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The Oxford Handbook *of*
ITALIAN
POLITICS

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

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and

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Preface

When we set out to assemble an *Oxford Handbook of Italian Politics* in the early spring of 2011, we had no idea how much and how quickly Italy would change. Silvio Berlusconi was then prime minister with a nearly unassailable parliamentary majority. The center-left was divided. And while much of Europe was in the throes of an economic crisis, the impact on Italy was not yet apparent. There were ongoing debates about whether Italy had transitioned from a "second" to a "third" republic and there was renewed focus on the foibles of the Italian political class. But Italy was hardly in the throes of a political revolution; the more things changed the easier it was to see how they remained the same.

We sketched our ideas for the volume to highlight the core features of Italian politics. We commissioned authors who could write authoritatively about the country's evolution, primarily since the end of World War II but in some cases since Unification. We established a supportive working relationship with the provincial government of Bologna in order to organize seminars with politicians around some of the many themes in draft form. And we set our authors to work with little inkling of what the future had in store.

The result is a collection that speaks to the enduring characteristics of Italian political life rather than focusing on recent political developments. This is consistent with the aims of the Oxford Handbook series; it is also complementary to a collaborative project we have with the Istituto Cattaneo in Bologna to produce the annual volume *Politica in Italia* in the Italian edition or *Italian Politics* in the English version. Readers looking to catch up on what is happening in real time are encouraged to look at that contemporary survey of events. The goal of this handbook is to provide a comprehensive overview of Italian political history, institutions, traditions, actors, and concepts.

There are 54 chapters organized in nine sections. We start with the conceptual vocabulary that defines key aspects of Italian political life. This is where we commissioned chapters to focus on elites, the Risorgimento, *trasformismo, partitocrazia*, and the dualism between north and south. These concepts are not necessarily unique to Italy. Other countries also have elites, they have gone through a period of nation-building, they have politicians who change party affiliations, and they have political parties that try to run the show. Other countries also have important geographic cleavages. What they do not have is the distinctive mix of these elements or the reinforcing influence they represent.

This conceptual vocabulary provides the context for understanding Italy's political institutions. This is the second section of the volume. Starting with the Constitution of the Republic, we asked authors to explain the organization of executive, legislative,

electoral, and bureaucratic power. The emphasis in these chapters is more descriptive than interpretative. They provide the frame within which Italian political life has evolved.

The third section explores Italy's political traditions from Christian Democracy through populism. The goal with these chapters is to show how each of these traditions has contributed to Italian political development. That set of parallel narratives comes together in the fourth section, where we look at the major periods in post-World War II Italian history. This periodization extends up to the present pattern of bi-polar alternation between center-right and center-left—setting the stage for what is likely to come after.

Such analysis should not ignore the individuals who have shaped Italian politics. However, a fair rendering of Italy's rich political tapestry of personalities would require a volume unto itself. What we offer is a study in contrasts. We have paired historical figures from similar or overlapping periods in order to elicit both their unique characteristics and some of the texture of their interaction. Most of these figures have played prominent parliamentary roles; we included a chapter on Gianni Agnelli and Enrico Mattei because not all major political figures are elected.

This point about politics outside the electoral process extends across the next three sections of our collection. We have clustered chapters on religion, economics, and society. The chapters on religion focus primarily on the Catholic Church but also consider Italy's growing religious differentiation and its enduring liberal or lay tradition. The chapters on economics draw attention to Italian families, firms, labor markets, and welfare state. They also highlight important roles played by specific institutions or groups, such as the Bank of Italy and the cooperative movement. The chapters on Italian society broaden the analysis to bring in different forms of mass media, to highlight public ethics, gender, immigration, and social movements—and to explore some of Italy's more violent forms of political expression through terrorism and organized crime.

The remaining chapters draw attention to Italy's relationship with the outside world using the concentric circles of the Atlantic Alliance, Europe, and the Mediterranean. These external relationships are present through much of the rest of the volume as well. It goes without saying that Italian politics has been heavily influenced by forces from abroad. It is also worth noting, however, that Italy exerts influence. In that sense, Italian politics is important not only for its own sake but also for what Italy has to offer to the rest of the world.

This collection would never have been possible without the professionalism, hard work, and commitment of our many contributors. As editors, we owe them more than the usual debt of gratitude. The Province of Bologna was a vital source of support and inspiration. They not only gave us a wealth of insights in the two seminars we held on their premises, but the resources they provided also made it possible for us to commission translations for eight of the chapters and so to facilitate participation from a number of vital contributors. Our thanks go to Valeria Calderoni for translating Chapter 26, and to Giulia Baldisseri and Valeria Elena Benko who together translated Chapters 9, 20, 27, 28, 31, 32, and 35. The project as a whole was overseen by Kathryn Knowles and

managed by Dea Di Furia. Thanks go to them and to the direction of SAIS Europe for making this possible. A number of very talented students also contributed to our efforts. Of these, two deserve particular mention: Luigi Scazzieri prepared many of the abstracts and keywords and Chiara Monti formatted the text for publication.

The talented production staff at Oxford University Press also deserve mention. Our commissioning editor, Dominic Byatt, has encouraged us throughout this project. His colleagues at OUP have shown unfailing patience with a production schedule that often overran our initial estimates. They also provided tremendous support. If the text of this volume reads fluently, Elizabeth Stone deserves the lion's share of the credit. Any errors are ours alone.

A final word of thanks go to my co-editor Gianfranco Pasquino and my SAIS colleague Mark Gilbert. Oxford Handbooks are somewhat daunting publications both because of the scale of the exercise and because of the range of knowledge required. As such, they are best tackled as collaborative ventures. It is a great privilege to work at a place like SAIS Europe where we have such a wealth of talent.

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Erik Jones
Oxford, UK
May 2015

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List of Common Acronyms

AC	Azione Cattolica
ACI	Alleanza Cooperativa Italiana
AGCI	Alleanza Generale delle Cooperative Italiane
AGCOM	Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni
AGIP	Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli
AN	Alleanza Nazionale
ANAS	Azienda Nazionale Autonoma delle Strade
ANCC	Associazione Nazionale Cooperative Consumatori
ANCD	Associazione Nazionale Cooperative fra Dettaglianti
ANM	Associazione Nazionale Magistrati
ASPI	Assicurazione Sociale per l'Impiego
ATM	Azienda Trasporti Milanesi
BNL	Banca Nazionale del Lavoro
BR	Brigate Rosse
CAF	Craxi-Andreotti-Forlani
CCC	Consorzio Cooperative Costruzioni
CCD	Centro Cristiano Democratico
CdM	Consiglio dei Ministri
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CEI	Conferenza Episcopale Italiana
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIG	Casse Integrazione Guadagni
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori
CL	Communione e Liberazione
CLN	Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale
CNEL	Consiglio Nazionale Economia e Lavoro
CNS	Consorzio Nazionale Servizi

Comintern	Communist International
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CpM	Cassa per il Mezzogiorno
DC	Democrazia Cristiana
DIA	Direzione Investigativa Antimafia
DRIA	Disintegration, Reconstruction, Integration and Alienation
DS	Democratici di Sinistra
EC	European Community
ECB	European Central Bank
ECPI	Excess Perceived Corruption Index
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EMS	European Monetary System
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENEL	Ente Nazionale per l'Energia Elettrica
ENEP	Effective Number of Electoral Parties
ENI	Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi
ENPG	Effective Number of Parliamentary Groups
ENPP	Effective Number of Parliamentary Parties
ERM	Exchange Rate Mechanism
ESCB	European System of Central Banks
ESRB	European Systemic Risk Board
EUR	Esposizione Universale Roma
FCC	Formazioni Comuniste Combattenti
FGCI	Federazione Giovanile Comunista Italiana
FI	Forza Italia
FIAT	Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino
FIOM	Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici
FLI	Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FSB	Financial Stability Board
FSF	Financial Stability Forum
FUCI	Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana
G-7	Group of Seven Leading Industrial Nations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GJM	Global Justice Movement
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
GSF	Genoa Social Forum
HDI	Human Development Index
IAA	Independent Administrative Agency
IDV	Italia dei Valori
IMI	Istituto Mobiliare Italiano
INA	Istituto Nazionale Assicurazioni
INAIL	Istituto Nazionale per l'Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul Lavoro
IOTA	Identity, Opposition, Totality, Alternative
IPAB	Istituti Pubblici di Assistenza e Beneficenza
IRES	Imposta sul Reddito delle Società
IRI	Istituto per la Ricostruzione Industriale
ISTAT	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica
IT	Information Technology
LN	Lega Nord
M5S	Movimento 5 Stelle
MP	Member of Parliament
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
NAR	Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCD	Nuovo Centrodestra
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHS	National Health Service
NIMBY	Not In My Backyard
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLIR	Osservatorio delle Libertà ed Istituzioni Religiose
ON	Centro Studi Ordine Nuovo
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
P2	Propaganda Due
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PES	Public Employment Services

PD	Partito Democratico
PdAz	Partito d'Azione
PdCI	Partito dei Comunisti Italiani
PdL	Il Popolo della Libertà
PDS	Partito Democratico della Sinistra
PL	Prima Linea
PLI	Partito Liberale Italiano
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNF	Partito Nazionale Fascista
PPI	Partito Popolare Italiano
PR	Partito Radicale
PRC	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista—see also RC
PRI	Partito Repubblicano Italiano
PSDI	Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano
PSI	Partito Socialista Italiano
PSIUP	Partito Socialista Italiano di Unità Proletaria
RAI	Radiotelevisione Italiana
RC	Partito della Rifondazione Comunista—see also PRC
RSA	Rappresentanze Sindacali Aziendali
RSI	Repubblica Sociale Italiana
RSU	Rappresentanza Sindacale Unitaria
SEL	Sinistra Ecologia Libertà
SISMI	Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare
SME	Small or Medium-sized Enterprise
SVIMEZ	Associazione per lo Sviluppo dell'Industria nel Mezzogiorno
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFR	Trattamento di Fine Rapporto
TV	Television
UB	Unemployment Benefits
UDC	Unione di Centro
UDEUR	Unione Democratici per l'Europa
UFM	Union for the Mediterranean
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

UQ	Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WGI	World Governance Index
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

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PART I

CORE CONCEPTS

CHAPTER 1

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LA CLASSE DIRIGENTE

....

JAMES L. NEWELL

THE term *classe dirigente* is not easy to translate. *Bourgeoisie* or "capitalist class"—Marxian terms referring to ownership of the means of production—do not fully capture the sense: a *dirigente* is one who leads, and leadership takes place in other spheres besides the economy. Not exclusive to the economy, leadership is not exclusive to politics either. For this reason, *classe dirigente* is not synonymous with *classe politica*, which consists of those occupying positions in the institutions of government at national and sub-national levels. Nor does the term *elite* constitute an adequate translation: elites are those who excel in some respect, whether in material possessions or abilities, and they may or may not lead, depending on the quality of the role models they furnish for those who have fewer of the possessions or abilities in question. Nevertheless, the term inevitably brings to mind the work of the elite theorists Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca.

For Pareto, since people are unequally endowed, political change is inevitably the work of elites, ordinary people in most circumstances acting as little more than bystanders. Regime change, through revolution or otherwise, then, is a matter of the circulation of elites and Marx was wrong in thinking that revolution could be used as a tool to end their domination. For Mosca, whatever the principles according to which people were theoretically governed, in practice all but the most primitive societies were ruled by small minorities. For both thinkers, as for members of the school of elite theorists they founded, the essential point is that power relationships in contemporary society are more or less independent of its formal political arrangements, democratic or otherwise. Given these reflections, "ruling class" seems to offer the best translation. It is the class which, thanks to its extraordinary endowments and therefore its status, leads and manages a society either by the influence it has over the actions of the political class or by the influence it has over popular attitudes and behavior, or by both types of influence.

A CONTENTIOUS TERM

It is entirely fitting that Mosca and Pareto were Italians writing at the time of Huttington's[1] first wave of democratization; for in stark contrast to countries such as Britain and the United States, Italy at the time had a state that found it difficult to use principles of democracy to establish a firm foundation of legitimacy for itself.[2] In Britain, nascent democracy, beginning with Magna Carta in 1215, was about the breakdown of feudalism; about placing limits on royal power; about empowering groups other than those with connections to the court. The purpose of government was to facilitate the unfettered pursuit of the action of free individuals in civil society—requiring divided government and constitutional government. From such a perspective, with the addition of universal suffrage, there can be no "ruling class" as such: the people as a whole rule through institutions explicitly designed to *prevent* such rule in fact being exercised by any one part, much less rule that is *arbitrary*. To acknowledge that *alongside* the institutions of political democracy there exists a "ruling class" is to agree to the proposition that the power that can be wielded by some relative to others undermines the empowerment the latter are supposed to enjoy through political institutions to the point of throwing a question mark over the extent to which the polity can in any meaningful sense be regarded as "democratic" at all. It is no wonder then, that in English-speaking countries, the notion of a "ruling class" has never been popular.

Italy represents a very different case. There, the term "ruling class" is used much more widely and in a much more relaxed way. In the south, the breakdown of feudal jurisdiction and the abolition of feudal land tenures have to await the French Revolution and Napoleon's conquest of Italy after 1796. In 1815, the peninsula is divided into eight separate states. "Most [are] under the direct or indirect control of Austria, and those that [are] not [are] ruled by conservative, absolutist kings."[3] Unification, when it comes, is essentially the work of a restricted Piedmontese elite unable to win the allegiance of vast swathes of the population or to place the authority of the state on any kind of firm foundations, this for reasons that are political (the opposition of the Church and a restricted franchise), economic (elites' rapacity, and grinding poverty), social (widespread illiteracy), and geographical (communications difficulties over a largely mountainous and rugged terrain). In some parts of the country, the state's writ does not run at all and people look for alternative means of underwriting contracts. In Sicily, the Mafia supplies, as a private good, the protection and dispute settlement that would otherwise be supplied, publicly, by the state.

Decline in the state's capacity and lack of public confidence in it become mutually reinforcing in a vicious circle. By 1913, while the per capita level of industrialization for the United Kingdom is 115 (UK in 1900 = 100), for Italy it is 26.[4] A weak manufacturing base combined with a weak state mean, not surprisingly, that the distinctively bourgeois values of law and order and due process find relatively infertile terrain. With the complicity of economic and political elites in the rise of Fascism, a refusal to acknowledge

the existence of a ruling class or something approximating it seems unsustainable. Consequently, Italians, and people like the British or Americans, find themselves at opposite ends of a spectrum: while the latter refuse to accept the idea that they have a ruling class at all, the former not only accept that they have one, they wish it were stronger and more effective.

The Empirical Significance
of the *Classe Dirigente*

Aside from what is *perceived* to be the case, it is worthwhile asking whether suggestions of the existence of a "ruling class" in fact make sense empirically. The term "class" implies, first, the internal homogeneity, in some respect, of its members and, second, some qualitative, not merely quantitative, distinction that sets its members apart from those who are not members. Third, if it is to be more than merely the concept of an observer, a class must have some kind of existence in the minds of its putative members: it must, to use Marxian terminology, not only be a *Klasse an sich* but also a *Klasse für sich*.

With regard to the first of these criteria, social scientists usually think of common location in the social structure as being what counts, the relevant indicator being occupation. The second criterion, meanwhile, points to the drawback associated with many attempts to operationalize the class concept: as occupations are typically grouped according to some continuous variable such as status, the placement of class boundaries is essentially arbitrary "and the utility of the resulting class schema correspondingly diminished: if using such a schema we find that there is a relationship between class position and vote, for example, essentially all we learn is that hierarchy is related to voting; we get little insight into what it might be *about* such classes that they influence voting patterns".[5] Third, since classes, unlike feudal estates, do not constitute legally defined sets of rights and obligations, it cannot be assumed that there will be any necessary connections between social structural position on the one hand and social consciousness and action on the other. Classes, unlike feudal estates, reflect power disparities that are the outcome of free exchanges between legally equal contracting parties. Consequently, they have no necessary bearing on people's self understandings or behavior; much less is there any guarantee that they will fulfill any of Michael Mann's IOTA (identity, opposition, totality, alternative) conditions.[6]

On what grounds, then, is it possible to point to the existence—in Italy or any other case—of a *classe dirigente* that goes any way to meeting the three criteria? Clearly, at the apex of various fields—law, politics, business, scientific research, culture and entertainment, religion—there exist people whose occupations enable them to exercise an unusual degree of influence over the life of society: that much is obvious. But what makes it legitimate to regard Mario Monti as belonging to a class together with the Agnelli family

and Luca Cordero de Montezemolo, and all three as belonging to a class together with Ferruccio de Bortoli, Eugenio Scalfari, Rita Levi-Montalcini, or the Pope?

First, they all restrict access to rewards and privileges by exclusionary forms of social closure, the two main devices of which are "first, those surrounding the institutions of property; and, second, academic or professional qualifications and credentials."[7] However, this is a characteristic they share with a not insignificant proportion of the population, most of whom are not members of the *classe dirigente*. What sets the latter apart, within the broader category, is that the status they have by virtue of the sheer quantities of property or certified competence at their command—the impact they single-handedly can have on public policy thanks to their property or their positions—gives them a *public reputation*, actual or potential. They talk to and are talked about in the media and are therefore known to the public. This in turn means that they have a resource which those who are not known to the public do not have. The prestige, recognized competence, the respect that is accorded them: these are by definition forms of authority and therefore power resources enabling them to access the media and politicians in a way that those who are not publicly known cannot. When they speak, other important people and the public sit up and listen.[8]

Their public reputation gives members of the *classe dirigente* a second common characteristic, the need to employ assistants and gatekeepers of various kinds: rarely can they be contacted directly—a reflection of the fact that their reputations are also their vulnerability. They are scandal prone. As used-car dealers know, reputations are very difficult to acquire but very easy to lose. As celebrities, actual or potential, members of the *classe dirigente* are of special interest to investigative journalists; as celebrities they are, like it or not, used by the public as role models. Transgressions—which, if committed by ordinary people would not be of the slightest interest outside their immediate circles—may damage celebrities' reputations and therefore their power if they become public; so they require staff to assist them in the continuous effort of reputation maintenance and to shield them from prying eyes.

Finally, as members of the *classe dirigente*, they each perform, in various ways and to various degrees, a role for society as a whole that is not dissimilar to the role the President of the Republic performs for the Italian polity. The President's supreme function is to mediate and regulate the interaction of political actors with the aim of ensuring that politics is carried on without threatening national integration. This means that the President's role is not simply juridical or ceremonial but also political in character; and it is precisely to facilitate the exercise of the supreme function that the Italian Constitution is rather unspecific about the President's powers: these are like an accordion, available to play to its full extent when the weakness of other actors (notably the parties) so requires, otherwise kept relatively "closed" by these other actors' strength.[9] Correspondingly, members of the *classe dirigente* are expected, by the public, to conduct themselves in ways that are conducive to the maintenance of order even when they are advocating changes; as individuals with very large stakes in the existing social order it is in their interests so to do.[10] The substance of the conduct that is required of them is not necessarily prescribed in detail anywhere; like that of the President it will

vary greatly depending on that of other significant actors. The decision of Monti—a leading academic—to accept the responsibilities of prime minister; the decision of Montezemolo—an industrialist—to set up a political movement and then to participate in the 2013 general election, are both clear examples of this.

Trade union leaders occupy an interesting position in relation to the definition just developed. On the one hand, they head organizations whose purposes lead them to challenge the distribution of power and resources sanctioned by the exclusionary activities of the ruling class. On the other hand, thanks to their capacity to deploy scarce resources of their own (skills of speech-making and handling meetings if nothing else) they occupy positions of power and influence which they can only retain to the extent that they are able to ensure the continuity of stable and cordial bargaining relationships with employers. And in order to ensure that, they must ensure that the organizations they lead exert at least as much power *over* their members as they exert power *for* them.[11] They must, in C. Wright Mills's famous phrase, act as "mangers of discontent."[12]

The Composition
of the *Classe Dirigente*

Given the above-discussed criteria, the *classe dirigente* can be defined in operational terms as consisting of all those who make it into *Who's Who in Italy*, the current edition of which includes about 8,000 entries.[13] This means that the class comprises about 0.02 percent of the adult resident population; that is, about 1 in 5,000 is a member.[14] In November 2012, the private research institute Eurispes undertook an analysis of *Who's Who* data relating to 1992 and 2012, making possible a description of the socio-demographic characteristics of the *classe dirigente* and how they have changed over the past 20 years.[15] The main findings were the following:

- The class consists predominantly of older males: the proportion of females has doubled in the last 20 years but still only 15 percent are female. Meanwhile, 4 out of 5 (79.5 percent) are over 50, and 39.3 percent over 65. Some 20 years ago the proportion of those over 50 had been 3 out of 4, the proportion over 65, 25.2 percent. Carboni and Pavolini analyzing *Who's Who* data for the period from 1990 to 2004 note that the process of aging has been particularly marked among business people and those employed in cultural occupations and the professions.[16] They therefore argue that aging has reflected not only the aging of the population in general but two specific processes. On the one hand, Italian capitalism, which flourished in the 1960s and 1970s, was built above all on family firms dominated by life-time owner-managers. The more recent transition to a post-industrial economy, and global competition, has limited the availability of new opportunities and therefore the proportion of new generations of entrepreneurs to be found in the *classe*

dirigente. On the other hand, recent years have seen severe cut backs in the availability of places in the universities, hospitals, research centers, and so on responsible for producing cultural products, as well as severe restrictions on access to the professions.

- The marked regional disparities apparent in other areas of political, economic, and social life in Italy are also reflected in the composition of the *classe dirigente*. As one would expect, a large majority of members of the class are resident either in Rome (47.2 percent) or in Milan (21.0 percent), which are the political and economic capitals, respectively, but also the main artistic and cultural centers. Of the 95.4 percent born in Italy, only 16.7 percent were born in the south, thus appearing to confirm the disadvantages faced by those originating in this part of the world in gaining access to positions of power. And when they do gain such access they go elsewhere: of those born in the south some 90 percent are resident in Lazio or in the main industrial regions of the centre and the north.

- At least in terms of formal qualifications, members of the *classe dirigente* are better educated now than they were 20 years ago, with 83.3 percent having a university degree as compared with 66.1 percent in 1992. While this presumably reflects the general growth of the better-educated in each generational cohort since the war, it is likely, at least in part, also to reflect the significant shift that has taken place in the distribution of members of the class among sectors of activity: as one would expect, the proportion of degree holders is larger among those working in the fields of culture and the professions than it is among businesspeople, and while the latter have declined as a proportion of the class, there has been an equally significant growth in the former.[17]

- The occupations accounting for the largest proportions of the *classe dirigente* are politicians (21.7 percent), university professors (18.5 percent), and company directors (14.7 percent) followed by sportspeople, actors, artists and entertainers (14.0 percent), and by journalists (5.3 percent). Lawyers, doctors, military, and judicial personnel together account for only 4.4 percent. The obvious overrepresentation of some occupations (notably politicians and journalists) as compared with others reflects the tendency towards a high public profile of its members as a function of its role in maintaining social integration.

Taken together, the changes in the characteristics of the *classe dirigente* arguably reflect important shifts in the performance of this integration role since the 1990s in the direction of more explicit efforts to manufacture consent. As is well known, key institutions like political parties have suffered drastic declines in public confidence, with falling memberships and falling turnouts at elections, while recent years have also seen, in part as cause in part as consequence, a growing mediatization of politics. These twin processes may in part explain the growth in the proportion of politicians making up the *classe dirigente*; the growing relative significance of journalists, writers, and university professors relative to company directors and entrepreneurs, and the growing numbers with degrees in the arts and humanities as compared with technical and

scientific disciplines.[18] The increase in significance of politicians probably reflects an expansion of institutional networks designed to increase public confidence by responding to decentralizing pressures such as those of the Northern League. As public confidence has declined so has there been a growing need for communications experts and experts in the processing and interpreting of information. Mediatization has meant a growing tendency for political communication to depend on and be shaped by the media and therefore a growth in the power of the latter vis-à-vis other institutions. Arguably, therefore, the power and profile of those whose job it is to select and interpret information (writers, journalists, and academics) through the media has grown correspondingly.

THE PERFORMANCE
OF THE *CLASSE DIRIGENTE*

By definition, the function of a *classe dirigente* is to lead. "To lead" means to "enlist the aid and support of others in the achievement of a common task" and obviously a leader is unlikely to be successful in this if s/he does not enjoy the trust and confidence of those whose support s/he is seeking to enlist.[19] Clearly, Italians do not have much confidence in their leaders, or in some of them, because, as is well known, survey data regularly show that they don't have much confidence in the key institutions these leaders are responsible for running (see Table 1.1). Politicians are spectacularly unsuccessful in inspiring confidence, while entrepreneurs and others responsible for managing the economic life of the country fare only marginally better. Far more successful are those with responsibility for institutions that are either close to citizens (voluntary associations), have direct responsibility for protecting them (the forces of law and order), or have succeeded in capturing the public imagination (the Corpo Forestale in the area of environmental protection and the army with its contributions to international peace missions).

Why is the *classe dirigente* less than completely successful in inspiring public confidence in the institutions it runs? Why, in short, is it *weak*? One reason is that it does not have, or significant numbers of its members, do not have—or take insufficient steps to be seen to have—the necessary degree of probity: they behave as "amoral individualists."[20] Transparency International's corruption perceptions index—measuring "perceptions of the extent of corruption in the public sector from the perceptions of business people and country experts"—shows this clearly: Italy regularly emerges among the bottom handful of EU member states and sometimes even behind such Third World countries as Ghana, Rwanda, or Puerto Rico. Corruption, real or perceived, is disastrous from the point of view of maintaining public confidence, as it blatantly contradicts those principles of legality, due process, and formal equality on which the power and authority of the *classe dirigente* as a whole depends.[21] It is a form of free riding that threatens the class collectively.

Table 1.1 Confidence of Italian Citizens in Institutions, 2013 (percent)

Institution	Confidence*
Corpo Forestale	77.1
Carabinieri	76.3
Voluntary organizations	75.4
Police	75.0
Armed forces	71.3
Guardia di Finanza	71.0
Consumers' associations	63.8
Schools	48.2
Secret services	45.3
President of the Republic	44.7
Judiciary	42.0
Church	36.6
Entrepreneurs' associations	29.8
Trade unions	19.5
Public administration	17.6
Government	15.9
Parliament	9.0
Political parties	7.3

* Percentages of respondents declaring "some" or "a great deal" of confidence in the institution in question.

Source: "La fiducia dei citadini nelle istituzioni: Rapporto Italia 2013", Eurispes <http://www.eurispes.eu/content/la-fiducia-dei-cittadini-nelle-istituzioni-rapporto-italia-2013>.

The point can be made by means of another comparison with Britain whose *classe dirigente* understands the importance of probity very well and is for this reason absolutely ruthless with any of its members who (are perceived to) step out of line: not for them the tolerance of tax evasion, the *ad personam* legislation, and the amnesties that make such regular appearances on the Italian political stage. One is bound to ask, then, why it is that, in the land that gave us Machiavelli and a host of other original and astute political thinkers, the *classe dirigente* has been so apparently inept at keeping its members in line.

Anything approaching a "complete" answer would have to appeal to social patterns with roots stretching back deep into the past, and to many other issues besides.[22] Here we focus on the way in which the class organized its internal affairs having emerged from the ruins of Fascism. The power vacuum created by this event meant that the only authority available for Italians to turn to was the Church or the Resistance movement, which was dominated by the political parties. Central, therefore, to the reconstruction of social organizations and interest groups, the parties were able—as "the principal channels of access to the bureaucracy and the principal transmission belts in the allocation of resources from centre to periphery"—to penetrate the interstices of civil society and the state.[23] In short, in the aftermath of Fascism, the *classe dirigente* came to be dominated

by one of its parts—the politicians—and it was through their organizations—the parties—that the class mainly organized its affairs. The politicians, however—thanks to the Cold War and the "polarized pluralist" character of the party system—were obliged to rely heavily on patronage to mobilize popular consent; and they were unable to offer to the business representatives among the members of the class, the coherent policy-making they needed in order to make sound, long-term investment decisions.[24] Thus it was that—needing politicians' patronage for a range of routine business matters, from town-planning decisions to those concerning the award of public-works contracts, and keen to overcome inefficiencies—entrepreneurs sought to establish stable relationships with politicians whereby, in exchange for financial support at a time when the cost of politics was rising, they would obtain more of the certainty needed for finance and investment to be managed and planned rationally.[25]

What emerged, therefore, was a whole series of improper relations between economic and political power, including concomitants like the P2 Masonic lodge, giving rise to:

> veritable clans whose purpose was nothing other than mutual assistance in the management and enhancement of the power of their members. Thus … Andreotti had a clan, comprising the chemicals industrialist, Nino Rovelli, the building contractors of the Caltagrirone family, parts of the Catholic banking sector and numerous politicians … while Berlusconi (who would hardly have been able to make his fortune without political support) belonged to Craxi's clan.[26]

For a short while after the great *Tangentopoli* corruption scandal, with its bipolarizing effects on the party system, it seemed that there might be a clean-up. But the emergent centre-right was dominated by Berlusconi, who has managed to undermine still further the capacity of the *classe dirigente* to inspire confidence in the country's institutions—this by managing power as a court system: "The principal characteristic of a court system is its ability to spread or reinforce servile attitudes and habits: adulation, simulation, cynicism, disdain for free spirits, venality and corruption."[27]

A second reason for the weakness of the *classe dirigente*, therefore, has to do with its lack of the cohesion without which leadership is difficult if not impossible. As conservative political thinkers have taught, cohesion requires that interaction between the components of a social body reflect the interaction between the parts of a living body, each of whose organs contributes to the survival of the body as a whole by performing a unique function in harmonious interaction with each of the others. Three instances of disharmony have been particularly important in recent years, first, the inability of the politicians on either side of the left–right divide to accord each other legitimacy as potential governing actors. For those on the centre-left, this has been impossible given Berlusconi's conflict of interests. The *classe dirigente*, in capitalist liberal democracies, is the body of commanders within the larger dominant class formed around practices of social closure based on principles of legality and due process. These principles, through the rules of property and credentials, guarantee unequal access to resources, while legitimizing that inequality in the eyes of the population as a whole. So, to accord Berlusconi

legitimacy is to undermine the bases on which the *classe dirigente* maintains itself in the first place.

Second, Berlusconi's power, and the way he has chosen to manage that power, has provided the basis for often bitter conflicts between the political and judicial branches of the state—which the *classe dirigente* has been unable to resolve because they cut right through the class itself: on the one side stand Berlusconi and his courtesans; on the other, "the austerity, ethical rectitude and idea of service to the state embodied in the figure of Francesco Saverio Borrelli, the chief prosecuting magistrate of Milan."[28]

Third, those members of the *classe dirigente* who are meant to keep the membership as a whole in line by playing the role of the fourth estate—those with media responsibilities—have been unable to do so effectively because they have lacked the authority that comes with independence: traditionally, Italian newspapers have found it difficult to make a profit, and hence have either been party newspapers or papers owned by other companies (e.g., FIAT) wanting to use them as tools to further their interests, or else by others wanting to use them to pursue some specific political ambition. "[T]he public service broadcaster RAI has, since its inception, been subject to political interference of varying intensity," while the main commercial broadcasting group, Mediaset, is of course owned by Silvio Berlusconi.[29] Hired to pursue a political line, journalists have helped to create that line: it is as if, as an organ of the body, they had been taken over by another organ. To be sure, they *do* criticize; but being perceived as being closely associated with one or the other of the political line-ups, they lack the authority that would enable them to set the political agenda and oblige politicians to respond.[30]

Finally, effective leadership requires a vision shared by leaders and led: in this case, a shared idea, however vague, of what the ideal Italy looks like, of what it means to be Italian. Yet the circumstances surrounding Unification were such as to obstruct the emergence of a national integrative ideology. Fascism's attempt to plug the gap was discredited beyond appeal with the outcome of World War II. While the anti-fascist ideals that inspired the 1948 Constitution provided some social glue, the latter was the work of the Communists and Christian Democrats: neither considered themselves heirs of the liberal tradition of the Risorgimento, and both had communities of reference that lay outside, and were in some respects opposed to, the national community. Moreover, the ideals automatically excluded those who, in the aftermath of 1943 had chosen to fight against the Resistance. Their capacity to promote a sense of nation was therefore limited. Lacking self-esteem as Italians, citizens had difficulty in developing feelings of allegiance to their national institutions, their leaders difficulty in creating them.

Conclusion

The problems of Italy are problems of its ruling class, which currently finds itself between the devil of a growing economic crisis and the deep-blue sea of growing citizen dissatisfaction.[31] It is not well placed to handle the dilemma because—thanks precisely

to amoral individualism, a lack of cohesion, and the absence of a clear vision—it is unable to exercise hegemony: to impose on citizens norms and values that they view as inevitable and take for granted so that they behave in ways functional to the maintenance and development of a social and political order with which all might be content. And because it cannot exercise hegemony, so the ruling class finds it difficult to lead and manage—in a never-ending vicious circle. Within and outside the class are individuals and groups driven by an ethic of social responsibility. In the absence of a class able effectively to lead, it is on the clash between these groups and the amoral individualists that the future of Italian society will depend.

Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).
2. Ibid.
3. John Gooch, *The Unification of Italy* (London: Routledge, 1986), 1.
4. P. Bairoch, "International Industrialization Levels from 1750 to 1980," pp. 3–35 in Patrick O'Brien (ed.), *Industrialisation: Critical Perspectives on the World Economy* (London: Routledge, 1998), 12.
5. James L. Newell, "Labourism, Ideology and the British Middle Class," PhD thesis (Florence: European University Institute, 1991), 38.
6. Michael Mann, *Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class* (London: Macmillan, 1973). In this book, Mann sets out four conditions that have to be fulfilled if classes are to exist as compartmentalized social collectives cemented by a shared sense of group consciousness, first, a shared "identity" must exist between the group's members. Second, this identity must include a perception of "opposition" to other group interests. Third, these components must combine in a "totality" that defines the group members' social situation and society in general. Fourth, an "alternative" to the existing power relations must be conceived.
7. Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique* (London: Tavistock, 1979), 48.
8. I am not suggesting that being known to the public is necessary in order to qualify for membership of the *classe dirigente*. Obviously, there are many members of the class, past and present, who have been and are, incredibly powerful (e.g., the head of the Italian army), but whom few have ever heard of (e.g., Enrico Cuccia). What I am saying is that these people's power gives them a capacity for publicity should they choose to seek it, a capacity that others do not have. The test, therefore, of whether one is a member of the *classe dirigente* as opposed to the broader category of those whose property rights and credentials give them privileged access to resources is that one can make pronouncements that cause others to pay attention. It is this *capacity* for publicity that distinguishes the *classe dirigente*, whose job, after all, is precisely to *lead*.
9. Gianfranco Pasquino, "Italian Presidents and their Accordion: Pre-1992 and Post-1994," *Parliamentary Affairs*, 65 no. 4 (October 2012), 847.
10. Honors and awards, with their imposing titles and therefore the additional status they confer—"Commendatore dell'Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana," "Cavaliere

del lavoro," "Grande Ufficiale dell'Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana" and so on—further enhance the size of this stake and it is not indulging in conspiracy theories to suggest that they are often used to keep potentially troublesome public figures in line. The British are experts at this, the Italians much less so largely because of the explicitly anti-fascist and egalitarian principles that inspired the drafting of the 1948 Constitution and underpinned the post-war settlement bringing the abolition of former aristocratic titles and thus a degree of diffidence toward honors generally.

11. Richard Hyman, *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1975), ch. 3

12. C. Wright Mills, *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1948), 9.

13. The reference here is to the online edition published by WHO'S WHO Sutter's international red series available at <http://www.whoswho.eu>. "The *Who's Who* database includes only those occupying positions at the top of Italian institutions, organizations, associations, firms and societies with an international profile." "The selection of people to include is made by an international committee of *Who's Who* experts which remains anonymous so as not to be subject to any kind of influence," "Nota metodologica alla ricerca," pp. 149–151 in Carlo Carboni (ed.), *Élite e classi dirigenti in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2007), 150.

14. Bearing in mind that the adult resident population on January 1, 2011 was 50,396,628, the latest date for which Istat figures are available: <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPORESBIL1&Lang=>

15. See "Il profilo del potere in Italia" (available at <http://www.whoswho.eu/doc/ita_newspaper_embed /4665_ita_newspaper_embed.pdf>) from which the figures cited in the following paragraphs have been taken unless stated otherwise.

16. Carlo Carboni and Emmanuele Pavolini, "Una radiografia delle élite: chi sono e che caratteristiche hanno," pp. 3–52 in Carlo Carboni (ed.), *Élite e classi dirigenti in Italia* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2007), 20–26.

17. Carboni and Pavolini (ibid.) suggest that businesspeople declined from 47 to 18 percent between 1990 and 2004, while those working in cultural and professional occupations rose from 27.5 to 42.0 percent over the same period.

18. According to Carboni and Pavolini (ibid., p. 11), politicians grew from 14.4 to 26.3 percent between 1990 and 2004; in 2004 only a quarter had degrees in economics or science subjects as compared to one third in 1990 (ibid., p.27); entrepreneurs and managers in private industry declined significantly while university professors, journalists, and writers remained steady or increased (ibid., table 1.1).

19. Martin M. Chemers, *An Integrative Theory of Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997).

20. Carlo Carboni, "Epilogo. Potere, élite e classe dirigente: un breve repertorio sociologico," pp. 125–147 in Carlo Carboni (ed.), *Élite e classi dirigenti in Italia*, Rome and Bari: Laterza), 141.

21. (<http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/in_detail/>.)

22. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

23. James L. Newell, *Parties and Democracy in Italy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 47.

24. For party systems, see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). These matters are explored in some depth in the chapters by Valbruzzi and Calise in this volume.

25. Martin Rhodes, "Financing Party Politics in Italy: A Case of System Corruption," pp. 54–80 in Martin Bull and Martin Rhodes (eds.), *Crisis and Transition in Italian Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 65–66; Mauro Magatti, *Corruzione politica e società italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 71–74.

26. Newell, *Parties and Democracy in Italy*, 107–108.

27. Maurizio Viroli, *The Liberty of Servants: Berlusconi's Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Universiy Press, 2012), xii.

28. Paul Ginsborg, "Explaining Italy's Crisis," pp. 19–39 in Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker (eds.), *The New Italian Republic: From the Fall of the Berlin Wall to Berlusconi* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 29.

29. Chris Hanretty, "The Media between Market and Politics," pp. 85–98 in Andrea Mammone and Giuseppe A. Veltri (eds.), *Italy Today: The Sick Man of Europe* (Abingdon, Oxford, and New York: Routledge, 2010), 85–86.

30. Martin J. Bull and James L. Newell, "Negatività in nome del liberalismo: Ritratti dell'Italia nell' *Economost*," *Comunicazione Politica*, no. 1 (2011), 33–34.

31. Carboni, "Epilogo," 147.

CHAPTER 2

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THE RISORGIMENTO

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ANTHONY L. CARDOZA

As the acrimonious debates engendered by the 150th anniversary of national unification in 2011 clearly attest, the Risorgimento remains very much at the center of contemporary Italian political life. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, the collapse of Italy's First Republic in the 1990s, the Northern League's challenge to national unity, the frustrated hopes for progressive reform, and a surge in non-European immigration have given the subject a new lease on life as a principal source of Italian national identity. The term, Risorgimento, which translates as "revival" or "resurrection," covers three distinct but interrelated projects. Traditionally, it has referred to a movement and sequence of events that culminated in national unification and independence between 1859 and 1861. As such, the Risorgimento represented the decisive moment in the emergence of Italy as a nation-state with defined geographical boundaries and a common institutional structure. At the same time, other scholars have applied the term to a broader process of social, economic, and political modernization after 1815, a time that ostensibly witnessed the gradual decline of traditional rural society, the rise of modern urban life, a shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and the creation of a new parliamentary political system. In this respect, the long-term goal of the Risorgimento was to forge a new modern Italy firmly ensconced in the first ranks of the most advanced nations of Europe. The lion's share of scholarship and popular media attention in the past 15 years, however, has focused on the role of the Risorgimento as an ideological and cultural movement that created and disseminated the idea of Italy as an "imagined national community." The nineteenth-century protagonists of this movement included novelists, painters, and composers, as well as nationalist propagandists like Giuseppe Mazzini, who provided the images, metaphors, and narratives of a new patriotic discourse that has shaped the ways political leaders, intellectuals, and the media have understood, interpreted, and acted upon Italian developments over the past century and a half.[1]

The perfect storm of events that resulted in the political unification of the Italian peninsula between 1859 and 1861 was largely the unanticipated product of conventional and guerrilla warfare, diplomacy, and popular revolution carried out by a diverse cast of mutually hostile forces against seemingly overwhelming odds. Italian nationalists

faced daunting obstacles in the nineteenth century. From the outset, they had to over-come a millennial history of political, geographic, economic, and linguistic fragmenta-tion on the peninsula. To make matters worse, Roman Catholicism, a powerful source of national identity in Poland and Ireland, played a decidedly anti-national role in the Italian setting, where the Pope was not only a spiritual leader, but also a temporal power, a status deemed essential to papal authority and independence. At the same time, nationalists faced a hostile coalition of the great powers of Europe, dominated by the Habsburg Empire, which controlled much of northern Italy directly, while its other family members ruled over many of the smaller states on the peninsula. Finally, Italian patriots were themselves bitterly divided between moderate liberal monarchists and more radical democratic republicans. Mazzini, the leading figure in the radical camp, played a crucial role in publicizing the national cause, promoting the martial exploits of Giuseppe Garibaldi, and in influencing public opinion abroad. Still, his attempts at direct action via revolutionary conspiracies, violent insurrections, and military expedi-tions all ended in failure.

A key turning point in the unification process came in the early 1850s, when Count Camillo Benso di Cavour became prime minister of the Kingdom of Sardinia, Italy's only indigenous dynasty, the most liberal progressive state on the peninsula, and the home of a proud monarchy and military nobility. An ardent proponent of free trade, sec-ularism, and constitutional government, and an opponent of revolution and republican-ism at home, Cavour was also a gifted statesman with an extraordinary talent for seizing opportunities. He was initially a reluctant nationalist, whose goals were limited to dis-lodging Austria from Italy and extending the boundaries of the Savoyard monarchy to the northern part of the peninsula. Such reservations did not keep Cavour from exploit-ing patriotic sentiments by enlisting the support of the Nationalist Society to promote Piedmontese leadership of the independence movement in northern and central Italy. The collapse of the conservative bloc of great powers in the wake of the Crimean War, Austria's relative isolation on the Italian peninsula after 1856, and the imperial ambitions of the French emperor, Napoleon III, created new diplomatic opportunities that Cavour skillfully exploited. In the spring of 1859, he negotiated the Treaty of Plombières with the French ruler, who promised military support against Austria in exchange for the Piedmontese territories of Nice and Savoy. The ensuing war ended prematurely when Napoleon III withdrew in July before Piedmont could seize Venice and the surrounding Veneto region. Nevertheless, Cavour and the House of Savoy's military–political cam-paign had achieved most of its principal objectives by the beginning of 1860, while keep-ing the democratic and republican forces at bay. Their state now included Lombardy, Emilia, and Tuscany, the most modernized and prosperous regions on the peninsula.

Piedmont's success in the north and center, however, had unintended and undesired consequences for Cavour in the south, where the withdrawal of the Austrian Empire destabilized the Bourbon dynasty in Naples and allowed the political initiative to shift to the democratic nationalists. Revolts in Sicily in the spring of 1860 inspired Garibaldi to lead an expedition of "one thousand red shirts" to the island, and then cross to the mainland in August to overthrow the Bourbon dynasty in Naples. The prospect of

a democratic republic in the south and a Garibaldian advance on papal Rome forced Cavour and King Victor Emanuel II to accept a much larger unified Italian nation in the name of the monarchy, in order to avoid hostile intervention on the peninsula by both the Habsburgs and Napoleon III and the possible loss of the territorial gains of the previous year. After assuring the French ruler that the status quo in Rome and the Vatican would remain unchanged, the monarch led his army into the rest of the papal territories and then south to the town of Teano, where Garibaldi handed over his conquests to the new "King of Italy." Plebiscites in the fall of 1860 resulted in the annexation of these territories and the formal proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy on March 17, 1861.[2]

While the unification of most of the peninsula was an extraordinary achievement, all the protagonists saw the resulting product as a decidedly mixed blessing. Cavour and the moderate liberals now ruled over a new national territory, but not the one that they had envisioned or necessarily wanted. Conversely, the democratic nationalists got most of the territorial edifice they had hoped for, but found themselves largely excluded from the new nation-state. At the same time, the forced merger of the north and south left a legacy of resentment, distrust, and popular unrest that would prove to be remarkably enduring. Nor did the emergence of a unified nation-state automatically resolve long-standing problems on the peninsula. The governments of the new state not only had to defend its independence abroad and resolve immediate financial challenges, but were also confronted with the enormous tasks of overcoming entrenched local and regional loyalties and rivalries, forging a new connection between the Italian state and society, and stabilizing their relations with the Catholic Church. Significantly, many of these tasks have continued to absorb the attention and shape the policies of the various regimes that have governed the country in the ensuing century and a half.

The Risorgimento's second project of economic and social modernization has also proven to be an arduous undertaking. From the outset, the ostensibly more advanced societies and economies of France, Great Britain, and Germany provided the yardsticks by which the country's "modernity" was measured and judged. As a nation-state based on a parliamentary system after 1861, Italy did enter the political vanguard of Western Europe, while recent scholarship has shown that its infrastructural investments in transportation, communications, and education contributed to gradual but steady economic growth in the half century after unification. Nonetheless, the country's overreliance on the old textile industry limited long-term sustainable expansion, and its economy continued to lag behind its northern and western European neighbors.[3] The combination of two world wars, a global depression, and Fascism in the first half of the twentieth century further delayed growth and the transformation of the economy. As a consequence, Italy remained a predominantly poor, rural society into the early 1950s. Only in the second half of the twentieth century, with the postwar "economic miracle" and the ensuing transformations, did the country join the ranks of the major European economies and become an affluent, "postindustrial," urban, mass consumer society. Even then, the persistence of the north–south divide and the absence of broader political and institutional reform led scholars, by the 1990s, to refer to Italy as an example of "modernization without growth."[4]

The Risorgimento's third project—the construction and inculcation of a collective national identity—received relatively limited attention in the academic community and the media during the decades of the economic miracle, a period when the excesses of Fascism had discredited the ideals of nationalism, and the opposing transnational ideologies and institutions of Marxism and Catholicism dominated Italian political and institutional life. After 1990, the end of the Cold War and the ensuing resurgence of old regional loyalties and tensions at home and across the European continent coincided with a sea change in the scholarly world to postmodern cultural approaches. As a result, there has been a surge in the past decade and a half of new research on the Risorgimento as a source of Italy's supposedly fragile sense of national identity. In the process, this work has re-envisioned the Risorgimento less as a concrete political movement or series of events and more as a set of discursive themes, symbols, metaphors, and images articulated by patriotic artists, writers, and propagandists to give meaning to and promote the idea of the "nation" and "Italian people" both on the peninsula and abroad.

The nineteenth-century architects of the idea of the Italian nation attempted to blend a pre-existing secular and religious culture of "Italian-ness" with the rhetoric of the French Revolution and the language of Romanticism. The result included a romantic nostalgia for past glory, a condemnation of present decadence, and a vision of future greatness for Italy's national community. Patriotic intellectuals and creative artists highlighted the glories of Ancient Roman civilization and the achievements of the Renaissance, when the peninsula stood proudly at the forefront of European economic and cultural life. According to their historical narrative, however, the centuries after 1500 saw Italy and its people fall into decline, decay, and corruption in the wake of military defeats, foreign domination, clerical rule, and domestic divisions. Thus, Italy lapsed into a long slumber, and was still mired in conditions of civil, individual, and collective degradation and fragmentation at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Significantly, the Risorgimento's condemnation of national decline and squalor involved not only institutional life, but also the character traits of the Italian people, who were depicted as excessively subservient, lazy, undisciplined, and effeminate shadows of their glorious ancestors. In this context of decadence and failure, nationalists envisioned unification and independence both as a means of reviving and resurrecting the greatness of Italy's past and as a force for the moral regeneration of its people. Italian national identity and national character became, in this fashion, inseparably intertwined in the vision and rhetoric of the Risorgimento, which offered an explanation for Italian degeneration as well as the remedies for its regeneration.[5]

As Lucy Riall has recently noted, historians initially refocused on the Risorgimento as a cultural phenomenon in the first half of the nineteenth century in order to understand how it shaped the consciousness and sensibilities of a growing segment of the educated classes, and thereby transformed them into active protagonists willing to fight and die for the nationalist cause.[6] Alberto Banti, for instance, identified a set of canonical novels, poems, theatrical works, paintings, and melodramas that, he argued, reached a growing audience by tapping into powerful emotions tied to kinship, honor, and sacrifice, which were adaptable to an ethno-cultural community rooted in bonds of blood, land,

memories, and self-consciousness.[7] In a similar vein, Christopher Duggan has shown how Mazzini redeployed the language and practices of Roman Catholicism on behalf of the national cause by emphasizing the themes of God, faith, doctrinal purity, and martyrdom in his writings and propaganda.[8] Banti and Paul Ginsborg have claimed that this "deep culture" of the Risorgimento had successfully given birth to a "mass movement" by the early 1860s, mobilizing tens of thousands of Italians, who enjoyed the support and sympathy of additional hundreds of thousand others.[9] Such claims need to be viewed with some caution, since a majority of Italy's middle classes and peasants still remained hostile or indifferent to the national cause both before and after 1861.

A subsequent body of scholarship has examined the ways in which the romantic ideals and rhetoric of the Risorgimento have continued to influence the terms and language of public debate and political conflict on the Italian peninsula in the century and a half after national unification. From the outset, the Risorgimento served as a partisan tool in recurring battles among competing political projects over the definition of what constituted a successful and modern nation and society. Such conflicts were already embedded in the contrasting hopes and expectations of the original participants in a movement that included republicans and monarchists, centralizers and federalists, democrats and liberals. Not surprisingly, these groups attached sharply different meanings to the terms nation, Italian people, rebirth, and regeneration, which they passed on to successive generations. The struggles of the Liberal state against the harsh social, economic, and political realities of the peninsula in the second half of the nineteenth century further exacerbated these divisions. The romantic image constructed by patriotic intellectuals of the Italian nation as a holistic, cohesive, and organic ethno-cultural community stood in stark contrast to concrete experiences of persistent divisions and fragmentation after 1861. The perceived gap between the heroic "poetry" of the Risorgimento and the mundane "prose" of the successive Liberal era's accomplishments nourished, in turn, a sense of disappointment and failure within the ranks of the intelligentsia and the educated classes in general, that took the form of repeated criticism of and disdain for the Italian nation-state.[10]

Dissatisfaction with the Liberal regime's perceived shortcomings and inadequacies led, on the one hand, some of its ideological opponents to attack the Risorgimento, per se, as a failed, flawed, or misguided project that had given birth to an illegitimate nation-state. Militant Catholics, for instance, argued that the parliamentary monarchy's secularist roots alienated it from the "authentic nation" or real Italy, whose true identity and greatness lay in its essentially Catholic character and its central role in a larger European Christian civilization.[11] On the other end of the ideological spectrum, Marxists challenged Liberal Italy's "grand narrative" of national triumph with a "counter-narrative" of the Risorgimento as a passive or failed revolution. For Antonio Gramsci, the moderate liberals' national-building project rested upon a fatal compromise between the modern capitalist bourgeoisie of the north and the semi-feudal landed elites of the south, a compromise that precluded any genuine economic, social, and political reform in the half century after unification. On the contrary, Gramsci argued, the unification process created an enduring gulf between the Italian state and

civil society that found expression in persistent parliamentary paralysis, political instability, social conflict, and distorted industrial development on the peninsula. In this fashion, the Marxist critique of the Liberal state linked the ostensible problems of the Risorgimento to a broader interpretation of the trajectory of modern Italian history, which led inexorably from unification to the post-World War I crisis and triumph of Fascism in the 1920s and 1930s. This interpretation of Risorgimento as a failed "passive revolution" did not go unchallenged after World War II. Rosario Romeo, in particular, argued that the Marxists' French Revolutionary model could not have worked under the conditions prevailing on the Italian peninsula. Here, the Risorgimento liberals' focus on the urban capitalist economy of the north and the unification of the national market, Romeo argued, represented the best possible path to development for the entire country.[12] Nonetheless, Gramsci's interpretation proved to have a long shelf life, dominating scholarly debates and discussion in Italy until the 1970s, when the work of the "new" social historians demonstrated the inadequacy of class-based analysis for explaining either popular revolts or the relationship between the socioeconomic interests and political views of the bourgeois elites.[13]

On the other hand, new right-wing nationalist forces enthusiastically embraced their own version of the Risorgimento and its rhetoric in order to advance their own authoritarian and expansionist agendas in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Above all, they seized on its romantic vision of Italy's glorious future as a virile, resurgent, and powerful new state, which they used to highlight the shortcomings of the liberal monarchy and to challenge its legitimacy as the political embodiment of the nation. In their propaganda, parliamentary transformism, the emerging threat of socialism, and the "Southern Question" all served as proof that the aspirations of the Risorgimento had been betrayed.[14] Nationalist ideologues devoted special attention to the supposed inability of the Liberal state to achieve the essential moral regeneration of the Italian people, whom, in their narrative, remained mired in their old vices and character flaws. At the same time, they employed the themes and models of Risorgimento discourses to articulate and legitimize their own authoritarian projects, which, they claimed, would strengthen the central state and solidify the national community. Through repression of subversion at home, in tandem with war and imperial expansion abroad, they promised to eliminate internal divisions, redeem past national humiliations, remake Italians into a heroic and virile people, and reassert Italy's prestige abroad. The extraordinary nature of Italian unification in 1861 encouraged nationalists in their endeavors, since it seemed to have rewarded foreign policies of adventurism and risk-taking. Disasters like the Battle of Adowa in 1896, which temporarily ended Italian imperial ambitions in Ethiopia, did little to temper nationalists' enthusiasm for war and expansionism as the best means for achieving Risorgimento goals of moral, cultural, and political redemption. On the contrary, nationalists became passionate supporters of the Libyan War in 1911 and Italian intervention in World War I.

In the explosive climate of revolutionary unrest and inflamed nationalistic passions after World War I, both Fascists and anti-fascist forces selectively made use of Risorgimento aspirations and ideals to bolster their own legitimacy and to discredit

their adversaries. Mussolini's propaganda apparatus boasted that his regime was carrying to completion the project of the Risorgimento and thus represented the fullest embodiment of the historically ordained Italian nation. In particular, the Fascists exploited the belief in Italy's pre-destined superiority and greatness, and the corresponding need for the spiritual and physical regeneration of the Italians to achieve that destiny. The regime's propaganda played on the country's past record of military and foreign policy defeats to disparage the Liberal parliamentary state and to mobilize popular support for its own project of remaking Italians into a more disciplined, "virile," and militaristic people, capable of achieving "glory and power" abroad and establishing the country as a great power on the world stage. In pursuit of these goals, the Fascist educational and cultural initiatives emphasized the historical continuities that linked the dictatorship to Imperial Rome and the Risorgimento. They highlighted the supposed affinities between Garibaldi's "red shirts" and Mussolini's "blackshirts" to present the Fascists as the natural heirs of these heroic, nineteenth-century freedom fighters. At the same time, the regime glorified physical strength and violence as part of a larger project of remaking Italians into new "fascist men." Unlike their liberal, individualistic, effeminate, peace-loving ancestors, they were depicted as hypermasculine warriors who formed a disciplined, unified force, obedient to the Duce and determined to establish Italy's rights as a great power in the Mediterranean and in Europe. The aspirations of the Risorgimento thus offered a framework for Mussolini's increasingly aggressive imperialist policies in the mid-1930s. Accordingly, the invasion of Ethiopia was presented to the Italian public as the first step in gaining revenge for past humiliations and in achieving the long-promised greatness of their nation in the Mediterranean.

At the same time, the Risorgimento provided a set of the rhetorical tools for Mussolini's political adversaries. While the Marxist left viewed the Fascist dictatorship as the end product of a fatally flawed passive revolution in the nineteenth century, liberal anti-fascists like Piero Gobetti advanced their own counter-narrative of Fascism as the betrayal of Risorgimento hopes and ideals. Far from being the engine of national rebirth, Mussolini's regime embodied, in their view, all the "old illnesses of immature Italy" that the national movement of the nineteenth century had sought to overcome. For his part, the Duce himself personified the worst "defects" of the "Italian soul and character" inherited from the past, with his "superficiality, effrontery, rhetorical emptiness, lack of political education, and boastfulness." Gobetti envisioned, as an alternative to the Fascist dictatorship, a "Risorgimento without Heroes" grounded in the modern, pragmatic, and industrious values of his native region of Piedmont.[15]

In the wake of the collapse of the original Fascist regime in World War II, each side in the ensuing civil war continued to employ the patriotic ideals of the Risorgimento to mobilize its supporters and legitimize its own political cause. Propagandists for Mussolini's Republic of Salò, for instance, constantly linked his government to the honor of the *patria* and invoked the names of the heroes of the Risorgimento against the traitors of the "fatherland," who had surrendered to the allies. For their part, the Resistance forces attacked Fascism for having "obliterated the nation," and portrayed their actions as a "war of liberation" in defense of the "honor of Italy," the "ideal of the

Fatherland," and the "independence of the nation." Through their "blood and sacrifices," the partisan brigades claimed to be united in a common cause of national regeneration or, in the words of Vittorio Foa, "the need to reconstruct an identity for ourselves in the face of fascism."[16]

In the decades after 1945, the Risorgimento and its nineteenth-century vision of the nation appeared to be an historical anachronism without relevance to the new Italy emerging from the war. The catastrophic legacy of Fascism, which had culminated in military defeat, economic chaos, and civil war, had discredited its nationalistic ideals and its accompanying patriotic rhetoric and celebration. In an era of the Cold War ideological blocs and the supranationalism of the emerging European community, the two dominant and sharply polarized parties of the first Italian Republic, Christian Democracy and the Italian Communist Party, both rested upon ostensibly universal values and institutions that, as Duggan has argued, precluded them from appealing "to the 'nation' as an overarching pole of reference."[17] The diminished status of the Risorgimento was strikingly evident in the positions of the two parties on the one hundredth anniversary of Italian unification in 1961. Echoing the rhetoric of their nineteenth-century predecessors, the Christian Democrats argued that the true nation was the community of Catholic believers and dismissed the events of 1859–61 as a failed "hasty and almost improvised diplomatic–military solution of the Italian problem."[18] While the Communists contested this view of Italian development, they also attacked the commemorations of a movement that had led to war and Fascist dictatorship. In the absence of an ideological foundation grounded in patriotic ideals and emotions, both blocs relied instead their own political subcultures and institutional communities to galvanize their supporters and consolidate their power bases in the Italian Republic. As more recent commentators have observed, post-1945 Republican Italy thereby perpetuated some of the historical shortcomings that had alarmed and mobilized the protagonists of the Risorgimento a century earlier: a lack of shared national values, a cohesive vision of the nation, and a sense of moral unity.

The economic miracle and the ensuing consumer revolution of the 1960s further complicated the situation. On the one hand, some political pundits worried that new patterns of mass private consumption reinforced the problems of excessive individualism and materialism that had concerned nineteenth-century patriotic intellectuals. On the other hand, the same material and cultural changes tended to erode traditional local customs and identities that had long impeded the development of a common national identity. The growing urbanization and secularism of the Italian people undermined, in particular, the old religious base of the Christian Democrats and forced them to rely on state largesse to preserve their virtual monopoly of power. Increasingly, short-term party and factional political interests, rather than a larger vision of the welfare of the nation, dictated government policies, setting the stage for the crisis of the First Republic at the beginning of the 1990s.

The Risorgimento and the theme of national identity have returned with a vengeance to the arena of public debate and discussion since 1990. The end of the Cold War

and its transnational ideological blocs, combined with a public debt crisis triggered by Italy's efforts to qualify for membership in the Eurozone, aroused popular discontent and undermined the raison d'etre of the old parties. In the void left by the collapse of the Christian Democratic regime, new political forces once again redeployed the question of Italian national identity as a device to mobilize their bases and discredit their foes. No movement more closely reflected this shift than the Northern League, which denounced the Risorgimento's unification of the peninsula in 1861 as a disastrous mistake, since it yoked together two separate and mutually incompatible national communities: the north and the south. In place of the existing Italian state, the League has advanced solutions that ranged from the independence of the northern regions to the introduction of a decentralized federal system. Although there was little popular support for the idea of secession, even in its own ranks, the Northern League did succeed in stoking widespread anxieties and worries about the supposed fragility of the unitary state and the dangers of national disintegration, at least judging by the tidal wave of new publications devoted to these topics over the past 15 years. At the same time, the erosion of older religious and class-based identities has led to what Silvana Patriarca has described as a "neo-patriotic … renationalization of the political landscape" in Italy.[19] The parties of the center-right, especially Berlusconi's Forza Italia and National Alliance, reappropriated national symbols and appealed actively to Italian patriotism in their electoral propaganda, attacking the parties of the left for their ostensible lack of commitment to the nation.

The 150th anniversary of Italian unification in March 2011 dramatically illustrates how the preoccupations of the Risorgimento patriots still can shape the agenda of contemporary Italian politics. As one might expect, the state commemorated the anniversary with various public ceremonies, sporting events, and other activities intended to display collective national solidarity and pride. At the same time, however, the anniversary also became yet another occasion for bitter public debates and disagreements about the nation's identity and the relative achievements, failures, and betrayals of the Risorgimento and its historical legacy. In response to this "destructive quarrelsomeness" and the "sowers of division," the President of Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, used a series of public speeches at celebrations of the anniversary to launch a vigorous defense of the Risorgimento. For Napolitano, the "greatness" of the unification movement in Italy lay "precisely in the richness and multiplicity of its inspirations and its components" as well as in its "identification of the idea of the nation with the idea of liberty." Accordingly, he argued that the anniversary represented an opportunity to reawaken "a unified national consciousness" in the Italian people, in a difficult moment "laden with uncertainties and challenges for our country."[20] While these polemics attracted a great deal of media attention, both on the peninsula and abroad, it is difficult to disagree with Lucy Riall's observation that the nation "is only a metaphor which displaces discussion of more intractable problems" and Risorgimento's failings "an allegory for … the present-day erosion of democratic institutions." [21]

Notes

1. See Lucy Riall, *Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation-State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 37–39.
2. Anthony L. Cardoza, "Cavour and Piedmont," in John A. Davis, ed., *Italy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 108–131.
3. Nick Carter, *Modern Italy in Historical Perspective*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 48–52.
4. John A. Davis, "Remapping Italy's Path to the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Modern History* 66, no. 2 (June 1994), 293.
5. See Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
6. Riall, *Risorgimento*, 122–124.
7. Alberto Banti, *La Nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santita' e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita'* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000).
8. Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 125–129.
9. Alberto Banti and Paul Ginsborg, eds., *Storia d'Italia. Annali 22, Il Risorgimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007), xxiii–xxiv. For an approach that highlights conflicts within the unification movement, see Mario Isnenghi and Eva Cecchinato, eds., *Fare l'Italia: unita' e disunita' nel Risorgimento* (Turin: UTET, 2008).
10. Banti, *La Nazione del Risorgimento*, 199–205.
11. Oliver Logan, "Italian Identity: Catholic Responses to Secularist Definitions, *c*1910–48," *Modern Italy* 2, no.1 (January 1997) 52–71.
12. Rosario Romeo, *Risorgimento e capitalism* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1959).
13. Riall, *Risorgimento*, 74–77.
14. On the concept of transformism, see Marco Valbruzzi's contribution "Trasformismo," Chapter 3 in this volume.
15. Patriarca, *Italian Vices*, 172–174.
16. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 535–537.
17. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 543.
18. Duggan, *The Force of Destiny*, 561.
19. Patriarca, *Italian Vices,* 237.
20. Giorgio Napolitano, *Una e indivisibile. Riflessioni sui 150 anni della nostra Italia* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2011), 9, 46, 68. On the role of the presidents of the Italian Republic, see Gianfrano Pasquino's chapter in this volume (Chapter 7).
21. Lucy Riall, "Sum of all Defects," *Times Literary Supplement*, August 19 and 26, 2011, 11.

CHAPTER 3

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TRASFORMISMO

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MARCO VALBRUZZI

"*Trasformismo*, an ugly word for an uglier thing." This is how, at the end of the nineteenth century, one of Italy's most famous poets, Giosuè Carducci, described and stigmatized what many historians consider to be the Italian vice par excellence: *trasformismo*. As a rule, it is preferable to be skeptical of words that we cannot easily translate into other languages, especially into English. Political concepts, such as the one this chapter deals with, should be able to "travel" across different countries and different time periods. Unfortunately, this is not the case with *trasformismo*, which has recently and aptly been added to the list of *les intraduisibles*, that is, those words that cannot be divorced from the deep-rooted tradition of a given country. Moreover, *trasformismo* has quickly become one of the most enduring features of the Italian national identity; a political phenomenology that, as Galli Della Loggia pointed out,[1] cannot be separated from "Italian social life."

What we know for certain is that *trasformismo* is a complex concept that encompasses a vast array of often contradictory definitions. In particular, during its long historical trajectory, different scholars have emphasized different aspects of the concept, while neglecting one or more of its defining features. For instance, many historians have focused on the relationship between *trasformismo* and the process of Italian unification. From this perspective, *trasformismo* has been treated almost as a synonym of "centrism" or, to parody Abraham Lincoln, a government of the center, by the center, for the center. To be more precise, *trasformismo* has been seen as a peculiar system of government, the Italian way to democratization and modernization. Conversely, other scholars, especially political scientists, have preferred to make their focus the individual behavior of those who "transform" their opinions and decisions in order to reach a particular opportunistic goal. In this case, transformism has come to be known as little more than a form of "party switching," that is, the changing of party affiliation by individual politicians. Accordingly, those politicians who practice the ancient art of *trasformismo* have been labelled "switchers" or, more figuratively, "turncoats" (*voltagabbana*). Finally, there are scholars, especially sociologists and anthropologists, who have approached the concept of transformism from a cultural perspective. For many among them, *trasformismo*

is neither the product of a difficult historical conjuncture nor the behavior of a single opportunist politician. Briefly put, *trasformismo* should be interpreted as a prototypical Italian trait: a distinctive national vice (for its critics) or the best example of Italy's quintessential ability to survive (for its apologists).

Nevertheless, despite its profound ambiguities and contradictions, *trasformismo* has become the *fil rouge* that links the heroic days of the Risorgimento to the far less heroic age of governmental instability during the republican phase that began in Italy after World War II. Looking for a single, or the most apt, interpretation of transformism would be wrong in itself and, above all, a mission that is unlikely to be accomplished. Instead, it is more constructive to chart its long and fortunate historical trajectory—from its birth at the dawn of the Italian nation to the aftermath of the party system breakdown in the 1990s. This is the aim of the following sections.

The Long History of a Successful Word

Trasformismo is a concept with many definitions and, as a consequence, many referents. With no *consensus scholarum* in the scientific literature as to what the term actually means, transformism has, thus far, been treated as an umbrella concept under which we find many different ideas. To some extent, the flexibility and universality of the concept has represented, until today, its good fortune. Because of its long history and the lack of clear borders vis-à-vis other confining concepts such as "centrism," "consociativism," "clientelism," "opportunism," and so on, and, above all, because it has always been at the center of a strong debate between, on the one hand, its realistic defenders and, on the other, its moralistic detractors, *trasformismo* is a magic box with ever-changing content.

If we observe the historical trajectory of the word carefully, it is interesting to note that, when it first appeared, it had no negative connotations. Quite the contrary: in a letter written in 1874, by the senator Carlo Alfieri to the deputy Francesco De Sanctis, Alfieri claimed that the "traditions of the past," namely the exhausted division between left and right, ought to be substituted by the "sane doctrine of the *parliamentary trasformismo*." Hence, at the beginning of its story, *trasformismo* was something good and sound—a practice that the parties should consider carefully. If the letter written by Alfieri signals the etymological birth of the term, its formal entry in the public debate occurred two years later in a speech by the Italian Prime Minister Agostino Depretis. On October 11, 1876, Depretis declared that his ultimate goal was to "facilitate that fruitful transformation of parties, that unification of the Liberal elements of the Chamber, which would constitute the solid majority so long invoked [. . .]. Good ideas, the really good practices: I will take them from anywhere, even from my opponents." That famous speech, delivered to his constituents in his hometown, Stradella, by one of the most important leaders of the left, marks the ideological debut of *trasformismo* in Italian history. At the same time, it implicitly recognizes that a political era, namely the period characterized by the (not so neat) contrast between the "historic right" and "historic left," was coming

to an end. More specifically, the ideological formation of the *transformist practice*—that had solved the Roman question in 1870, and balanced the budget—was the unavoidable consequence of the "break-up of the great political parties, and their change of colour, or rather, the varied hues which their representatives assumed from time to time, and the disappearance of any particular significance from the old names, which were not replaced by others with a more definite meaning."[2]

The positive atmosphere surrounding the practice of government theorized and implemented by Depretis quickly disappeared when *trasformismo* moved from the world of ideas to the world of empirical and real phenomena. At this point, it is worth recalling that the *political* birth of *trasformismo* dates back to 1883, with the formation of Depretis's fifth cabinet. At that time, a sizeable group of former rightists, inspired and led by one of the leaders of the fragmented "historic right," the Bolognese Marco Minghetti, entered and reinforced the incumbent governing majority formed by Depretis, who, only one year earlier, in a remarkable speech to his Piedmontese constituency, stated that: "If anyone wishes to *transform* himself and become progressive by accepting my very modest program, how can I refuse him?" This seemingly disinterested invitation from the head of government was enthusiastically accepted by Minghetti who strongly believed in the virtues of the "center virile parties," that is, the *conjonction des centres*—the moderate liberals and the moderate conservatives—against the threat posed by the extremist or anti-system parties. Incidentally, it is worth noting that, for Croce:

> [A]fter 1885, "transformism" was so much an accomplished fact that it was no longer talked about, and the word itself went out of use. Nevertheless, when the name recurred it always suggested something equivocal and unworthy, a sign of Italian weakness, and the echo of this impression is to be found in historical literature. Historians are usually professors or other simple-minded people, who are bewildered by successive changes of ministry, by the perpetual failure to realize their coveted hope of a "stable government" and above all by the mutability of human affairs. The secret desire of their hearts is that things should remain as they are, and they do not consider that, if they did so, there would be no history to write, or at least none of the kind which they are accustomed to write.[3]

Nevertheless, and perhaps against Croce's wishes, the word "*trasformismo*" did not disappear from the public debate. On the contrary, it became an ideal target for any kind of critic, both from the left and the right.

Despite, or perhaps thanks to, its highly negative connotations, *trasformismo* remained a constant element in the history of Italy. Its success was certified, once for all, by the fact that, curiously, when Crispi become President of the Council in 1887, he agreed to form his majority and govern the country in a very "transformist" way. The telling case of Crispi, formerly a fierce opponent of the misdeeds of transformism, illustrates perfectly the secret and irresistible charm of this parliamentary technique, which had the power to change and *transform* the minds of even those who had previously

criticized it. The absolute flexibility of *trasformismo* to adapt to the different phases of Italian history is proved once again by its capacity to face the emergence, at the end of the nineteenth century, of the first mass-based political parties: the Italian Socialist Party and, later on, the Catholic Popular Party. As Antonio Gramsci correctly pointed out, the advent of these new models of political organization led to a different kind of transformism which, after the tragic Fascist "parenthesis," would accompany the history of the country until the complete collapse of its party system in the early 1990s. More specifically, the "molecular transformism" working under the strict control of Depretis and Crispi, whereby "individual political figures were incorporated one by one into the conservative-moderate 'political class,'" was substituted by the "transformism of whole groups," especially extremists "who crossed over the moderate camp."[4] This second kind of *trasformismo* made its first appearance during the disputable "Giolittian era" and later, after World War II, it would become the defining feature of the party system that existed in Italy almost until the end of the twentieth century.

Needless to say, there are many (substantiated) reasons as to why *trasformismo* was unable to shake off its negative associations, in particular its strong connection with the idea of political *immobilismo* and corruption. What is more, this complex set of meanings and interpretations found its main exegete in the Sicilian writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa who, in his unique masterpiece *Il Gattopardo*, perfectly described the intrinsic logic of any "transformist" arrangement: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." With the (posthumous) publication of *Il Gattopardo* in 1958, *trasformismo* found its perfect icon and manifesto.

The Different Types and Phases of *Trasformismo*

Cavour's *Connubio*

For many scholars *trasformismo* has an eminent forefather and a noted precedent: Camillo Benso, count of Cavour, the leader of the process of Italian unification and the undisputed leader of that political coalition of competent and distinguished politicians that we know as the "Destra Storica." The noted, and much debated, precedent dates back to 1852, when Cavour decided to reach an agreement—which has passed into the annals of history as *il Connubio* (literally: the "marriage" or "union")—with the leader of the radical (and relatively leftist) wing of the Parliament, Umberto Rattazzi, in order to isolate both the extreme monarchic right and the Mazzinian left. Observed from this viewpoint, the agreement between Cavour and Rattazzi, with the subsequent formation of a workable and sizeable centrist majority, was neither an isolated incident in the history of Italy nor simply an antecedent of that peculiar mode of government (re)launched, 30 years later, by Depretis and Minghetti. As Luigi Musella

has recently highlighted, Cavour was the first Italian politician "to put into practice a *transformist* politics which remained a constant in the political history of the country."[5] Thus, the count of Cavour has been considered as the actual putative father of *trasformismo* or, worse still, the first ever *trasformista*.[6] However, other scholars and historians, approaching the same phenomenon from different perspectives, have reached different, if not opposite, conclusions. For instance, Luciano Cafagna, having recognized that "'trasformismo' was actually born—as it has been frequently and correctly suggested—with Cavour's *connubio* in 1852,"[7] stresses the progressive and dynamic orientation of Cavourian politics and its governing majority. If the *transformist* practices carried out decades later by Depretis, Crispi, and Giolitti had a defensive, tactical, and purely spontaneous nature, the mode of government developed by Cavour was absolutely strategic, progressive, and programmatic.

Depretis's (Liberal or Historic) Transformism

Only three months after the declaration of the Kingdom of Italy, Cavour unexpectedly passed away. His death meant not only the tragic disappearance of the most important and ingenious figure of the Italian Risorgimento, but also the gradual disintegration of his political party. Moreover, after the challenging rebalancing of the budget and the tormented conquest of Rome, the "historic right" had implemented its historic platform. Consequently, the "legitimate" right was, at that time, both lacking an uncontested leader and a clear mission. This situation opened the way to the "parliamentary revolution" that, in 1876, brought Agostino Depretis and the "historic left" into power. However, as Maurizio Cotta has noted, the governmental alternation occurred in Parliament (not at election time) in 1876, and "far from constituting an unexpected 'revolution', can be seen as the culmination of a gradual convergence among the two elite camps that took place in the parliamentary arena during the preceding ten years."[8]

It was during this period that "historic *trasformismo*" made inroads in the history of Italy and became a concrete political reality. More precisely, it was the October 1882 general election, with the electoral deal struck by Depretis and Minghetti, which marked the formal inauguration of what was then called (without any negative connotation) transformism. It is worth highlighting that 1882 was the year that saw, following a long and complicated process,[9] the electoral reform that extended the vote to literate males over the age of 21—even those who did not pay any direct taxes. As Salvemini noted, the "Italian Risorgimento between 1859 and 1870 was the work of an oligarchy of upper and middle classes [where the] right to vote was granted only to males over twenty-five who paid a minimum of eight dollars in direct taxation and knew how to read and write."[10] Consequently, until 1882, the enfranchised citizens numbered 620,000, that is, 2 percent of the overall population. After the reform headed by Depretis, the electorate rose from 2.2 percent (in 1880) to 6.9 percent of the Italian population

The extension of the vote, both for the left and the right, was approved with the common purpose of reducing the distance between the so-called (originally by the

Catholics) *paese legale* ("legal country") and *paese reale* ("real country"); that is, the liberal elites, on one hand, and the popular masses, on the other. However, and, in some cases, even against the hopes of the governing elite, the electoral reform of 1882 made the electoral bases of the two loose parties in power more unstable and "unmanageable" and, at the same time, electorally strengthened the extreme forces. In sum, *trasformismo* as a parliamentary technique was "not improvised, nor particularly original",[11] and was devised by the liberal elite in order to deal with, on the one hand, the increasing fragmentation of the parliamentary arena, and, on the other, the growing and converging threat posed by the extreme left (radicals, republicans, and, later, socialists) and the extreme right.

In 1882–83 the Italian political system was still undergoing that "molecular" phase of transformism which entailed individual co-optation of single parliamentarians within the so-called "area of legitimacy." This kind of parliamentary arrangement came into being as the result of many steps and phases. The first step took place during the pre-electoral period, thanks to the meticulous operation of the prefects at the local level. In this respect, suffice to say that by (ab)using the local power of the prefects, the ruling elite was able to mold its parliamentary majority well in advance. The second step toward the formation of the "transformist coalition" occurred at the electoral level and took the form of "semi coordinated electoral stand-downs,"[12] namely pre-electoral agreements between politicians of the "liberal-conservative" camp. Finally, although this process proceeded as a never-ending vicious circle from the local level up to the central level, the third step required the formation, at the center of the party system, of a sort of "coalition of the willing" made up of all those parliamentarians willing or, in many cases, eager to trade their vote and consensus to the government in exchange for pork barrel favors. It is no coincidence that this was the precise point at which *trasformismo* meets and espouses (for mutual convenience) *clientelismo* (clientelism).

Crispi's (Conservative) Transformism

The death of Agostino Depretis in 1887 marked both the end of the so-called "historic trasformismo" and the arrival of the "dictatorship of an old wolf, following the regime of an old fox."[13] The "old wolf" was Francesco Crispi, who became prime minister after the uncontested political supremacy of the "old fox" Depretis. What the new President of Council inherited from his direct predecessor was, in part, his mobile and flexible parliamentary majority and, above all, his ability to reach flexible compromises between different groups and individuals. Many scholars have identified only small differences of degree between "Depretis's transformism" and "Crispi's transformism." By contrast, other scholars have emphasized differences in kind between what they call the "liberal transformism" inaugurated by Depretis and the "conservative transformism" of Crispi (and, later, of di Rudinì).[14] More precisely, with the approval of the protectionist trade policy of 1887, Crispi created the conditions for a strict alliance between traditional landowners (especially from the south) and new entrepreneurial groups in the north.

The creation of this new "historic bloc" (to use Gramsci's terms), masterminded by the prime minister himself, allowed the formation of that " 'permanent' alliance of interests and values" which formed the basis of the "new" conservative transformism.[15]

Despite the aforementioned differences, "liberal" and "conservative" *trasformismo* shared the same defensive, or exclusive, approaches. In order to avoid and reduce the convergent threats of the extreme parties, both Depretis and Crispi created centrist governing majorities with the support of available legislators from the liberal pro-system camp. The birth of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in 1892 and, more than twenty years later, the formation of the Catholic Italian Popular Party (PPI), engendered new and unprecedented challenges for the ruling liberal class. The age of the mass-based political parties was making its gradual—albeit belated, but undoubtedly triumphant in the long run—entrance into the Italian political system. It was the challenge launched by this new kind of party that drove *trasformismo*: the necessity to deal with new and stronger political actors required an overhaul of the old and weakened transformist practices. In this sense, Giovanni Giolitti can be considered the "updater" of the old practices to meet the new demands of a changing society on the road toward industrialization and political modernization. Unsurprisingly, during the so-called "Giolittian Era" many scholars have seen the emergence of what they aptly label "*neotrasformismo*."[16] While in the past the practice of *trasformismo* took place within the borders of the centrist, liberal, and "legitimate" coalition, Giolitti's new inclusive project tended to absorb and co-opt into the governing majority those parties and forces outside or, more precisely, *against* the system. Briefly put, Giolittian *neotrasformismo* completely changed the logic of competition between the ins (liberal ruling class) and the outs (anti-system parties from the extreme left and right): the new defensive strategy masterminded by Giolitti required on "opening," first, to the extreme left and later to the extreme right.

That said, another relevant difference between the old and the new version of *trasformismo* involves the nature of those political actors that needed (more or less reluctantly) to be "transformed." At its inception, transformism had a "molecular" nature: single legislators were co-opted from time to time in the flexible parliamentary majorities. Conversely, at the beginning of the twentieth century, in particular as a consequence of the emergence of the new mass parties, (neo)*trasformismo* became a collective action, that is, a strategy to absorb distinct groups within the centrist majority. Incidentally, the new strategy designed by Giolitti, albeit original and meticulous, was not as successful as its creator had hoped. In spite of the ambitions of "the statesman of Dronero," his project was unable to either reduce the distance between the rulers and the ruled or to govern effectively and consistently. The so-called "*giolittismo* was a sort of centrism tilted toward the center-left in the first phase and a sort of center-right centrism in the second phase, with the war in Libya and the Gentiloni Pact. The historic expressions of this oscillatory centrist defense were a peculiar method of 'trasformismo.' "[17] Securing the parliamentary support of the radicals and, with much more difficulty, the socialists, Giolitti tried (without success) to absorb the emerging "social question" within his amorphous political majority.

Fascist Interlude and Republican Transformism

Thus, the failure of the "transformist system" paved the way for the Fascist regime, whose inception, incidentally, was based on a "great and successful transformist operation,"[18] namely, the creation of a "big list" (*listone*) of all the truly "national" (approved) candidates. In so doing, *trasformismo* signed its own death warrant: Mussolini transformed the "gloomy" Parliament into a "bivouac for his platoons," and transformism, at least as a purely parliamentary phenomenon, disappeared suddenly.

After the end of World War II and with the return to a democratic political regime, the Italian political system relied once again on the old practices of centrist majorities fabricated in Parliament after the elections and without any clear associations to the preferences of the voters. As in the past, the party system was "blocked" at the center: alternation in power was impossible and the oppositions were plural, bilateral, and, above all, anti-system. The presence of the so-called *conventio ad excludendum* against the Italian Communist Party, established because of its strong links with the Soviet Union, and the presence of an "excluded pole" harboring the not so different heirs of the Fascist regime, reduced the "area of legitimacy" to a few centrist political parties: the dominant Christian Democracy and their small laical or liberal satellites (the Republican Party, the Italian Liberal Party, and the Italian Democratic Socialist Party). It was under these conditions, where the center was "bound to govern" and the oppositions were obliged to stay out of power, that what we can label "republican transformism" made its first appearance in 1962: when the PSI left the benches of the opposition and joined those far more hospitable and rewarding benches of the centrist parliamentary majority and, one year later, those reserved for the cabinet. Unlike the old "liberal" transformism, based on "mobile majorities formed day-by-day through agreements with single parliamentarians or local interest groups,"[19] *trasformismo* of the "first Italian party system" (1946–93, the period in Italian history known as the "First Republic") was much more static or rigid. The leaders (of the factions) of the governing parties decided the coalition agreements and post-electoral alliances. However, the rigidity of the system did not reduce the frequency of cabinet turnover or the instability of the governments. If the Kingdom of Italy experienced 58 governments from 1861 to 1922, the Italian Republic did not fare much better, with 59 governments between 1948 and 2013 (with an average tenure of about 13 months for both periods). *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*: another immortal motto of transformism.

The (new) "opening to the left" (*apertura a sinistra*) made in the early 1960s by several leaders of the Christian Democrats (DC) aimed to broaden the decreasing consensus in the Italian polity by enlarging the area of democratic legitimacy to the PSI. This strategic move, which can be seen as an episode of "inclusive transformism," opened the way to the period of the "center-left," a stable governmental coalition that lasted for more than a decade (1962–75) and followed the phase of "centrism" inaugurated in 1948 by the governments headed by the Christian Democrat Alcide De Gasperi. The second episode in the trajectory of the republican *trasformismo* occurred in the mid-1970s,

when Enrico Berlinguer, leader of the PCI, and Aldo Moro, leader of the Christian Democrats, decided, in the midst of a profound economic crisis and the growth of terrorist movements, to build a "grand coalition" between those political forces "which group together and represent the great majority of the Italian people."[20] This agreement, which Berlinguer himself described as a "historic compromise," brought about a consociation between the DC and the PCI that lasted only from 1976 to 1979, during which time Giulio Andreotti led two monocolor governments supported by a large parliamentary majority. Likewise, the "opening to the left" and the period of "national solidarity" (the other label attached to the "historic compromise") entailed a form of "inclusive" transformism as the DC tried to absorb the anti-system menace by including the PCI into the area of the pro-system, that is liberal-democratic, parliamentary majority. This was, at least in the vague project of Aldo Moro, "an unprecedented and 'total' form of transformism" that,[21] however, ended in a "total" failure: the PCI did not become *ipso facto* a pro-system actor; the *convention ad excludendum* remained firmly in place; and, above all, the "governments of national solidarity" lasted little longer than *l'espace d'un matin*.

After the failure of the "historic compromise," *trasformismo* turned out to be a form of defensive or restrictive strategy exclusively regarding those five parties included in the area of democratic legitimacy. Indeed, the five-party coalition era (*pentapartito*), which lasted from 1980 to 1992, was an alliance containing all five main non-communist parties that, after several more or less centrist governments led mainly by Giovanni Spadolini, Bettino Craxi, and Giulio Andreotti, was destroyed by the 1992–94 anticorruption and anti-Mafia investigations.

The Second Italian Party System

The complete and unexpected collapse of the first Italian party system was hailed, perhaps overly optimistically, as the advent of a new political era that would eradicate the innate vices that have accompanied Italian politics since the Unification. The discovery of government alternation, a complete novelty for the Italian people, particularly if "dictated" by the electorate, was greeted as the death knell for any kind of *trasformismo*. However, as many scholars have emphasized, the "second Italian party system" ("Second Republic" in the journalistic jargon) was based on purely transformist foundations. Ernesto Galli della Loggia is right to highlight that both the PCI and DC faced (and to some extent overcame) the crisis of the party system thanks to transformist and only cosmetic changes. On the one hand, the PCI suddenly "chang[ed] its name in a day" and its party leaders "denied ever having been Communists." On the other hand, the DC changed its name to Partito Popolare Italiano, "whose current leaders were nearly all, in the past, ministers or important representatives of the DC's nomenclature but preferred now to forget this." And so, Della Loggia asked rhetorically: "Is not trasformismo this manipulation of memory?"[22] Indeed it was. And these were the foundations upon which the so-called Second Republic was built.

However, unlike in previous decades, the kind of transformism that has occurred since 1994 was, in a way, far more similar to the original practice inaugurated by Depretis. Indeed, as Figure 3.1 shows clearly, since the inception of the second party system (1994–2013), party switching, that is, the changing of party affiliation of a single legislator, became a significant and frequent phenomenon. From a historical perspective, after a phase of "group transformism" dominated by the mass parties, and since 1994, Italy has experienced a return to the form of molecular transformism that characterized the Liberal state, albeit in a more bipolar context.

Although not explicitly supported by large bureaucratic organizations, these forms of individual party switching have had profound consequences in the history of Italy. Two examples may suffice to illustrate this point. The first example dates back to 1998, when the former President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, in the vanguard of the few parliamentarians that he described as *straccioni di Valmy* ("beggars from Valmy") caused the defeat of the Prodi government and, at the same time, the formation of the new D'Alema government. The second and more recent example is related to the crisis created by the decision of Gianfranco Fini, one of the main representatives of the (Berlusconi's) People of Freedom, to leave the government led by Silvio Berlusconi in 2010. While the parliamentary group Futuro e Libertà (Future and Freedom)—created by Fini and his loyal supporters after the 2008 general elections—passed in the opposition camp, Berlusconi received the support and, more importantly, the vote of confidence, of single parliamentarians (self-defined as I Responsabili, "The Responsible Ones") coming from parties elected outside the center-right, pre-electoral, coalition. In light of these two examples, it is clear that the 1992 breakdown of the party system has not cancelled the practice of *trasformismo*. It has merely *transformed* it, which is not a paradox, but yet further proof of its chameleon-like ability to adapt to different political habits and environments.

To summarize, all the historical episodes of Italian *trasformismo* can be categorized into two distinct dimensions. The first separates cases of "molecular transformism" from those of "group transformism." While the former identifies examples of legislators who, as individual parliamentarians, cross the floor and/or change party
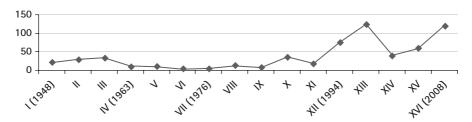

FIGURE 3.1 Absolute Numbers of Party Switching in the Chamber of Deputies, by Parliamentary Term

Source: Author's own elaboration. Data from: CIRCaP Archive on Parliamentary Elites in Italy (<http://www.circap. org/data-on-political-elites.html>) and Italian Chamber of Deputies (<http://storia.camera.it/deputati#nav>).

Table 3.1 A Typology of *Trasformismo* in Italy		
	Molecular transformism	Group transformism
Exclusive transformism	"Liberal transformism" (1876–87) "Conservative transformism" (1887–1900)	*Pentapartito* (1980–92)
Inclusive transformism	Second Party System (1994–2013)	Giolittian era (1901–14) Center-left (1962–75) Historic compromise (1976–79)

affiliation, the latter concerns those cases in which entire groups of politicians are co-opted within a given parliamentary majority. Instead, the second dimension distinguishes between cases of "inclusive transformism," whereby parties in government sought to increase the existing majority through the assimilation of other parties excluded from the customary coalitions, and cases of "exclusive transformism" by which different centrist majorities are formed through different combinations of the existing pro-system parties. The four cells created by crossing these two dimensions (see Table 3.1) allow us to chart all the episodes (to date) of Italian *trasformismo*. As the table shows, transformism—whilst not an innate moral characteristic of Italian politicians—can undoubtedly be considered a "constant" of the Italian polity.

INTERPRETATIONS AND VIEWS OF *TRASFORMISMO*

"An Italy without Italians. A unification without unity. A nation excommunicated. A centralism without centre. A political system that works with difficulty."[23] These were, and in many cases still are, the problems that the ruling elite had to tackle after the creation of the Kingdom of Italy. The Liberal state was, in Gramsci's terms, the result of a "passive revolution"; a process carried out by the elite without any meaningful participation of the popular masses. In line with this perspective, *trasformismo* has been considered, especially in the Marxist historiography literature, as the parliamentary expression of the ruling class's hegemony. More accurately, the creation of amorphous centrist majorities was the strategic device that the "political class" adopted in order to exclude permanently the popular masses represented in Parliament by the extreme political parties (republicans, radicals, socialists, and Catholics). As a purely conservative strategy employed (in turn) by the leaders of the Destra Storica and Sinistra Storica, many historians, in Italy as well as in other countries, have wholly condemned the transformist system.

Strictly attached to this negative view of *trasformismo*, there is a moralist stream of literature that has specifically emphasized the extreme corruption and manipulation of the whole electoral process.[24] Gaetano Salvemini, famous historian and southern socialist, can be considered the preeminent representative of this strand of literature. The main target of his vehement critiques against "*il Ministro della malavita*"—this is the, perhaps unwarranted, nickname Salvemini gave to Prime Minister Giolitti—was the corrupted "management" and gerrymandering of the general elections, thanks to a problematic control of the public bureaucracy at both the central and local level. This vicious triangular relationship between government, single parliamentarians, and public administration was used by the prime minister to build his "personal" majority, and by the politicians to favor the re-election and satisfy the requests of his restricted constituency.

In marked contrast to the (neo)Marxist and moralist accounts of *trasformismo*, the Idealist literature, in particular, Benedetto Croce and Rosario Romeo, has preferred to interpret it as the best strategy employed by the liberal ruling elite in order to face the threat of the "red ones," on the extreme left, and the "black ones," on the extreme right. Briefly put, the creation of floating and amorphous centrist majorities was a sort of automatic self-preservation device by the governing political class which has the responsibility to govern an "Italy without Italians" and, what is more, a nation directly "excommunicated" by the Church with its formal prohibition (*non expedit*) for Catholics to vote and participate in public affairs. In such a difficult context, *trasformismo* represented not only a life-support system for the liberal elite (and, *sensu lato*, for the entire country), but also an effective political arrangement that "provided a remarkable level of stability, while Italy was making huge progress in sectors like economic development, of the North but also of the South, civic growth, education, healthcare and so on and so forth."[25] In sum, for the Idealist, historiography transformism was neither the epiphenomenon of the ruling class's hegemony nor the easy target of preachy politicians or scholars. Essentially, it was the best option in the worst situation.

At the midpoint between Marxists and Idealists, we find the interpretation of those we can describe as "Realists." For them, *trasformismo* was not the "best option" but the "only option" in the worst situation. This point has been finely illustrated by Giovanni Sartori: "transformism was an 'equilibrium' between two opposite disequilibria."[26] In a context characterized by the existence of strong anti-system parties, the only feasible solution was the creation of a large centrist majority, which encompassed all the pro-system actors. It was, as Giulio Bollati described it, "a defensive reflex"; that is to say, a system of government based on the center of the party system, which excluded any alternative government.[27] In this sense, *trasformismo* implied the impossibility of any kind of alternation in power because the hypothetical "alternatives" were illegitimate and anti-system. In this way, transformism has quickly become an apt synonym for "centripetalism" or "centrism." Ultimately, transformism conceived as the product of a troubled process of national unification is anything but the "Italian version—neither particularly corrupted nor specifically virtuous—of a model of government, and of a political system" that prevailed elsewhere in Europe during the nineteenth century.[28]

Concluding Remarks

At the end of this historical and conceptual journey, one question remains: Is *trasformismo* an Italian specialty? Put another way, is its worldwide success deserved or just a by-product of an eye-catching label? In order to effectively address these questions, it is worth noting that, historically, transformism masquerading as "centrism" "has been anything but peculiar to Italy."[29] As many scholars have pointed out,[30] the tendency among centrist parties to converge in "the middle" of the party system was a common trend throughout Europe in the late nineteenth century, and transformism *qua* centrism was not an invention that we can say was made in Italy.

The same argument holds true with regard to that specific facet of *trasformismo* that political scientists call "party switching," or "party hopping." As Heller and Mershon argue: "even where switching is rare, it is not utterly absent and its occurrence varies over time."[31] The Italian party system is far from the only example in which switchers and turncoats have existed and proliferated. Indeed, the term "*transfuguismo*" was coined in Spain, during the years of the Restauración, precisely to describe any change in party affiliation on the part of a single parliamentarian. No different from what happened to the word "*trasformismo*," "*transfuguismo*" also became a negatively charged word—characterizing, in Spain and elsewhere (but particularly in Latin America), any blameworthy and opportunistic behavior exhibited by politicians. In short, there is nothing new about the Italian transformism.

Finally, there are those works that have put an emphasis on the cultural side of *trasformismo*. In such a context, several scholars have seen it as an extreme example of political corruption, the "Italian version of the patronage system" or a tricky form of electoral malpractice.[32] However, it is worth noting that neither clientelism and patronage, on the one hand, nor political and electoral corruption, on the other, are phenomena strictly confined to Italy. Hence, even in this field Italians have not discovered anything new: they have simply pushed already existing trends to extreme limits.

But then, in conclusion, is *trasformismo* a useful category for analyzing modern Italian history? In the light of the discussion in this chapter, the answer should be a straightforward "no": transformism as "centrism" or "clientelism" or "*transfuguismo*" is a concept that is common, diffused, and well-known beyond Italy. As we have seen in this chapter, *trasformismo* is a complex category that encompasses many different entities. It is not only a *system of government* based on the inclusion of the "centers" and the parallel exclusion or transformation of the "extremes," but also a *mode of governance* that implies the more or less covert cooperation of several public authorities at different levels. In other words, it involves the tendency of mainstream parties to converge to the center, excluding the extreme forces, as well as the ability of the politicians to change their opinions and affiliations in order to protect/promote particularistic interests, controlling the bureaucratic apparatus. *Trasformismo* contains all this, and much more. It is its special mixture of events and episodes, deeds and misdeeds, feelings and strategies,

tendencies and constants, that makes it absolutely singular and unquestionably Italian. I have no doubt that the true "autobiography of the nation" can and must be read among the folds of the enduring transformist trajectory.

Notes

1. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, *L'identità italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998), 98.
2. Benedetto Croce, *A History of Italy: 1871–1915* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 13.
3. Ibid., 20.
4. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, III* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 257.
5. Luigi Musella, *Il trasformismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 9.
6. See, e.g., Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell'Italia moderna,* Vol. IV (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967) and Fabio Vander, *La democrazia in Italia. Ideologia e storia del trasformismo* (Genoa: Marietti, 2004).
7. Luciano Cafagna, *Cavour* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999), 231–232.
8. Maurizio Cotta, "Elite Unification and Democratic Consolidation in Italy: A Historical Overview," in John Highley and Richard Gunther (eds), *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 150.
9. See: Sandro Rogari, *Alle origini del trasformismo. Partiti e sistema politico nell'Italia liberale* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 1998).
10. Gaetano Salvemini, "Introductory Essay," in William A. Salomone, *Italian Democracy in the Making: The Political Scene in the Giolittian Era, 1900–1914* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1945), vii.
11. Alfio Mastropaolo, "Notabili, clientelismo, trasformismo," in Luciano Violante (ed.), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 17. Il Parlamento* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), 810.
12. See: Mark Donovan and James L. Newell, "Centrism in Italian Politics," *Modern Italy* 13, no. 4 (2008), 381–397.
13. Pietro Vigo, *Annali d'Italia,* vol. 5: *1887–1890* (Milan: Treves, 1947), 103.
14. See, for instance, Musella, *Trasformismo*, 2003.
15. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy: 1871 to the Present* (Essex: Pearson, 2008), 116.
16. See, e.g., Rogari, *Alle origini del trasformismo*; Giovanni Sabbatucci, *Il trasformismo come sistema* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2003); Massimo L. Salvadori, "Trasformismo," in Angelo d'Orsi (ed.), *Gli* ismi *della politica* (Rome: Viella, 2010), 467–474.
17. Luciano Cafagna, "Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia politica italiana," in Loreto Di Nucci and Ernesto Galli della Loggia (eds), *Due Nazioni. Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), 17–40.
18. Sabbatucci, *Il trasformismo come sistema*, 66.
19. Ibid., 78.
20. Enrico Berlinguer, *La questione comunista. 1969–1975* (Rome: Editori Riuniti), 1975.
21. Giampiero Carocci, *Il trasformismo dall'Unità ad oggi* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli), 21.
22. Ernesto Galli della Loggia, "L'Italia trasformista," *Il Corriere della Sera*, March 17, 1999, 1.
23. Cafagna, *Cavour*, 220.
24. See, e.g., Carlo Tullio-Altan, *Populismo e trasformismo. Saggio sulle ideologie politiche italiane* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1989).
25. Mastropaolo, "Notabili, clientelismo, trasformismo," 814.

26. Giovanni Sartori, *Mala tempora* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2004), 502.

27. Giulio Bollati, *L'Italiano: Il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione* (Torino: Einaudi, 2011), xxvii.

28. Sabbatucci, *Il trasformismo come sistema*, 32.

29. Donovan and Newell, "Centrism in Italian Politics," 381–397.

30. See, e.g., Paolo Pombeni, *La trasformazione politica nell'Europa liberale. 1870–1890* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994).

31. William Heller and Carol Mershon, *Political Parties and Legislative Party Switching* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 10.

32. Simona Piattoni, "Le clientélisme revisité. Politique clientéliste et développement éeconomique dans l'Italie de l'après-guerre," *Pôle Sud*, 19 (November 2003), 161.

CHAPTER 4

....

PARTITOCRACY

Parties and their Critics in Italian Political Life

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MAURIZIO COTTA

The word *partitocrazia* appeared in the Italian vocabulary after World War II, most likely coined by Roberto Lucifero, a right-wing and monarchical journalist,[1] and received a more scientific interpretation by Giuseppe Maranini, a prestigious constitutional lawyer of the University of Florence.[2] The word was used in a broad sense to express a critique of the role of organized parties and to uphold the role and independence of individual parliamentarians against collective party discipline. We can see this expression as part of a long-term tradition of criticism toward parties and their role and influence within the Italian political system.

The acceptance of parties as a normal, or even as a necessary, component of modern representative democracy has not been easy in Italy and many other Continental countries. Against this acceptance has long been the simple and deep-rooted idea that political divisions are not compatible with the common good. An established history, especially in the "republican" tradition, of condemning "factions" as the major enemies of good governance, has contributed to the perception of parties, and the partisan spirit in which they originated, as sources of conflict and thus a serious danger to the orderly running of the polity. This negative view has been reinforced, in some Continental countries more than others, by the emerging "sacralization" of the state. The Hegelian view that the modern state,[3] as a unified and coherent system of authority, represented the pinnacle of civilization and morality, was difficult to reconcile with parties competing to win a place at the helm of the state and implement their "particularistic" views of government. Only a more pragmatic and pluralistic political culture could accept that the common good was not a monolithic and predefined entity, but rather the result of a dynamic process of approximation which could indeed be enhanced by competition among differing views,[4] and that the state (as an authority and administrative system) should be viewed as an instrument, rather than the absolute good of political life. In such a framework, far from being a negative factor, parties would positively contribute to a real-life (fully functional) democracy.[5]

A critical view of parties can also be traced to a rather different origin. From an individualistic liberal conception of politics with the independent amateur politician as its ideal, the party as a collective and disciplined organization had to be seen as a threat. The individual parliamentarian subjected to the orders of an external party bureaucracy was reduced to a pure executor deprived of any autonomous role, while the role of the parliament itself was diminished to that of a voting machine. In this way, parties were seen as a danger to "true" parliamentarism.

And, finally, these negative views about parties of a theoretical and normative type could easily be reinforced by the practical evaluation of their very real flaws.

To conclude from the existence of a strong critical tradition that parties have always been strong in Italian politics would, however, be wrong. Rather, the truth is probably the opposite. For long periods and from many different points of view Italian parties have in fact been weak and unable to implement a true party government.[6] In a wide historical view, the periods characterized by strong party control over political life are significant but far from dominant. A synthetic historical excursus could probably identify the following phases with regard to the role of parties in Italian politics: (1) a prolonged phase of notable parliamentary parties; (2) the delayed ascendance (and rapid failure) of mass organized parties before Fascism; (3) the authoritarian single-party monopoly of the fascist period; (4) the "golden age" of mass parties after World War II; and (5) the decline of mass parties and the challenge of leader-dominated parties after 1994. In the following discussion I will briefly outline the state of affairs for the first three periods and then devote more attention to the last two.

Italy as a Latecomer in the Development of Organized Mass Parties

The not so linear "parliamentarization" process of Italian politics found its early origins in the "predecessor state," the Kingdom of Sardinia, under the constitution gracefully conceded (*octroyé*) by King Charles Albert in 1848 (the so-called Statuto Albertino, which, in 1861, became the first constitution of a unified Italy). Although the distinguished politician and political writer Marco Minghetti wrote that "parliamentary government meant party government,"[7] parties hardly emerged as a strong political actor in that context. For quite a long time they consisted of fairly loose parliamentary aggregations of notables, and their presence at the electoral level remained extremely weak and scarcely visible. In spite of this, from the outset parties were a frequent target of criticism. On the one hand, they were criticized from a more philosophical perspective, for example by political thinkers such as Rosmini (1839)[8] and Gioberti (1850)[9] for their

particularistic views. On the other hand, more practically oriented observers accused them of having a clientelistic role and excessive influence over the public bureaucracy and judiciary.[10] Paradoxically, these early parties could simultaneously be criticized for being weak in exercising some of the typical functions of parties in a developed party government system, as well as for their excessive intrusions in areas of public administration. Their ability to develop clearly distinguishable and alternative political platforms was limited, as was their capacity to produce cohesive majorities in parliament and to sustain the government in office. In addition, their ability to control the selection of the prime minister and some of the ministers (against the influence of the king) was far from fully established. At the same time, politicians (especially those in government) did not refrain from using their influence in an expanding state bureaucracy to position their clients. It could be said here that the inability to fulfil the higher political functions of parties was, to some extent, compensated by their clientelistic instruments of influence.

The rise of organized parties with a formal membership structure was a relatively late phenomenon. It was the Socialist Party and, somewhat later, the Christian Democratic People's Party of Luigi Sturzo that initiated the era of a more modern type of party. In the face of this new challenge, even the "liberals," who had so far dominated political life without being an organized party, decided in 1922 to establish a true party—in fact not so long before political parties were banned by the incoming Fascist regime. The new style of political action brought by the organized mass parties, and, in particular, the influence of their external membership structure and leadership over the parliamentary component, once again stimulated criticism toward parties from the right side of the ideological spectrum. As this party model was particularly associated with the rise of the socialists, conservative opinion was understandably negative. Very soon, however, the new Christian Democratic Partito Popolare, guided from outside the Parliament by its leader, a priest (Luigi Sturzo), also received strong criticism from the liberal side due to the preeminent role of the external membership structure.

With regard to the development of strong party organizations Italy was in fact a latecomer in Europe, and the process could not reach a stable level as it was soon interrupted by the authoritarian experience of Fascism. Compared to other contemporary experiences, the Italian Socialist Party was not able to develop a very strong membership structure before the advent of Fascism; the rate of members to voters was among the lowest in Europe.[11] The strong internal divisions that marred the life of the party and produced repeated schisms further increased this organizational weakness. As for the Partito Popolare, its organization was, to a significant extent, dependent on religious organizations, and its short life between 1919 and 1925 did not allow it a full organizational deployment. It can be said, then, that, before the advent of Fascism, the build-up of a fully developed system of modern mass parties was less than midway. Old parties of notables found themselves in an uneasy coexistence with the new organizations, making a true party government far from an accomplished feat.

The Fascist Experience

In 1925, within a couple of years of its takeover, the Fascist regime outlawed and destroyed all pre-existing party formations; at the same time, however, it initiated a new phase of party influence in Italian political life. For the first time, albeit in a non-competitive framework, a dense and ubiquitous party organization came to cover the entire country and mass membership acquired an unprecedented high. The Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF) was, until Mussolini's rise to power in 1922, a rather small organization in terms of membership (members in 1920 only numbered 27,430, though rapidly rose to more than 100,000 by May 1921);[12] more important, however, was its significant paramilitary branch, which was a crucial instrument for the political takeover.

The role of the PNF went through a progressive transformation as Mussolini's regime consolidated. With Mussolini, strongly placed at the regime's helm, using the government and the bureaucratic apparatus (in particular that of the Ministry of Interiors), at this point unchallenged by parliament and opposition, as the main instruments of power, any strong dualism between party and state was to be a source of embarrassment rather than a resource. In this way, the paramilitary branch of the party, often with strong local roots, was to be disciplined. By 1925, with the banning of all the other parties, the PNF reached a monopolistic status yet was clearly and increasingly placed in a subordinate position vis-à-vis the highly personalized rule of the dictator. Any autonomous initiative of the party and its top ranks was not tolerated. The party was to be the instrument for the consolidation of the regime's control over Italian society, but not the driver of the process. It was not in the party that the leadership role of Mussolini was to be decided; on the contrary, it was the Duce who decided the role of the party.[13] Only at the end of the regime, in July 1943, when military defeat had dramatically exposed the failure of the dictator, could the party become the arena for deciding to put an end to the political career of Mussolini (and, at the same time, decreeing the end of the party itself).

After a first phase, during which access to the party remained relatively restricted and members were supposed to be "true" fascists, membership of the party and its auxiliary organization covering all sectors and milieus of society expanded enormously to the point where the majority of the population was, in some form, organized into the machine. Being a party member became almost mandatory for obtaining a post in public administration and, more generally, for not being relegated to the status of second-class citizen in the country. From around 600,000 members of the party in 1926,[14] when Farinacci was forced to resign as party secretary after his attempts to exert a relative autonomy over Mussolini, the numbers more than quadrupled (to approx. 2.6 million) in 1939; if we add all the ancillary associations of the party, nearly half of the Italian population (20 million out of 43.7) came to be enrolled in this gigantic machine before World War II. Particularly important was the network of youth organizations.[15] The party and its organizations not only oversaw the political regimentation of the population, but also distributed a vast array of "welfare" benefits (from health care and

holidays to sports and cultural activities) for a large strata of the population that had been thus far denied access to these. From this viewpoint, it could be said that Fascism brought about the first true period of partitocratic penetration in Italian society. At the same time, this gigantic machine had become deeply bureaucratized and in a way even depoliticized: the highest political direction was not produced from the party, but from the personal dictator.

THE COMPETITIVE BUILD-UP OF PARTY ORGANIZATIONS AFTER WORLD WAR II AND THEIR INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The war defeat, the collapse of Mussolini's regime, and the reconstruction of a democratic state in the new international context that followed these events opened the way for a period of undeniable party ascendancy. Two large parties, the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Communist Party (PCI), became the major players of the new political regime and, together with a few smaller ones (Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party, Republican Party, Liberal Party), they inaugurated a period of more than forty years of relatively stable electoral alignments, government arrangements, and a broad political penetration into Italian society. This was a period that, from many points of view, can be defined as partitocracy,[16] or, to use a different terminology, as having a fairly strong system of party government.[17]

The fall of Mussolini's dictatorship left the new regime with an inheritance that should not be underestimated. The huge heritage of PNF buildings and structures was, to a large extent, incorporated into the new democratic state, but some were appropriated by the reborn parties. A large number of intermediary cadres were "recycled" by the democratic parties. More important, perhaps, was the fact that people had become accustomed to the idea that a political party should play a role that went beyond the purely political debate of ideas, and instead extend to more mundane aspects of day-to-day life, essentially working as a subsidiary to the state.[18]

Beside the inheritance from the Fascist period, a number of other concomitant factors likely contributed to the strong role acquired by organized mass parties in the new democratic regime. The almost complete disappearance of the pre-fascist liberal political class, and the collapse of the state in the wake of military defeat, gave the reborn mass parties (Communists, Christian Democrats, and Socialists) an opportunity to gain a central role in shaping the new democratic regime while the state machine was being rebuilt. The harsh competition between the Christian Democratic Party and the Communist Party, which erupted soon after the new regime was inaugurated, added a strong incentive for the main actors of this dramatic game to strengthen their organizational bases.

In the competitive game of organizational build-up, the Communist Party was originally in the lead and the DC could only counteract, mainly using the support of the Catholic Church's organizations. With time, albeit without lessening the strong ties with religious organizations, the DC also developed a much more articulated organization of its own.

The Communist Party was rapidly able to achieve what the Italian Socialists had failed to obtain: a cohesive and locally ramified membership organization. Within two years after the end of World War II, the party had reached more than 2 million members, around 10,000 local sections, and 50,000 cells in workplaces.[19] A large proportion of communist voters were, in fact, mobilized in the party organization.[20] No other party could display such a strong organizational machine at that time. The DC, which, at the electoral level, already had the largest following in 1946 and was about to win a landslide in 1948, had, in 1947, less than half the members of the PCI and a much less structured network of local units.

At the organizational level, the great strategic electoral battles of 1948 and 1953, which established the period's political winners and losers and defined the long-term political equilibrium of the country, were not decided by the membership organizations of the parties alone. It was quite clear that the DC could count upon the decisive support of another crucial actor in the Italian system, the Catholic Church with the powerful lay organizations of the Azione Cattolica.[21] On the other side, the PCI was supported by the leftist trade union CGIL.

The stabilization of the political system on two main fronts, a permanent party of government, the DC, with its smaller allies, and a permanent party of opposition, the PCI, gave Italian politics the semblance of "trench warfare," with parties engaged in a constant struggle to strengthen and defend their political and social bases. The opposition party, deprived of central government resources (but not those of local government) counted not only upon its membership organization, but also upon a broad set of ancillary associations in the fields of culture, sport, and leisure to consolidate its following. This type of social penetration was not, however, equally successful across all regions of Italy. In the so-called "red regions" of central Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, and Umbria) this produced a strong "subcultural" entrenchment, and the party became the center of a dense and integrated network of influence. In other regions (the "white regions"), however, the opposition party could not compete with the entrenchment of the DC and had to count on a less structured relationship with voters.[22] In spite of some difficult moments, such as the shock produced by the Russian intervention in Hungary in 1956, or the challenges coming from the students and social movements and the birth of "red" terrorism in the late 1960s and 1970s, the party was able to organize itself for a long-term strategy of survival in opposition.

The DC, having firmly established its control of the central government (and much of local government), was keen to develop its own organizational apparatus in a way that would make it more independent from the lay organizations of the Catholic Church, without rejecting the electoral support that could be derived from them. Under the leadership of Fanfani in the 1950s, a great effort was made to establish a stronger membership

organization with a diffuse local presence. In spite of this, the local units of the DC never acquired the importance and activism of communist units. With the increasing fragmentation of the party into organized factions (*correnti*), the membership organization became the arena for an intense internal competition of power at the local and national levels. This led to an inflation of membership numbers, and quite often cast doubt on the quality of the membership: a significant number of cards would simply be paid for by local caciques.

Owing to its permanent government position, the DC party could extensively exploit other important resources. Patronage applied to the central and peripheral state administration, and even more to the large parallel bureaucracies that had developed over the years, became an extremely important instrument in the hands of the party leadership. Schools, the post, the railroads, and the police offered opportunities to exert clientelistic influence in the recruitment, career advancements, and geographical mobility of employees and high-level officers. The large public sector of the economy, especially in the industrial and financial subfields—in part a legacy of the economic crises of the 1920s and the fascist period, but also a product of the more recent policy choices of postwar governments and their attempts to foster industrial development in less favored areas of the county and so safeguard employment—created particularly favorable opportunities for party intervention. In fact, some of the party's internal factions developed very close relations with state industries.

With the decline of ideological tensions and under pressure to make the system work, the competitive and conflictual entrenchment of the two main Italian parties gradually mellowed, and, from the 1970s onwards, was increasingly balanced by instances of more cooperative behavior. Examples of this behavior were the reforms of parliamentary regulations (1971), allowing the opposition a greater role in the agenda setting of the representative assembly, then the external support granted by the PCI to the Andreotti governments in 1976–79, the assignment of some leading parliamentary positions to the opposition, and also some areas of influence granted on state television. If we further consider the introduction of a system of state financing of parties in 1974, it is reasonable to say that some elements of the cartel party model were emerging.[23]

In spite of these transformations and a decline in the original ideological conflict that had defined the competition among parties, the Italian political system remained frozen throughout the 1980s with regard to the original allocation of governing and opposition roles. In this view, the Italian party system seemed unchangeable. The inertia of political dynamics and the lack of any significant alternation of executive power were to exact an increasingly high price from both governing and opposition parties. The main parties increasingly lost contact with society, and their ability to mobilize popular support declined significantly.[24] This was well attested, for instance, in the plunging numbers of affiliates of the PCI (according to the Istituto Cattaneo, the party lost about one third of its members between 1977 and 1990).[25] The increasing volatility of the vote from 1979 to 1992, before reaching an unprecedented peak in 1994,[26] as well as the unexpected success of new parties (the Northern League in particular), were other signs of the crisis of the old order. An even more dramatic indicator of this crisis was the combined electoral

weight of the two largest parties (DC and PCI) which, between 1976 and 1992, declined from 73.1 percent to 45.8 percent.

With the arrival of the 1990s, it became clear that, while the old partitocratic mold appeared to persist unchanged, in reality its ability to control Italian society was rapidly disappearing and the stage was being prepared for a political earthquake.[27] Evaporating electoral and organizational control meant it was increasingly difficult for parties to obtain the traditional allegiance of the media, the judiciary, and organized economic groups.

The Collapse of the Old Party System, the Decline of the Organized Party: Leaderocracy after Partitocracy?

The party system that had dominated Italian politics for nearly forty years came to an abrupt end at the beginning of the 1990s. A combination of factors contributed to the sudden and unexpected collapse of all "governing parties"—Christian Democracy Party, Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party, Republican Party, Liberal Party—which had been at the helm of the executive without alternation of power since 1947. The inquiries of Milanese prosecutors, soon followed in other parts of Italy, unveiled to the public the diffuse practices of illegal financing of parties and the large recourse to corruption in procurements and tenders, discrediting the leadership of the governing parties. The fact that all attempts to renew their leadership failed to save the parties from political bankruptcy suggests that corruption was but one aspect of a deeper crisis, which, above all, had a political component. The system of parties, frozen into shape by the harsh ideological confrontation of Cold War years, had not benefited from the stimuli of open competition and alternation in government. The security of their position in government, assured by the ideological (self-)exclusion of those in opposition, had made the governing parties increasingly unable to face the new problems of the country and to innovate in policymaking. Particularistic distribution of benefits and clientelism had become their main instruments of action. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991 deprived them of their ideological superiority, while the dramatic rise in costs of a huge public debt curtailed resources for sustaining the spending policies of the past.[28] In this context, mainstream parties had become significantly more vulnerable to external challenges. The breakdown of the governing parties, coupled with the difficulty of the main traditional opposition party, the PCI (now renamed PDS), to redefine its identity after the sunset of world communism, created a wide opening for political innovation. Some of this opening seemed bound to be occupied by a new territorially based party (the Northern League) that, for the first time in a non-peripheral

area of Italy, introduced a brand new political discourse challenging the central government. Yet, given the intrinsic geographical limitations of that appeal, there was still a very large part of the electorate that was in want of representation. The appearance and immediate electoral success in 1994 of a new leader, Silvio Berlusconi, and of his party (Forza Italia) initiated a new phase in Italian politics. Berlusconi's success certified, on the one hand, the end of the old parties, while, on the other hand, it offered a new model of efficient political organization with which the other political actors had to come to terms sooner or later.

Between 1994 and 2011, the dynamics of the political system were defined by asymmetric competition between the new model party, the "personal party" of Berlusconi,[29] and the post-communist PDS/DS/PD trying to adapt the surviving elements of a more traditional model of party organization to the new political context. Forza Italia profited from the extraordinary resources of its leader (not only financial and the media, but also Berlusconi's personal electoral appeal and intuitive strategizing in the formation of coalitions); at the same time, it was entirely dependent on the leader. This symbiosis was the source of the party's success, but also of some of its problems. The party had to follow the personal strategies of the leader (for instance, in matters of judicial policy) even when they were not necessarily productive in terms of consensus; at some points, the party became embroiled in the private problems of its leader. As can happen with personalistic leaderships, the entourage of the leader is often selected more for its loyalty that for its merits. It is therefore difficult for such a party to nurture a political class of a high standing. These limits especially started to weigh down on local politics, where decisions were made directly from the center of the party, often leading to suboptimal results. Increasingly, these limits became relevant at the national level as well.

Difficulties and problems were, however, for some time much greater on the other side of the political spectrum. The only party that had survived from the collapse of the so-called "First Republic," the successor party of the PCI, found itself faced with the dilemma of preserving its old organizational machine and, at the same time, adapting to the deeply changed political landscape post-1994. A particular challenge for the party was to adapt to a bipolar and leader-centered arena of competition. The party, which had lived for so many decades guarding a well-identifiable left position, now had to fight for center voters in order to have any chance of winning against a strong competitor that had conquered a broad space spanning the center and right. To face this challenge, the party was compelled to redefine its identity, open its ranks to politicians coming from very different origins (mainly former Christian Democrats), and incorporate other parties under a broader ideological umbrella. After the electoral failure of 1994, it also had to accept an external leader, Prodi (a Christian Democrat by background), for the electoral battle and leadership of government. In a way, the main left party also had to recognize, not without strong internal doubts, the preeminent importance of leadership in the new competitive framework. Yet while Forza Italia, and later its successor, the PdL, were intrinsically adapted to accepting the domineering role of the leader, things were very different for a party which, in its long tradition, had not refused the role of leaders (from Togliatti to Enrico Berlinguer), but had only accepted those grown into this role from

inside the party apparatus and strongly identifying with it. It has probably to do with this that, twice, the electorally winning leadership of Prodi was weakened from within the party, and, in the end, rejected. At the same time attempts to relaunch the party with leaders (such as D'Alema, Veltroni and Bersani) coming from the traditional ranks of the organization, repeatedly failed or at best obtained a Pyrrhic victory (as with Bersani in 2013). In an attempt to give greater authority to its leaders, the party started to experiment with primaries to select the candidate for governmental leadership, and to organize popular elections (open to all sympathizers), also commonly called "primaries," for the party secretary. This instrument was at first largely controlled by the party apparatus and used to confirm the existing leaders, but, more recently, it has opened the way for a significant transformation in the relationship between party organization and leader. Through this instrument, a new young leader, Matteo Renzi, coming from an absolutely peripheral position in the party apparatus, has managed, with the help of his own personal electoral machine, to win, first locally in 2008 (becoming the mayor of Florence) and then nationally in 2013, against the worn-out representatives of the party establishment, and so rapidly reach the premiership. The innovative aspect of this occurrence is what we might call a sort of "semi-hostile takeover" of the party from an individual political entrepreneur. The success of this takeover against a largely hostile party apparatus also suggests the possibility of a deep transformation for the main party of the left. Despite differences, the PD might also take on some of the features of its main opponent, the Berlusconi party. The leader, with his personal entourage, becomes the real engine of the party, while the party organization becomes something between an obstacle to be neutralized and an instrument to be used when needed—but not the political core of the party. The central element becomes the ability of the leader to win political battles and to command the loyalty of his followers.

The picture of the new Italian world of parties would not be complete without mentioning the third actor that has moved even more innovatively in the direction of a leader-centered model, the Five Star Movement. The movement, launched between 2007 and 2009 by the popular television comedian and blogger Grillo, features a strong anti-political message and, after some victories in municipal elections, obtained an unexpected success in the 2013 elections and inaugurated a very special organizational style. The leader of the movement, not elected in parliament, has guided the parliamentarians from the outside with a very strong hand and by means of internet communication.[30]

At this stage, then, the three main Italian parties are all strongly guided by a leader (albeit each with a peculiar style) who is, in a sense, above the party, either because he has created the party (Berlusconi and Grillo), or because he has won the party against the apparatus (Renzi). The long cycle of partitocracy, inaugurated after World War II, seems to have ended in what we might call the phase of "leaderocracy." In this type of party, a leader with a strong personal control over resources and a sophisticated ability to communicate directly with the voters through the media prevails over the burdensome permanent organization of the party. The leader and his loyal entourage now

increasingly control some of the peculiar functions of the party apparatus, such as programmatic elaboration, patronage, and the recruitment of middle-level elites.

It is still too early to say how stable and lasting this new phase will be. For the time being, three points deserve to be highlighted. The first is that no significant alternative model of party organization seems available in Italy today. The second is that the new model features some crucial advantages (a greater programmatic flexibility, better adaptation to the new world of media, more immediate rapport with individualistic voters, etc.), but also some relevant problems. Of the latter, the foremost are linked to the personal characteristics of the leader. As the example of PdL/Forza Italia has shown since 2011, the decline of the strategic capacities of the leader, his private problems, and his aging may become a serious disadvantage for the party. At the same time, the obvious solution of substituting the leader may be very difficult to implement because the party as such has lost any autonomous capacity to generate alternative leaders. The third point worth mentioning concerns the compatibility between this new model and a parliamentary form of government. A form of government such as a parliamentary one based on indirect legitimation of the executive and a need to have a collective discipline in the assembly may not be easily compatible with the new type of leader-centered party. Almost inevitably, a push in the direction of presidential or semi-presidential forms of government will most likely gain momentum. The recent electoral reform initiated by Renzi indicates that even without a constitutional reform an electoral system with a bonus for the largest party (and runoff among the two strongest competitors) may be used to produce de facto the direct investiture of the leader.

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