

The second volume of *Italy: Politics and Policy* documents the changes in the Italian political system and policy-making process since the watershed election of 1992 and the parliamentary elections of 1996. *Volume Two* critically evaluates the policy consequences of the Berlusconi, Prodi and Di Martino administrations. It examines whether policy-making is dependent on the structure of political choices at national level, or whether it is now the result of a complex interaction of various levels of government and socio-economic interests above and beyond the political orientation of the national government. The book also looks at the autonomy of national policy-making in light of developments at the sub-national as well as European levels, and the continuity in policy-making brought about by multi-level interest representation. It will be an essential resource for academics, researchers and students of Italian, European and comparative politics and policy-making.

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volume two

edited by
**Robert Leonard and
 Marcello Fedele**



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- 20 See Tobias Abse, 'Italy' in *The Force of Labour: The Western European Labour Movement and the Working Class in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stefan Berger and David Broughton, Berg, Oxford and Washington DC, 1995, p. 159.
- 21 I discuss these exceptions in chapters 4 and 5 of my *One Hundred Years of Socialism: The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1996 and Fontana, 1997.
- 22 The PCI was, of course, quite tolerable as a partner in local government, in the trade unions and in the cooperatives.
- 23 Donald L.M. Blackmer, *Unity in Diversity: Italian Communism and the Communist World*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, p. 396.
- 24 Joan Barth Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party: From Togliatti to Berlinguer*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1986, p. 256.
- 25 'The Yalta Memorandum (1964)', in Palmiro Togliatti, *On Gramsci and Other Writings*, ed. Donald Sassoon, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1979, esp. pp. 286–9.
- 26 The short-lived Berlusconi government – in office in 1994 – continued this practice. The result is that Italy's largest party is still not represented in the Commission.
- 27 See Partito socialista italiano, *351 Congresso Nazionale*, Roma, 25–29 ottobre 1963, Ed. Avanti!, Milan, 1964; see the agreed resolution on p. 589.
- 28 For Berlinguer's declaration see Enrico Berlinguer, *After Poland*, ed. and trans. Antonio Bronda and Stephen Bodington, Spokesman Books, Nottingham, 1982.
- 29 See the supplement to *Politica e economia*, No. 6, June 1989, 'Il nuovo PCI: due congressi a confronto'.
- 30 Achille Occhetto, 'Relazione al 180 Congresso, Il nuovo Pci in Italia e in Europa', *L'Unità*, 19 March 1989; this was reiterated at the central committee meeting of 20 November 1989.
- 31 S. Elezioni politiche 27–28 marzo 1994, Rome, February, 1994, pp. 13, 31; *ibid.*, pp. 13, 17, 15, 21, 22.
- 32 Speech to the First Congress of the PDS, 6 July 1995, in Massimo D'Alema, *Un paese normale*, Mondadori, Milan, 1995, p. 168.

Chapter 4

Political Change in Italy: 1996–2001

Giuseppe Bettoni and Robert Leonard

The Italian Context

With the end of the international bipolar system, one of the fundamental reasons to vote for the parties in government in Italy also disappeared: anti-communism. The vote for the Christian Democrats (DC) or for another party in government was justified because of Italy's position in the Western bloc of the international chess board and dominated the entire national political landscape. The demise of the Soviet Union disintegrated not only the international equilibrium but also that internal to many countries, such as Italy, where the end of the division of the world into two blocs had a profoundly direct impact on the definition of the role of every Italian political actor.

The Milan *Mani Pulite* (Clean Hands) operation on the part of the judiciary against political corruption led to the delegitimation of leaders, who until then were considered untouchable, and served to amplify the break in the political equilibrium. It was as if, in a system of communicating vessels full of water, the balance was abruptly altered, leading to great turmoil before reaching a new equilibrium. Italy is still going through this 'political and electoral' reshuffling. A comparison between the parliamentary elections of 1992 and 1996 highlights the extent of the change and the transformation of Italy's political system.

In 1992, the only real change in the Italian political landscape was the transformation of the Communist Party (PCI) into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), with the side effect of a minority split represented by Rifondazione Comunista (PRC), at the time led by Sergio Garavini and Armando Cossutta. The rest of the parties remained unaltered. The existence of the Lombard League (now Northern League) was almost entirely undervalued as a banal protest vote, as if it were a fleeting disease. The DC remained by far the largest party formation in Italy; the PDS achieved 16 per cent as its first national vote, dangerously close to the 13 per cent of Bettino Craxi's Socialist Party (PSI). Nonetheless, the then leader of the PDS Achille Occhetto was the first to rejoice at his press conference 'for the success of his

party'. Small parties such as the Liberals and the Social Democrats were disappearing from the political spectrum – the Republicans were the only to achieve slightly over 4 per cent – while the Northern League achieved a significant 8 per cent, entirely drawn from the northern part of the country.

Without foresight, the time did not appear to be more difficult than in other dramatic moments in the history of the Republic. Yet there were clear signs of change; the dam was about to break and many leaks were evident.

A comparison with the 1996 elections reveals an impressively different political and electoral map. The PDS, which only four years previously appeared on its deathbed, became the first party in Italy with over 21 per cent. The most significant change, however, was in the more or less moderate right. The collapse of the Christian Democrats caused the release of an enormous amount of votes, going in diverse directions and leading to the turmoil mentioned above.

Mainstream political science analyses define the Italian electorate as extremely static, at least until the beginning of the 1990s. Only the disappearance of some political formations and the birth of others would have allowed for the creation of new electoral dynamics. Yet, as I will argue, this view prevented analysis from perceiving that changes had already started.

An analysis of the electoral results of the 1980s reveals that at each parliamentary election there was a shift of between 20–30 per cent of votes from one party to another. By comparison with any other European country, even smaller shifts should have enabled change to emerge in the system. The 'blocked system' was not due to a static electorate but to the blindness of the political actors. According to our communicating vessels metaphor, some channels were closed, thereby obstructing communication between all of the vessels in the system. Adding water to one of the vessels without allowing it to circulate created an imbalance, which is what happened in Italy. The electorate was closed in one particular container that eventually exploded, dispersing its contents in every direction.

The voting public that found itself 'mobile' in the electoral market came from the Christian Democrats (DC), Socialists (PSI), Social Democrats (PSDI), Liberals (PLI) and Republicans (PRI). These parties represented mostly a moderate centre-right electorate, and an overwhelmingly Catholic one. Yet, it would be misleading to portray the DC as a centre party when most of its voters were, in fact, right wing. In the hemicycle of Italian political life, the DC occupied a space which spanned from the centre-left to the conservative right. If PSI, PSDI and PRI were to the left of the DC, the only right-wing parties were the PLI and the MSI. During the history of the Republic, however,

the latter parties never obtained more than a combined 10 per cent which on its own could not embody the Italian right. Furthermore, two right wing parties of the post-war period, the Monarchists and the Common Man Front (*Como Qualunque*), had reached more significant electoral percentages – far higher than the 10 per cent of the PLI and MSI. This right-wing and conservative electorate did not disappear but fuelled the tanks of the great Italian Catholic party.

This brief digression on the composition of the Christian-Democrat electorate of the Republican period helps to understand the formation of two political actors after the 1992 elections which occupied a key role in subsequent developments: Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale. It would otherwise be difficult to understand the shift from a political right representing 10 per cent of the electorate to one which easily represents over 40 per cent of the voting public.

The North-South Dichotomy

Electoral analyses of Italy have been for years modelled on a division between the north and south of the country. This division was represented on different analytical grids. One example is given by the distribution of the MSI electorate. According to one of the leading specialists,¹ the main support for the MSI came from the south, was conservative in its beliefs and was tied to the Fascist regime of the 1930s. This was an electorate which was unashamed to define itself as Fascist and which had never experienced heartfelt anti-fascism. It was also an electorate which had not suffered the violence of the 1943–45 civil war or the Resistance movement. According to this analysis, the northern MSI voters stemmed from a different tradition, from the political culture originating in the Republic of Salò of 1943–45 and consisting of a social right, tied to the corporativist tradition rather than to the dictatorial aspects of the Mussolini regime. These two representations of the right-wing electorate were identified with the two territorial areas (the north and the south) and a specific demarcation line running along the Gothic line. This frontier, which in theory crosses Italy from Grosseto to Ascoli Piceno, traces the war front of 1943 between the Allies in the south and the Germans in the north.

The other analytical dichotomy, perhaps more well-known, was pioneered by Robert D. Putnam and his associates,² according to whom Italy is divided in two parts: one in the north characterised by horizontal solidarity, and one in the south characterised by vertical solidarity. According to this theory, the

north of Italy bears a culture rich in horizontal solidarity; between members of the same social stratum or of the same working sector, originating in the period of the *Comuni* or city states when guilds were born. This kind of solidarity stimulated the development of those small and middle-sized enterprises which today constitute a fundamental part of Italy's productive capacity. On the other hand, the lack of this kind of solidarity is considered to be one of the crucial factors in accounting for the lack of this kind of enterprise in the south. Here, solidarity is of the vertical type. The protection of those highest in the social hierarchy is considered to guarantee better opportunities – more famously known as 'amoral familism'.³ The lack of horizontal ties is modelled on the prisoner's dilemma. Public goods are not possible. The political system is focused on the production of individual goods.

These generalisations may help to understand macroscopic differences between different sections of the country, but they do not allow us to understand the local dimension of electoral behaviour, especially the differences at the provincial or local levels. Even the south of the peninsula, always considered uniform and compact in its large landowning and Bourbonist tradition, is characterised by a number of geographical areas that need to be identified and differentiated from each other. Firstly, the south should be differentiated between the Adriatic and the Tyrranmanian coasts; Calabria can be considered as a region with a particular electoral and political tradition compared to the rest of the south; and Basilicata is historically divided in two parts, the Basento and the Metaponto. Sicily has always been considered uniform, but its internal diversity is significant. From the electoral point of view it was divided into east and west, based on the allocation of constituencies and without considering the single provinces. Yet we shall see that Sicilian diversity emerges on another geographical scale. In Puglia there still is continuity with the old division between the three areas of Capitanata (northern part of Puglia), Terra di Bari and Terra d'Otranto (southern part of the region). Finally, the Campania region will be analysed below.

The technique used here enables us not only to achieve an understanding of the success of parties such as Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and Forza Italia (FI) in the 1994 through the 2001 elections, but it also provides a greater understanding of the left, as represented by the PDS/DS and Rifondazione Comunista. It reveals how the Catholic electorate, which remains the most important section of the electorate, reallocated its allegiances according to traceable patterns.

Over the past decade the most important changes occurred in the right and moderate wings of the political spectrum, especially with the disappearance

of the DC and the emergence of FI and AN. Smaller parties such as CCD and CDU congregated around these parties, forming the Polo della Libertà (Liberty Pole) in 1994 and 1996 and subsequently the Casa della Libertà (CdL) in 2001. The Northern League was aligned with the Polo for a while in 1994 before going off on its own and then returned to join the CdL in 2001. This section of the electorate is intersected by numerous territorial variables and diverse religious and ideological structures, and still needs to find a definitive allocation. Accordingly, the analysis will begin with an examination of the main components of the Polo/CdL.

The Centre-right Parties: Alleanza Nazionale, Forza Italia and the Northern League

The party led by Gianfranco Fini, Alleanza Nazionale, is perceived as the heir to the MSI. This claim, however, is not entirely correct. In the 1994 elections AN received at national level 5,199,916 votes in comparison with the 2,107,272 the MSI achieved two years earlier. In 1994 AN received more votes than the old MSI, but the distribution of the support in the various parts of the country were very similar. In 1994 AN gained 44 per cent of its total vote from southern regions (versus 40 per cent in 1992 for the MSI), 22.7 per cent in central Italy (versus 20 per cent for the MSI in 1992) and 33.2 per cent in the north (versus 40 per cent for the MSI in 1992).⁴ Before comparing these results with those of 1996 and 2001, it is worth noting that even if AN had in the past achieved the majority of its votes in the south, the percentages in the rest of Italy were substantial. AN proved to be in a good position to capture the ex-DC vote in the centre and south while Forza Italia took the lion's share in the north.

Central Italy in particular gives AN almost a quarter of its votes, despite the fact it consists of only three regions – slightly over 7 million inhabitants – that is, 13 per cent of the Italian population. Here, a crucial role was played by the Lazio region which surrounds Rome, the national capital. In 1992 Lazio by itself accounted for 15 per cent of the total MSI vote. In 1994 the average vote for AN had risen to 28 per cent of all votes cast in the region.

In the south, with over 20 million inhabitants or 36 per cent of the Italian population, we find 44 per cent of AN's electorate.⁵ The collapse of the DC and PSI went a long way in replenishing the electoral coffers of the new Alleanza Nazionale party. In 1994 AN became, *de facto*, the dominant party in the south.

Two years later, in 1996, AN achieved a national total of 5,870,491 votes, but the distribution was significantly different from the result in 1994 with 34

per cent (2,000,111) of the party's votes in the north, 29 per cent (1,718,245) in the centre and the remaining 37 per cent (2,152,135) in the south. The north became an important area for AN, with an additional 700,000 votes compared to 1994. In the south Fini's party lost around 150,000 votes due, however, to a specific reason. In 1994 FI was not able to present its candidates in Puglia, thereby leaving its electorate to vote for AN. In 1996, Berlusconi's party was on the ballot in Puglia and therefore was able to recover its votes from AN and became the first party of the region, followed by AN.

Between 1994 and 1996, AN therefore remained 'stable' in the south after factoring in the missed opportunity on the part of Forza Italia in being on the ballot in Puglia two years before. But AN significantly expanded in the north. In 1994 AN achieved a substantial electoral coup in the south compared to the MSI result in 1992 (and prior to the transition of the MSI to AN). In 1994 the electorate in the north remained sceptical and focused its attention on the new political actor: Forza Italia.

It is 1996 that AN achieves a substantial breakthrough in the regions of the north. In the process it became an important national party at the heart of the Italian political system together with PDS and FI. With its ally Forza Italia AN shared a presence in those regions from which it had been substantially excluded throughout the First Republic – the northwest. Until 1992 when it reached 3.8 per cent of the vote in the four northwestern regions (Val d'Aosta, Piedmont, Lombardy and Liguria), the MSI never reached over 3 per cent. The MSI consistently registered its minimum level of support in the province of Cuneo, and in the whole area from the Piedmontese Alps to the Veneto.⁶ With the exception of Bolzano and Trieste, MSI never had a stronghold in the northern regions vis-à-vis the vote for other parties.

In 1994 AN increased its support throughout the country, but its percentage of growth in the north was still four percentage points short of the level of national growth between 1992 and 1994. The only exceptions were Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, Bolzano and the Alto Adige area. Here, the MSI had support due to specific historical reasons. In Bolzano the party was seen as the main defender of the Italian language against the German-speaking majority; in Trieste it was perceived as the defender of the Italian population against, cumulatively or alternatively, the 'red menace' 'the Slavs' or 'the thieves of the territory of Istria'.⁷

In 2001 AN suffered a severe reversal of its political fortunes. It lost 24 per cent of its 1996 voting base (the overall number of votes for AN shrunk by almost 1.5 million) and its role as Italy's third largest party. The moderate centre, represented by the Margherita (PPI, Prodi, Dini), surpassed it by almost

2 million votes. AN's losses were generalised throughout the country, but especially in the South. In 2001 AN received 36 per cent of its total in both the north and south and the remaining 28 per cent in the centre. In terms of the percentage of all votes cast in an area we see in Table 4.1 that AN is still relatively weak in the north with only 9.1 per cent of the 2001 vote while it polls 11.8 per cent and 11.5 per cent respectively in the south and islands. Its vote in the central regions reached 19.9 per cent making it the third largest party in that area of the country.

Table 4.1 Results of the Chamber of Deputies ballot for proportional lists, 2001

Parties	North	Centre	South	Islands	Italy
DS	15.6	23.2	14.9	11.8	16.6
Margherita	15.1	14.8	13.8	13.3	14.5
Greens	2.0	1.9	3.1	1.8	2.2
PdCI	1.5	1.8	1.9	1.6	1.7
PRC	5.0	6.0	4.9	3.6	5.0
DiPietro	4.0	2.8	4.7	3.7	3.9
<i>Total centre-left</i>	<i>43.1</i>	<i>50.5</i>	<i>43.3</i>	<i>35.8</i>	<i>43.9</i>
FI	29.9	24.3	30.6	35.0	29.4
AN	9.1	16.9	11.8	11.5	12.0
CCD/CDU	2.4	5.1	3.9	6.6	3.2
Lega Nord	8.2	0.2	–	–	3.9
New PSI	0.6	1.0	1.5	1.4	0.9
Fiamma (extreme right)	0.3	0.4	1.2	*	0.4
<i>Total centre-right</i>	<i>50.6</i>	<i>47.9</i>	<i>49.0</i>	<i>54.5</i>	<i>49.8</i>
Others	6.3	1.6	7.7	9.7	6.3

* In Sicily the Fiamma and other extreme right parties did not field separate electoral lists for the proportional vote in the Chamber of Deputies elections.

Source: Ministry of the Interior, www.mininterno.it/camera.

The sudden rise of AN in the north after 1992 and its subsequent decline in 2001 may be attributed to a number of factors. First of all, the vicissitudes of the Catholic centre party, PPI, which achieved its zenith in 1996 and recuperated in 2001. In the previous election, the PPI had been more successful in holding on to votes in the north than in the south. Secondly, in 1996 FI had

difficulty in holding on to all of the electorate it attracted in 1994. Therefore, some may have migrated to other parties in the coalition. Thirdly, AN still seemed to be the most 'untainted' part of the centre-right coalition given the scandals and judicial investigations that continued to involve Berlusconi and his Fininvest associates. However, in 2001 Forza Italia reattracted all of those voters who may have temporarily fled to AN in 1996. In the north and islands it outpolls Fini's party by three to one, in the southern regions of the peninsula two to one and in the centre 24.3 to 16.9 per cent. Had the centre-right coalition not won the election the 2001 vote would have been a virtual disaster for the fortunes of AN.

As seen above, the regions of the centre (Lazio, Umbria, Abruzzo) and the north of Campania (Naples and Caserta) represent one of the strongholds for AN. Here, the average vote for the party exceeded 20 per cent of the total vote in 1996 but fell to 16.9 per cent in 2001. In Rome it reached above 30 per cent but was substantially reduced in 2001. One of the reasons for the better than average result for AN in the central regions was the role played in the post-war period by the MSI party organisation and its presence at the local level in a diffused manner. The symbols of fascism continued to be treasured and used to attract new members. Secondly, the area has amongst the most important universities in the country – such as Rome, Naples and Perugia. The MSI found among the students one of its most significant potential reservoir of party cadres and voters. The role of student organisations in Perugia allowed the MSI and AN to become strong in a traditionally left-wing area such as Umbria. Finally, what provided the MSI/AN tradition a mass base was the huge presence of the national bureaucracy in Rome which during the interwar period was 'cleansed' of anti-fascist elements and which after the war was not purged of its fascist sympathisers.

In 1996 the support for AN in the south remained largely unaltered compared to the 1994 elections. However, the party did leap ahead in certain areas. In Calabria, where its 1994 outcome was nonetheless high, AN obtained over 20 per cent of the entire vote, an exceptionally high percentage compared to the whole of the south. Only in Catania did AN reach similar percentages. In Palermo AN surged ahead by 6 per cent reaching 15 per cent (slightly below the national average). Forza Italia continued to be the dominant party in Sicily.

This dominance was reconfirmed and re-enforced during the 2001 elections. Forza Italia was the dominant party throughout the country but its strongest support was found in the south and islands.

Allianza Nazionale had specific strongholds in the south, but it was in the north of the country where the party made its most spectacular gains in

1996. The surge of support in the north helped to introduce into the party organisation more moderate leadership with northern roots. This trend was confirmed in the aftermath of the November–December 1997 local elections. One year after the general elections, AN suffered a defeat. It was unable to mount a credible campaign in Rome and in many other cities in the north. Fini therefore undertook a shake-up of the party leaders by dismissing Gasparri, the previous number two of the party, and replacing him with Storace (who in 2000 would be elected president of the Lazio region) and a set of more moderate leaders. However, the old guard from the centre and south remained supreme despite the growing equilibrium between the party's northern and southern electorate. In 2001 AN received for the first time more votes (1,609,219) in the north than in the south (1,574,516). Fini's role as party leader had already been substantially weakened in the 1996 election, and in 2001 with even a worse result he was forced to concentrate mainly on governmental rather than party matters.

Allianza Nazionale is, therefore, now a party with roots in the entire country and for this reason finds itself overlapping its main ally, Forza Italia, in attracting moderate political support. Berlusconi's party is the closest to a fully national party in the country. His support is spread out in a uniform manner across the whole territory. The provinces in which it is weakest are Bolzano (where it obtained its lowest result below 10 per cent), Siena and Florence. In the electoral data presented in Table 4.1 we can see that in 2001 Forza Italia was strongest in the south and islands though it was the single strongest party in every part of the country. The results of the three past parliamentary elections show that the two strongest areas for FI are the northwest and Sicily, or more specifically Piedmont, the west of Lombardy, and the whole of Sicily. In 1994 in the northeast of Italy, despite the strong competition of the Northern League, FI nonetheless obtained over 20 per cent, while in the northwest the vote was overwhelmingly in favour of the Milanese business tycoon. But in 1996 FI lost the majority of its votes in this area and in the Veneto. In the northwest Forza Italia lost over four percentage points in the provinces of Alto Tichino in which, conversely, AN reached its highest peaks of growth in the north. The loss of votes for FI was only partly compensated by the fact that CCD and CDU were not present as separate entities in the 1994 election – the first had presented its list of candidates within Berlusconi's FI while the second was still part of the PPL. In 1996 when the two centrist allies of Berlusconi presented their own lists, their showing was poor. Success went, instead, toward AN and the Northern League, followed by the PDS and Rifondazione Comunista. In 2001 the combination

of CCD/CDU lost approximately half of the vote it had in 1996 in all parts of the country. The real winner in all sections of the country was Forza Italia that uniformly expanded its 1996 voting base by nine percentage points. Forza Italia was able to catalyse the loss of votes suffered by AN, CCD/CDU and the Northern League. In the north the League's vote went from 20.5 per cent in 1996 to a mere 8.2 per cent in 2001. Given that it was not present in any part of the country, the vote represented a political disaster for the League and its ability to formulate an independent position vis-à-vis the CdL and its leader, Berlusconi.

The whole north of the country reveals a great overlap between the right wing electorate and the Northern League rather than between the left and the League. Bossi's electorate, however, is not simply right-wing as much as its vote is not simply a protest vote. The elections of 1996 confirmed the structure of the vote for the Northern League: a circumscribed but resilient territorial presence which increased its success in the areas in which it is strongest. In 1996 the Northern League grew in the east of Lombardy and in Veneto, with increases of 10 per cent and even 13 per cent. In 2001 it haemorrhaged votes all over the north. In 2001 the Northern League seems to have lost its ability to personify the protest of the north against the central state apparatus and state transfers to the south.

The results of the League have always been territorially circumscribed, and its penetration in regions such as Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany and Marche has been marginal – in some parts it increases feebly, in others it decreases. Forza Italia picked up the bulk of the losses suffered by the Northern League in Veneto and the eastern part of Lombardy but also in the rest of the north.

The Catholic Parties: PPI, CCD, CDU, UDR, Margherita

The next task is to analyse the Catholic electorate which decided to cast its vote for a religiously defined party, such as the PPI or the CCD-CDU. In 1994 the real haemorrhage from the DC was in the south. A comparison between the southern electoral data of 1992 and of 1994 reveals that in the provinces the transition between the DC and PPI lost by the wayside no less than 20 per cent of the vote, and even reached peaks of over 25 per cent. The losses in the north were heavy, but not as serious as in the south.

IFAN grew in two stages (i.e., in the south immediately before and during the 1994 elections and in the rest of Italy in the 1996 elections), the PPI also lost the bulk of the Catholic electorate in two stages. In 1996 the party

previously led by Gerardo Bianco – and subsequently by the former trade unionist Franco Marini – lost points precisely in those areas in which it had held strongly in the previous elections: the northeast and the Adriatic side of central-southern Italy. In 2001 the party under Pierluigi Castagnetti bounced back with a significant result. It is true that in 2001 the Margherita brought together the PPI (6.8 per cent in 1996) with the group around Dini that polled 4.3 per cent in the previous election and the party founded by Romano Prodi (Democrats) in 1997, but this assembly of parties emerged as Italy's third largest party with 14.5 per cent of the vote.

It is a general assumption that the PPI embraces the left of the former DC, tied to Catholic associations, while CCD and CDU are followed by the more conservative electorate and linked to that image of vertical solidarity. The assumption derives from the idea that the DC exploded producing a diaspora of its internal factions. Yet the 'death' of the DC was not so logical and composed. In the northeast the PPI is more deeply established than its right wing competitors. Despite the losses due to the success of the Northern League, the PPI maintained a stronghold, especially in the southeast of Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and in parts of Friuli-Venezia-Giulia, thanks not only to the traditions of association and solidarity but also to outstanding leaders. The local leader of the PPI is the same Rosy Bindi (former Health Minister) who was one of the first to challenge the leadership of the old DC for its corruption and incompetence. If the images of the former leaders of the CCD – Clemente Mastella, Francesco D'Onofrio and Pierferdinando Casini⁸ can be associated with the old DC ruling elite, the same cannot be said of Rosy Bindi. This may explain why in 2001 the Margherita did best in the northern part of the country with 15.1 per cent of the vote. In comparing the percentages gained by the Margherita vis-à-vis those that were attributed to its sister party on the centre right, the Margherita maintained a difference of 5:1 and 3:1 in the north, centre and south. Only in the islands was the CCD/CDU able to reduce the difference to 2:1.

Despite the changes in its composition over time, the two parties (CCD/CDU) had good results in the north east in 1996, but they did not reach the levels registered by the PPI. All these small Catholic parties reach a respectable number of votes in this area. However, they grow weaker in moving westward towards Lombardy. The difference is evident in the province of Novara and in the Ticinese area, where the PPI as opposed to the CCD-CDU has a stronghold. This is also thanks to the fact that the former president of the Republic, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, is from Novara. His faction (now absorbed by the PPI) has dominated the province in an unchallenged manner and is still

present on the whole territory. It has been extremely useful for the PPI – whose local leader is the nephew of the president – to have key figures in important positions in the area. The two centres of power in the area – the Banca Popolare di Novara and the Società De Agostini – have been the focus of a battle for control between members of Forza Italia and of PPI. The area is characterised by bitter disputes between political actors which do not leave much space to new arrivals.

Emilia-Romagna highlights another point of difference in 1996 and 2001 between the PPI and CCD-CDU. The former party of Casini and Mastella and the current party of Casini and Buttiglione, have never reached more than 5 per cent of the vote, despite the fact that Casini is from Bologna. On the other hand, the PPI lost very few votes between 1994 and 1996, but in 2001 its voting base crumbled, thereby leaving it with a minimum base in the region.

The presence of the both the PPI and CCD-CDU used to be uniform in Tuscany and Umbria, whereas it changes radically in favour of the latter in the Marche. However, the real stronghold of the CCD-CDU is the south of Italy, especially Sicily where the party has become one of the most important political representatives. The PPI, on the other hand, used to receive some of its lowest turnouts in Sicily, with the modest exceptions of the provinces of Agrigento, Enna and Caltanissetta where it had not gone over 7 per cent in 1996 but in the subsequent elections it grew much faster than the CCD/CDU.

The Left: PDS/DS, PdCI, PRC

The electorate of the PDS and Rifondazione Comunista has remained substantially stable between 1994 and 1996, especially in the case of the PDS. The total results of the two parties in the elections of 1996 reached 30 per cent of the vote. In 2001 the combined vote of the DS, PdCI (party of Cossutta) and Rifondazione (PRC) reached only 23.3 per cent in the PR vote for the Chamber of Deputies. Compared to the results of the old PCI, the left has not increased its vote and, if anything, it has precipitously declined during the past decade. In 1996 the PDS and Rifondazione together exceeded the PCI votes in the 1987 election but were still below the high point of communist party voting of 1976 when the party reached 36.6 per cent of the total vote. The vote for the two Italian left wing parties is highly localised and is tied to clear historical traditions. The split of Cossutta from Bertinotti in 1997 over the betrayal of the Prodi government by Bertinotti significantly weakened the PRC in subsequent elections but it did not help regenerate the fortunes of the

DS. It continued to experience difficulties in areas outside of the traditional red belt (the regions of Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria and the northern Marche).

Rifondazione's presence on the national territory is extremely precise: in Tuscany and Umbria and with high percentages in the whole of central Italy (between 9–10 per cent in 1996 but only 6 per cent in 2001). The region of Emilia-Romagna, despite its communist tradition, has remained tied to the PDS/DS. Rifondazione has only demonstrated a limited ability to penetrate the region. An interesting increase was in central Italy, especially in Abruzzo, and in the province of Torino, a traditionally working class area and birth place of the party leader Fausto Bertinotti.

Despite these shifts, the left-wing electorate remained essentially stable in 1996 and significantly declined in 2001. The more unstable electorate is represented by the moderate voters who in the past had voted for the Christian Democrats but who now have tended to drift between the Northern League, AN and Forza Italia. In the north of the country, especially in western Lombardy and Piedmont, this kind of voter can be attracted by a liberal and secular discourse – a position applicable to both FI and AN. In this area the two right-wing allies often become rivals, drawing from the same electoral base. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of the two parties is far less evident in central Italy, as the case of the election for the mayor of Rome in November 1997 revealed. The candidate for the Polo was the leader of the industrialists of the Lazio region Borghini, an ideal-type candidate for Forza Italia. But the real driving force of the Polo was Teodoro Buontempo, the Roman leader of Alleanza Nazionale, who was, however, too closely linked to the old image of the MSI to allow him to represent the centre-right in the run for the national capital's mayoral position. As a result, Borghini was number one on the list and Buontempo remained number two. The calculation was that Borghini would fulfil the role of presenting an acceptable face for the front pages of the magazines and newspapers; Buontempo would mobilise the base for an effective door to door campaign. At the end, the centre-right alliance fell flat on its face, and the incumbent mayor, Francesco Rutelli, won easily. In high profile campaigns where Berlusconi is not involved, the centre-right does miserably. This rule was reaffirmed in the contemporaneous local elections that took place alongside the national elections in 2001 and in the local elections that took place in 2002. If Berlusconi is not the candidate, the centre-right has difficulty in beating the opposition. The generalisation is confirmed by the data on the results of the single-member district results: the candidates of the Ulivo outpolled their parties by over 4 per cent. In 2001 the Ulivo candidates

in Rome (Walter Veltroni) and Naples (Rosa Russo Iervolino) outstripped their centre-right opponents. In 2002 the centre-left was able to win over former traditional bastions of the centre-right such as Monza and Verona in what was described as an electoral debacle for the CdL. Numerous questions remain to be answered. The first of which is the future of Berlusconi's movement and government. A party based exclusively on the image of one man and unable to find at the local level any candidates of stature – as demonstrated in the 1997 and 2002 administrative elections – risks a lot. It could disappear as quickly as it appeared in 1994. Yet Forza Italia represents a movement which has attracted 10 million voters. Where would the votes go? It is by no means certain that they would flow into Alleanza Nazionale. Fini's party is searching for a future strategy. One option would be a stronger stand towards the moderate liberalism of the European right; yet, this did not prove to be a winning strategy in the elections of 1996 and in the administrative elections of 1997 or 2002. It is therefore to be seen whether the leadership will be able to steer the party in that direction and overcome the internal pressures tied to a social right which ask for a return to the old values of the MSI.

The other possibility is that if FI were to disappear its voters would flow back to the moderate Catholic parties. With the emergence of the UDR (Mastella's party) moderate voters have the choice between a moderate Catholic party (UDR) allied with the centre-left or a moderate Catholic party (CCD/CDU) allied with the right. A shift towards the centre-right could finally create that long-term majority which has, up to now, eluded the Italian political system. Until the moderate voters in the system – who span the spectrum from the right of the Ulivo (PPI, Dini and Di Pietro) to a substantial part of the AN electorate – will have found stability in their place on the political spectrum and the structure of the reform of Italian national institutions is finally decided it will be impossible to assert that the Italian transition is over.

Notes

- 1 Piero Ignazi, *P, Il polo escluso* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1989).
- 2 See R.D. Putnam with R. Leonardi and R.Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 3 Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958).
- 4 The south is here considered to comprise Sardinia, Sicily, Calabria, Basilicata, Puglia, Campania, Molise and Abruzzo. The centre is composed only of Lazio, Marche and Umbria. The remaining regions are classified as northern regions. In 1992 the MSI received 40 per

cent of its vote in both the north and south as defined here. The centre accounted for 20 per cent. However, the overall number of votes garnered by the party in 1992 was 2,107,272 or 5.7 per cent of the popular vote in the Chamber of Deputies. See S. Romano 'Documentary appendix' in S. Hellman and G. Pasquino (eds), *Italian Politics: A Review*, Vol. 8, pp. 198–204.

5 The distribution of the Italian population is according to the above tripartite division of the country: 36 per cent in the south, 13 per cent in the centre and 51 per cent in the north. The distribution of AN's vote in 1994 was accordingly: 44.1 per cent in the south, 22.7 per cent in the centre and 33.2 per cent in the north. The ability of AN to achieve a higher than proportional vote in the centre is attributable to its support in Rome and southern Lazio which account for three quarters of the population in this three region definition of the centre.

6 These were areas where the armed resistance to fascism and nazism were particularly strong during the 1943–45 period.

7 These were the images used in the MSI party propaganda.

8 Mastella abandoned the CCD as part of the process that led to the creation of the UDR headed by Francesco Cossiga. Mastella is currently the secretary of the UDR.