the level of conflict to cool down but it also served to lower the voice of Confindustria in national affairs. In the 2013 elections the organization remained above the fray and did not openly endorse any of the party leaders or coalitions. With the creation of the Letta government, Confindustria pressed

for a more proactive intervention in the economy in order to stimulate renewed confidence, investments and the creation of new jobs.

Catholic Interest Groups: The Church and Its Lay Organizations

The Catholic Church and the various associations of Catholic laypeople have always been active in Italy's interest group system. Heavily influential throughout Italian public life by means of the Concordat of 1929 (which has constitutional status and can be altered only by a bilateral agreement between church and state or by a formal constitutional amendment), the Catholic Church intervened openly in Italian domestic politics for two decades after World War II. But its intervention grew less pronounced in the 1960s and 1970s under Popes John XXIII and Paul VI. Under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the church has begun to reestablish closer ties with the state. It has become more assertive in asking for public resources in support of Catholic schools; limitations on gay marriage, in vitro fertilization, and adoption policies; and maintenance of Catholic religious instruction in the state's elementary schools.

The principal church-sponsored lay organization is Catholic Action, which at its peak had 3 million members. Its separate groups or branches include the Union of Men, the Union of Women, Italian Catholic Action Youth, and the Federation of Italian Catholic University Students. The president of Catholic Action and the presidents of its component branches are appointed by individual bishops at the diocesan level. Other Catholic associations, not under the tutelage of the hierarchy, pursue specialized nonreligious goals. They include Coldiretti, the Italian Association of Catholic Schoolteachers, and the Christian Association of Italian Workers (ACLI). These organizations have acted as economic and social pressure groups and have not behaved primarily as spokespersons for the church.

Since the late 1960s, the influence of the church and its lay organizations has been greatly diminished. The failure of a referendum campaign in 1974 to repeal the divorce law and in 1981 to repeal an abortion law, as well as the revision of the Concordat, are all indicative of waning clerical influence. Some Catholic lay organizations, such as the Confederation of Catholic University Students, came out in favor of the divorce law. Meanwhile, associations such as the ACLI have been steering a more autonomous course: even before the political upheaval of the 1990s, ACLI cut its formal ties with both Catholic Action and DC, although it still maintained a dialogue with the church.

Perhaps one reason for the increasingly independent stance adopted by Catholic organizations was their greatly reduced strength, which was itself a symptom of the growing secularization of Italian society. Catholic Action, which had 3 million members at its peak in the 1950s, was down to 600,000 by the late 1970s. ACLI, which had about a million members in the 1950s, had only 400,000 in the late 1970s.⁵⁵ Clearly, Catholic organizations are no longer the dominant, hegemonic force they were in the immediate postwar decades. And there is no longer a single mass Catholic Party to unite and energize these organizations. Nor is such a party being encouraged by the dominant elements in the church, which seem to favor something like the German CDU—a large center party composed of both Catholics and center-right liberals.⁵⁶

Catholic groups assumed a more vocal stance in the summer of 2009 as the scandal involving the prime minister and his use of paid escorts became public. The Catholic

groups, especially the newspaper *Avvenire* and the magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*, argued that public figures should assume a more sober life style and not pretend that personal behavior does not have an impact in the framing of public morality. In late 2009 the editor of *Avvenire* was forced to resign due to alleged pedophile tendencies. Those accusations by a newspaper run by Berlusconi's brother proved to be false. It became abundantly clear that the relationship between the church hierarchy and Berlusconi would never be the same. In the 2013 elections the church assumed a favorable but quiet stance in support of the Monti coalition. But the surprise resignation of Benedict XVI on February 28, 2013, forced the Catholic groups to look inward at the renewal of the church and its relationship with the social system and civil society in general. The new pope, Francis, has promised to renew the church hierarchy as well as the pastoral message of the church, and he is systematically undertaking to change the relationship between the church and civil society in Italy.

Current Trends: The Advent of Fragmented Pluralism and the Rise of Nongovernmental Organizations

According to some observers, the Italian interest group system in parallel to the political system is moving in the direction of fragmented pluralism—that is, toward the weakening of old established interest groups speaking for business or labor as a whole and toward the rise of a multiplicity of new groups, such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), each expressing a narrow range of interests and concerns. These Italian lobbies, like US lobbies, serve the specific social and economic interests of their members.⁵⁷ For example, social service delivery organizations have emerged in response to the increased decentralization of social services by the regional, provincial, and city governments. Communion and Liberation, a conservative Catholic movement founded by Don Giussani, has been particularly active in the provision of services in Lombardy and other regions in the north. This growing Catholic movement has made its mark in center-right politics by fielding candidates for political office such as Roberto Formigoni, the former president of the Lombardy region. That relationship was placed into question by the scandals that rocked the health system in Lombardy where it was revealed that individuals close to Formigoni had a stranglehold over the allocation of regional contracts and the certification of hospitals and clinics to receive financial support from the public health system controlled by the region. A particularly significant case emerged after the death of Luigi Verzé the founder of the San Raffaele Hospital, which was considered by many to be a vanguard institution in the provision of private health care but which had accumulated debts of almost 100 million euros in the pursuit of a program of far reaching expansion. The catastrophic losses incurred by the San Raffaele (despite its privileged access to public funding) served to put an end to the cozy relationship between Communion and Liberation and Roberto Formigoni and the entire Lombard regional government.

Aside from the unique features of the Catholic NGOs in Lombardy, NGOs in general have greatly benefited from the trend toward the privatization of service delivery in areas such as school lunch programs, drug rehabilitation centers, management of hospitals, and programs for seniors and the handicapped. In this respect, it is not surprising that in the more leftist regions, where regional and local governments have always pioneered innovations in social and economic development policies and yielded high performance, NGOs have made their strong presence felt. There, the NGO phenomenon has taken the form of

tremendous growth in the personal services cooperatives tied to the leftist cooperative movement, together with producer and consumer cooperatives that have made great strides in capturing a significant part of the market in food distribution through supermarket chains.

The future of the NGO phenomenon in Italy depends to a certain extent on the ability of the NGOs to negotiate between the exigencies of the market—the cost of existence needs to be met—and civil society—the organizations need to meet imbedded conditions that cannot be provided by public administrations or exclusively private provision. With the erosion of the traditional organizations such as the parties and the church, there is an increasing space for nongovernmental organizations to act.

NOTES

1. Diego Garzia, "The Personalisation of Partisan Attachments in the Second Republic," *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 3, no. 1 (2011): 59–78.
2. See Raphael Zariski, "Italy," in *Western European Party Systems: Trends and Prospects*, ed. Peter H. Merkl (New York: Free Press, 1980), 122–152.
3. Giovanni Sartori, "European Political Parties: The Case of Polarized Pluralism," in *Political Parties and Political Development*, ed. Joseph LaPalombara and Martin Weiner (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966). See the response by Robert Leonardi, "Polarizzazione o convergenza nel sistema politico italiano," in *La politica nell'Italia che cambia*, ed. Alberto Martinelli and Gianfranco Pasquino (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978), 299–319.
4. See Joseph LaPalombara, *Democracy Italian Style* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987); and Samuel H. Barnes, *Representation in Italy: Institutional Tradition and Electoral Choice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
5. Robert Leonardi and Douglas A. Wertman, *Italian Christian Democracy: The Politics of Dominance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); and Donald Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party: From the Resistance to the Historic Compromise* (London: Frances Pinter, 1981).
6. Leonardi and Wertman, *Italian Christian Democracy*, 130; and "The New Parliament," *News from Italy* (published by the Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli) 10 (July 1983): 11. Also see Robert H. Evans, "The Italian Election of June 1987," *Italian Journal* 1, nos. 2 and 3 (1987): 15.
7. See Zariski, "Italy," 131, and "New Parliament," 11. Also see "A Comprehensive Report on the 1987 Political Elections: Nine Tables of Statistical Data," *Italian Journal* 1, nos. 2 and 3 (1987): 24.
8. See Giorgio Galli, *Il bipartitismo imperfetto* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1966).
9. See Robert Leonardi, "Polarizzazione o convergenza nel sistema politico italiano?" in *La politica nell'Italia che cambia*, ed. G. Martinelli and Gianfranco Pasquino (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978), 299–319.
10. On factions within the DC, see Leonardi and Wertman, *Italian Christian Democracy*, 90–124.
11. See Evans, "Italian Election," 12.
12. For the disastrous effects of the corruption scandals and the Mafia connections on the DC, the PSI, and the minor center parties, see Mario Caciagli, "Italie 1993: Vers la Seconde République?" *Revue française de science politique* (April 1993): 229–256.
13. Under the new election law of 1993, three-fourths of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies were allocated to single-member districts that could be won by the candidate of a

party (or alliance of parties) if he or she obtained a plurality of the votes cast. The other one-fourth was to be distributed on the basis of proportional representation. Because several parties did not run candidates in every single-member district, party voting performance was calculated on the basis of each party's share of the proportional representation vote.

14. For the results of the 1994 election, see Edmondo Berselli, "Solution on the Right: The Evolving Political Scenario," *Italian Journal* 8 (1994): 13–21; Robert H. Evans, "Italy: Quo Vadis?" *Italian Journal* 8 (1994): 4–12; Michael Gallagher, Michael Laver, and Peter Mair, *Representative Government in Western Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 168–169; Mark Gilbert, "Italy Turns Rightwards," *Contemporary Review* 265 (July 1994): 4–10; and Francesco Sidoti, "The Significance of the Italian Elections," *Parliamentary Affairs* 47 (July 1994): 333–347.
15. *La Repubblica*, March 31, 1994, 13.
16. For the results of the 1996 elections, see James L. Newell and Martin Bull, "Party Organizations and Alliances in Italy in the 1990s: A Revolution of Sorts," in *Crisis and Transition in Italian Politics*, ed. Martin Bull and Martin Rhodes (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 104.
17. See James Newell, ed., *The Italian General Election of 2008: Berlusconi Strikes Back* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
18. Marco Damiani, "Nichi Vendola: For the New 'Laboratory' of the Italian Left," *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 3, no. 2 (2011): 371–390.
19. In the European parliamentary elections Silvio Berlusconi's PdL polled 35.3 percent and the NL 10.2 percent vis-à-vis the PD's 26.1 and Di Pietro's 8.0 percent of the vote. See Marco Giuliani and Erik Jones, ed. *Italian Politics: Managing Uncertainty* (New York: Berghahn, 2010).
20. In the 2010 regional elections the center-right added four regions (Piedmont, Latium, Campania, and Calabria) for a total of six regions under their control in addition to Lombardy and Veneto that they confirmed from 2005. See Elisabetta Gualmini and Eleonora Pasotti ed. *Italian Politics Much Ado about Nothing?* (New York: Berghahn, 2011).
21. Davide Vampa, "The Death of Social Democracy: The Case of the Italian Democratic Party," *Bulletin of Italian Politics* 1, no. 2 (2009): 347–370.
22. For an analytical account of the process that led to the demise of the PCI and the formation of the PDS, see Leonard Weinberg, *The Transformation of Italian Communism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1995).
23. See Donald Blackmer, "Continuity and Change in Postwar Italian Communism," in *Communism in Italy and France*, ed. Donald Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 21–68.
24. Antonio Gramsci was one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party. He was jailed by the Fascists on November 8, 1926, and died on April 27, 1937, after eleven years in prison. During his imprisonment, Gramsci wrote a series of notebooks, which provided the intellectual foundation for the transformation of the Italian Communist Party from a sectarian splinter group of Italian Marxism to the largest mass party in Western Europe. Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings* (New York: International Publishers, 1957).
25. On the PDS program in 1994, see Evans, "Italy: Quo Vadis?" 10; and Sidoti, "Significance of the Italian Elections," 336–337.
26. On the PDS conflict with the PRC, see Stephen Hellmann, "The Italian Left after the 1996 Elections," in *Italian Politics: The Center-Left in Power*, ed. Roberto D'Alimonte and David Nelken (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 83–101.

27. Marc Lazar, "The Birth of the Democratic Party," in *Italian Politics: Frustrated Aspirations for Change*, ed. Mark Donovan and Paolo Onofri (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 51–67.
28. In retrospect, the 15.7 percent garnered by the PPI and Segni electoral bloc in 1994 represented a respectable showing in relation to the votes they attracted in subsequent elections. See Robert Leonardi and Paolo Alberti, "From Dominance to Doom? Christian Democracy in Italy," in *Christian Democratic Parties in Europe since the End of the Cold War*, ed. Steven Van Hecke and Emmanuel Gerard (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2004), 105–132.
29. See Vittorio Buffachi, "The Success of Mani Pulite: Luck or Skill?" in *Italy: Politics and Policy*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1996), 189–210.
30. "Centro sinistra e politica locale," *Il Mulino* 12 (March 1963): 240.
31. See Leonardi and Alberti, "From Dominance to Doom?" 105–132.
32. See Newell and Bull, "Party Organizations and Alliances," 104.
33. For a discussion of the Micchiche' phenomenon in Sicily see Eusebio Dali, *La forza di Micciche'* (Reggio Calabria: Falzea Editore, 2011).
34. For some early discussions of the NL, see, for example, Tom Gallagher, "The Regional Dimension in Italy's Political Upheaval: Role of the Northern League, 1984–1993," *Government and Opposition* 29 (Summer 1994): 456–468. See also Dwayne Woods, "The Crisis of the Italian Party-State and the Rise of the Lombard League," *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992): 111–126.
35. For a discussion of the NL's political program, see Carlo Ruzza and Stefano Fella, *Re-Inventing the Italian Right* (London: Routledge, 2009), 85–88.
36. See Adrian Lyttelton, "Italy: The Triumph of TV," *New York Review of Books*, August 11, 1994, 27; and Vincent R. Tortora, "Italy's Second Republic," *New Leader*, May 9–23, 1994, 6.
37. See Evans, "Italy . . . Quo Vadis?" 10–11; and Sidoti, "Significance of the Italian Elections," 339–340.
38. Paul Ginsborg, *Silvio Berlusconi: Television, Power and Patrimony* (London: Verso, 2004).
39. For an analysis of Berlusconi's territorial support, see Michael Shin and John Agnew, *Berlusconi's Italy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).
40. See Sidoti, "Significance of the Italian Elections," 342–344.
41. See "Gianfranco Fini: A Nearly Respectable Post-Fascist," *Economist*, February 21, 1998, 56.
42. A new political group, Future and Liberty (FLI), was created by Gianfranco Fini in September 2010 within the PDL, but it was soon expelled by the leadership loyal to Berlusconi.
43. Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2005), 130.
44. Beppe Grillo "Introduction" to Davide Scale, *L'alba delle 5 stelle: Il tramonto della partitocrazia*, (no place of publication: Dissensi, 2012), 9.
45. On the 19th of May, Grillo's blog began with the title "the M5S is not of the left (and neither of the right)."
46. In the past, the "anti-system" parties represented by the MSI on the right and the PCI on the left had always accepted to find agreements with the other parties represented in parliament, especially in the activities within the standing committees undertaking the passage of legislation in *sede deliberativa*. See Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Nanetti, and Gianfranco Pasquino, "Institutionalization of Parliament and Parliamentarization of Parties in Italy" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (February 1978): 161–186.
47. For a fuller discussion of the Italian electoral system under the pre-1993 electoral law, see Raphael Zariski, *Italy: The Politics of Uneven Development* (Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1972).

48. On the 1993 election law and its effects, see Evans, "Italy: Quo Vadis?" 6–8; and Gallagher Laver, and Mair, *Representative Government in Western Europe*, 168–189.
49. See Stefano Bartolini and Roberto D'Alimonte, "Majoritarian Miracles and the Quest for Party System Change," *European Journal of Political Research* 34 (1998): 151–169, esp 151–157 and 162–168.
50. In 2008 that level was back up to 3.6 percent.
51. See Arturo Parisi and Gianfranco Pasquino, "Changes in Italian Electoral Behavior: The Relationship between Parties and Voters," in *Italy in Transition: Conflict and Consensus*, ed Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow (London: Frank Cass, 1980), 6–30.
52. See Evans, "Italy . . . Quo Vadis?" 11–12.
53. See Ilvo Diamanti, "The Lega Nord: From Federalism to Secession," in D'Alimonte and Nelken, *Italian Politics: The Center-Left in Power*, 68–72; Roberto Biorcio, "La Lega Nord e la transizione italiana," *Rivista italiana di Scienza Politica* 29 (April 1998): 55–85; and Patrizia Messina, "Opposition in Italy in the 1990s: Local Political Cultures and the Northern League," *Government and Opposition* 33 (Autumn 1998): 462–478.
54. Marco Simoni, "FIAT Restructuring and the Pomigliano Case: A New Era in Italian Industrial Relations," in *Italian Politics: A Review: 2010, Much Ado about Nothing?* ed. Elisabetta Gualmini and Eleonora Pasotti (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 198–219.
55. Giuseppe Berta, "La Confindustria all'opposizione" in *Politica in Italian: Edizione 2012*, ed. Anno Bosco and Duncan McDonnell (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012), 237–256.
56. See Gianfranco Pasquino, "Italian Christian Democracy: A Party for All Seasons?" in *Italy in Transition: Conflict and Consensus*, ed. Peter Lange and Sidney Tarrow (London: Frank Cass, 1980), 92–93.
57. See Sandro Magister, "The Church and the End of the Catholic Party," in *Italian Politics: The Stalled Transition*, ed. Mario Caciagli and David I. Kertzer (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 223–240.
58. See Raphael Zariski, "Italy: The Fragmentation of Power and Its Consequences," in *First World Interest Groups: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Clive S. Thomas (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 127–138.