INTRODUCTION: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING?

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Now that the time has come to make an overall assessment of 2010, it can be said that no new elements have emerged to contradict what Ernesto Galli Della Loggia, a commentator who cannot be suspected of preconceived hostility toward the center-right, had written in the middle of the year: on the one hand, we cannot yet speak of a final crisis for Silvio Berlusconi or of the end of Berlusconiism, but on the other hand the country can hold up a list of “results that are, to say the least, unsatisfying.”¹

Halfway through the 16th Legislature, after a turbulent summer and internal conflicts within the majority, leading to the “divorce” between Gianfranco Fini and Silvio Berlusconi, it was to be expected that the government’s hold would be severely put to the test. The confidence vote of 14 December and the ensuing unraveling of *Futuro e Libertà per l’Italia* (FLI, Future and Freedom for Italy), which was to become even more evident in the first weeks of 2011, put the damper on any prospect of a technical or of a national unity government, thereby solidifying a very peculiar bipolar dynamic. Berlusconi’s government has survived, proving resistant to any blows—even to “Rubygate” and to the huge street demonstrations on 13 February 2011. It continues to survive without, however, succeeding in introducing structural reforms. The “liberal revolution,” which had been so often and loudly proclaimed, seems destined to remain on paper only. Italy is ever more divided between geographical areas and social categories—the young and the adult population, women and men, workers with permanent positions and those with temporary work, the North and the South. In addition, it continues to rely on a fragile and outdated mix of factors:

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the huge role played by families in providing services, the submerged economy as a security valve for the continuous loss of employment in the “legal” economy, and the solid nature of private savings, which has prevented damaging effects on the credit system (unlike in Ireland) and on the state’s solvency (as was the case in Greece).

The government’s one and only distinct impact, as far as policies are concerned, was made by the minister of the economy, Giulio Tremonti. In 2010, the third stage of the anti-crisis package first introduced in 2008, in response to the yet more visible effects of the international financial crisis that began in the same year on the real economy, was put into effect, with a hardening of the austerity measures and with even more robust cuts and interventions. Tremonti’s austerity measures also left a mark on other public policy initiatives that were prioritized in 2010: the reform of secondary high schools and universities and the so-called fiscal federalism. Other than that, as had already been the case in the past, most of the government’s attention was directed toward the justice system, with measures clearly aimed at changing the course of proceedings in which the prime minister or his close collaborators were involved. The government also had to deal with a number of emergencies. It had to face up to some of them directly (the reappearance of garbage in the streets of Naples), and it decided to adopt “emergency procedures” for a growing number of ordinary measures, thus creating ample room for the shady and discretionary awarding of public contracts related to these, as shown by the magistracy’s investigations into the Dipartimento della Protezione Civile (DPC, Civil Protection Department).

Notwithstanding the scandals, the economic crisis, and the cuts made as part of the austerity program, in 2010 support for the government, as measured in opinion polls, fell only slightly, even though various feelings of discontent were beginning to appear. In fact, what was becoming obvious was the weakness of the political offer from the center-left, as shown by the increasing number of social protests and a growing disaffectedness with politics. This was also made clear by the fact that these phenomena were not channeled by the main opposition parties, nor did they lead to a new consensus for them. Therefore, at the end of the year, it was difficult to expect a rapid change of scenario in the public life of the country.

A Newly Fragmented, Still Asymmetric Bipolarism Based on “Berlusconi and His Enemies”

Italian politics in 2010 continued to be characterized by a previously noted tendency that still often leaves both Italian and international

observers aghast. In spite of a crescendo of embarrassing gaffes on the international stage and scandals linked to the economic interests and private lives of the prime minister and his close collaborators, Berlusconi still holds the reins of power, against the expectations of many.

One of the most notable political events of the year was the challenge thrown down by Fini, which has been lost for the time being, and the consequent breakaway of the FLI group, that is, roughly 10 percent of the *Popolo della Libertà* (PdL, People of Freedom). As David Hine and Davide Vampa explain in the opening chapter of this volume, it is hard to reach a full understanding of the thinking behind a gamble that proved so costly to the ex-leader of *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN, National Alliance). Whether Fini was pushed against his will by events (including the attacks made by a number of newspapers owned by the prime minister), or whether he himself took the initiative (the power games having not yet provided us with a definitive answer), the fact remains that Berlusconi's separation from Fini leaves the prime minister decidedly weakened, although still at the head of the parliamentary majority. Berlusconi survived the confidence vote in December, but it was by a margin of just three votes in the Chamber. This result shows a downturn in Berlusconi's political project. The PdL displays flaws at the level of its territorial organization, and the ongoing "signing up campaign," while not ineffective among second- and third-rate personalities, gives an indication of how the charismatic bandwagon of "Berlusconi the winner" has a lesser capacity to attract support than in the past. Alongside this, we have seen the erosion of the government's initiatives in terms of its program: there has been a growing skepticism concerning its determination and its capacity to push through reforms, apart from the much-debated measures introduced in the education and university sectors.

But while Fini's departure was the most dramatic event of the year, the key point that explains the government's longevity when faced with these significant challenges continues to be the crisis that has hit the *Partito Democratico* (PD, Democratic Party) for the entire year. The party has appeared to base its main strategy on the expectation that the prime minister could be worn down, showing a dramatic inability to react to his resilience. The proliferation of minority factions has created difficulties, and, as a consequence, the opposition has still not developed a concrete alternative to Berlusconi's government that can be presented to the electorate.

On the other hand, we must not underestimate the government's ability to maintain its center of gravity year after year, thanks to the various arrangements and agreements that it has made. The government's hold on power has continued to attract allies and elites,

making the task of the opposition even more arduous. Many commentators in the country express doubts as to whether being at the helm actually means the same as governing, if by the latter we mean implementing effective public policies and being able to respond to the main problems experienced by citizens, as opposed to just “getting by.” And yet the basic point remains that a government does not need to be very effective in order to survive—it only needs to be less weak than the opposition.

There is little doubt that the weakness of the opposition in 2010 was the result of internal fragmentation and the lack of charismatic leadership. Within the PD, the majority group absorbed the faction led by Dario Franceschini, which had stood in opposition to Pierluigi Bersani in the primaries a few months earlier, and clashed with the Veltroni group. The tensions led to a document (published in September and signed by 75 PD members of Parliament) that was strongly critical of Bersani’s strategic line and his ability as a leader, as well as the D’Alema-inspired objective of broad alliances and the repositioning of Franceschini. Another contentious issue was the use and the functioning of the primary elections, an important mechanism for internal democracy endorsed by the party’s statute and recently extended to include administrative and regional contests in various areas of the country (where there were also criticisms, either when the contests were not truly competitive or when the weakness of the party’s candidates was revealed). The polls showed that electors were somewhat unhappy with the PD, which was perceived as still affected by a self-referential tendency, a lack of charisma, and a detachment from people’s real problems.

A further cause of considerable friction concerned the strategy of alliances. After the decline, resignation, and replacement of Walter Veltroni (the leader who had guided the party from its inception to the 2008 elections) and the Franceschini interlude, Bersani, the new party secretary, openly abandoned the ambition to make the PD the center of mass and the driving power for politically coherent coalitions. Instead, he preferred to draw up as many agreements as possible with groups, both inside and outside Parliament, that, it was assumed, might be interested at various points in time in forming an anti-Berlusconi alliance. This meant that there was no shortage of tactical switches, which were already evident when the time came to choose candidates for the regional elections and continued in the ensuing months. Within the space of just one year, there were several shifts of alliances: a (self-damaging) confrontation with Nichi Vendola in Puglia as a means of moving closer to the Unione di Centro (UdC, Union of the Center); the “anti-clerical” candidacy of Emma Bonino

in Lazio; the agreement, albeit an informal one, on an alliance with Vendola himself for national coalition primaries, following the model of 2005; the evocation of a vaguely defined Nuovo Ulivo (New Olive Tree); a reiterated proposal for an agreement with the UdC; an appeal to the Lega Nord (LN, Northern League) to abandon the PdL and to form an alliance with the PD, in exchange for the long-desired federalism; and the prospect of an agreement with all the forces of the “third pole,” including the FLI, after Fini not only had been hailed by the PD president, Rosy Bindi, in the *Guardian* as early as 2009 as the “best leader of the left,” but also had been seen as a possible ally in the summer of 2010.

Amid all this, another issue remained unresolved in the background: the relations with Italia dei Valori (IdV, Italy of Values), the only party with which an electoral agreement had been worked out in 2008. As Stefano Braghiroli and Luca Verzichelli explain in their chapter, the two parties kept their distance from each other, in terms of both their programs and their political interests and styles. While the PD retained its aspiration to be the beacon of the reformist left, the IdV continued to be a strongly personalistic party with a “minority vocation.” The PD has attempted to be responsible in opposition and to show a culture of government, while the IdV has stood by its protest campaigns with populist undertones. The result was a partnership that frequently had damaging effects on the PD leadership, particularly when one considers the anti-politics radicalization of a significant part of its traditional base of support.

Along with the obvious weakness of the PD and IdV, there was the loudly proclaimed announcement of a plan to set up the so-called third pole halfway through 2010. This alliance aimed explicitly to oppose the increasing bipolar structure of the Italian political system. As Carlo Baccetti’s analysis shows, the Alleanza per l’Italia (ApI, Alliance for Italy) and the UdC have proved to be fairly active political forces, capable of drawing attention both to the government’s failings and to the ineffectiveness of the opposition. The ApI and UdC have been strongly bound together in their critique of bipolarism as an institutional structure. In their view, it is not adequate for the country because it hands over too much power to the LN and to the IdV, that is, to the extreme wings within the two coalitions, at the expense of more moderate positions and policy strategies. The center’s election results, however, were of modest proportions. The ApI remained a minor player, and the UdC, which allowed itself greater room for maneuver by forming an alliance with either the right or the left, depending on the regional context, gained only 5.6 percent of the votes, notwithstanding this strategy. This result is similar to the one

obtained when the UDC was in a coalition with the center-right in 2005. The possible alliance in 2010 between the ApI, the UdC, the FLI, and the Movimento per le Autonomie (MpA, Movement for Autonomies) therefore began life as fragile from the outset, having originated as a kind of “holy alliance” against Berlusconi, rather than as a coalition based on a program with a clear and recognizable identity. The defeat of the no confidence vote in December and the subsequent defections from the FLI moved that prospect further into the distance and proved that Berlusconi has resources at his disposal that are more than sufficient to attract members of Parliament who are confused or worried about their chances of being re-elected. These members have allowed Berlusconi to remain in power or, if necessary, to prevent the formation of other majorities. They have thus enabled the prime minister to impose an early end to the legislature.

The FLI's breakaway from the PdL provides clear evidence of a reverse trend that is currently under way regarding the move toward a two-party system that had taken place in 2008. In an attempt to broaden his parliamentary base, Berlusconi also had to acknowledge the existence of a number of new political forces. Up to February 2011, the so-called Group of 28 “willing members” in the Chamber is made up of the following: Noi Sud—Libertà ed Autonomia (We of the South—Freedom and Autonomy), Popolari d'Italia Domani (Popular Party for Tomorrow's Italy), Movimento di Responsabilità Nazionale (Movement of National Responsibility), Azione Popolare (Popular Action), Alleanza di Centro (AdC, Alliance of the Center), Liberal Democratici (LD, Liberal Democrats), Minoranze Linguistiche (Language Minorities), and MpA—Alleati per il Sud (Movement for Autonomies—Allies for the South). Some of these groups came into being as a result of a diaspora of members leaving the PD—a movement that could spread. Thus, bipolarism continues to exist, but it appears more fragmented and asymmetrical. While the majority has consolidated in Parliament by acquiring a multiplicity of insignificant party emblems—which possibly exercise some bargaining power behind the scenes but are non-existent as far as the wider public is concerned—the opposition has split up into a countless number of semi-protagonists.

This fragmentation was seen again in the recent round of elections. In the 2008 elections, over 70 percent of the votes had been shared by the two main parties, the PdL and the PD. However, as outlined in the chapter by Brunetta Baldi and Filippo Tronconi, the 2010 regional elections saw a significant shift away from the largest parties, to the advantage of the two extreme groups within the respective coalitions, that is, the LN and the IdV. In particular, the LN was the real winner of

the elections, taking over the presidency of Piedmont and Veneto and gaining an extraordinary 13.7 percent of the vote in Emilia-Romagna. On the one hand, the campaign was marked by some unusual anomalies in the presentation of center-right candidates in Lombardy and in Lazio, which led to the exclusion of PdL lists in the province of Rome. On the other hand, there was the politically clumsy behavior of the PD leadership that culminated in Puglia, where the Bersani secretariat attempted to put up a candidate to run against a very popular out-going president such as Vendola, and chose the very same candidate who had been defeated in the primaries five years earlier. All these elements contributed to exacerbate the disaffection of the voters toward the two main parties. Therefore, the result was Berlusconi's worst performance since the 2005 elections, a further drop in the PD vote, and the lowest turnout ever for that type of election (63.6 percent). It also revealed a strong showing for the *MoVimento 5 Stelle* (M5S, Five Star Movement)—a group led by the satirist Beppe Grillo that expresses anti-political sentiments simmering especially within center-left public opinion—which attained 3.7 percent of the vote in Piedmont and 6 percent in Emilia-Romagna.

The level of discontent was high, but the government's hold over the years has allowed it to build an advantageous position that allows it to beat off challenges. The protests and the mobilizations of the opposition, although frequent and well-supported, were certainly not strong enough to change things. Indeed, we need to bear one important distinction in mind. The opposition may obtain concessions when it is in a position to apply pressure on the foundations of support for the coalition government, which is why elections are important. However, it can replace the coalition in power only when it has developed a recognized ability to govern, and it is for this reason that winning elections is not enough.

The left certainly suffers as a result of the perception of a failure of the political context to stabilize. For years, factions and leaders of opposition groups have continued to identify opportunities in the political sphere for those who can play their cards most cleverly. The result is a kind of competition with short-term horizons that leaves no room for the formation of enduring alliances. Politics is carried out in the here and now: virtual mechanisms of reputation and trust are not developed, and at all times the actions of each actor depend on the perceptions, expectations, and actions of others. In this context of a low level of trust, it is difficult to achieve an alternating government because it requires a substantial group of actors who believe in the existence of a better and a sustainable alternative and, above all, who are prepared to risk the benefits of their current situation by gambling

on possible future outcomes. It is therefore no surprise that Berlusconi can keep going, even when faced with unprecedented levels of opposition, some coming from within the center-right as well as from the center-left. The challenge for change presents a number of obstacles, both cognitive and motivational, and in fact the majority of ex-AN members stayed with Berlusconi instead of following their former leader into the FLI, as Hine and Vampa explain. In a fragmented system, even those with reformist intents are attracted to the coalition, which has the resources to put changes into effect in a context that would otherwise be paralyzed.

So the picture remains complex. In spite of the fact that in the regional elections the center-right coalition took the presidency of four regions that had previously been held by the center-left, the final result provided proof of Berlusconi's personal decline. To this should be added significant rifts (the most important of which brought Fini's departure from the PdL) that mark the growing discontent within the coalition, especially in the South, and between the allies within the industrial sector. Together with the increasing difficulties in the legislative field, where vetoes have been applied at regular intervals, all this could represent a sign of tectonic movements that are under way. But it is too soon to say this, and it is certainly the case that the government has shown great powers of resistance up to now, as we have argued. Paradoxically, those who have gained the most from Berlusconi's weakness are not the opposition but rather his coalition partners. The vulnerability of the prime minister has guaranteed the LN a strategic position in the pursuit of its long-term objectives, the first of which is federalism.

The Italian Response to the Crisis: Tremonti's Austerity Policy

In its edition of 29 May 2010, the title of the editorial in the *Economist* left no doubt as to the alarming situation caused by the international crisis throughout Europe: "Fear Returns: How to Avoid a Double Recession." Even the front cover, which depicted a huge, frightening shark approaching the shore from the ocean, was far from reassuring. During these very days, Berlusconi's fourth government was discussing and approving a third anti-crisis decree (Decree Law No. 78/2010), which became law at the end of July 2010 (Law No. 122/2010), after requesting a vote of confidence in both chambers, the umpteenth of a fairly long series of votes. During the course of 2010, in fact, a confidence vote was sought eight times in either the Chamber of

Deputies or in the Senate, taking the total to 39 since the beginning of the legislature. To be fair, this is quite close to the 30 motions of confidence requested by Prodi's government between mid-2006 and the end of 2007, which were interpreted, however, as an unavoidable consequence of the tiny majority that propped up that executive. It was certainly a much higher number than the 49 votes of confidence held in the whole period from 2001 to 2006.

The response of the Italian government to the international economic crisis has oscillated between two opposing policy discourses, characterized, on the one hand, by optimism, reassurances, and repeated appeals to the well-established virtues of the Italian economic system (a high propensity to save on the part of families, a low level of private debt, and a solid banking system) and, on the other, by caution, prudence, and calls for austerity and sacrifices when the signs of crisis become more evident to public opinion. If we look through the daily newspapers of the last three years, this seesaw of information is obvious, even though it has been stated again and again in the public debate (and also within many national newspapers) that the only thing that the Berlusconi government and, in particular, its minister of the economy have done well has been the strategy to tackle the economic crisis. Berlusconi's public discourse has shifted from announcements along the lines of "It is a very serious crisis, which could also be very deep, especially in its effects on the real economy"² to "Our country will be the first to come out of the crisis. We have a solid banking system, our banks have not been involved with toxic securities, Italian families are savers, and every Italian who loses his job has complete health coverage and receives 70 percent of his salary;"³ and from "We must stay calm. If we say that everything is going badly, everything *will* go badly"⁴ to "While there are disturbing situations in Europe, we are managing better than all the others, and we have even reduced taxes by abolishing the ICI and saving firms 2 billion euros."⁵

We certainly cannot expect massive doses of pessimism and announcements of catastrophes from a government in power. We should also acknowledge that the Italian banking system appears to have more robust foundations in terms of liquidity than the US system, and that the increasing public debt, an enormous burden carried by the Italians, had been kept under control over the past few years in a more careful way within the group of countries known as the PIIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Spain), although this proved to be less the case with Greece. However, it should be added that the opportunity provided by the crisis to relaunch the country through reforms of a structural nature—in order to tackle the toughest problems that have for many decades plagued the labor market, the economic and

business fabric, the functioning of the public sector, and social cohesion—has definitely been missed. What has taken priority has been the correct running of the economy, but without any innovatory impetus. The long-running decline of the country did not stop, therefore, in 2010. The individual disinvestment in work (i.e., the lack of interest in autonomous business initiatives) has continued, as has business despecialization, stagnation in consumption, and a fall in investment in research, as outlined in detail in the 2010 report provided by Censis, a social study and research institute.⁶

The impact of the crisis on the real economy has actually been very considerable, and the recovery predicted for the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011 has not brought significant effects. According to data from the Banca d'Italia (BdI, Bank of Italy) published in May 2010, between 2008 and 2009, the GDP had gone down by 6.5 percent, almost half of the wealth produced in the previous 10 years; the real income of families had decreased by 3.4 percent; consumption had fallen by 2.5 percent; exports had collapsed by 22 percent; and business investments had dropped by 16 percent. The impact of the state redundancy fund (*cassa integrazione guadagni*) on the industrial sector had grown by 12 percent at the end of 2009 and continued to grow throughout 2010. In that two-year period, employment had gone down by 1.4 percent and the number of hours worked by 3.7 percent. Finally, there were 2,900 company bankruptcies in 2009, 25 percent more than in 2008.⁷

However, it was the indicators concerning the labor market that caused the most concern in 2010. At the end of the year, the employment rate was 57 percent, 13 percentage points below the target set in Lisbon in 2000 as part of the European Commission's European Employment Strategy, which was supposed to be reached in 2010. Unemployment began to rise again, up to 9 percent (compared with 7 percent in 2006). Finally, the activity rate that indicates the propensity of job seekers to look for work actively—or, conversely, their level of discouragement—remained static between 2004 and 2010, wavering around 62.4 percent. This means that there is a large group of job seekers who are resigned and not even trying to find their way to a new job. If we add to this situation the record level reached by Italy, compared to the rest of Europe, near the end of 2010 in terms of the unemployment of youths (those between the ages of 15 and 24), that is, 29.7 percent, we can understand the urgent need to introduce radical reforms in the labor market. These should move in the direction of easing the entry of young people as much as possible.⁸ In fact, almost a third of young Italians still cannot find a job, and the figure is over 50 percent in some regions of the South,

such as Calabria and Campania. A large number of those who have managed to find employment are still flexible workers. According to data provided by one of the most reliable sources in this area, in 2009, 22 percent of the total number of employed people were “flexi-workers.”⁹ Apart from young people, another category that stands out as being particularly weak in the country—especially in the labor market—is women: in 2010 the female employment rate reached 46.5 percent, over 20 percent lower than the male employment rate of 67.5 percent and some distance from the target of 60 percent that was set in Lisbon.¹⁰

The hemorrhaging of jobs during the whole of 2010 was therefore alarming, not only in itself, but also because it continued to hit the less-protected segments of the workforce and, as a result, put them at greater risk of being excluded or marginalized. It is no coincidence that the levels of comparative poverty and of social inequality in Italy have grown significantly, an almost unexpected phenomenon in a Bismarck-style welfare system that strongly protects the male breadwinner and that is supported by the very important role of the family as a provider of assistance and services that are not offered either by the state or by the market.¹¹ The year 2010 saw a kind of “Anglo-Saxonization” of the Italian welfare system, a circumstance that has been mentioned very little in the public debate, although it deserves more attention. The inequality between incomes became greater in 2010, reaching the highest level in the euro area. Italy reached an inequality rate of 5.3 percent against the euro area of 5.0.¹² In addition to this, the risk of poverty after the distribution of social benefits is reduced less in Italy in comparison to other European countries—from 23 percent to 19 percent in 2010, compared to 23 to 13 percent in France and 24 to 16 percent in the Eurozone. These data show that a significant proportion of the population remains completely excluded from any type of social protection.

Faced with such a situation, it was perhaps to be expected that the government would take rapid and extraordinary measures in terms of investments in and expenditures for the weaker sections of society, and yet we saw an even more resolute shift toward rigor and austerity. The comments of the minister of the economy on this issue could not have been clearer. On 21 July 2010, during a speech at the University of Freiburg, Tremonti strongly argued that austerity was the main (and obligatory) route for Europe, calling for yet harsher sanctions to be added to the Stability and Growth Pact for countries failing to meet the targets. He thus presented a position that is very close to German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s *Ordnungspolitik*—an economic policy that is based on a strict control of public accounts and a moderate

and balanced increase in social expenditure. At that time, two key points became evident. Firstly, the minister of the economy had taken over full authority in the handling of the crisis, while the prime minister was still occupied on an almost full-time basis with defending his leadership and his coalition from public and private scandals. Secondly, a new vision was beginning to spread in the ministry in favor of Europe and in favor of the German economic policies, unlike in the past, when Tremonti himself had been more than ready to criticize harshly excessive regulation coming from European institutions and to show a marked preference for policies designed to protect the national economy.¹³

The sacrifices included in the third anti-crisis package of the summer of 2010 have been numerous and have had a great impact: altogether the maneuver has involved cuts of 24.9 billion euros, of which 7 billion involve public spending. Among the most important measures, we would list the following: draconian cuts in transfers to the regions and to local bodies (13.3 billion euros, of which 10 billion will be taken from regions for the two-year period 2011–2012 and 3.3 billion from communes and provinces); stricter requirements for disability pensions; the raising of the pension age for women in the public sector (from 60 to 65, starting in 2016) and the reduction of “pension windows”; the abolition for three years of automatic salary increments for public employees; a block on staff turnover in public administration; the reduction of benefits and of reimbursement of expenses for ministers, members of Parliament, and political parties; the elimination of superfluous agencies; stricter controls on pharmaceutical expenses incurred by the regions; an increase in highway tolls; and yet more measures.

Then there has been the confirmation of the waiving of special social security cushions for 2010 as well (introduced by Art. 19 of Decree Law No. 185/2008, which became Law No. 2/2009), these finances being assigned to the regions via conventions with the Ministry of Labor. The ISFOL data relating to 2010, gathered through monitoring undertaken by Italia Lavoro SpA, reveal interesting differences between various parts of the country. In the regions of the North, the majority of workers (63 percent) received exceptional benefits, and the state redundancy fund was used to the maximum as a type of benefit. In the regions of the Center-South, however, a significant proportion of workers (16 percent) received a redeployment or “mobility” allowance after being laid off.¹⁴ In any event, notwithstanding the introduction of the “exceptional” state redundancy fund and the extension of the unemployment indemnity scheme for apprentices with a minimum of three months at work and for the collaborators (Laws No. 2/2009, No.

33/2009 and No. 91/2009), reports from the Bdl research office (based on ISTAT data) reveal that around 1.6 million workers still received no subsidies.

After the approval of the budget in September 2010, a wave of strikes and protests took place, some organized by key public employees (such as doctors and even magistrates). The regions and the local bodies also mobilized to negotiate amendments to the draft version of the decree. But once again the request for a vote of confidence in both of the chambers—without any ifs and buts—blocked any attempt to introduce changes to the anti-crisis measures.

The Government's Other Priorities: Education and Justice against a Background of Scandals and Shady Deals

In parliamentary debates, the opposition frequently criticized Tremonti's maneuvers, arguing that the minister was constantly applying the technique of "linear" and "horizontal" cuts, that is, blanket reductions in funding allocations that are often connected to the equally indiscriminate blocking of staff turnover in public administration. This approach was seen as a clumsy short cut that took the place of formulating well-planned interventions of a structural nature to address areas of state apparatus where there were more inefficiencies. Indeed, there were not many memorable sector reforms in 2010. Among those given the most prominence by the executive were certainly the two on high schools and universities that were signed by the minister of education, Mariastella Gelmini.

As Giliberto Capano shows in his chapter, Gelmini demonstrated a decision-making capacity that far surpassed her predecessors, even though the reasons behind the reforms, and perhaps also their speed of passage, were largely the result of financial imperatives. On the other hand, the shadow of Minister Tremonti and of the resources first taken away, then partially restored, then perhaps promised—but without any real funding guarantees—continued to hover over the fate of the related draft laws right up to the final hours before the parliamentary vote, on a knife's edge, during the last reading in the Chamber of Deputies, between Christmas and New Year.

Both of the Gelmini reforms were carried forward, and not only as a result of pressure from the Ministry of the Economy. They also received explicit support from the employers' federation Confindustria, whose opinions were given great consideration, and from some members of the press who do not usually side with the center-right. The reform of high schools, which came into effect in 2010, is along similar lines

to the reforms suggested by Confindustria as long ago as the early 1990s, regarding the role to be given to technical institutes for job training where there is a need identified by companies. We should also acknowledge the effectiveness of the reform in streamlining the curricular pathways available, compared with the plethora of options and experimental courses in the preceding system. In the 2010–2011 school year, the educational offer was structured around six types of high school (classical, scientific, artistic, linguistic, human sciences, and music-dance), two technical institutes (business and technological), and two vocational institutes (services and industry and craft). The reduction in the number of hours of lessons (in line with other OECD countries) was in response to the demands set by public finance, while the plan to limit the number of graduates undergoing teacher training was clearly aimed at reducing the likelihood of an excessive supply of teaching staff in the future. In the meantime, however, none of these measures resolves the problem of the large group of teachers who hope to gain a permanent position. This makes the reform itself a precarious and fragile one to implement.

The plans for universities, which seemed pretty ambitious when outlined in public speeches, have affected the governing bodies of universities, their internal organization (with a reduction of the role of faculties in favor of departments, which will take on dual responsibilities for teaching and research), a change of contract for researchers (who will now have a fixed-term contract), and the revamping of the recruitment and promotion procedures for university academic staff. Even more than for the high school reform, the support for this university reform from Confindustria and from the “independent” press, as well as from important sections of the academic community, was decidedly overgenerous. In fact, after the summer recess and just before the reform’s final approval, there were a few bumps along the path. For one thing, the effects of the deafening campaign to discredit Italian universities, to which many in the media had contributed, had begun to fade. The media campaign could be interpreted as a prelude to the forthcoming initiative on the part of the government to “clean up” and “restore morality to” public life. Also, some contradictions within the reform itself and in the actions taken by the minister of education had come to light. Gelmini had been forced to tread a careful line between announcing a meritocratic policy that would allocate resources for universities based on an assessment of their performance and reassuring the universities that any reductions in resources would be kept to a minimum, based on their previous expenditure, as the only possible way forward in the context of Tremonti’s austerity program. For the same reason, the much-heralded rewards to be given to

the most deserving students had to be counterbalanced by the almost total removal of the funding for the right to study. On top of this, there were the protests held by university students and researchers and the unrest among Fini's supporters in Parliament, who, when the time came to examine the final version of the draft law, were right in the middle of splitting up from the coalition. Notwithstanding all that, the reform was passed with a comfortable majority, even receiving the votes of the FLI. Minister Gelmini will therefore legitimately be able to take credit for proposing and signing, in the space of 18 months, two reforms that her predecessors had repeatedly attempted to pass, but which they had had to give up after years of exhausting inquiries and parliamentary debates.

To find another sector in which the government has acted with similar determination, we need to move to the justice system, another ministry led by a "young" member of Berlusconi's inner circle. Here, however, Angelino Alfano, the minister of justice, had to allow the trials in which Berlusconi was caught up to take precedence over reforms. The prime minister's long-held antipathy for the magistracy became even more marked during the course of 2010. It was as a result of one of the most talked-about judicial cases of the year, for example, that the plans to privatize the DPC had to be abandoned. Berlusconi had entrusted the DPC with a growing number of management responsibilities, based on his very close and public relationship with the DPC's director Guido Bertolaso. However, Bertolaso was himself involved in the scandals concerning contracts awarded in preparation for the G8 conference in La Maddalena and for the organization of the efforts required after the earthquake in L'Aquila, as David Alexander tells us in his chapter. The plan to transform the DPC from a department to a private company (after moving through a fairly short stage of being an administrative agency run by a public manager) and to a "strange" limited company with 100 percent public-owned shares (in other words, another sham Italian-style privatization) makes us think that the proposed change in legal status was in reality a response to the aim of getting around, as quickly as possible, the hitches and snares concerning competitive tenders and public contracts. Other interesting aspects emerge from Alexander's analysis, in particular, the undoubtedly instrumental way that the crisis following the L'Aquila earthquake was managed, given the approaching regional elections in March 2010. An example was the government's decision to provide groups of evacuees immediately with habitable and well-furnished homes, not to mention expensive ones, without the usual interim solution of temporary, less well-equipped, and less expensive accommodations.

Coming back to the policies on the justice system, the time sequence followed by the government to draw up the political agenda concerning this sector speaks for itself, as Patrizia Pederzoli shows. The passage of the draft law on wiretapping was interrupted in July 2010 when Berlusconi realized that it would be impossible to achieve what he had hoped to do, given the pressure from all the media beyond his own control and the opposition of Fini's group in Parliament, which was by this point very explicit. The prime minister acknowledged this just before expelling the president of the Chamber from the PdL. The approval of that reform would probably have prevented the use of wiretapping and the publication of phone interceptions regarding details of an offense for which the prime minister was later to be investigated, in the following autumn, relating to events that took place in May. This includes the famous phone call made by the prime minister to an officer in the Milan police headquarters in which he sought to place a young Moroccan girl (nicknamed Ruby Rubacuori by the press) in care, following her arrest on a charge of theft, on the basis that she was the niece of the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak.

Although the two facts are not connected, in the same month of May 2010, the draft constitutional law signed by Alfano was presented. It included a provision that any trial in which the prime minister was the accused could be suspended. As it would have taken too long to pass a constitutional amendment of this kind, Alfano, with the help of the prime minister's lawyer, Niccolò Ghedini, had to devise the "bridging norm" on the legitimate impediment, whose content Alfano himself admitted was debatable from a constitutional point of view. In fact, the law openly stated that it was designed "with a view to" a future change in the Constitution and, by providing the prime minister with a huge range of opportunities to declare himself "impeded," it gave Berlusconi the prerogative to absent himself from trials that he would normally have been required to attend. Since there were growing fears toward the end of the year that the Constitutional Court would not allow this norm to pass, the "short trial" was set in motion. This was a measure that would make trials so short that none of those in which the prime minister was involved would reach a conclusion.

From this point of view, there was nothing new under the sun for Italy, except perhaps in the degree of distrust that began to spread even within the center-right electorate and the amount of indignation that was swelling in center-left public opinion. This phenomenon had still not peaked by the end of 2010, but in the weeks in which we are writing, it could take on similar dimensions to those seen in the two-year period 2005–2006, which could be a prelude to a change that could be deeper this time.

Discontent over the Cuts and Failed Responses

The depth of this change in public opinion could be fueled by a widespread feeling of discontent caused by the economic crisis and the ensuing austerity policy, on the one hand, and unfulfilled promises, on the other. This discontent grew in various sectors of the economy and of society during the course of 2010, from universities to immigrants, from culture to high-speed trains, albeit without the violent social repercussions that might have been expected, for example, when faced with the devastating loss of jobs and the start-up of major company restructuring processes like those proposed for Fiat in Pomigliano and at Lingotto.

As far as the latter aspect is concerned, it should be remembered, as Marco Simoni points out in his chapter, that the percentage of paid-up trade union members among employees in the private sector fell by 40 percent in the early 1990s and was down to 19 percent by 2008. Furthermore, deep fissures have opened up during these years between CGIL and the other unions as a result of the tendency to negotiate labor contracts at the company level rather than nationally. This decentralization of the negotiating process has opened up degrees of flexibility that some unions have favored, but it has been strongly opposed by CGIL. The restructuring plans for Fiat in 2010 are the key to an understanding of these dynamics. While the closing of the Termini Imerese (Palermo) plant did not cause any protests, the reorganization strategies for Pomigliano d'Arco (Naples) have sparked off violent clashes with FIOM-CGIL, the largest metalworkers' union. FIOM has actually turned down the "social peace" clause (or the "responsibility" clause, to quote the words of the agreement) laid down by Fiat as a requirement for the restructuring plan, while FIM-CISL and the UILM have accepted the terms of the agreement. Following the rift between the unions, there was a vote on the part of the workers in the plant in favor of the conditions offered by Fiat. The result was a loss of status for FIOM and a further move on the part of the workers toward less standard and more flexible labor practices as a response to international competition, even though no certainties had been provided with regard to workers who had been laid off for months on one of the two government redundancy schemes available.

Many of the protests that took place in 2010 were of a local nature. However, when the budget cuts began to have an impact on what are considered to be essential services for society, protests began to spread like wildfire. The demonstrations against the university and high school reforms proposed by Gelmini involved students all over Italy. These protests were surprising in their intensity and length, and a huge number of students (the most in 20 years) were involved,

many of whom took part in “occupations” of university buildings and historical monuments. Berlusconi’s opponents—including not only the opposition groups but also the FLI representatives—did not hesitate to use the demonstrations as a means to increase their own visibility, seeing this as a way to tune in with a generation that is moving further away from politics and losing any trust that it might have had in the political process. But rather than communicating a well-thought-out and reasoned critique of the specific measures under examination in Parliament, the students’ uproar was the expression of a long-standing and confused sense of dissatisfaction among Italian youths. Many of them see a permanently precarious future, without the hope of being able to build their own paths in life. In many cases, they expect that their own living conditions will be worse than those of their parents, a situation from which they feel unable to escape.

Apart from schools, the culture sector has seen the most protests at the national level—perhaps for the first time in such a visible way. In fact, the finance bill has imposed record cuts, with the decision not to renew the tax concessions for cinemas and the lowest-ever allocation (288 million euros) for the Unified Fund for the Performing Arts, which was set up in 1985. Among many demonstrations, including the occupation of the red carpet at the Rome Film Festival and the sit-in outside the Palazzo Montecitorio (the seat of the Chamber of Deputies), there was the first-ever general strike of the culture sector on 22 November 2010, in which thousands of workers in the field of entertainment took part. These workers refused to appear in cinemas and theaters and on film and television sets, preferring instead to take part in widespread protests over the entire country.¹⁵

Alongside the arguments over industrial and cultural policies, there were also repeated clashes over policies for the development of the infrastructure. Both in the North and in the South, these tensions were characterized by their bipartisan nature and a strongly parochial logic reinforced by “Nimbyism” (the “not in my back yard” syndrome). In Naples in the South, the refuse problem reappeared, this time with a center-right governor in charge of the region. The departure of Antonio Bassolino as the president of Campania seems to have changed very little with regard to the issues that were highlighted in the *Italian Politics* volume of 2009. Indeed, the management of garbage in Campania has continued to be plagued by delays and malfunctioning in its industrial treatment; by political obstructionism in local and regional councils; by huge real estate speculation and pressure from the Camorra crime organization; and by the protests of citizens against the opening of dumps in an environment where the very high population density makes them unsuitable.

In the North, meanwhile, there have been ongoing protests against the high-speed rail lines, but in this case with the important new factor of the liberalization of the market and the actual entry into service of this new mode of transport. The development of the high-speed train, however, continues to come up against a number of problems. As Mauro Tebaldi points out in his analysis, the level of competition is still low, and the rail transport market remains deeply politicized. Moreover, the key section at the frontier between Turin and Lyon has remained blocked because of the protests, especially in Val di Susa and in Val Sangone, where civil society leaders, groups of experts, mayors, and presidents of mountain communities have, over a number of years, mounted a strong challenge to the government's plans, whether drawn up by the left or the right. With the exception of the Greens and the radical left, all of the parties have taken up positions marked by conflicts between the center and the periphery, with the representatives in the center in favor of high-speed train lines and the local representatives completely against them, thereby breathing life into a conflict that is decidedly a non-party one.

One further form of protest rooted in the territory, at least in its early stages, concerned the clashes in Rosarno (Calabria), in which large groups of immigrants, mainly of African origin, mobilized and organized politically, possibly for the first time. This was an important signal from an ever-growing section of the population that possesses a social capital and a huge presence in the territory—the number of immigrants with a right to live in Italy has gone from 780,000 in 1990 to over 4 million today. The citrus fruit pickers in the South are mainly foreigners who are legally resident in Italy but are often forced to work illegally, and in conditions that are barely acceptable, as a result of the deep international crisis in the agricultural-food industries and due to the negligence of employers. The usual politicization of the protests, made worse by the proximity of the regional elections, did not bring any significant changes in the management of seasonal and illegal labor for the immigrants, nor was there a review of the processes of reception and integration, as Camilla Devitt details in her chapter. The protests later shifted to Milan and culminated in the “immigrants’ strike” all over Italy on 1 March 2010. This represented an important event in the recognition of resident foreigners as new, politically organized actors.

In 2010, Italian society therefore continued to experience a climate of profound discontent. We have witnessed a growing separation between protests and parties, between the skepticism and disaffection shown by demonstrators and the political and institutional spheres. When faced with the crisis and the cuts, the population has found

it harder and harder to identify with rallying cries from parties and ideological appeals. The politics of the palace, both of the right and of the left, has been seen as very distant from the problems of the people, capable only of adapting to emergencies or of causing reactions in the shape of huge demonstrations that, until now, have been largely ignored.

Conclusion: Toward the Never-Ending Return of the Same?

At the beginning of 2011, Italian politics is once again hanging in the balance. This cannot be said of the government, which will in all probability have increasing incentives to remain in the saddle, even though it has a less firm grip on the reins. The institutional strains and the scandals that have marked 2010, in addition to the economy, which is moving again too slowly, and to the “liberal revolution,” which has never materialized, could begin to cause reverberations even within the most devoted adherents of the center-right. The parliamentary numbers counted on 14 December and strengthened over the following weeks could therefore turn out to be useful for Berlusconi, not to threaten a recourse to early elections and possibly even to end the game, but to prevent an electoral fight from taking place, given the fear that this could turn out to be the final round. The year 2010 could therefore be remembered as the year when the second, and possibly definitive, decline of Berlusconi began. It will surely be remembered as the year in which the deterioration of behavior in public life reached heretofore unseen depths in well-established democracies.

There is an obvious danger that, unless new events bring about change, when faced with an electoral cycle that could retrace the one in 2005, the opposition will frantically prepare to build an “anti-Berlusconi” coalition that is even more heterogeneous and difficult to unite than the ones seen in 2006 and 2008. The other danger is that, with or without Berlusconi, we may witness the never-ending return of the same—another majority, more or less durable over time, that will be ready to hold the reins of political power, but without steering a significant new course toward growth and the economic recovery of the country.

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— Translated by David Bull

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ANOTHER DIVORCE: THE PdL IN 2010

David Hine and Davide Vampa

This chapter analyzes the power struggle inside the Popolo della Libertà (PdL, People of Liberty), which reached a crisis in the summer of 2010, leading to the secession of about 10 percent of its parliamentarians to form a new party, Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia (FLI, Future and Freedom for Italy). First, it traces the process by which the new group emerged, explaining in particular the personal tensions between Silvio Berlusconi and Gianfranco Fini, which were the immediate cause. It seeks to provide an actor-centered analysis of the motivations of those who followed Fini into the new group at the parliamentary level, and it provides some pointers to the probable impact of the split on the PdL as an organization. Finally, it assesses the position reached at the conclusion of the vote of confidence held on 14 December 2010: a vote that Berlusconi won by the narrow margin of three votes in the Chamber of Deputies. The vote appeared to leave both leaders wounded and the center-right coalition seriously weakened. It gave Berlusconi a temporary respite from the acute instability that the coalition had suffered throughout the year, but it left unresolved the outcome of the broader power struggle between the two leaders.

The issues that led to the split concerned both the succession to Berlusconi and the nature and ethos of the PdL. Berlusconi's style of party leadership—variously described as monarchical, plebiscitary, *padronale*—is a marked break with the bargained negotiation between parties, factions, and territories that has been the dominant style of post-war Italian democracy. As a result, Berlusconi has repeatedly faced divorces, and while 2010 saw the formal end of his marriage to

Veronica Lario, much attention has also been focused on his political splits over the years. In all three periods as prime minister, Berlusconi has been challenged by one or more of the groups with whom he has been allied, as they have sought to contain his power. In 1994, it was the Lega Nord (LN, Northern League). In 2005, it was the Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro (UDC, Union of Christian and Center Democrats) and, ambivalently, the Alleanza Nazionale (AN, National Alliance). In 2010, the opposition came from within Berlusconi's own party—mainly, although not entirely, from part of the AN group that had been brought into the PdL in the 2009 merger.¹

In essence, the challenge played out by the prime minister's rivals and critics on the center-right can be seen as a continuing effort to constrain the capacity of a would-be plebiscitary leader to appeal directly to the electorate. Given what Berlusconi represents, and given the compelling evidence that he is in politics at least partly to serve his own personal ends, there are many reasons why advocates of the democratic process might worry if such an appeal succeeded. But for allies and rivals on the center-right, the main concern is a cruder one: the stronger Berlusconi becomes, the less he will allow power to be dispersed across the coalition in a negotiable way. To this charge, Berlusconi would respond, first, that, in any "normal" democracy, power would not be dispersed in the way that it is done in Italy; second, that his own allies, let alone his enemies, regularly play what is in effect a negative-sum game to restrict his power; and, third, that his political mission is to make Italy a normal democracy by making it a more purposive one. This chapter does not enter into the normative aspects of this debate. Exactly when the allocation of intra-party and intra-coalition power is a positive-sum game, as opposed to a zero-sum or even negative-sum game, is an interesting question, but not one that needs to detain us for long in the case of the Italian center-right. Consistently, there are enough players who take the view that their own power is enhanced when Berlusconi is weakened to ensure that a key repertoire of action includes constraining behavior.

The Formation of Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia

The timeline leading to the formation of the FLI is well-known. In April, after months of simmering arguments, a violent public exchange of insults took place between Berlusconi and Fini at the PdL national council, an event all the more undignified as it involved two of the highest officials of the Italian state. Shortly afterward, and evidently with Fini's blessing, Italo Bocchino announced the creation of a new

foundation, Generazione Italia (Generation Italy), the clear purpose of which was to rally dissatisfied members of the PdL around a faction that could prepare itself for a split, should it become necessary. On 29 July, three of Fini's close party allies (Bocchino, Carmelo Briguglio, and Fabio Granata) were referred by the presidency of the PdL (and hence by Berlusconi himself) to the *probiviri del comitato di coordinamento* (a nine-person disciplinary panel). The *probiviri* met in September and requested that the three submit a memorandum of defense against charges of party disloyalty by 21 October, although by then the matter was irrelevant. Immediately after the presidency's decision, the new FLI parliamentary group was formed. Three days later, a similar group was formed in the Senate.² That Fini was also the target of the *probiviri* was not in doubt. A document released by the presidency of the party described Fini's behavior as "incompatible with the founding principles of the PdL."³

Nevertheless, Fini remained circumspect about what exactly he had created, continuing to refer to the FLI as a parliamentary group or a foundation rather than a full-blown party.⁴ He was even more cautious about the new group's relationship with the governing coalition, insisting that his parliamentarians had been elected by voters on a program to which they would remain loyal. Therefore, in Fini's eyes, the FLI would not be responsible for a government breakdown, but neither would it necessarily support proposals that were not in the 2008 electoral program. The latter included most sensitively the so-called *processo breve* (short trial), that is, the government's proposal to shorten the time limits within which prosecution cases had to be completed. If the government made this issue a confidence matter and fell, Fini argued, the government, not the FLI, would be responsible.

The size of the rebellion may have taken Berlusconi by surprise, as it certainly did the two ex-AN hawks Maurizio Gasparri and Ignazio La Russa, who had apparently advised the prime minister that the secessionists could be contained. In April, Generazione Italia appeared to have only 31 deputies and senators in its ranks.⁵ By August there were 45, 35 of whom were now in the Chamber of Deputies. Given the size of the government's majority (340 out of 630),⁶ they henceforth appeared to hold the balance.

Most of the secessionists were originally from the AN component elected in 2008. In the Chamber, only 2 of the 35 deputies (Chiara Moroni and Benedetto della Vedova) came from Forza Italia (Forward Italy) and not AN origins. However, as table 1.1 shows, the composition of the Chamber changed further in the last five months of the year, with defections within the FLI group itself during the confidence vote of 14 December. In the Senate, the only ex-Forza Italia recruit to

TABLE 1.1 *Change in the composition of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, July–December 2010, and the no confidence motion on 14 December 2010*

Group	1 July 2010	1 Oct. 2010	15 Nov. 2010	13 Dec. 2010	No Confidence Motion 14 December 2010		
					Yes	No	Absent, No Vote
PdL	272	236	234	235	—	235	—
FLI	—	35	37	36	31	3	2*
LN	59	59	59	59	—	59	—
MISTO	31	35	35	35	24	17	3
<i>ApI</i>	8	6	6	6	6	—	—
<i>MpA</i>	5	5	5	5	5	—	—
<i>Noi Sud Libertà e Autonomia, I Popolari di Italia Domani</i>	6	6	11	12	—	11	1
<i>LD</i>	3	3	3	3	2	1	—
<i>Repubblicani</i>	3	3	3	3	1	2	—
<i>Azionisti</i>							
<i>Minoranze Linguistiche</i>	3	3	3	3	1	—	2
<i>Indipendenti</i>	3	9	4	5	2	3	—
UdC	38	35	35	35	35	—	—
PD	206	206	206	206	206	—	—
IdV	24	24	24	22	22	—	—
Total	630	630	630	630	311	314	5

*The president of the Chamber does not participate in the vote.

Source: Chamber of Deputies, <http://www.camera.it>.

the FLI was Barbara Contini. Moreover, although the secession was larger than most expected, it still involved only about one-third of the AN members who had been elected in 2008.

However cautious Fini had been initially, the events that quickly followed the formation of the FLI made any turning back impossible. This was ensured by the ferocious press campaign waged by *Libero* and *Il Giornale* against Fini over his hapless brother-in-law's property venture in Monaco (i.e., the alleged purchase at below cost of an apartment formerly belonging to the AN). The attacks also made it inconceivable that Fini could ever inherit the leadership of the PdL.

Think tanks were key to Fini's strategy. FareFuturo (MakeFuture), founded in 2007, was a means of carving out a distinctive identity for Fini's followers, both in policy matters and organizationally. It mounted an energetic program of conferences, workshops, and courses, linked to increasingly direct attacks on Berlusconi himself. Initially, the purpose was intellectual and policy leadership, but by 2010, the program needed a stronger presence on the ground. Generazione Italia became that presence and was quickly transformed into an organization with the characteristics of a real political party with full territorial articulation. By October, there were reported to be 15,000 members and 900 circles, each claiming a minimum of 10 members. The director of Generazione Italia, Gianmario Mariniello, claimed that half of this total were from the AN, 20 percent were from Forza Italia, and 30 percent were new to politics.⁷

Explaining the Split between Leaders

The split between Fini and Berlusconi has its origins both in the events that led to the creation of the PdL and in what followed the election of 2008. The objective of a single party for the center-right had been long-standing but was not thought feasible, until Berlusconi suddenly revitalized it in November 2007 in his improvised *discorso del predellino* (speech made from the step—*predellino*—of his car), in which he called for the formation of the PdL. Fini's initial response was that the AN was not ready to merge itself into such an uncertain project.⁸ The single center-right party quickly transmuted into a "People" (in the populist terminology beloved of Berlusconi) and clashed even more strongly with Fini's aspiration to retain a distinct organizational and cultural identity for his own movement within the center-right. Nevertheless, the pressure of events leading to the fall of the Prodi government hastened developments. As the election approached, Fini agreed, probably reluctantly, to join a single center-right list of candidates (known, in fact, as the *People of Liberty*), which, in the months following the election, became a single party at the national level.

The explanation for Fini's about-turn seems to lie in the leadership rivalries within the AN. However secure Fini was as the AN's leader, many of the party's senior officials saw the merged party as a platform to pursue their own ambitions on a wider stage, where opportunities were potentially much greater than in the AN. Bocchino has stressed that, notwithstanding Fini's uncontested leadership, a large part of the party would have been alienated by any serious falling-out with Berlusconi ahead of a general election in which they expected to do well, if not very well.⁹ As we have seen, the majority of the AN did indeed remain

with the PdL, suggesting that Bocchino is right. In this sense, in using the attractions of a large party stage to absorb the great majority of the post-fascist establishment, Berlusconi was completing an operation to rationalize the Italian right that went back almost 20 years to the incorporation of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI, Italian Social Movement) into the zone of democratic respectability in 1993.

Fini's room for maneuver in 2008 therefore looks to have been limited. His acceptance of a merger may have been influenced by the hope that the loose and charismatically led PdL could be transformed into something more solid and structured, and closer to the more conventional center-right parties in Western Europe, but this institutionalization did not materialize.¹⁰ Ever since 1994, first Forza Italia and then the PdL had lived in a state of permanent mobilization, and this served Berlusconi's ends as the leader of these parties. In the year and a half that followed the merger, Fini and his followers became acutely aware that there would be no normalization and that charismatic and centralized leadership would continue to hold sway.

It was not just organizational issues that were at stake, however. Fini seemed to have made a tactical error in accepting the role of president of the Chamber of Deputies. By taking himself out of front-line partisan politics, he found himself in the awkward position of defender of the rights of Parliament against a government in regular conflict with the legislature. Clearly, there is much to be gained, for someone with Fini's past, in occupying major offices of state. His period as minister of foreign affairs (2004–2006) and, even more so, his role as president of the Chamber gave Fini a level of democratic credibility that he had never previously enjoyed. Some of his speeches made in the latter capacity suggest that he took to the role of constitutional guarantor with unexpected relish. He certainly did not hesitate to criticize the government—of which he was still, by electoral mandate, nominally a part—for its allegedly excessive use of confidence votes and decree laws, hardly a new theme in Italian constitutional controversy, but not one from which Fini shied away.¹¹

Beyond Parliament, moreover, it was clear that Fini was carving out a new identity for himself as a defender of civil rights, particularly the rights of immigrants. He was also a surprising recruit to the liberal cause on right-to-life and lifestyle issues, such as *in vitro* fertilization, the morning-after pill, living wills, and civil unions. In many of these areas, he proved to be well ahead of both parts of the PdL, and his stand on these issues certainly put him in difficulties with the Catholic Church. For the probably small number within the AN who shared his views, it might have been helpful when the FLI was formed. But for most it was no doubt a difficult identity to share.

Having received a degree in psychology, Fini may well have asked himself how he had come to endorse such views. Conceivably, his answer would be that personal views are relative, flexible, and functional to a political role. Fini had prepared his party for a major ideological rethink in 1993 and sailed past the embarrassing contradictions inherent in a long list of his past public statements without much sign of difficulty or embarrassment. In government from 2001–2006, he continued this journey: as the Italian representative to the European Convention in Laeken, he had little difficulty rethinking his earlier Euro-skepticism, and as deputy prime minister, he discovered the full complexity of Italian policy toward immigration control and quickly adjusted the message. That he should show further adaptation as president of the Chamber of Deputies is therefore unsurprising. In Fini's case, the role seems to stimulate the values. One might even infer that his defense of civil rights and of liberal and secular values was preparing him for an even more dramatic break, after which his natural allies would, for the most part, no longer be from the AN at all, but would be found among lay liberals in Forza Italia or even in the liberal center of the political spectrum as a whole. If so, however, Fini played his hand badly, or had his hand forced by Berlusconi. The liberalism on right-to-life issues would hardly find favor with the part of the political center—the Unione di Centro (UdC, Union of the Center) included—that had Catholic origins, and the battle with Berlusconi left Fini with few natural allies in the PdL, even among the liberal wing.

These last observations raise the intriguing question: did Fini go or was he pushed? The two leaders seemed to collide in 2009–2010 with linear inevitability, but it is difficult to decide who had the greater ultimate responsibility for the secession. Berlusconi appears to have isolated Fini from the majority of his supporters quite effectively, an effort that was sustained by an aggressive media strategy. *Il Giornale* and *Libero* spared no punches against Fini following the formation of the FLI at the parliamentary level. Fini tried hard to retaliate, both to increase the visibility of his new movement and to discredit Berlusconi, but the FLI had none of the major media control enjoyed by Berlusconi and generally found itself on the defensive in the frequent skirmishes that followed.

Since Berlusconi is not, apparently, averse to risk, he may have been willing to gamble that while the secession might deprive him of his absolute parliamentary majority, it would allow him to prepare for a better future, free of Fini, after another general election, even if the souring of the political climate would rebound against the PdL in the short term. If this was his strategic plan, it almost succeeded.

However, as we shall see later in this chapter, Berlusconi appears to have been careless in preparing the party organization on the ground to resist the attractions of the FLI—that is, he was either careless or powerless to do much about it.

As for Fini, he might argue that he was indeed pushed. It was, after all, Berlusconi who was the most aggressive actor in public, both at the PdL national council in April and in referring Fini's party allies to the *probiviri* in July. But Fini played his part in this constant provocation. Either he had been converted to a principled politics in which he finally understood the serious flaws in the coalition partner with whom he had worked for 15 years, which seems unlikely, or he himself was careless, not only in his choice of brother-in-law, but also in estimating how far he could provoke his coalition partner without being thrown out of the party. Clearly, much more evidence is required before this small codicil of Italian party history can be accurately written. We tend to the view that Fini gradually realized after the 2008 general election that his chance of ever leading the PdL was rapidly diminishing and that his psychological reaction to this drew him, perhaps even against his better judgment, into more and more explicit and angry confrontations with Berlusconi. How much advice he was receiving, and from whom, in that psychological journey, offers an interesting possibility for investigation.

Explaining the Split at the Parliamentary Level

In all, about 11 percent of the deputies and senators followed Fini into the FLI. Who were they and what determined their decision? We note first that the proportion of the PdL following Fini was larger in the Chamber (13 percent) than the Senate (7 percent), possibly reflecting Fini's greater influence where he played an institutional role. As we have seen, most of those who seceded had been in the AN previously, and in this sense the split was within the AN rather than within the PdL. Fini was unable to serve as a wider pole of attraction to discontent in Forza Italia and, in fact, lost the greater part of his own following. The rate of defection to the FLI was slightly lower, although only marginally, for those holding some kind of political office in the AN-PdL than for non-ranking deputies and senators. But Fini certainly did not bring a disproportionate number of leading figures with him. It is possible that those who seceded saw their careers in decline and either had less to lose or hoped to secure more advancement through membership in a smaller universe. However, there does not seem to be an obvious age factor: the average age of the secessionists was 55.7

years, while that of the AN parliamentarians remaining in the PdL was 54.2. Likewise the parliamentary seniority of the two groups was similar. It might be thought that recent entrants to Parliament would prefer the apparently greater security of the PdL, in that the possibility of re-election would on average be greater, but in fact the proportion of first-time parliamentarians in each camp was exactly the same at just over 25 percent. Those who joined the FLI had, on average, 7.7 years of service in the legislature, while those who stayed with the PdL had 8.6 years.¹²

A further actor-centered explanation of individual choice might lie in the calculations of self-interest arising from the position of each deputy or senator in the list of those elected in 2008. We might expect that the elected AN members who had been placed in more marginal positions in the PdL list had greater incentives to leave the PdL than those who had at least this nominal form of greater security and, other things being equal, whose re-election was less at risk (assuming, of course, that positions in the lists do not change greatly between elections). To test this, we divided the position in the list of each former-AN deputy and senator by the number of elected representatives in each constituency to obtain a positional index (the higher the index number, the less privileged the particular senator or deputy would be in the list). The results do not support the hypothesis that the parliamentarians who remained in the PdL were less marginal than those who joined the FLI. In fact, the position of the AN-PdL parliamentarians is only slightly better (0.64 for the AN-PdL against 0.69 for the AN-FLI), and the difference in the index is only 0.04, which has no statistical significance (p value = 0.54).

Looking closely at the geographical distribution of the FLI component in Parliament, we might then seek explanations either in macro-regional factors (in particular the competition with the LN), or in a more detailed region-by-region analysis. Obviously, Fini was troubled by the changing relationship of strength within the coalition to the advantage of the LN. The latter had, apparently, found precisely the right formula for playing the dual role of protest party and responsible coalition partner. The League's poll support has gradually expanded since 2008, to a large degree at the expense of the PdL, as table 1.2 demonstrates for the three major northern regions. In the 2008 general elections, the League had almost 21 percent of the votes, compared to the PdL's 32.2 percent; two years later, following the 2010 regional elections, the League had almost 27 percent, compared to the PdL's 28 percent.

Fini frequently sounded his concern about the growth of the League's support, not least at the PdL national council meeting in April, when he accused the PdL in the North of supinely following

TABLE 1.2 *Election results in Veneto, Lombardy, and Piedmont, 2008–2010*

	General Election 2008	European Election 2009	Regional Election 2010
PdL	32.2 %	33.3 %	28.3 %
LN	20.8 %	22.5 %	26.5 %

Source: <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/>.

League positions.¹³ The League's growth clearly had implications for the balance of forces on questions of institutional reform—above all, the vexed issue of fiscal federalism. The closer together that Finance Minister Giulio Tremonti managed to draw his joint sponsors, Umberto Bossi and Berlusconi, the bigger the risk to Fini's neo-Gaullist view of national cohesion. It might be supposed, therefore, that the secession of the FLI was also aimed at moderating moves toward fiscal federalism, and that we should expect to see this in a strong southern imbalance in those who backed Fini. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to support this. There is some superficial evidence in the southern backgrounds of leading exponents of the FLI, including Bocchino, Granata, Briguglio, and Adolfo Urso. However, closer inspection changes the picture. In both the FLI and the post-secession PdL, the South accounts for about 40 percent of parliamentarians. Likewise the figure for northerners in both groups is around 37–38 percent. The former AN parliamentarians who stayed in the PdL after the secession show a similar geographical distribution. The North-South argument was certainly not unimportant in the policy arguments that preceded the split, but it does not immediately show up in the backgrounds of those who chose to follow Fini.

A more plausible and nuanced explanation probably comes from a closer analysis of local situations and the on-the-ground control exercised by some of the so-called *colonnelli* of the AN. We can therefore look at the percentage of defections from the former AN parliamentarians by region. Eight regions have a defection rate higher than the national average of 33 percent. Only in Basilicata did all parliamentarians (two in total) join the FLI. In Basilicata, in fact, the PdL obtained its worst result in the 2010 regional elections, falling from the 34.8 percent it obtained in the general election of 2008, to a miserable 19.4 percent in 2010.

The weakness of the PdL on the ground is reported as having helped to set in motion a large-scale exodus toward the FLI.¹⁴ In the Marche, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Veneto, half or more of the parliamentarians

followed Fini. The case of Veneto is especially interesting, as it is the only region in which the PdL now runs second to the League (24.7 percent in 2010, compared to the LN's formidable 35.2 percent). In Veneto, two strong supporters of Fini, Urso and Maurizio Saia, had personal strongholds, and this may explain the high level of defection to the FLI (62 percent, or five out of eight parliamentarians), despite the counter-presence of Gasparri and supporters of Altero Matteoli (although the latter's real stronghold was in Tuscany).¹⁵ Sicily, where 4 of the 10 former AN parliamentarians joined Fini, provides a further interesting case. The Sicilian context is one where there have been major tensions for a long time, not just within the former AN group, but also within Forza Italia. These tensions led to an earlier secession within the PdL, which split into the official PdL and the PdL-Sicilia, and then to a second secession of the Fini group. In the former AN component, the faction led by Granata and Giuseppe Scalia clashed with that of Domenico Nania, the former AN group leader in the Senate and the Sicilian regional coordinator of the PdL. In two other major regions, the Fini secession was much weaker: in Lombardy, the La Russa brothers (Ignazio, the minister of defense, and Romano, a major power broker at the regional and local levels) maintained firm control of the AN wing of the PdL,¹⁶ and in Tuscany the same control was exercised by the ubiquitous Matteoli and by Denis Verdini.

Thus far, it is evident that we have not tapped any significant variables that provide broad and generalizable explanations about the decision to join the FLI at the parliamentary level. No doubt, personal relationships, social pressure, threats, and opportunities, alongside local political circumstances and regional variations in the political context, all played a role in the difficult choices being made.

We should further note that there is little obvious correlation between the secession of parliamentarians and members of regional assemblies. At least in the early months, it appears that those in the second tier of the PdL (i.e., members of the regional assemblies) were more cautious than the parliamentarians in making any immediate declaration of identity. Outside the special case of Sicily, only 12 members of regional assemblies had, by the end of October 2010, declared their allegiance to FLI, while 316 remained with the PdL. Even adding in the 7 defectors in Sicily, the total comes to only 5.7 percent. It is of course possible that the information is imperfect. The research has depended on Web-based searches of the sources,¹⁷ which may not be up to date or reliable. However, at the very least, it suggests that regional councilors can afford to wait and watch before making decisions about their future identity.

The Organizational Resilience of the Popolo della Libertà

The divisions within the PdL in 2010 raised serious issues about the party's organizational resilience. The threat, and then the reality, of a secession by Fini's supporters created tensions that spread from the leadership to the grassroots. The problems were primarily, but not entirely, between the "Finiani" and the ex-Forza Italia majority. When the split came, the majority of former AN leaders and elected representatives stayed with the PdL, under the informal, although distinct, leadership of Ignazio La Russa and Gasparri. It was not immediately clear whether these two were strengthened and rewarded for staying with Berlusconi, or weakened because they were henceforth leaders of smaller princedoms. But to those from the Forza Italia mainstream, the AN component, even in its potentially reduced state, remained an irritant and a risk, since—with the FLI successfully launched—the possibility of further defections was as acute as ever. The mainstream Forza Italia leadership was also well aware of its own continuing organizational fragility, compared to the experienced organizers and power brokers of the AN, a party with a long tradition of robust organization and discipline. Before their merger, the AN probably had at least twice as many members as Forza Italia.¹⁸ At the local level, officials in towns and provinces were frequently elected under *liste civiche* identities that were affiliated with Forza Italia but not strictly part of it. Many of these officials did not have formal membership in Forza Italia, and they continued to sidestep membership in the era of the PdL—a problem that was said to apply even to some parliamentarians.¹⁹

A further stimulus to organized factional activity arose due to the prominence of Finance Minister Tremonti, whose Forza Italia identity did not preclude ambivalent links with the LN. Tremonti's institutional role as guardian of fiscal probity and his credibility in financial markets gave him a platform and power base far greater in scope than his influence over the PdL, in organizational terms. Here, too, Berlusconi's instincts were divided. He relied on his finance minister's international prestige and status to impose budget discipline, but, as Fini's credibility as successor waned and the press identified Tremonti as the most probable future center-right candidate for prime minister, Berlusconi periodically felt the need to remind Tremonti that there was only one individual who was indispensable.²⁰

Media discussions were increasingly framed in terms of the organized factionalism that was characteristic of the Christian Democrat era. The think tank Liberamente, created initially in opposition to FareFuturo and Generazione Italia, remained ostensibly loyal to Berlusconi. Yet even as the FLI group was preparing to depart, other

groups in the PdL were speaking out and solidifying into a cacophony of voices, more or less openly advising Berlusconi on what he needed to do to avoid party paralysis. Fabrizio Cicchitto's think tank, Riformismo & Libertà, claimed to defend strands of the liberal and Catholic traditions in a party where they were allegedly at risk. Other forums, including the online newspaper *Il Predellino* and foundations such as Magna Carta and Italia Protagonista, were more openly platforms for the promotion of personalities.

Officially, business leaders tended to line up behind Berlusconi. However, some, increasingly frustrated by policy stalemates, started making overtures toward Fini. Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, the chairman of Ferrari and inter alia president of Italia Futura, a cultural foundation, published in August 2010 an influential editorial that was sharply critical of Berlusconi's policy-making style and called for a more open and discursive form of government decision-making, as well as more and better-targeted public spending policies. In October, Emma Marcegaglia, one of di Montezemolo's successors as president of Confindustria, also came out with strong criticism of the prime minister. Her attack was not taken lightly in the Berlusconi camp: two journalists from *Il Giornale* were investigated for threatening to wage a press campaign against her. The incident contributed to a year of increasingly tense relations between Confindustria and the prime minister.

Most critics claimed allegiance to Berlusconi's leadership, but the prime minister and his spokesman, Paolo Bonaiuti, expressed both reservations about the risks of fragmentation and irritation with what was happening to the party on the ground. Eventually, in a surprising outburst in October, Berlusconi put the blame for much of the government's difficulties on the PdL—implicitly, on the three national coordinators, Verdini, Sandro Bondi, and Ignazio La Russa, who were responsible for organizing and managing the party on the national level.²¹ There was also much evident discomfort as a succession of senior PdL figures—including Verdini, Claudio Scajola, Raffaele Fitto, Nicola Cosentino, Stefano Caldoro, and Guido Bertolaso—fell into serious trouble due to various financial scandals. But it was also widely noted that while the typical response (Scajola excepted) was “no resignation,” the level of support offered by the colleagues to each other was influenced by internal friendships and rivalries. Fini's treatment at the hands of *Il Giornale* was in a league of its own, in terms of brutality, and can be seen as part of a general strategy to discredit Fini once the split had been decided. However, among those who remained in the PdL, relationships were also badly affected by the various scandals that emerged in 2010. The serious dispute that arose in November

between Mara Carfagna, the minister of equal opportunities, and the group dominated by Cosentino, a powerful political boss in Campania, seems to confirm that the interaction between organizational shortcomings and pork barrel politics is negatively affecting the cohesion of the PdL establishment.²²

Organizational deficiencies and internal indiscipline were perhaps the predictable result of the speed and lack of preparation with which the party had been created. The most startling example was the failure of the PdL to agree on lists of candidates for the administrative elections of 2010 in time to meet the deadlines (in the case of the province of Rome) and with the correct number of valid nominators (in the case of the region of Lombardy), resulting in the PdL's exclusion from the ballot in Rome and mutual recriminations among the opposing factions over the source of blame.²³ In 2009, these problems had been masked by the warm afterglow of the election victory, but in 2010, following a year in which the leader's image had been severely tarnished, they were becoming difficult to conceal. Moreover, in comparison with European parties such as the Christian Democratic Union of Germany or the British Conservative Party, the PdL's capacity to dominate the center-right and discipline its potential factions into loyalty to the leadership would always be weak. Politicians whose fortunes were in decline in the PdL could realistically think about a profitable defection to another party or breakaway group.

The risk was especially immediate in Sicily, where the PdL lacked territorial organization and was vulnerable to the accusation that it was too accepting of the LN's anti-southern rhetoric. Sicily therefore became a good recruiting ground for the FLI, and Fini was able to build on strong pre-existing relations with parties such as the Partito del Sud (PdS, Party of the South) and the Movimento per le Autonomie (MpA, Movement for Autonomies) and swiftly establish a local organization. Besides the Sicilian splits within the PdL, additional possible escape routes for the disaffected were held out by the UdC and even the League. In 2010, the secession of the FLI added a fourth potential exit point. Under such circumstances, keeping leaders disciplined was hard, and the year saw several reports of grassroots crises in the PdL—not just in Sicily,²⁴ but in Puglia, Campania, and Tuscany.

Ultimately, the secessionist problem was not simply the result of structural features of Italy's party system or its electoral process. It was also the outcome of choices concerning ethos and style that had been made by Berlusconi. The iconoclastic culture of the PdL was a carefully chosen contrast to the structured democracy of traditional Italian parties. The PdL's ideal world was one of "promoters," "circles," and "clubs," where supporters materialized spontaneously, even without

formally joining the party and certainly without the traditional and laborious grassroots work involved in sustaining party networks. Yet real power in the party remained highly centralized. Despite years of debate about normalizing Forza Italia into a structured, internally democratic party, its successor, the PdL, was inevitably organized as a party similarly dominated by elected office-holders and centrally appointed party managers. Holding together a party born of several pre-existing parts obviously required a delicate compromise, starting with its three national coordinators, who represented different perspectives and different constituencies. In this sense, the centralization of power was naturally imperfect. The very delicacy of the power balances that had to be worked out between the national leaders probably made real democratization of the party seem extremely risky.

Equally difficult to sustain forever, however, was the myth of spontaneous mobilization against the reality of pure bureaucratic power. A simple, emotional appeal to the abstract theme of "liberty" was no more motivating to the PdL's would-be promoters than it was to politicians looking for guidance in real-world situations in the regions and cities. The party's leadership showed some realization of this in August, when it set a program of five points: tax reform, fiscal federalism, faster justice, the South, and law and order. But as an agenda for action on the ground, even these points were unlikely motivating forces. The daily decisions of democratic government in a decentralized democracy cannot derive simply from the leader's love of liberty or his infinite capacity to provide the money for elections. Politics at the regional and local levels is about choices in which broad national themes need interpretation and debate. Between elections, a party that depends entirely on impulses from above when appointing its coordinators and regional management will struggle to maintain cohesion and purpose.

For much of 2010, in fact, the PdL seemed to be in a state of near paralysis. It struggled to provide legislative impetus in Parliament as reciprocal vetoes were placed against important legislation. There was bad-tempered debate about which measures in the government's plans had been in the original government program and which (the short trial, in particular) were new. And there was sustained argument about the meaning of fiscal federalism. There were also difficulties over the renewal of the chairmanships of legislative committees, the safest strategy proving in the end to be the renomination of incumbents.²⁵ In addition, there was an embarrassingly long wait to appoint a successor to the disgraced Scajola as minister of economic development. Only in October, after the summer break and the defection of the FLI, did the air clear sufficiently for some of these questions to be addressed.

It would be far-fetched to suppose that in the PdL the combination of a superficial and flawed party constitution and worrying falls in approval ratings were generating a wholesale movement for reform and democratization. Yet these factors undoubtedly emboldened individuals to speak their minds more freely, even if their real concern was for votes, not democracy. The response, as might be expected, was an ambivalent one. Dissatisfaction with the performance of the party locally was reported to be widespread, and one concession that internal critics of the performance of the three coordinators seem to have extracted from the prime minister's office was an agreement to modify the party constitution to allow at least a degree of internal democracy. It was reported that regional coordinators, until then directly appointed by the president of the party according to its constitution,²⁶ could henceforth under the right circumstances be elected by an assembly of parliamentarians, regional councilors, and mayors. It was not yet grassroots activism, and it had the proviso (intended to force rival factions to come to local agreements) that a rather high quorum of 70 percent was required. But this decision did at least introduce a small element of locally derived democracy into the excessively centralized party structures.²⁷ As for the role of ordinary party members, the situation was less clear. Even as Berlusconi was responding to the concerns of *Liberamente* and others about the paralysis of the party by ordering a renewed effort to kick-start membership, Bondi was writing an article in which he doubted the future prospects for any party built on individual membership.²⁸

Conclusion: After the Vote

In this chapter, we have presented reasons for the creation of the FLI, both in terms of actor-centered interests and of party ethos and doctrine. Our explanations have been determined largely by the circumstances and activities at the elite level. What will develop on the ground is more difficult to judge, and we have limited ourselves to some brief comments, although the ultimate fate of the FLI clearly depends on its capacity to insert itself locally, to control local networks of power, and thereby to mobilize votes for regional and parliamentary leaders. If it has no prospects of doing so, it will eventually wither and fragment. In this regard, Berlusconi's ability to evade an adverse result in the dramatic confidence vote of 14 December 2010 was a matter of serious concern for Fini, but not the end of the game. At the time of writing—immediately after that vote—there is no simple answer to the question of who won the power struggle

analyzed here. The parliamentary arithmetic after the secession of the FLI remained finely balanced.

The vote of confidence demonstrated that boundaries of loyalty on the center-right are ill-defined and that switches of party identity are not infrequent. Some individuals are watchful of opportunities and flexible in attachments. Nomination prospects under a closed list system can be important determinants of an individual's direction of travel. Indeed, nomination may not be the only questionable incentive, as was revealed by the polemical debate surrounding the so-called *compravendita*, that is, the buying and selling of individual deputies. This is nothing new in recent Italian Parliaments,²⁹ but the arguments surrounding the integrity of those involved reached new heights in 2010. The conflicts of interest that were brought to light show how urgently Italy needs to address the regulation of this issue.

This fluidity added to the weaknesses of the coalition generated by the FLI secession. The secession happened, by pure chance, to create a very finely balanced parliamentary outcome, one in which several variables would henceforth determine the fate of Berlusconi's coalition. These included the absolute size of the FLI defection; the level of cohesion with which the new group would follow its leader; the cohesion of the PdL itself; the attitude of other "third pole" groups, especially the UdC; and, finally, at the margins, the cohesion even of those deputies who are nominally part of the opposition. When Fini decided to try to bring down the Berlusconi government, he almost attracted enough parliamentarians to his side—but not quite.

In the end, each of the other variables played a role in the vote. The UdC had to decide to join forces with Fini in the confidence vote, which it did, and it had to remain unified throughout the debate and the vote, which it also managed. But others did not, and seven deputies in particular proved decisive to helping Berlusconi avoid defeat. Four of them, extraordinarily, came from the opposition. Two had been elected on the PD list, although one of these, Massimo Calearo, declared that he had "never been on the left," and had started his rightward journey a year earlier, as had a colleague, Bruno Cesario. Two others came from the Italia dei Valori (IdV, Italy of Values) list, one of whom, Antonio Razzi, had been elected to represent one of the overseas constituencies, which have acquired a notable reputation for switching sides. The remaining three, however, were initially supporters of Fini, having joined the FLI in July, only to defect again by December. All were part of the so-called moderates within the FLI, who, throughout the crisis, appeared to have been urging Fini not to make a complete break with the PdL. Rather, they sought an eventual re-entry into the coalition, perhaps along with Pier Ferdinando

Casini's UdC, if it could be achieved, under a different prime minister. Well before the confidence vote, one of these deputies, Maria Grazia Siliquini, had announced that she would not vote against Berlusconi. It was the dramatic last-minute choices of the other two, Silvano Moffa and Catia Polidori, however, that saved Berlusconi's skin. He had reason to be grateful to both, and there was much speculation that he would be.

The vote of confidence introduced a new phase in the ongoing struggle of the Italian center-right, but it did not resolve the fundamental issue. That issue is the nature of the relationship between a party (the PdL), which aims, thus far unsuccessfully, to hegemonize the coalition, and its challengers (the UdC, the FLI, and of course the LN), which seek to create enough electoral space to ensure that the relationship is one of negotiation and co-existence, not hegemony. In 2008, this contest was largely a matter of the relationship between the PdL and the League. Three years later, the game had broadened to include new players and suggested the possibility of a third pole, built around the UdC and the FLI. However, even if the PdL itself, by the end of 2010, appeared to be an increasingly leaky vessel, this new third pole looked anything but watertight, as the confidence vote demonstrated. A decisive turn of events that could provoke an opportunistic rush to the exits, leaving Berlusconi in power, if not exactly in control, remained a possibility, if not a probability. And even if there were no such rush to the exits in 2011, the new pole still had to decide what it wanted to do with its new power—itsself no small question.

Notes

1. The background to the deteriorating relationship between the Forza Italia and AN components of the PdL is described in E. De Giorgio, "The Balance of the Coalition," in *Italian Politics: Managing Uncertainty*, ed. M. Giuliani and E. Jones (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 112–129, here 122–125.
2. See Senato della Repubblica Italiana, <http://www.senato.it/composizione/21600/159070/152847/genpagspalla.htm>.
3. See "Il documento politico del PdL contro i finiani," *Il Foglio*, 30 July 2010.
4. See <http://www.generazioneitalia.it/2010/09/06/avanti-con-futuro-e-liberta/>.
5. P. Di Cara, "Finì si organizza: 'Ma niente imboscate,'" *Corriere della Sera*, 14 May 2010.
6. The four groups that were part of the government majority were the PdL (236 deputies), the LN (59), the FLI (35), and the MpA (5), to whom should be

- added the votes of individual deputies—mostly from the mixed group—in confidence votes when their support was solicited.
7. A. Garibaldi, “Si parte da 15 mila iscritti e 800 circoli,” *Corriere della Sera*, 6 October 2010.
 8. P. Di Caro, “Finì: Il Vassallum? Truffa l’ira di Forza Italia,” *Corriere della Sera*, 10 December 2007.
 9. Repubblica television, interview of 9 September 2010, <http://tv.repubblica.it/palinsesto/2010-09-09/9352>.
 10. A. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
 11. See “Decreti, fiducia e immigrazione tutti gli scontri tra Fini e Berlusconi,” *La Repubblica*, 13 January 2009. There were more votes of confidence forced by the government on its legislation in 2009 (10 in the Chamber and 5 in the Senate) than in any year since 1996. See Senato della Repubblica Italiana, <http://www.senato.it/leg/16/BGT/Schede/Statistiche/Stato/2010/DDLQuestioneFiducia.html>.
 12. These figures refer to the composition of the FLI immediately after the split and may have slightly changed in the following months.
 13. C. Dominelli and A. Annicchiarico, “Duro scontro Berlusconi-Fini. Il Premier: Si allinei o è fuori,” *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 22 April 2010.
 14. P. Quarto, “Di Lorenzo con Fini, Labriola e gli altri AN restano nel PdL,” *Il Quotidiano della Basilicata*, 3 August 2010.
 15. P. Bricco, “La corrente finiana non supera il Po,” *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 24 April 2010.
 16. Ibid.
 17. The sources are principally the Web sites of the various regional councils.
 18. P. Ignazi, L. Bardi, and O. Massari, “Party Organizational Change in Italy (1991–2006),” *Modern Italy* 15, no. 2 (2010): 197–216. Although any particular annual datum on party membership is likely to be unreliable—especially the PdL figure for as chaotic a year as 2010—the multi-year series in this article bear out our point, showing that from 1997 to 2004, the AN consistently reported at least twice as many members as Forza Italia.
 19. M. Cremonesi, “Un rete di fedelissimi per sostenere Berlusconi,” *Corriere della Sera*, 18 June 2010.
 20. F. Bei, “PdL, piano di Berlusconi per evitare il collasso: Capi locali eletti, riparta il tesseramento,” *La Repubblica*, 17 October 2010.
 21. M. Dino, “Berlusconi: Il ‘correntismo’ ‘Non facciamoci del male,’” *Corriere della Sera*, 21 June 2010; M. Galluzzi, “Puglia: Il premier riapre i giochi,” *Corriere della Sera*, 27 January 2010; “Berlusconi striglia il PdL: Basta errori,” *Corriere della Sera*, 10 October 2010. Bonaiuti was at pains to downplay the significance of Berlusconi’s outburst, but after Ernesto Galli della Loggia’s observation that the party coordinators had been surprisingly reticent in responding to Berlusconi’s critique (E. G. Della Loggia, “La successione a Berlusconi,” *Corriere della Sera*, 18 October 2010), a strong self-defense appeared from both Bondi and Verdini. See S. Bondi, “L’Orgoglio dell’unico partito che vanta una classe dirigente nuova e giovane,” *Corriere della Sera*, 19 October 2010.
 22. M. Giannini, “La rabbia di Mara,” *La Repubblica*, 22 November 2010.
 23. The affair occasioned a good deal of comment, a special decree from the government, and various judgments from the Regional Administrative Tribunal. See in particular “Il TAR riammette Formigoni,” *Corriere della Sera*, 6 March 2010.

24. In October, Undersecretary Gianfranco Micciché formed a new movement, Forza del Sud, to compete with the PdL in southern Italy. See "Micciché dà vita alla Forza del Sud: A Berlusconi 'Fedeltà non è infinita,'" *Corriere della Sera*, 31 October 2010.
25. P. Notargiacomo, "La partita delle Commissioni Parlamentari Fli e Mpa decisi per le nuove presidenze," *La Repubblica*, 5 October 2010; P. Notargiacomo, "Commissioni, l'accordo regge Bongiorno confermata alla Giustizia," *La Repubblica*, 13 October 2010.
26. Statuto del Popolo della Libertà, Article 26: "The regional coordinator and the vice-regional coordinator are nominated directly by the national president, in agreement with the office of the presidency, in the days immediately following his or her election."
27. F. Bei, "Pdl, piano di Berlusconi per evitare il collasso 'Capi locali eletti, riparta il tesseramento,'" *La Repubblica*, 17 October 2010.
28. zS. Bondi, "Nel Pdl non sarò io a frenare il rinnovamento," *Il Giornale*, 12 October 2010.
29. W. B. Heller and C. Mershon, "Party Switching in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, 1996–2001," *Journal of Politics* 67, no. 2 (2005): 536–559.