RENZI'S LEADERSHIP BETWEEN PARTY AND GOVERNMENT

Sergio Fabbrini and Marc Lazar

Matteo Renzi became the second politician from the Partito Democratico (PD, Democratic Party) to lead Italy after the technocrat government of Mario Monti, but unlike his predecessor, Enrico Letta, he was thrust into a new, not to say unprecedented, situation. It has been unusual in the history of the Italian Republic to see a politician simultaneously holding the two positions of prime minister and secretary of his own party. Nevertheless, there are many other differences between Renzi's experience and those who preceded him. Renzi found himself in the position of leading the governing coalition not only after winning the primaries of his own party, but above all after the party had failed to secure a victory in the elections of February 2013.¹ Thus, he was in the position of leading the government without being elected to Parliament and within a context where the opposing coalition was decidedly unstable. To retain his political legitimacy, Renzi was forced to hold the dual posts of party secretary and head of government and also to find the means to prevent any conflict between the party and the government.

Renzi's leadership faced a number of challenges. First, there was the challenge from the opposition within his own political party. A second challenge came from various regional party organizations, which have adopted policies that have been relatively independent from the preferences of the party's national executive. Finally, Renzi faced challenges from sections of the parliamentary groups in his own party, as well as the opposition in Parliament, which have been critical or even hostile

toward the decisions made by his government. This chapter is structured in such a way as to discuss each of these challenges.

Dissent within the Party

Renzi has enjoyed the almost total support of the PD's national board, having defeated the representatives of the left wing of the party in the 2013 primaries and after installing a new and largely young executive. Some of them, such as Graziano Del Rio and Debora Serracchiani, had gained administrative experience on councils and regional governments, while others, including Filippo Sensi, Paolo Gentiloni, and Roberto Giacchetti, had gained political experience under Francesco Rutelli when he was mayor of Rome and later a center-left candidate for the leadership of the government in 2001. Lorenzo Guerini, Ettore Rosato, and Luigi Zanda, the PD vice-secretary and the heads of the PD parliamentary groups in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, respectively, and Patrizia Toia, who had been head of the PD delegation at the European Parliament, had held various roles within the Catholic popular movement. Others, like Marianna Madia and Federica Mogherini, had cut their teeth in the *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS, Left Democrats). In spite of all this, relations with the internal minority continued to be highly conflictual.

Despite their crushing defeat in the PD primaries of December 2013 (in which Renzi obtained 68 percent of the 2.5 million votes cast), the left wing of the party (whose main candidate in the primaries, Gianni Cuperlo, won 18 percent of the votes) has never accepted the leadership of the ex-mayor of Florence both because it considered Renzi alien to the identity of the party and because it felt marginalized within the party's executive, due to Renzi's refusal to adopt a consociational model. As Salvati (2015b) has pointed out, two parties with radically different lines and political identities have emerged within the PD. What is more, the left has been split between one component willing to enter in the government or to collaborate with Renzi (represented by Maurizio Martina, Matteo Orfini, and Andrea Orlando) and another more radical wing (represented by Pier Luigi Bersani, Cuperlo, and Pippo Civati) that increased its opposition to Renzi.

Given this situation, Renzi was compelled to play the public opinion card in order to reduce the influence of his internal minority, just as he had done during the 2013 primaries, the 2014 European elections, and the first few months of his prime ministership. However, this strategy has met with strong dissent from within the party. The PD has continued to be a work in progress, but one whose political identity

is still uncertain. There is no doubt that the national party has stood fully behind Renzi, with Ilvo Diamanti defining it as the “Partito di Renzi” (Renzi’s Party). The party is somewhat in tune with the notion of “audience democracy,” in which it is the leader, and not the party organization, behaving as the main political actor. Moreover, Renzi’s grip on the party leadership has been unprecedented in the PD, bearing in mind that this party has had no fewer than five leaders in eight years—Walter Veltroni, Dario Franceschini, Pier Luigi Bersani, Guglielmo Epifani, and, since 2013, Matteo Renzi. This explains why the Renzi story has attracted the attention of so many left-wing parties and think tanks all over Europe.

Nevertheless, Renzi’s leadership had to bow to a number of pressures. The PD has turned out to be like an archipelago: strong in some of the central regions of Italy, albeit less so than in the past, where it forms a kind of League of the Center, and weak in the South and in the main industrial areas of the North-East, thus reflecting the extreme fragmentation of Italian society. Even the question of the number of PD members has become a matter of heated debate between the majority and the minority. Critiques from the minority regarding the fall in membership appear to be reliable. According to figures published at the end of November 2015, it is estimated that there were between 300,000 and 350,000 paid-up PD members in 2015, compared to the 800,000 in 2012 when Bersani was party secretary.² This drop in numbers reflects a crisis, but also a change in the model of parties that is happening all over Europe. Indeed, Renzi’s PD has become more and more responsive to the electorate rather than to its membership, which is why it is based on open primaries, albeit regulated by an official electoral college (Cuzzocrea 2015), supported by a sophisticated communications system managed by the national central office. This experiment has led to some surprising outcomes, as in the case of the 2 per thousand financing of the party by citizens. Out of the total of 9.6 million euros raised through this system in 2015,³ 5.5 million were donated to the PD (by around 550,000 citizens), 900,000 went to the radical left party Sinistra Ecologia e Libertà (SEL, Left Ecology and Freedom), with the other parties sharing the remaining (approximately) 3 million euros.⁴ However, this experiment did not resolve the problem of the party’s identity.

The question of the PD’s identity has been more openly debated than ever. In reference to an article by Alfredo Reichlin in *L’Unità* (29 May 2014), the secretary himself had mentioned the notion of the “party of the nation” when speaking at a PD executive meeting on 20 October 2014, but he did not explore the idea in any depth. In reality, Renzi had long adopted the concept of a “party with a majoritarian

vocation,” which had been developed by some academics in the 1990s and subsequently set out by Veltroni in a speech at Lingotto in June 2007 when he was party secretary. Later, in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* (28 April 2015), Reichlin noted that, according to Palmiro Togliatti's interpretation of the term, “party of the nation” means a party that is capable of pursuing the general interests of the nation (see Trocino 2015). Needless to say, a party of the nation and a party with a majoritarian vocation are not the same thing, but there are many overlapping features. Renzi has continued in a pragmatic vein to talk about the need of a party in government to be open to an electorate that has not traditionally been on the left, rather than being primarily inward-looking, and to be able to put forward the reforms required to take the country out of its institutional, political, and economic gridlock. But which party is Renzi looking to lead? In the view of Angelo Panebianco (2015), Renzi thinks of himself as a “leader of a post-party democracy” who sets out to rip up “the constitutional pact on which the PD was originally founded”—and probably a post-ideological leader as well, due to traditional parties’ “failure to put down social roots”—and to replace it with greater power for the executive.

The PD national assembly met on 18 July. The choice of venue had not been left to chance. The assembly was held in Milan on the EXPO 2105 site in order to promote the idea of the PD's modernity, inventiveness, and dynamism. During the course of the assembly, an amendment to the party's statute was unanimously approved, bringing it into line with the draft law on the reform of political parties presented by the PD on 25 May, a proposal that introduces precise rules on the representation of minorities in executive bodies and respect for equality between men and women. The PD's president, Orfini, emphasized the importance of adopting other rules before the end of the year, with a view to exercising better control over primaries and the role of party members. The assembly did not, however, provide a platform for internal debate. This is not just because one of Renzi's opponents, Letta, had already resigned from the parliamentary group to take over the role of director of the School of International Affairs of Sciences Po Paris, albeit remaining in the party. It was above all because Bersani, Veltroni, and Rosy Bindi had decided not to take part, thereby revealing the loss of influence of the old guard of ex-Communists and ex-Christian Democrats.

The assembly was instead marked by Renzi's speech in which he promised a significant reduction in taxes—a message that was addressed to the Italian public rather than to the party assembly. This announcement thrust the prime minister back into the center of public debate and set the center-right and the Lega Nord (LN, Northern

League) on the defensive while at the same time gagging the left of the PD. This marked a new chapter in Renzi's relations with the left of his party, calling into question one of the traditional political assumptions represented by the latter, that is, that reducing taxes means weakening the welfare state. In his speech, Renzi dismissed the criticisms registered by the party's minority, accusing it of blocking the road to reforms. After all, he added, there are people in that minority group, whom he called "the doomsayers" (*la tribù dei musi lunghi*) who "buy a ticket to go and support the 'no' side in the Greek referendum without realizing that Tsipras himself has chosen to become a reformist" (Mauro 2015). In any event, on 19 July, some of the younger members of the minority who were closest to Bersani formed a new faction called Sinistra e Cambiamento (Left and Change). Among its most well-known members were Alessandra Moretti and the so-called Young Turks, such as Orfini and a few ex-DS members like Martina.

Renzi showed that he was fully aware that without the support of his party, his leadership of the government was destined to be undermined. As he stated in an interview: "I will go to every festival and to every party branch to talk to the militants and to the senior figures in the PD. I want to get the PD back up to 40 percent, and I will do that, while at the same time taking more and better care of the organization of the party" (Colombo 2015). In November, he asked the PD to organize 1,000 open booths in city squares around the country on 5 and 6 December in order to increase the party's visibility, to explain the government's policies, and to open a dialogue with ordinary citizens. Nonetheless, Renzi continued to rely on the personal organizational network that had supported him in his quest to become party secretary, as shown by the conference that took place at the Leopolda on 11–13 December (Martini 2015).⁵

What have been revealed by the clashes between Renzi and Bersani are their contrasting visions on the relationship between the leader and the organization. As far as Renzi is concerned, the leader has a fundamental role. He must address the voters directly and avoid falling into the trap of the oligarchic logic of "fireside meetings" with the heads of the various factions. For Bersani and the minority he represents, however, the party (sometimes defined as "the firm") takes precedence over the leader. Leaders come and go, but the party remains. This is a debate that has been going on within all parties, especially on the left. It is worth noting that empirical research has shown how party organizations that allow their leader or their executive a high degree of decision-making autonomy are those that have the greatest capacity to adapt, to innovate, and to be strategically flexible (Kitschelt 1994; Schumacher 2012; Schumacher et al. 2013).

The Autonomy of Peripheral Organizations

Renzi's rise to the national leadership has not implicated the reorganization of the PD at the local level. The majority in the national party had changed as a result of the primaries, but this had not happened in the peripheral branches. So while the secretary was in control of the majority within the central structure of the PD—as demonstrated by the executive meeting held on 21 September at which the government's program was unanimously approved, in part because the minority had opted not to attend—Renzi had not been able to exercise this control over the peripheral party branches.

The rivalry between the pro-Renzi majority and the left minority was clearly in evidence on the occasion of the regional elections held in the spring of 2015. In Liguria, on 11 January, primaries took place to choose the candidate for the presidency of the region. Raffaella Paita, who was supported by the PD's secretary, won with 53.1 percent of the votes, beating the ex-CGIL secretary, Sergio Cofferati (45.6 percent). Cofferati reported serious irregularities during the count and resigned from the PD on 16 January. Three months later, on 25 March, another deputy, Luca Pastorino, also resigned. Eight days earlier, as mayor of Bogliasco, he announced his intention to stand as a candidate for president of the Liguria region, heading a civic list supported by SEL, the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC, Communist Refoundation Party), the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani (PdCI, Party of Italian Communists), and some PD dissidents. In Campania, in April, the deputy Guglielmo Vaccaro, a politician close to Letta, reported irregularities in the PD primaries held to appoint a candidate for the regional presidency that had led to a victory for Vincenzo De Luca. "It was shameful," he explained. "The primaries were rigged, as they always are" (Pretini 2015). On 2 May, after failing in his bid to be elected regional secretary, Vaccaro left the PD.

Although the PD managed to win five regions out of seven in the regional elections of 31 May, these elections were marked by a high abstention rate, a fall in the number of votes for the PD compared to the previous regional elections, and an even bigger fall compared to the elections for the European Parliament in 2014, when the party had secured a spectacular success. The PD maintained control over three regions that were already "red" (Tuscany, Umbria, and Marche), while it obtained a controversial victory in Campania and a defeat in Liguria (also due to the internal divisions within the left). In the spring administrative elections, it lost control also of important cities such as Venice, Arezzo, and Matera. This led to a weakening of Renzi's position and the deepening of the internal conflicts within the party. The

regional and administrative elections, upon which the national leader has traditionally had only a minor impact, unlike the European and national elections, only served to underline the need to shift the focus back to the party. Research carried out by Paolo Segatti (2015) for ITANES has shown how most voters in Venice completely ignored the Jobs Act and the education reforms when they went to vote. Moreover, among those PD voters who were aware of these reforms, there was a low level of support (Palmerini 2015).

The issue of the relationship between the center and the periphery of the party has not been resolved. The most controversial cases were those involving Rome, Sicily, and Campania. In Rome, Renzi has kept a close eye on the difficulties of the city council, which has been seriously destabilized by the widespread urban degradation and the numerous scandals in which the party itself was eventually caught up (and which are attributable to the “Mafia Capital” scandal).⁶ In December 2014, Renzi decided to put the party into receivership, with Orfini taking it over; on 28 July 2015, when the council was reshuffled, Marco Causi was appointed deputy mayor. Causi was a friend and collaborator of Veltroni when he was mayor of Rome, and he had since moved closer to Renzi. Notwithstanding these changes, the Rome council was unable to stabilize. In fact, on 8 October, Rome’s mayor, Ignazio Marino, handed in his resignation, thus opening a new chapter for the PD in Rome. The crisis in the Rome council partly reflects the divisions within the party because it was the minority that had supported Marino, while Renzi had repeatedly urged the mayor to change direction in his policy-making.

The problems in Sicily surfaced in July when the affair surrounding Rosario Crocetta, the island’s governor, erupted after the weekly “*L’Espresso*” published a threat purportedly made to Lucia Borsellino, the daughter of the judge murdered by the Mafia in 1992, during a telephone conversation (later proved non-existent) between the Sicilian governor and his private doctor. The local PD reacted by calling for Crocetta to resign, which he refused to do, speaking of an attempted “coup.” The PD in Palermo, and more generally all over Sicily, was caught up in the crisis, which damaged the whole party’s image.

In Campania, the situation was different because Renzi had not been seen to back the candidate who had won the primaries and then the elections. The person concerned was Vincenzo De Luca, the mayor of Salerno for 17 years, whom the PD secretary was forced to support in spite of the uncertainty around his political future as a result of a sentence that might potentially prevent him from taking office. On 26 June, a decree from the prime minister suspended De Luca via the application of the Severino law, which prevents anyone sentenced to at

least two years in prison from being elected in the following six years. De Luca did not remain suspended for long: on 6 July, the Naples Tribunal dropped the suspension until the sentence was announced. On 10 November, however, one of the judges who had approved that sentence, Anna Scognamiglio, was officially transferred by the Magistrates' Governing Council to a different judicial branch under suspicion of "incompatibility with the local context," following the publication of telephone conversations in which there appeared to be a family interest in supporting the newly elected governor, De Luca. It is obvious that the cases of Rome, Sicily, and Campania are the most blatant examples of a model that exists in a number of other cities and regions, in which the holders of local power rule unopposed.

The appointment of regional candidates laid bare the limits of the central party, insofar as local power relations played a decisive role in the primaries. Even though there were four candidates out of seven in the 2015 regional elections who had been defined as (more or less) Renzi supporters (Luca Ceriscioli in Marche, Enrico Rossi in Tuscany, Alessandra Moretti in Veneto, and Raffaella Paita in Liguria), they could count on their own autonomous electoral base, as proved to be the case with Michele Emiliano in Puglia and De Luca in Campania. Furthermore, being a Renzi supporter has no longer been a guarantee of victory, as shown by the defeats of Paita and Moretti and the victories of the two non-Renzi supporters, Catuscia Marini in Umbria and De Luca in Campania. In this context, it is clear that the primaries, due to be held in 2016 to choose the candidates for the administrative elections, will be of great significance, as they will determine the party's shape at the local level. It is precisely because of the PD's various political configurations in the different regions that there has been no lack of critical voices from within the majority of the PD itself concerning the decision to introduce primaries for the council elections in 2016. Nevertheless, any decision not to organize primaries or to change the way in which they are run would call into question one of the fundamental elements of the PD's identity (Salvati 2015a).⁷

In reality, the PD has become a multi-level party (Fabbrini 2015), even though it is unclear how the various levels—national, regional, and local—should operate and be regulated. In addition, it is necessary for a multi-level party to establish roots all over the country, even though the party can no longer be promoted as it was in the past, given the need to accommodate different forms of membership (Scarow 2014). What we have seen is a party with an undisputed leadership at the national level that has moved into peripheral governments on the basis of agreements with local leaders who are able to gather votes with a degree of autonomy, provided that they are prepared to

recognize the national leader and his program. The reality is that Renzi and his team are committed to a huge program of reforms as a government, and they have not addressed the issue of the party as a priority, thereby fueling the centrifugal forces at the local level.

The Government's Action and Its Agenda

The PD has found itself in a paradoxical situation. Renzi has led a parliamentary majority that is not homogeneous but is still able to fall in line behind his leadership, probably out of a mixture of conviction and opportunism. At the same time, the prime minister has succeeded in winning the support of senior figures from a variety of political backgrounds, including the ex-president of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, who, also in his role of life senator, has turned out to be an indispensable ally of the government in the field of institutional and electoral reforms. Added to this, there is the fact that, since the 2013 elections, which the PD failed to win, there has been no one who could legitimately challenge Renzi's leadership. Furthermore, ever since the Renzi government was installed in February 2014, the left wing of the PD has taken a particularly aggressive stance toward the government's program, challenging all of its main decisions, either in full or in part. These include the reform of the provinces, the reform of the Senate, the Jobs Act, the new electoral law, the reform of the school system, and the stability law. In particular, the left wing opposed the school reform, which was finally approved in the Senate on 9 July, provoking an impressive mobilization of teachers against the measure. This sector had traditionally supported the PD in elections, and the school reform was partly the reason why the PD was punished in the regional and administrative elections. The only exceptions have been the choice of Sergio Mattarella as the president of the Republic, which in effect marked the end of the Nazarene pact with Silvio Berlusconi, and the announcement of the introduction of a law recognizing civil unions.

The internal opposition within the PD has led a number of PD figures to leave the party. On 6 May, Civati left the PD after voting against the new electoral law, known as the "Italicum." On 26 May, Civati himself announced the birth of a political movement called "Possibile" (Possible), which was officially established on 21 June. Then on 24 June, when the reform of the school system was debated, another deputy opposed to Renzi, Stefano Fassina, previously vice-minister of the economy in the Letta government and the PD's economics spokesperson, handed in his resignation, along with that of his colleague

Monica Gregori. On 4 July, various dissidents, such as Fassina, Gregori, Civati, Cofferati, Pastorino, and the Tuscan regional councilor Daniela Lastrì, alongside those opposed to Renzi who remained PD members, held a meeting in Rome to discuss starting up a new movement. On 7 November, following other defections from the party—Corradino Mineo (on 28 October) and Alfredo D'Attorre, Carlo Galli, and Vincenzo Folini (on 3 November)—the Sinistra Italiana (SI, Italian Left) was formed. This brought together SEL, a number of ex-PD members, and members of various movements and associations for a total of 31 deputies and 10 senators. These defections were balanced out in April when Tommaso Currò, Alessandro Tacconi, and Gessica Rostellato, deputies from the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S, Five Star Movement), became part of the PD group in the Chamber, following parliamentarians from Scelta Civica (SC, Civic Choice) (e.g., Andrea Romano and Stefania Giannini) and SEL (e.g., Gennaro Migliore) who had made the same decision the year before.

The minority, which can count on between 25 and 50 wavering senators, depending on the reforms under discussion, has certainly shown that it holds a significant degree of power to influence outcomes, as it has been prepared to vote against the government alongside Forza Italia and the M5S, which it did on 30 July when the reform of RAI was debated. However, although it has achieved some victories, as in the case of the school reform in which some of its motions were included in the draft law, it has not managed to affect the government's actions as much as it had hoped.

It is perhaps for this reason as well that the tensions with the government have become more acute. When dealing with the opposition of PD parliamentarians, Renzi has not hesitated to use all the available institutional and statutory measures in Parliament in order to push forward his program. For instance, he replaced 10 parliamentarians of the Commission for Constitutional Affairs in the Chamber, among whom were main figures from the minority, such as Bersani, Bindì, and Cuperlo (as well as D'Attorre and Fassina, who were still PD members at that time), because they had openly opposed the proposal to reform the Senate supported by the majority within the party. At the same time, he has attempted to find a *modus vivendi* with other opponents. On 20 July, in fact, he extended the terms in office of all the presidents of commissions in the Chamber who belonged to the minority—Epifani in the Commission for Productive Activities, Cesare Damiano in the Commission for Labor, and Francesco Boccia in the Commission for the Budget—on the condition that they would make a commitment to respect party discipline, as requested by Rosato, the new head of the PD parliamentary group in the Chamber. Finally, in

September, Renzi reached agreement with Bersani on the appointment process for future senators.⁸

Ever since he became prime minister, Renzi has shown that he has a fairly clear vision of his role as head of government. He has put politics back in charge, in the sense of exercising full autonomy in his decision-making capacity. He has built this capacity through a combination of strength and shrewdness. While Renzi has stuck to his agenda in the struggle with opponents within the PD's parliamentary groups, he has also shown that he is willing to make the necessary compromises to push it forward. This has applied even when he has needed to win over the support of Forza Italia parliamentarians for one reform or another proposed by his government, thereby compensating for the dissidents of his own majority.

Contrary to the expectations of many commentators, Renzi's government has set out and pursued a program for a full legislature. It had been installed to replace a government led by Letta that had been paralyzed by rifts within the majority, and in spite of Renzi not being a member of Parliament, the Renzi government has behaved as if it had a real electoral mandate. It has been a majoritarian government operating within an electoral and institutional context that was not majoritarian but that, if anything, had become more split than ever. It could be said that Renzi, as head of government, has felt inspired to change Italy, both due to events and to the widespread feeling in public opinion that the country could no longer continue to remain in the mire. Renzi has claimed that he has personal legitimacy gained in the PD primaries, and this has been strengthened by his decision to remain in the party in spite of the earlier defeat that he had suffered. This decision enabled him to demand a similar degree of loyalty, even from his opponents within the party, once he became party secretary and head of the government.

This loyalty has been strongly opposed by some PD senators, and a critical minority of them has made it extremely difficult for the government to remain on track with some measures that are of particular importance. At the same time, Berlusconi's exit from the parliamentary stage has been of great benefit to Renzi and his government. Deprived of their charismatic leader—depending on one's point of view—the members of Parliament in the center-right have begun to fall out with one another, and this has led to a variety of groupings that all have varying degrees of voting autonomy. Moreover, this fragmentation and the ban that prevents Berlusconi from taking part in elections have created a widespread predisposition within the center-right to avoid a crisis in the legislature, which would have led to early elections and put the seats of many of those

members under threat. While Mattarella's election to the presidency of the Republic in January 2015 led to a breakdown in relations between Renzi and Berlusconi, the relations between the government and a number of members elected under Berlusconi's party banner have not been severed.

The break-up of the center-right and its internal divisions have increased the opposition role of the M5S and the Northern League. However, as a result of the characteristics of the latter, the opposition has ended up taking on strongly populist features, paradoxically reinforcing the image of the government as a team committed to resolving Italy's structural problems. The 2015 Parliament has thus been dominated by a government led by an undisputed leader with the support of parliamentarians who had not chosen him to lead them or who had not themselves been chosen by him to stand as candidates in the blocked lists in their respective electoral districts. Moreover, the government majority was formed partly thanks to a split within the center-right, which led to the birth in 2013 of the *Nuovo Centrodestra* (NCD, New Center-Right). Committed to support the reforms, the NCD was also buying time in order to build an alternative leadership to Berlusconi's in this political camp.

In fact, when faced with Matteo Salvini's attempt to become the leader of the whole center-right, many Berlusconi supporters in Parliament have ended up pursuing different paths instead of hard opposition. All this has created a situation that has been highly favorable to Renzi and his government. Above all, it has set in motion a fluid, and at times transformist, system of parliamentary support that has enabled the government to press on with its agenda in spite of the dissenting voices within the PD minority (Camarano 2015).⁹ By the beginning of November 2015, there had been 317 cases of parliamentarians changing their political affiliation, involving 114 senators (36 percent of the total in the Senate) and 128 deputies (20 percent of the total in the Chamber).¹⁰ The end of Berlusconi's leadership has led to instability within the center-right, and other political parties that had emerged in the 2013 elections have also been caught up in this, particularly the SC. Even the M5S has been affected (albeit partially) by the trend toward fragmentation: some parliamentarians who were critical or dissatisfied with the Movement found themselves expelled or decided to leave. Renzi's leadership has acted as a magnet for some because it has offered them the opportunity to redefine themselves politically and culturally, as well as to save their own personal position.

Thus, with the help of a favorable parliamentary context and the widespread feeling that Italy needed to change direction, Renzi has

put forward a very ambitious agenda for the government. In reality, agenda-setting has turned out to be the main tool to promote his leadership. Instead of concentrating on a few objectives, as emergency governments normally do, Renzi decided to tackle a large number of structural issues that had remained unresolved in Italy. The government's agenda and timing have been key tools for legitimizing its program of action. The government has defined as priorities those reforms for which a consensus already existed, especially in epistemic communities, for example, the reform of the jobs market, of the bicameral parliamentary system, and of public administration. Building on this consensus, the government has then attempted to attack some sticking points within the Italian gridlock, such as those concerning the education system or the public broadcasting system. However, it has achieved more limited objectives than expected, as in the case of the reform of the broadcasting system.

This has been a bold strategy and one that has drawn criticism from many observers, who have argued that a such a government—which had not emerged from a victorious election and thus lacked any political mandate—did not have the legitimacy or strength to carry out such an ambitious program of reforms. And yet the opposite has taken place, not only thanks to the swift decision-making of the prime minister and the determination of his team, which have put their opponents on the defensive, but above all the fact that the plan to carry out one reform after another has ended up dividing the opposition instead of uniting it. Every planned reform, in fact, has activated different groupings of opponents, but above all the government has softened the impact by continually setting new items on the parliamentary agenda. Thus, rather than building the agenda in the normal way, Renzi has been a strategic actor in the way that he has made use of it. It should also be said that many of the reforms approved by Parliament have subsequently run into difficulties when it came to their implementation, even though some improvements have been noted in this area (compared with previous governments), especially as far as the time needed to implement them is concerned. Probably the only comparable experience of a government with a reformist drive is the one led by Romano Prodi between 1996 and 1998, even though the government's action at that time focused on the objective of bringing Italy within the parameters of the European Union, thus allowing the country to adopt the common currency, while Renzi's government has taken action over a wide range of strategic objectives.

The reforms program implemented by Renzi's government reached its high point on 13 October when the Senate approved the bicameral system reform on its third reading. No less than 32 years after the first

Bicameral Commission for institutional reforms was instituted, then under the presidency of the liberal politician Aldo Bozzi, Renzi's government succeeded in imposing a reform of the symmetrical bicameral system, which had long been opposed by the preceding Parliaments. It was due to the pressure of Renzi's government that Parliament was put in a position where it could go beyond its own internal powers of veto, approving a reform that, regardless of its merits, marks a historic turning point in the history of the Republic. It remains to be seen whether the rationalization of the parliamentary system will lead to an increase in the public's trust in the political class and in the institutions of the Republic. The level of trust remains low, and this fuels opposition from the M5S.

It may be useful to compare the experience of Renzi's government with that of the previous government under Letta. If we consider the literature on leadership (Fabbrini 1999, 2011), a democratic head of government may carry out a "transactive" role (as arbitrator) or a "transformative" role (as activist) within the executive. This role is generally supported (in the first case) mainly by party-based resources or (in the second case) mainly by public opinion. Moreover, the arbitrator is generally an insider (from the party or from the coalition), while the activist is generally an outsider. On the basis of these criteria, it is plausible to argue that Renzi's leadership in government has been closer to the "government dominated by the leader," while Letta's leadership was closer to the type of "government dominated by the party" within the context of a complex national situation.

Conclusions

Following the elections of February 2013, there was first a dramatic paralysis that failed to produce either a coherent parliamentary majority in both chambers or an institutional majority for the election of a new president of the Republic. Then there was the resignation of the Letta government in February 2014, brought about by the divisions within the center-right in September 2013 between Berlusconi and Angelino Alfano and by the creation of a new political majority within the PD. This was followed by a long period of political uncertainty against the background of a crisis of the euro, which continued to eat away at the Italian economy and society. After all these events, the Renzi government probably turned out to be the only alternative if Italy was to avoid a political and financial default. Faced with the populist alternatives of Salvini's LN and Beppe Grillo's M5S, Renzi's PD was able to draw together a much broader area of consensus than

the one traditionally covered by the center-left. Renzi and his new government team took this consensus as a mandate to change Italy. From that moment, reforms have been introduced that have upset the existing power relations within the political parties.

Renzi's actions have had the effect of highlighting the divisions within the PD. At the same time, the reforms pursued by the government have exacerbated the political rifts inside Parliament, and this has led to a variety of arrangements of parties supporting one or another of the proposed reforms. With the single exception of the election of Mattarella as president of the Republic, which was first agreed upon within the PD and then submitted to the other parliamentary forces, Renzi and his government have followed a different logic when it has come to the main reforms to be introduced. As far as these are concerned, Renzi's government has certainly gained the support of the PD in advance, but it has not felt hampered by the need for unanimity, which had traditionally been the case for that party. Having to deal with parliamentarians chosen by the previous secretary, Renzi has reckoned with the fact that a minority of them would put up fierce resistance to his reforms. After all, those reforms would impact on important groups within the PD's traditional electorate, such as teachers, public employees, and unionized workers, many of whom were represented by those members.

Renzi appears to have adopted a different model of political action. Unlike previous center-left governments, Renzi's government has pursued an objective of national renewal to which it has subordinated particular social interests, rather than drawing up its program on the basis of aggregating the social interests normally associated with the center-left party or coalition. This has led to a more open attitude toward groups and classes that have traditionally supported the policies of the center or center-right parties. Alongside the objective of national rebuilding, there have been critical statements and comments directed toward European institutions, which were accused of working in the interests of the stronger countries—to the point where the refugee problem became an issue for Europe only when the refugees reached Germany's borders. These criticisms reached a climax when the European Commission objected to the stability law drafted by the government in November. The Renzi government took advantage in Parliament of the break-up of the center and center-right parties to gain the support of members elected in those lists for reforms that it was proposing. It was a combination of various factors that made it possible for Renzi's government to obtain the approval of Parliament for important parts of its reforms program, although this provided no guarantee that the reforms would be implemented in a coherent manner.

The cornerstone that has enabled Renzi to hold his party and the government together has been his dual leadership as party secretary and as prime minister. In spite of the considerable pressure on him from supporters of the previous leadership or party oligarchy to give up the role of secretary in order to focus on his role as prime minister, Renzi has borne in mind the history of the Ulivo alliance, as well as that of the most important European parliamentary democracies. It was the separation of the two roles of secretary of the largest party in the Ulivo and that of prime minister that led to the crisis of the first Prodi government in 1998 and to the collapse of the second Prodi government in 2008. And after all, if we consider the main European parliamentary democracies, there is no separation of these roles in Germany, the UK, or Spain. The Renzi government has thus taken on a new form for Italian democracy—one in which the party is no longer an alternative to the government, but is (or should be) its unquestioned mainstay, as set out by the PD's own statute. The new electoral reform, the *Italicum*, which awards a majority bonus for the list, and not the coalition, winning the most votes, will make the connection between party leader and head of government even stronger.

In spite of all its difficulties, Italy has moved toward the model of competitive parliamentary democracies that have a leader in the government. In spite of all the resistance, Italy has introduced structural reforms that have not been imposed by any troika or international bodies. From a systemic point of view, there seems to be some continuity between the governments led by Monti, Letta, and Renzi. Even though they were not elected, these governments have set Italy on a developmental path that seemed unthinkable in November 2011. Within this continuity, however, it is important to note that Renzi and his government have succeeded in giving greater impulse to the introduction of reforms by taking advantage of external conditions that are more favorable than those in which the previous two governments operated. It remains to be seen whether the highly political nature of Renzi's leadership will succeed in pushing the reforms program through to a conclusion, establishing Italy as one of Europe's most reliable and innovative countries, or whether it will implode as a result of weak political support, particularly within his own party.

— *Translated by David Bull*

Sergio Fabbrini is Professor of Political Science and the Director of the School of Government at LUISS “Guido Carli” University, Rome.

Marc Lazar is Professor of History and Political Sociology at Sciences Po, Paris.

Notes

1. We refer readers to the special edition of *Contemporary Italian Politics* edited by Fabbrini and Lazar (2013).
2. These figures are taken from *La Repubblica*, 20 November 2015. The PD had 366,641 members in 2014 compared to 539,354 in 2013, according to the official data published in February 2015 on the PD's website. See <http://www.partitodemocratico.it> (accessed 21 November 2015).
3. Starting in 2014, every taxpayer may contribute 2 per thousand (one-tenth of 2 percent) of his or her IRPEF (personal income tax) to a political party, provided that it is listed in the register of political parties. This system was established by Law No. 149/2013, which put an end to the direct public financing of parties.
4. These data were published by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. See <http://www1.finanze.gov.it/finanze2/2xmille/index.php?tree=2015AADUEXM0101>.
5. Leopolda is the name of a former railway station in Florence. Commissioned in 1848 by the then Grand Duke Leopold I, it is now used for conferences and conventions. Since 2010, Renzi has organized meetings here with his supporters from outside the PD.
6. “Mafia Capital” is the name given by the Rome magistrates to a criminal group associated with Mafia-like political-business crime during the investigations that went public in 2014 when a number of leading figures were arrested. The group has been operating in Rome since 2000.
7. On the primaries, see Lazar and Giugni (2015) and Candidate and Leader Selection (2015).
8. The compromise was as follows. The left faction of the PD accepted the principle that senators should not be directly elected. The Renzi government accepted the principle that senators elected in future will be selected from the members of regional councils, but on the basis of the preferences expressed by voters in regional elections, when they will be able to vote for the councilors who should also become senators.
9. An article titled “Trasformismo dilagante” by Ernesto Galli della Loggia (2015) triggered a debate in the newspapers on this issue.
10. The source of this data is OpenPolis at <http://blog.openpolis.it/2015/11/02cambi-di-gruppo> (accessed 9 December 2015).

References

- Cammarano, F. 2015. "Una politica di 'trasformazione' e il fenomeno del voltagabbana." *Mente Politica*, 16 May.
- Candidate and Leader Selection. 2015. *Rapporto sulle elezioni primarie in Italia*. http://www.idemlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Rapporto_primarie_italia.pdf.
- Colombo, E. M. 2015. "Senato, Renzi cambia strategia: 'O passa la riforma o si va al voto.'" *QN*, 26 August.
- Cuzzocrea, A. 2015. "Pd, rivoluzione primarie, arriva l'albo degli elettori: Regioni, vota solo l'iscritto." *La Repubblica*, 16 October.
- Fabbrini, S. 1999. *Il Principe democratico: La leadership nelle democrazie contemporanee*. Rome-Bari: Laterza.
- Fabbrini, S. 2011. *Addomesticare il principe: Perché i leader contano e come controllarli*. Venice: Marsilio.
- Fabbrini, S. 2015. "Elettorale e multilivello: Questo è il partito che serve oggi." *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 7 June.
- Fabbrini, S., and M. Lazar, eds. 2013. "The Italian Elections: The Electoral Roots and the Political Consequences of the 24–25 February 2013 Italian Elections." *Contemporary Italian Politics* 5, no. 2. Special issue.
- Galli della Loggia, E. 2015. "Trasformismo dilagante: Le radici della crisi dei partiti." *Corriere della Sera*, 17 May.
- Kitschelt, H. 1994. *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lazar, M., and L. Giugni. 2015. "From Communism to Centre-Left: Analysis of an Unprecedented Political Trajectory." Pp. 181–193 in *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: History, Politics, Society*, ed. A. Mammona, E. G. Parini, and G. A. Veltri. London: Routledge.
- Martini, F. 2015. "Renzi torna in piazza ma pensa alla Leopolda." *La Stampa*, 20 November.
- Mauro, A. 2015. "Renzi alla minoranza Pd: 'Riforme per abbassare le tasse.' Il nuovo mantra per le amministrative 2016." *L'Huffington Post*, 18 July. http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2015/07/18/renzi-pd-riforme-tasse_n_7823464.html (accessed 23 September 2015).
- Palmerini, L. 2015. "'Lezioni' dal Veneto per Renzi: Elettori impreparati sul Jobs act." *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 21 July.
- Panbianco, A. 2015. "Il partito fragile." *Corriere della Sera*, 8 August.
- Pretini, D. 2015. "Regionali, gran bazar Campania: Pezzo di FI con De Luca. Il lettiano 'Meglio Caldoro.'" *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 8 April.
- Salvati, M. 2015a. "Il PD ostaggio delle primarie: Sono il marchio del partito." *Corriere della Sera*, 15 October.
- Salvati, M. 2015b. "Renzi, Stick to Your Guns." *Il Mulino* 64, no. 5: 787–795.
- Scarrow, S. 2014. *Beyond Party Members: Changing Approaches to Partisan Mobilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schumacher, G. 2012. "'Marx' or the Market? Intra-party Power and Social Democratic Welfare State Retrenchment." *West European Politics* 35, no. 5: 1024–1043.

- Schumacher, G., C. de Vries, and B. Vis. 2013. "Why Do Parties Change Position? Party Organization and Environmental Incentives." *Journal of Politics* 75, no. 2: 464–477.
- Segatti, P. 2015. *Indagine su tre regioni italiane alle elezioni del 2015*. Report based on the research project "Come cambia la rappresentanza politica in Italia 2013–2016," University of Milan.
- Trocino, A. 2015. "Reichlin: Ho lanciato il partito della nazione non unico e pigliatutto." *Corriere della Sera*, 28 April.