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The Selectorate Model of Government Stability: an Application to Italy

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INTRODUCTION

Free and fair elections are considered the cornerstone for liberal democracies and for responsiveness and accountability of their governments. During the polling day, citizens are called upon to choose their delegates who, once elected, will be accountable for their actions. In 1861, Abraham Lincoln claimed that elections provide the basis for the mutual obligations between the electorate and the government. Through elections, the electorate selects delegates who will represent the interests of the society, but not without any risk. In the study of political regimes, many scholars have focused on the democratic deficit caused by the lack of effective delegation, mostly in authoritarian countries (Linz, 2000), others have conducted studies on the coalition-building criterion required to pass the constitutional constraints for parliamentary majorities, like proportional electoral system or investiture requirements. Indeed, as Lupia and Strom (2005) sustain, representative democracies face two main challenges, namely delegation and coalescence. Both aspects are essential elements of the overall quality and functioning of democratic governance and, as a consequence, of the well-being of liberal countries.

In parliamentary systems, in order to rule decisively and even to survive, governments require the support of solid and disciplined parliamentary majorities. Still nowadays, many parliamentary democracies cannot manage to implement crucial reforms, such as those for economic and social development, due to the high level of instability caused by the intra-parliamentary dynamics. The welfare of the societies has become even more reliant on the political survival of their governments to such an extent that public policies cannot be effectively implemented without a stable cabinet and a solid majority in Parliament. Intra-government conflicts may lead to the risk of policy “immobilism”. For example, in the Italian First Republic, the political instability resulted in an abundance of distributive policies aimed at satisfying sectional interests, failing to implement significant reforms that would threaten the political status quo (Verzichelli & Cotta 2000). The causes and the potential risks of policy immobilism are meticulously explained by the scholar Paul Warwick in the following words:

“In policy terms, the consequence of perpetual centre rule is immobilism: the divisions within governing coalitions, the fact that they usually contain one or more parties committed to the status quo, and the lack of a viable alternative waiting in the wings all ensure that government action will be difficult to come by. Rather than focusing on policy, therefore, coalition partners or potential

coalition partners turn their attention to things that can be achieved: career advancement, patronage allocation, logrolling on the less charged issues, and so forth” (Warwick 1995).

Moreover, economic growth is becoming deeply interconnected to policy uncertainty. Through a comparative study of 113 countries between 1950-1982, Alesina et al. (1996) have demonstrated a strong and negative relationship between growth and political instability. In particular, countries that show a high propensity of political unrest experience considerably lower economic development. Indeed, since the financial crisis of 2008, policymakers have acquired a significant role in the public sphere, so that even their possible intentions can be responsible to the effects on the recovery and recession of a state (Bloom, Baker & Davis 2011). When a government presents doubtful proposals regarding taxes and other regulatory costs, major economic stakeholders prefer to be cautious and to postpone investments or to hire campaigns to calmer periods. Moreover, the degree of conflict and the high governmental turnover rates within a country decrease national stability and credibility in the international credit market, affecting sovereign debt, country spreads and default rates (Cuadra & Sapriza 2008). In November 2018, for example, following the institutional dispute between the Italian government and the European Commission, the European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs Moscovici rejected the spending budget due to the excess deficit, well beyond the Maastricht parameters. As a consequence, the back and forth with the Commission has increased the concerns among international investors, leading Italy’s 10-year bond’s interest rate to reach the 326 basis points, the highest level since 2013 (Gilbert, 2019).

Italy is among the most striking cases where the effects of political instability are evident on its economy. The election of 2018 led to greater instability due to the uncertainty of the government to forge, breaking the record of days for the formation of the new government with 89 days. A delay that was not without costs. According to a report by the Confesercenti (2018), the country's stop, combined with tensions on the spread, has frozen investment and consumption, leading Italy to burn about 5 billion in GDP growth (0.3%) between 2018 and 2019, and causing a sharp deterioration in the public budget (+ € 7.3 billion of deficit). Moreover, due to the uncertainty effect - whose effects are likely to continue until 2019 – the report estimated that the slowdown affects both investments (estimated to be down by 1.6 billion, 0.6% less than expected), and consumption, with a decrease of 3.9 billion (-0.4%). Overall, domestic demand contracted by 5.5 billion. Furthermore, according to the Confesercenti, there are also effects on exports (-0.2%, almost a billion euros less) and on prices, which earn 0.3% more inflation. The most obvious impact, however, is on the public budget balance, which worsens by 0.4 points of GDP, about 7.3 billion more deficit.

The unstable political climate in Italy is not just a recent issue and to fully understand this chronic political disease, there is a need to review its relevance in Italian political history. Since the establishment of the Italian Republic, no government has ever completed its entire mandate. For this reason, the Italian government has been usually defined as in a perpetual state of “stable instability”, as Massimo Franco, political journalist of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* critically described the Italian political system during the past financial crisis (Donadio, 2011). During the First Republic (1946-1994), Italy had the highest rate of cabinet turnover¹ in Western Europe (Muller & Strom, 2000). Throughout its first fifty years of Republic, Italy experienced more than 50 cabinets, thus having an average life of one year of life ranging from the 100 days of the shortest-lasting cabinet (Spadolini II) up to more than two years of the longest-living (Craxi I)². The harsh end of the First Republic led a different political scenario with new political parties and a mostly majoritarian electoral law (D’Alimonte & Chiaramonte, 1995; Bartolini & D’Alimonte, 1995). However, although the Italian Republic experienced fewer government turnovers, these new political mechanisms have not solved the government stability issue in the Second Republic yet. Political scientists have concentrated several studies regarding the political instability of the Italian governments in order to find a specific model to apply to the Italian case. These theories have focused mainly on the electoral law, the party system or even on the Italian cultural political apathy without finding an overarching explanation for government survival.

This thesis aims at analysing the government instability of the Italian governments through a comprehensive data collection from 1948 until 2019 through the application of Bueno de Mesquita’s (2005) Selectorate theory. The study provides simultaneously a quantitative study regarding the duration of the past Italian cabinets and offers a foreseeing formula for future government stability. The data collection presented in this dissertation is partially reformulated by the previous research conducted by Sebastiano Lustig (2012). For my research, I preferred to use days since they are the most basic unit of measurement, allowing every scholar to convert the data in accordance with his or her needs. In this study, I will concentrate on a variety of institutional arrangements such as electoral systems and government coalitions that shape the reasons beyond the governmental stability and the potential causes of its termination. Finally, in case of correct applicability, further studies would allow predicting government stability in the Italian political system.

¹ The definition of government turnover will follow Woldendorp et Al. (2000), namely a change of prime minister; a change in the party composition of the cabinet; a resignation in an inter-election period followed by re-formation of the government with the same prime minister and party composition.

² Days are counted from the Prime Minister’s oath until the formation of the new government.

The first chapter will briefly introduce the three main phases of the Italian history: the liberal state (1861-1926), Fascism (1926-1943) and, finally, the current Republic that can be subsequently divided into two phases, namely the First Republic (1946-1994) and the Second Republic (since 1994). Every phase has contributed to bringing a cultural and a social transformation to the Italian society, shaping the family tree of the Italian political parties. Indeed, in order to grasp the intra- and extra-parliamentary dynamics of the current political system, it is essential to analyse the sequence of events that has continuously shaken Italian civil society, through the emergence of new cleavages. In the second chapter, I will then present the main literature regarding the studies of political stability, with a particular emphasis to the concepts and the methodology of the Selectorate theory developed by Bueno de Mesquita and its application to the Italian case by Sebastiano Lustig (2012) from 1946-2008. Then, in accordance with the aforementioned theory, I will argue that governments with a large selectorate and a small winning coalition are more stable³. Finally, in the last section, I will extend Lustig's research by applying this analytic framework to the past ten years from the Berlusconi IV cabinet to the Gentiloni cabinet and I will discuss the expected contributions of my study.

³ The term winning coalition (W) refers to definition provided by Bueno de Mesquita in *The Logic of Political Survival* (2005): "the subgroup of the selectorate (S) who maintain incumbents in office and in exchange receive special privileges" and its size is related to the ratio of the loyalty norm (W/S).

CHAPTER 1 - History of the Italian Political System and Government Stability

1.1 The Liberal State

The Italian Kingdom was unified on the 17 March 1861 following the Second Italian War of Independence against the Austrian Empire and the successful expedition of the *Thousands* led by Giuseppe Garibaldi to liberate Southern Italy from the Bourbon rulers. Since the 1861, the liberal state had to deal with a series of political, social and economic issues that threatened the internal unification of the country. First, the electoral law allowed only a small minority of the population the right to vote, approximately 420,000 out of 22 million inhabitants. The franchise was granted only to male citizens over 25 who were literate and paid at least forty Lire of direct tax. In 1882, the electorate was extended through the implementation of a new electoral law that decreased the minimum age up to 21. The universal male suffrage was finally introduced in 1912, while women waited for the end of World War II to gain the right to vote. During the Italian Republic, the main political parties have often preferred to transform the political system through new electoral laws, instead of radical institutional reforms (Bracci, 2011). Second, the Italian kingdom, in 1871, was made up of different regional societies, with different economies and ways of life, cultures and religious practices, which were still culturally underdeveloped. Almost 70% of Italians were illiterate, but there was a different degree of literacy among regions. While the northern regions, like Piedmont and Lombardy, had a percentage of 40% of illiteracy, the Southern areas duplicated this percentage, reaching almost 90% of illiterate citizens. Moreover, education was almost inexistent, and people communicated mainly in dialect, having difficulties in understanding their compatriots from other regions (A'Hearn, Baten & Crayen, 2009). Finally, nation-building was hampered by economic backwardness. The rural-urban disparities in the geographic patterns of the country could not normalize the national growth, worsening the “Southern Question”. Although the agricultural sector occupied 60% of the Italian economy, the natural disadvantages of Southern regions of climate and soil, and its distance from the foreign countries, trumped investors who preferred to invest in less risky landlords of the north (Clark, 2014).

1.1.1 The Historical Right and Left

The high number of government turnover during the first fifty years of the Italian Kingdom represented the incapacity of the political system to promote a real Westminster model, based on the alternation of the two main wings, the Historical Right and Historical Left. Like many other Western

national assemblies of the 19th century, the Italian Parliament was not formed by real political parties, but mainly by local notables who performed institutional activities, such as the formation of the government, inside the Parliament. Indeed, these two wings, devoid of a stable organizational and ideological structure, expressed the interests with a strong regional base. While the Left represented the interests of Southern bourgeoisie, the Right those of the North. Indeed, as Duverger (1954) claimed, political parties began to be formed from local and ideological factors only once the political prerogatives were extended during the first democratization period at the beginning of 1900. In Italy, when the universal male suffrage granted the right to vote to a broader electorate, new political parties emerged in the Italian political system like the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in 1911 and, shortly after the end of the *non expedit* principle, the Christian-democratic Italian People's Party (PPI). However, the lack of a stable political system produced a fragmentation of the whole society and, above all, of the emerging middle class that pretended more active participation in the political life of the county (Körner, 2008).

The Historical Right has ruled the first fifteen years of the Italian Kingdom (1861-1876) with an average of one prime minister every eighteen months. During these years, the Right-wing governments aimed at the creation of a highly centralized state through the implementation of a series of laws that harmonized the legislative and administrative apparatus. For example, in 1865, the liberal-conservative government implemented a law for the unification of the administration by extending Piedmont laws towards the whole country, including civil law, civil procedure and, even, trade legislation. Furthermore, despite the acquisition of the treasury of the Reign of the two Sicilies, the liberal-conservative governments had to face the scarce financial resources due to the drastic costs of the independence wars that was only partially relieved by the acquisition of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies' treasury. In order to achieve the budget balance, in 1882, the Italian economy minister Quintino Sella enacted multiple fiscal policies that targeted, originally, the upper-class and, then, the lower-class population. The tax rate on profits in 1868 was the most unpopular policy that caused social unrest among the poorest regions of the kingdom that were finally repressed by the military intervention (Carocci, 2012).

In 1876, the objective of the balanced budget was achieved but the social and human costs were too high to avoid a political shifting with the rise of the Historical Left to the power. Indeed, the high costs led to a restriction on the salary that brought the birth of the first labour organizations aimed at safeguarding the employees from the tough work in the factories. Aside from the harsh fiscal policies, the war against the banditry caused the deaths of many innocent people, wrongly confused

as anti-unitary guerrillas. On the 18 march of 1876, the government's defeat on a motion of confidence can be considered the straw that breaks the camel's back, leading to the appointment of Agostino Depretis, leader of the Historical Left, as the new Prime Minister. The historical period between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century is usually known as transformism ("trasformismo"), characterized by a centrist government aimed at the preservation of the status quo through the isolation of extreme fringes. In order to maintain a stable majority in the Parliament, the Left was continuously accused of alighting the corruption system through a system of distribution of favours to local notables (Cammarrano, 2014). However, the phenomenon of transformism cannot be exclusively addressed to the Left because also the Right demonstrated their transformist nature when most of the right-wing deputies preferred to join the alliance with the Left instead of occupying the opposition benches, showing the complete failure of the Anglo-Saxon political model based on the Italian system (Musella, 2003).

1.1.2 The Giolitti Era

The end of the century was marked by a continuous succession of prime ministers who were unable to create a strong liberal political party and, as a consequence, were forced to collaborate with large majorities. In 1903, subsequently to the assassination of King Umberto I, the political instability ended with the appointment of Giolitti as the prime minister who considered the government as a neutral institution, oppositely to the political Parliament (Carusi, 2008). Following this approach, Giolitti succeeded to promote economic and cultural development for the whole society through the promulgation of substantial reforms, like the enlargement of the right to vote, thanks to the support of a sizeable liberal coalition. Despite his role as a competent conciliator, he was unable to solve the deviancies of the Italian institutions and its elitarian political system before the emergence of Fascism.

In conclusion, despite the territorial unification, Italian Kingdom was still culturally and socially divided. The national resurgence ("Risorgimento") could not simply nullify the two different realities characterizing the North and the South. Scholars coming from different backgrounds had divergent opinions regarding the effects of the Italian liberal state. The anti-liberal perspective of Marxism brought many criticisms towards the liberal post-unification period. Antonio Gramsci, the key figure of neo-Marxism, considered this phase as the beginning of a failed state and claiming this period as the main responsible for Fascism (Gramsci, 1975). Differently from the French revolution, the Italian Risorgimento was perceived as passive bourgeois revolution (Carter, 2011). The anti-liberal interpretation relied on the weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie that, lacking the popular legitimacy, failed to lead the masses and to promote progressive developments. Furthermore, the local

notables that constituted the Parliament created a dense network of patronage, the so-called transformism. The élite established a system for the exchange of favours in return of votes, strengthening the corruption and increasing the concerns about the liberal state. In fact, the Gramscian thesis about the emergence of fascism was also supported by other contemporary historians. At the beginning of 1900, Gaetano Salvemini (Montanelli, 2013) accused Giolitti of being the Minister of the Underworld (“Ministro della Malavita”) due to his political incorrectness. Indeed, Salvemini believed that, in order to elect his fellow deputies, Giolitti ruthlessly practised election rigging, exploiting the backwardness of the South and further deteriorating the liberal Italian economy. In contrast to the Marxist school, Liberal historians considered the liberal transition a flourishing opportunity for the Italian kingdom. Benedetto Croce, one of the foremost liberal philosophers of the 19th century, portrayed Italy as the most democratic country in Europe from the unification until the outbreak of the first world war (Croce, 1929). Croce has repeatedly compared Fascism as “an intellectual and moral disease” that suddenly infected the liberal Italian country. Unlike Salvemini, Croce praised Giolitti’s efforts in creating a modern welfare state that was able to satisfy the demands coming from either right-wing industrialists or left-wing employees, considering Giolitti the forerunner of the American president Roosevelt (Coppa, 1971).

1.2 Fascism and the transition to Democracy

1.2.1 Fascism

The aftermaths of WWI provoked dramatic shifts in the political scenario. The proportional electoral law of 1919 favoured broad alliances, transforming the political structure from the elite parties, composed by local notables, into a party-based system, where the majority was created inside the Parliament among parliamentary groups, rather than aggregating individuals. Furthermore, as a consequence of the Bolshevik revolution in URSS, the PSI split into two main factions, the moderate wing remained in the party, while in 1921 the Marxist-Leninists formed the Communist Party of Italy (PcdI). The latter was created according to the Bolshevik model of Lenin, aiming at promoting the proletarian revolution following the orders of the Comintern. Lastly, the parliamentary strength of the Liberals was dramatically reduced due to the emergence of the socialists and the Catholics of the PPI, increasing the difficulties to form a government of liberal bases.

The new National Fascist party (PNF) was presented as the liberal solution to the political crisis. Unlike the previous liberal parties, the PNF was able to gain consensus among the masses of the low and middle bourgeoisie. Due to the advance of fascism in the Italian society and with the

implementation of the Acerbo law, an extreme majoritarian electoral law, the PNF showed its real totalitarian nature. In 1926, Fascism banned every political organization. This political diaspora led to the imprisonment of many opponents, like Nenni (PSI) by the German army, and to the exile of other political enemies, like Togliatti (PcdI) to URSS. Despite the severe blow to the Italian democracy, the Fascist regime, and particularly World War II, have been considered crucial for the ideological and political maturation of the antifascist parties for the upcoming years (Colarizi, 2016).

1.2.2 Transition to democracy

The transition to democracy is usually divided into two phases, the first period (1943-1945), that led to the emergence of antifascist forces, the Committee of national liberation (CNL) during World War II, and the second one (1945-1948), when the Italian citizens voted in a national referendum in favour of the Italian Republic and the emerging antifascist parties enacted the first democratic constitution.

1.2.3 The end of Fascism (1943-1945)

The outbreak of World War II gave rise to a process of a joint effort of anti-fascist forces of all different sorts, the committee of national liberation (CNL), headed by Ivanoe Bonomi. Antifascist parties did not accept and recognize the newly formed the Republic of Salò, preferring to collaborate with the king and facilitating the emergence of partisan movements. After the armistice of 1943 and the rapid dissolution of the Fascist movement, the king Vittorio Emanuele III was unable to rule the Italian Kingdom, leaving the hard task to the antifascist parties. The committee of national liberation assumed the institutional powers to guide the population towards the liberation, thanks to the support of the Anglo-American allies, and finally to establish a new form of state.

During fascism, values of democracy and freedom have been violated and the plurality of political parties was unknown to many citizens who grew up in an authoritarian country. Despite its young formation, the presence of DC was quickly widespread throughout the peninsula thanks to its Christian roots. The sudden endorsement of Pope Pius XII was the first step of the Church to underline its antifascist vocation. Then, the PCI abandoned its revolutionary ideology, acquiring a more moderate position in order to adapt to the new democratic rules. Inside the socialist family, the extreme fragmentation, caused by the destruction of the social and organizational networks by the fascist regime, led to an alliance between the Movement of Proletarian Unity (MUP) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), forming the Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP). Since the unification and the proclamation of the Italian Kingdom, the republicans were striving to achieve a

republic form of state under the Italian Republican party (PRI). The committee of national liberation was composed by other small parties, namely the Action Party (PDA), the Party of the Democracy of Labour (DDL) and the Man's Front (UQ). The democratic-liberal orientation founded in 1942 the Action Party from the former Justice and Freedom movement of Carlo Rosselli. The Party of the Democracy of Labour was guided by Ivanoe Bonomi, the first president of the first antifascist government of 1944. The emergence of so many parties spread concerns, above all, among the inhabitants of Southern Italy. Guglielmo Giannini caught this discomfort and his party Common Man's Front emphasized the uncertainty towards the emerging Italian partitocracy.

1.2.4 The Italian Republic and the Constituent Assembly (1945-1948)

Without a legitimate ruler, the end of World War II led to a new problem of identity. Indeed, the afterwards of the WWII experienced several government turnovers that ended up with the appointment of Alcide De Gasperi as President of the Council, thanks to his moderate approach and his ability to mediate and to maintain the unity among the antifascist parties. Furthermore, this peaceful phase was essential given the upcoming elections, namely the national referendum for the choice of the form of state between monarchy and republic and, second, the election of the constituent assembly.

On 2nd June of 1946, almost 11 million people voted in favour of the Republic. Naturally, DC's reluctance of taking sides has been determinant for the result. Indeed, afraid of losing votes from the South lower classes, DC has preferred to let electors choose freely, leading to a feeble victory of the Republic (54%) versus the Monarchy (46%). There has been a different trend compared to the geographic position. A vast majority of citizens in Southern Italy choose the monarchy, while the inhabitants of North Italy preferred the republic. Some weeks later, the king Victor Emanuele III abdicated and escaped in Portugal, leaving the throne to his son, Umberto III. After almost one century of power, the Kingdom of Italy was replaced by the current Italian Republic.

On the same date of the national referendum, voters elected the deputies of the constituent assembly for the formulation of the new Italian constitution. The constitutional commission was formed by a vast majority of the deputies elected in the constituent assembly in order to achieve some outcomes widely accepted. As evidenced by the composition of the sub-commissions, the constitutional chart aimed to include the Catholic, the liberal and socialist values. Indeed, the part regarding the Economic and the Social Relationships were chaired by the PSIUP, the Rights and Obligations of the Citizens by DC, and the Constitutional Organization of the State by the PCI.

Moreover, the constitution included some strong provisions to safeguard the democratic system, namely the impossibility to overthrow the republic form of state, the absolute majority for further changes, limitations of the Prime Minister's powers and also the formation of bicameralism. Once the constitution officially entered into force on the 1st January 1948, the Assembly was dissolved, and the new Italian Parliament was finally established.

1.3 The First Republic

The 1946 referendum and the first legislative elections of 1948 have been crucial not only for the formation of the new institutional framework but even for the upcoming domestic and foreign politics. The political scenario of the left wing saw the victory of the communists over the socialists, thanks to their more solid involvement in the society, the rigid internal discipline, the strong ties with international superpower such as the Soviet Union. As a consequence, the following years the communist party (PCI) has always been the largest party on the left-wing side. On the contrary, the Christian Democracy (DC), frightened by the possibility to lose voters from the right-wing due to the increasing competition, led to a rupture from the socialists and communists in favour of a centrist establishment on the political spectrum. Furthermore, in addition to the traditional cleavages of the domestic politics, the end of World War II brought new international cleavages that characterized the Italian political system, the Western-oriented parties and the pro-communist parties (Cotta & Verzichelli, 2016).

The consolidation of the democratic system was based on the exclusion of the fringe parties, namely the Communist Party (PCI) and the Italian Socialist Movement (MSI). The strong relationship between the largest oppositional party, the PCI, and the totalitarian Soviet Union reduced any likelihood of a government alternation, considering the PCI a high risk for the democratic parties and the Italian Republic. This ambiguous situation led to what Galli (1966) defined as "imperfect bipartitism". Indeed, despite the high percentage, even up to 34% in the political elections of 1976, the PCI has never been in power since the Communist Party has always been excluded during the government formation. And more importantly, the Christian Democracy ensured a permanent position in the government, representing in the eyes of citizens as the only political force that could preserve the democracy from the anti-system party (Sartori, 1976). As a result, DC has been in power for the whole duration of the first Republic, but, since it never obtained a majority in the Parliament, it was subjected to a continuous negotiation among the small centre-left or centre-right political parties that caused a high level of government instability for the whole period.

The cabinet instability of the Italian political system has been compared to Hanoverian England by Sir Lewis Namier (Allum, 1974). Indeed, the “Namier party model” was characterized by a continuous change of governments, but the same political groups composed the formation of new cabinets. In Italy, the first fifty years experienced the centrality of DC in every government and the alternation of government supporting parties, both right and left wing. Following Allum’s thinking, the political immobility was strengthened by electoral stability. While in Hanoverian England, the stability was caused by the corruptive system and the restricted suffrage, in Italy this electoral stability was entrenched by four main factors (Allum, 1974). First, the Christian and Marxist ideological tradition of the nineteenth century allowed a broad electoral basis from the Church organizations for the DC and the labour associations for the PCI. The second factor was the clientelist system that was extended in the Italian peninsula through channels of bossism and patronage for specific interest groups. For example, the DC brought a close relationship with Confagricultura, the leading Italian agricultural association, in order to marginalize the demands raised by other actors from the agricultural field and to avoid that other government supporting parties might gain influence in such a crucial sector for the Christian Democracy’s electorate (Cotta & Vezzichelli, 2006). Then, the Cold War widened the gap between the two blocks, becoming a polarizing factor that led to controversial ruptures and unifications within the socialist party. With the membership of the NATO, Italy was clearly collocated on the western side of international politics, sidelining the Communist party and its alliance with the Soviet Union. Lastly, the proportional electoral law has been so easily overpassed that it did not interfere with the creation or dissolution of political parties due to the low threshold, leaving the electorate the possibility to vote without strategic reasoning.

The peculiarities of the Italian Republic and the high government instability of the First Republic led many scholars to analyse its political system. In addition to the “imperfect bipartitism” of Galli that was previously described, there were other two interpretations, namely Sartori’s “polarized pluralism” and Farneti’s “centripetal pluralism”. First, Sartori (1976) considered Italian politics an ideological polarized space between left and right. He sustained that there were three poles (left, centre and right) instead of two, as in the usual bipartisan model or moderate pluripartisan. While the fringe poles, namely PCI and MSI, were excluded and they formed the opposition, the political parties that composed the central pole formed the government coalitions. In this way, the competition tended to be centrifugal, where fringe parties moved towards the extreme of the political spectrum in order to achieve electoral gains and they act in a politics of outbidding, promising unrealizable proposals to the electorate. However, following Sartori’s hypothesis, there would have been an erosion of the centre in favour of the extreme fringes. But, as Di Palma (1978) underlined,

the extensive parliamentary collaboration between the government and the communist opposition, extremely pronounced during the “historical compromise”, avoided the centrifugal competition. Indeed, Farneti (1983) considered Sartori’s interpretation very strong until the 1960s, while afterwards the political spectrum was characterized by a centripetal dynamic that reduced the ideological space between political parties in order to increase the possibilities to forge a government with the centre.

1.3.1 The years of the Centrism (1948-1963)

The first legislative elections in 1948 proclaimed the victory of the DC and established the beginning of a new phase in the Italian political system, the *centrism*. The political scenario was represented by the “Popular Front” composed by the left forces, communists and socialists. The Christian Democrats, allied with the Social Democrats and the Republicans, were opposed to the block of the left parties. Then, the Liberals and the Common Man's Front converged in the National Block. At the extreme right, there were the monarchists and the newly born Italian Social Movement. The electoral result declared the predominance of the DC coalition, while in the defeated Popular Front, the PCI achieved a political hegemony towards the PSI, receiving more support than the socialist ally. Moreover, this result highlighted one of the constant electoral tendencies of Italian republican history, namely that when the vote took place in a climate of clear political-ideological opposition, the electorate preferred to converge the votes on the two major parties (DC and PCI) of the opposing blocks, rather than to disperse them on the allied minor lists.

In the second half of 1950, the centrism entered a crisis period and it began the long phase of transition towards the centre-left coalition, the alliance between the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. Indeed, after the failure of the Scam law (“Legge Truffa”) in 1953, the electoral support of the government was shrinking making new alliances necessary for the democratic survival. In the PSI, there was a widespread feeling that the alliance with the communists would not lead to great outcomes, especially in electoral terms. Thus, a slow process of detachment from the extreme left and closer approach to the DC started. At the 1955 Turin Congress, the socialist leader Nenni explicitly launched an invitation to the DC to an openness to the left. But, since the PSI was still too tied to the communists, the time was not yet ripe because the socialist left wing was still willing to continue the alliance. The elections of 1958 decreed a steady growth of the PSI against the substantial stability of the communists, while in the DC, Tambroni failed to set up executive capable of obtaining parliamentary confidence with right-wing parties, leading to an opening to the left as the only plausible path to form a government coalition.

1.3.2 The First Centre-Left Government (1963-1976)

The alliance between the DC and PSI started during the fourth Fanfani cabinet that obtained the parliamentary confidence thanks to the abstention of the socialists. Although it remained in office for just a year, until the elections of June 1963, it carried out some of the significant reforms included in the centre-left government program. For example, in 1962 a commission for economic planning was established and, in December, the electricity industry was nationalized with the birth of Enel. Then, at the beginning of the following year, several school reform measures were adopted, with the creation of a single middle school and the extension of compulsory attendance to 14 years. On the other hand, the green plan for agriculture and the implementation of the regional order envisaged in the Constitution, which represented other priority objectives of the government alliance, will never be implemented.

The socialists officially entered the government when Aldo Moro started the first of the three consecutive governments in which members of all the centre-left quadripartite participated (DC, PRI, PSDI, PSI). The original reform program, which remained unfinished, was immediately re-launched but the coalition seemed to have lost strength and its initial incisiveness. An economic crisis was holding back the implementation of very costly interventions, and Moro had also to deal with the pressures of the great economic actors such as finance and agrarian lobbies who were more favourable to the preservation of the status quo.

The end of the 1960s was characterized by an explosion of student protests all over Europe. The economic miracle, in fact, had promised well-being and success for the whole society, which it could not offer in reality. Hence, young people coming from low and middle-class rejected the values and models of the miracle itself and started a cultural revolution where the institutional power and family values become the main targets of protesters. Subsequently, the working class joined the youth protest and, in this climate of high tension, trade union movements reached the peak of their strength. The strike, therefore, ceased to be a tool of struggle aimed exclusively at wage claims or specific problems in the field of work and turned into a more practical means of union strategy that aimed at the implementation of those radical reforms that the centre-left governments did not have the strength to realize. This period was nominated “pansindacalism” (Baglioni, 1975), that was an attempt by the unions to replace the political parties, earning themselves a privileged channel of dialogue and negotiation with the government.

The events of 1968-69, however, affected the legislative activity of the following years, contributing to nourishing a new reformist push that would materialize in the approval of the workers' statute, in the implementation of the regions, in the referendums and the interventions concerning divorce. The overall society was disappointed not only because the student movement failed to impose a revolutionary transformation of politics, but above all, because the progressive forces managed to implement only a small part - albeit necessary - of their reform program.

With the outbreak of the oil crisis and the high inflation, the Italian government had to face the urgent problem of the economic crisis. For this reason, the PCI announced a more tenuous opposition on economic policy issues and a favourable vote on measures to alleviate the emergency. Thus, at the end of 1973, the new secretary Berlinguer launched for the first time the idea of the "historical compromise", between DC and PCI. The massive shift to the left of the electorate - not only the young youth, but also middle and Catholic classes - showed that for the first time the PCI was no longer seen as a proponent of revolutionary tendencies, but of proper governance techniques. In the meanwhile, the idea of a government of national solidarity was becoming the only solution to the years of lead ("anni di piombo") characterized by the terrorist attacks and massacres caused by the Red and Black Brigades.

1.3.3 The Historic Compromise (1976-1979)

The electoral campaign of June 1976 was dominated by the possibility of the overtaking of the Communists over the DC. After the success of the leftist forces in the administrative offices of the previous year, the Christian Democrats were, once again, raising the banner of anti-communism, re-proposing themselves to the voters as the only bulwark against the "red danger". On the other hand, the PCI of Berlinguer continued to support the hypothesis of a "historical compromise", that was the rebirth of the anti-fascist coalition and a government of "democratic unity" to face the moment of crisis. In the end, the electoral result marked a clear affirmation of the PCI, which had never obtained so many votes, but the planned overtaking against the DC, however, did not realize because the Catholic party was able to recover a large part of the support it had lost.

However, the Italian political system reached its maximum level of bipolarization and the DC could neither ally with the PSI which, after the electoral defeat, was suffering a moment of internal crisis, nor relying on its traditional allies, that became too small from the result of the polls. Therefore, the only solution was to entrust the leadership of the country in no small alliance, the national solidarity ("solidarietà nazionale"). Of course, it could not occur immediately, since the entry of the

PCI into the government would be difficult to digest after the entire electoral campaign that was set in the name of anti-communism. Thus, a single-colour government led by Andreotti was born, thanks to the PCI's abstention. For the first time since the CLN, the communists entered the governmental area, albeit not directly but only on the parliamentary level. Thus, the national solidarity declared the end of the "conventio ad excludendum".

In January 1978, the Andreotti government headed for an institutional crisis following the ultimatum issued by the PCI: either the communist party was allowed to enter the government directly, or they would return to the opposition benches. The Moro kidnapping by the Red Brigades allowed Andreotti to escape from the political crisis and he managed to form a new executive supported by the abstention of the communists. There was already a new government solution: the Pentapartito.

1.3.4 The Phase of Pentapartito (1979-1992)

In the late seventies and early eighties, after the national solidarity that had allowed the PCI to leave the isolation momentarily, the PSI resumed the governmental status. Compared to the past, however, the PSI was widely renewed and most importantly, it was governed by a young, dynamic and ambitious ruling class headed by Bettino Craxi.

The Pentapartito formula focused on the alliance between DC and PSI, but it was based on mutual suspicion and strong internal conflict. However, since the main opposition force, the PCI, was again in crisis and isolated on the left of the line, the Pentapartito was, in fact, the only possible solution at the moment in the Italian political scenario. This formula of government was based on rules that represented an absolute novelty, namely an equal presence in the government between the Christian Democrats and the representatives of the four smaller allied parties (PSI, PSDI, PLI and PRI) and, surprisingly, an alternation of the leaders of all the parties majority to the Presidency of the Council.

This situation favoured a socialist enlargement. Indeed, the 1983 electoral results signalled a net downsizing of the Christian Democrat political primacy (about six percentage points); the PCI, on the other hand, lost very little while the PSI gained. But more than in electoral terms, the strong profit of the PSI lied in the political role that the scenario redesigned by the elections: DC and PCI were in a situation of substantial equilibrium, separated only by about 2 percentage points; the socialists, therefore, could act as arbiter and obtained all the possible advantages from this situation,

as in the case of the Presidency of the Council of Spadolini, since no alternative government was practicable without their consent.

The Pentapartito dominated the Italian political scene until 1992, the year of the crisis and the breakup of the party system. One by one, passing through an early dissolution of the Chambers in 1987, seven governments followed one another, preparing the ground for a drastic political change.

1.3.5 Tangentopoli and the End of the First Republic (1992-1994)

The 1992 elections decreed the rejection of all traditional government parties of the First Republic. At the polls, the electorate signalled strong demand for a renewal of political practice, but there were still no new political identities capable of legitimately replacing the old parties. Beyond these upheavals, there was the outbreak of a new scandal called Bribesville (“Tangentopoli”), a series of investigations and trials, started on 17 February 1992 with the arrest of Mario Chiesa, which shed light on the system of corruption that had dominated for decades the vast majority of Italian political scenario. Tangentopoli, however, only represented the straw that broke the camel's back. The deep motivations of the crisis and the collapse of the party system, in fact, had profound causes - both to internal disputes and linked to the international context.

Indeed, the Italian political system also suffered the collateral effects of the earthquake that had upset the global scenario. The balances that kept the regime of the parties in place, in fact, could survive only within a specific international context, characterized by the cold war and by the bipolarity between two superpowers that represented the different cultural and ideological ideas. But, the collapse of the Berlin's wall marked the end of communism and its ideology. Furthermore, the process of European integration reached a significant step. In this changed international situation, the conditions on which the Italian system had stood up were suddenly changed.

Besides, since there was no longer the fear of communism, the need, felt by a large slice of the electorate, to converge their votes on the DC disappeared. Moreover, the Christian Democrats had to deal with one big challenge, namely the disaffection of a large part of the electorate towards the corruptive system which considered the DC as the main responsible. On the other side, the PCI was incapable of satisfying the needs of the youngest people because of its structures and its language. The way of understanding and making politics were obsolete and inadequate to face the problems of the new generations. The very concept of anti-fascism, which had also been a formidable electoral tool, had become an obsolete theme for the upcoming electorate.

1.4 The Second Republic

The end of the twentieth century experienced the end of the first republic and the beginning of a long transition phase, also thanks to a series of referendums promoted by Mario Segni, Occhetto and the Radicals. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Occhetto's PCI became the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and with this new look began the race for the country's government while the Rifondazione Comunista group comes off its left wing; the phenomenon of the Northern League exploded, which under the flag of anti-meridionalism concealed a more general intolerance of the prosperous north towards the dysfunctions of the political-administrative system; the DC, overwhelmed by the scandals for rampant corruption in the country, with Martinazzoli, made a last attempt at survival summarizing the ancient name of the Popular Party; the PSI disappeared; the MSI, at the Fiuggi congress, became the National Alliance, under the guidance of Gianfranco Fini. However, a transformation process had begun and concerned every party from left to right.

In addition to the conjunctural emergency of Tangetopoli, the Italian political system had to face, also four main structural crises (Bull & Rhodes, 1997). First, the crisis of the traditional political parties which were unable to face the new emerging challenges; Second, the crisis of the political class which assumed the negative label of *partitocrazia*; Third, the crisis of the institutions which were considered as outdated and inefficient to tackle the financial state emergency; Lastly, the crisis of the state which led to a loss of faith in politicians and in the national identity.

The meltdown of the old configuration of parties was extraordinarily rapid, so rapid, in fact, that it created a vacuum which new and recycled parties and movements attempted to fill. This emptiness allowed the creation and successful electoral launch of a genuinely new and original phenomenon, Forza Italia (FI), usually described as a 'virtual party' for its ability to convey messages, agendas, data, information, in real time (McCharty, 1996). Despite the political turmoil and the following emergence of new political parties, the system was unable to find stability, as evidenced by the intense conflict in the parliamentary majority that expressed four governments and gradually crumbled with every election: the European, the regional and finally the national elections.

1.4.1 The 94' Elections: the centre-Right in office

The 1994 elections decreed the victory of Forza Italia and Lega Nord, united in the Polo della Libertà, and of Forza Italia and the National Alliance, united in the Polo del Buon Governo and the defeat of the other two poles, the Progressives (PDS, Rifondazione, Verdi, Alleanza Democratica,

Rete, Psi), led by PDS secretary Achille Occhetto, and the Patto per l'Italia (PPI and Patto Segni), led by Mario Segni and Mino Martinazzoli.

The real winner turned out to be Silvio Berlusconi, a tycoon with vast interests, and his new political party, Forza Italia. The declared purpose was to succeed the old parties and to build an alternative to the PDS. In order to achieve this objective, Berlusconi devoted all his energies to the project of building a political force capable of filling the political vacuum left by the *partitocrazia*. In the beginning, Berlusconi commissioned a series of analyses on the orientations of the public opinion, which expressed a high degree of satisfaction for his personality. Indeed, Forza Italia had usually been considered as 'personal party' (Calise, 2011; McDonnell 2013). For millions of citizens, Berlusconi embodied the ideal of the successful man, as the surveys confirmed, from which the leader of FI focused to build his image carefully. Thus, his picture of the self-made man complemented his origins from the middle-small classes, despite the accumulated wealth. "I am one of you", this was the paternalistic and reassuring message transmitted to the electorates in his appearances on television and during the political rallies. However, several political scientists concentrated their studies on the business-firm party for its organizational model (Hopkin & Paolucci, 1999). In Italy and Europe, FI was the first successful experiment of a broad political party created by a commercial company, a real business party, founded by a corporate group and directed by the Fininvest personnel with managerial criteria in the organization and administration. In fact, such a rapid and extraordinary organizational success was ensured thanks to the almost unlimited financial and human resources available to Berlusconi, who was supported by the specialist skills of his analysts, consultants, media technicians and, above all, journalists.

However, the victory of the right in the 1994 legislative elections was a brief interlude. The electoral campaign had just begun, and Berlusconi and his collaborators had to face earnest judicial investigations. Indeed, the Berlusconi government, with the entry of Fini, immediately encountered numerous difficulties that resulted in judicial clashes with the Public Prosecutor in Milan, in political clashes with the Lega di Bossi and social clashes with the trade unions, especially regarding the pension reform. These hindrances led to a rapid fall of his government in December 1994 and the premature end of the legislature, after the brief period of the technical government of Lamberto Dini (former Treasury Minister of the Berlusconi government), supported from the outside by the centre-left and the Northern League. The 1996 elections were conducted during this political atmosphere, but, this time, the new cartel of the left, the Ulivo, was proclaimed as the winner.

1.4.2 The 96' Elections: the centre-left coalition in office

Two years after the 1994 electoral victory, on 21 April 1996 the Polo delle Libertà was defeated by the Ulivo coalition (centre-left coalition composed of PDS, PPI, Lista Dini, Verdi, La Rete and other minor formations), led by former president of the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI), Romano Prodi.

The secession of the Lega Nord mainly caused the defeat of the centre-right government. The remarkable success in the 1996 elections was not enough to counterbalance the isolation in the system, determined by Bossi's choice to leave the Polo della Libertà. In order to keep his electorate reliable and above all, to maintain its visibility, the Northern League leader engaged in an extraordinary operation of marketing and communication that even passed for the construction of a cultural tradition. Thus, they tried to present themselves as a real nation with its lawn of Pontida and the figure of Alberto da Giussano.

On the other side, despite the contrasts within the parliamentary majority, the centre-left government was characterized by rigorous policies, allowing the adoption of the euro, the beginning of a serious of privatization process following the Maastricht parameters, the revival of the economy and employment. In fact, some internal compromises led to the replacement in October 1998 of Prodi, who had led the Ulivo coalition in the electoral campaign, with Massimo D'Alema, leader of the DS, and following the defeat in the regional elections of 2000, with Giuliano Amato.

1.4.3 A new Bipolarism (2001-2013)

The revenge of the Casa delle Libertà in the 2001 general elections seemed to confirm that the Italian political system had started the path of a virtuous bipolarity, based on the physiological majority-opposition alternation as in the Anglo-Saxon democracy. By expressing a recognizable leader, the two main factions could ask citizens for a vote for their candidate and their coalition, stressing the importance of the leader and the role of the President of the Council.

At the political elections of 12 May 2001, the Casa delle Libertà (Forza Italia, Alleanza Nazionale, Biancofiore, Lega Nord, Nuovo PSI) took its revenge on the Ulivo (Ds, Margherita, Girasole, Party of Italian Communists). The dualism of Silvio Berlusconi and Gianfranco Fini beat that opposite side constituted by the former mayor of Rome Francesco Rutelli and the DS Piero Fassino.

The centre-left forces had very few optimistic forecasts on the imminent political vote due to the poor results of the European elections and the administrative elections of 2000. In addition, the Ulivo lost its charismatic leader Prodi, who was elected as president of the European Commission. As stated before, the designation of a head of the coalition was indispensable. On the other side, Berlusconi was still a strong candidate who summed up the entire coalition in his personality. Finding an antagonist at Berlusconi's level of popularity and visibility, however, appeared difficult for the centre-left parties, which could not appoint a leader of the DS as in 1994 again. The most obvious solution would have been the President of the Council, Giuliano Amato, an esteemed technician in Italy and abroad. Surprisingly, the Ulivo preferred the election of Francesco Rutelli, leader of the Margherita. Rutelli, a former radical, was popular thanks to his victory in the elections of the Rome administration in 1993 when he defeated Fini, despite Berlusconi's support. As a mayor, Rutelli had shown remarkable managerial qualities and particular political abilities, increasing his credibility. But, the divisions of the centre-left during the elections due to the rupture of Rifondazione Comunista and Di Pietro from the Ulivo coalition and the failure to demonstrate the results achieved in five years caused the loss for the leftists parties, despite of few votes (16.839.562 votes for the centre-right coalition versus 16.406.969 votes of the Ulivo).

During the 2006 elections, the new political system experienced a very high bipolarization rate (99.54% of the votes for the election of the Chamber of Deputies were attributed to the sum of the two coalitions) and a very high internal fragmentation (13 lists were presented by the centre-left coalition and 12 lists by the centre-right coalition).

The 2006 elections were remembered for an unbelievably uncertain outcome: the final victory of the centre-left coalition led by Romani Prodi was decided in the Chamber of Deputies by a margin of only 24,000 votes, but sufficient for the coalition to obtain, by virtue of the Calderoli electoral law, also known as *Porcellum*, the majority prize in that branch of Parliament. In the Senate, on the other hand, with a total number of votes lower than the adverse coalition, the same centre-left had obtained a very narrow majority of only two senators, thanks to the regional majority prizes and the excellent result of the Ulivo coalition in the district for the Italians abroad.

The very high fragmentation within the centre-left, coupled with the very slim majority obtained in the Senate, favoured the exhausting instability that in less than two years determined the fall of the second Prodi government. During these years, while the almost perfect bipolarization of 2006 was slightly scaled down (due to the decision by Casini and its *Unione di Centro* (UDC) to present himself to the elections separated from Berlusconi), the bipartism index rose to the highest

value, thanks to the choice of the leading parties to build two majoritarian parties: Berlusconi's Popolo della libertà (Pdl) and Veltroni's Partito Democratico (Pd). This state of affairs, from the observers, defined as "limited Biporalism" (D'Alimonte & Chiaramonte, 2010), represented a new critical point of the Italian political scenario, where Pdl and Pd obtained more than 70% of the votes.

In 2008, the Italians were called to vote and decided to bring Berlusconi back to Palazzo Chigi, who won against his rival Walter Veltroni, the first secretary of the newborn Partito Democratico (Pd). However, Berlusconi resigned in 2011 in favour of Mario Monti. In fact, the country was at risk of default with the spread exceeding 500 basis points, an economy that was struggling to recover and the unemployment was steadily increasing. Thus, the Parliament decided to form a "technical" government, which will be remembered for its rigorous austerity policies.

1.5 The Tripolar phase

The fluidity within these same majority parties and the events of the subsequent political cycle would have easily demonstrated that the illusion of near-bipartisanism could not last so long, opening new prospects for a change of the party system in Italy. Indeed, despite the incapacity to maintain a stable and effective government, the interaction between the electoral system and the party system had in any case allowed the maintenance of bipolar competition. Meanwhile, the 2013 elections seemed to testify the return to a multipolar order. This time, fragmentation between and within the coalitions was growing. The political offer changed with the appearance of two new political subjects and the lists within the centre-right and the centre-left multiplied.

The elections proclaimed the emergence of a third pole, but it was not that of Mario Monti: moderate, Europeanist, governmental. It was instead the radical, protestant and populist of Beppe Grillo, who became the first Italian party in the Chamber of Deputies. The vote of the Five Stars Movement (M5S) undoubtedly had a strong anti-establishment connotation (Della Porta, Fernández, Kouki, Moscow, 2017) which translated into the South in a massive refusal to traditional parties as to signal the urgency of a change and an apparent discontinuity. Due to the failure to achieve a majority by one of the three poles, the political scenario indicated the existence of a new structure polarized composed by the centre-left collation, the centre-right coalition and the M5S. A centrifugal mechanic that seemed to revitalize, in another form, that "ideological polarization" that had long characterized the First Republic (Sartori, 1976). This new territorial polarization that was also socio-economic, in the extreme unresolved distance between

development and underdevelopment, between the North and the South, with a Centre that was not only a geographical place, but also a contestable area, competitive for all three poles.

The centre-left coalition “Italia. Bene Comune”, led by Pierluigi Bersani, received an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and a relative majority in the Senate. Although the Democratic Party and the centre-left had more votes than the PDL and the centre-right, they lost in the regions that assigned the most significant number of senators. Bersani was commissioned by the President of the Republic of Napolitano to form a government but he was forced to renounce in his attempt due to the lack of a stable majority in Palazzo Madama. The political stalemate was resolved only two months after the elections, on April 28, with the formation of the Letta government, deputy secretary of the Democratic Party. The Letta government was the first executive of the grand coalition in the history of the Italian Republic, as it included members of both the main coalitions that were opposed before the elections. Despite ample confidence, his government lasted less than a year. Indeed, in 2014, the Letta government was discouraged with a motion by the new Pd secretary, Matteo Renzi, after the famous statement “Enrico do not worry” (“Enrico stai sereno”). The new Renzi cabinet followed the resignation of the President of the Council. This executive has held up thanks to the Nazarene pact (“Patto del Nazareno”), signed with Berlusconi and lasted about a thousand days and a package of reforms was implemented, ranging from the jobs act to the civil unions. As a result of the defeat of the constitutional referendum, Matteo Renzi was forced to leave Palazzo Chigi and announced his resignation. The last phase of the legislature was concluded by the formation of a new government led by Paolo Gentiloni, the former Foreign Minister of Renzi, who gradually achieved some successful laws such as the law of living wills. Premier Gentiloni’s mandate lasted until the general election scheduled on 4 March 2018.

1.5.1 A new Republic?

The 2018 elections will be remembered in the history of the Italian Republic for the great victory of the Five Stars Movement and the League. The M5S became the first party and almost one person out of three voted it. The Five Stars Movement's hegemony in the southern regions, mostly in Campania and Sicily, achieved an incredible 50% of the votes. Behind the uncontested success of the M5S, the League has been the other winner of this electoral round. Thanks to his leader, Matteo Salvini, the League achieved his historic peak, overcoming Forza Italia and becoming the first party within the centre-right coalition. The leader Salvini had the merit in this successful operation of restyling his political party, first changing the symbol from Lega Nord to Lega and, subsequently, replacing the historic green of the Pianura Padana with the patriotic blue. This

process of nationalizing the party has been essential to gather votes even in the regions of southern Italy, transforming the party from a regional to a national party.

The main losers of 2018 elections have been the two main parties of the Second Republic: PD and FI. First, the Democratic Party that led the country in the last five years was brutally defeated, ranking around 18%. Furthermore, the disappearance of its "red regions" (historically centre-left regions), a certainty that seemed to be granitic and lasted practically for a century: the centre-left was first only in Tuscany. Regions such as Emilia-Romagna and Umbria were conquered by the centre-right, while Marche by the M5S. Second, Forza Italia has been the other political force defeated by this election round. The results not only disappointed FI's expectations, but they also put a symbolic end to the political phase inaugurated in 1994 and to the Berlusconi myth. For the first time, in fact, his personality has not been able to bring his party to success.

Following the impossibility of forming a government with the Democratic Party, above all because of the adverse position of Matteo Renzi, the Five Stars Movements started a negotiation with the League of Matteo Salvini. Although the left wing of M5S, led by Roberto Fico, appeared to be very sceptical about the Northern League alternative, mainly due to its xenophobic propaganda towards migrants, there were no other possible solutions. Thus, despite the difficulties encountered in the drafting of the "Government Contract" and the formation of the list of Ministers, the Conte Government was born on June 1st.

For the first time in 24 years, none of the two major parties in the Second Republic, Forza Italia and PD, was part of the government. Certainly, the 4 March elections have been a breaking point of the "old" political system, the one considered as the historical dualism between the centre-right and the centre-left that ruled Italy in the last twenty-five years. The apparent victory of the populist parties (Lega and M5s), gave a clear and strong signal to the democratic, liberal and pro-European Italian politics.

CHAPTER 2 – The Logic of Political Survival

“The politics behind survival in office is, we believe, the essence of politics.”

(De Mesquita et al., 2005)

Political survival is considered the foremost challenge that every political leader has to face in order to retain power. As a consequence, leaders' actions that regards the types of policies implemented and the allocation of benefits are influenced by the strong desire to maintain a position of authority (Downs, 1957; Black, 1958; Wintrobe, 1998). The desire to survive shapes the whole political process and field of action in any regime, either democratic, authoritarian or totalitarian.

The literature on democratic and authoritarian regimes have provided different models of power maximization of political leaders and their government. Since the old age of Thucydides, Aristotle, Sun Tzu, scholars have continuously been interested in totalitarian forms of states. More recently, Linz (2000) demonstrated that in bureaucratic-military authoritarian regimes, consisting mainly of army officers and bureaucrats, their ruling coalition is not institutionalized, and it provoked low legitimacy and instability. Differently, studies conducted by Arrow (1951), Riker (1982, 1996), McKelvey (1976, 1979), and Schofield (1978) have proved how the selection of policies can be determinant for the political survival in democratic regimes. However, three primary sources can threaten governmental stability, namely domestic, external or revolutionary challenges. To keep their office, rulers have to carefully use the right tools that avoid internal revolutions and military attacks but, to accomplish this goal, political leaders need to choose the right institutions that guarantee their interests and prevent any political inconvenience. Indeed, when political rulers have enough resources to appease the possible challengers, they can easily maintain their support stable and solid. Differently, when incumbents lack funds, or they misallocate them, their offices can be threatened by insurgencies and revolutions. Scholars have analysed how political leaders, especially political elites, try to find the support of a winning coalition to overcome the moment of crisis (Moore 1966; Tilly 1978; Olson 1982; Goldstone 1991; Skocpol 1998). This situation is not only typical during historical revolutions like the Glorious Revolution, the American or the French revolutions, the criticality of the political instability forces rulers to abandon their egoistic interests in favour of peaceful domestic resolution together with political allies. In these cases, democracies do not work thanks to their functioning institutions, but due to the elite behaviour that let the system works together, finding dividing issues and find a joint base, the so-called “politics of accommodation” (Lijphart, 1968). Even in the Italian political scenario, the emergence of political crises has brought together different groups

of interests that were compelled to cooperate despite their divergent opinions. For example, the unstable electoral results of 1976 constrained the Italian Christian Democrats (DC) to find an ally in their greatest political enemy, the Communist party, putting an end to the “*conventio ad excludendum*” in order to save the Italian government.

2.1 Political Stability in Literature

The issue of government stability has long been debated by political science scholars, without finding a suitable solution for every political regime. Thus, before analysing the Selectorate theory of Bueno de Mesquita that will be applied in the Italian context, I will provide the main models and theories that concern political stability in democratic governments: Almond (1956) with the study of political and civic culture in Anglo Saxon countries and continental Europe; Lijphart (1969; 2012) with his model based on cultural factors in the case of consociational democracy and institutional indicators in consensus democracy; but, also, Duverger (1963) in his study of party systems and electoral laws that influence governments’ efficiency and stability.

2.1.1 Almond and the Civic Culture

According to the political scientist Almond (1956), political systems equipped with homogeneous political culture would give rise to stable democratic systems, as it occurs in the case of Anglo-Saxon democracies; unlikely, political systems with a heterogeneous and fragmented political culture, on the other hand, would create unstable democratic regimes, including continental European regimes. The stability and functioning of democracy are guaranteed by the spread of civic culture, or a hybrid between the activism of participatory culture and the deference to power, typical of positions of passivity. For Almond and Verba (1963) they defined the concept of political culture as the set of individual and social attitudes of society towards politics. This concept is an integral part of the functionalist theory of politics and is used to take account both of the differences in the structures of individual behaviour in similar political systems, and the persistence of structures of individual behaviour, even in the presence of significant changes in the political structures of the political system itself. In short, the Almondian concept provides the indispensable link between the individual and the political system, between micro-politics and macro-politics. In their studies, Almond and Verba (1963) analysed five thousand cases distributed in the five states involved in the research, namely Italy, the United States, Mexico, Great Britain and Germany. The results have not had great success in Italy, mainly because of the numerous criticisms, concerning above all the methodology (Corica, 2011). Indeed, according to this approach, the political culture guarantees the functioning of the institutions and, consequently, of democracy. Several critics of this theory support

the opposite position: only democratic and efficient institutions allow the development of civic political cultures. The results of the research attribute to the Italian democracy a profound structural weakness and a sort of incompleteness, due above all to the diffusion in the citizenship of apathy, indifference, and particularism.

2.1.2 Lijphart and the consociational/consensus democracy

However, the descriptive approach of the Almondian theory was unable to classify all cases. Indeed, Almond did not provide a typology for his work and many countries fell outside this system, becoming inapplicable to the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries in general, which, despite having a high degree of cultural fragmentation, are characterized by stable democracies. In order to solve this problem, the political scientist Arendt Lijphart (1969) expanded the study of Almond and developed a typology with two independent variables that focused on government stability: the elite behaviour and the structure of the society. This typology provided a classificatory system for a set of an empirical political system representing different degrees of political stability. The study outlined that the application of the consociational and centripetal model must be necessary for the attainment of stable democracy. In many consociational democracies, such as Switzerland, Belgium, Netherlands, despite the plurality of the structure of the societal culture, the cooperative attitude of the elite facilitated the political survival of the government, also thanks to the “grand coalition” and the coalescent decision-making. Instead, the centrifugal democracy of the Italian political system has been considered the cause for its instability. However, Italy is defined as a paradox. Although the cabinet changed very frequently, for Lijphart, there were some coalescent features. Indeed, mainly in the First Republic, political parties could collaborate more secretly, as the PCI’s influence in the policy-making mechanism.

The typology developed in 1969 by Lijphart was challenging to apply on studies with large samples or with several countries. In many new countries, it was not possible to classify the kind of elite or to collect data. For this reason, Lijphart adopted several institutional variables that were easier to measure and to compare. In the second edition of *Patterns of Democracy*, Lijphart (2012) aimed at testing the different performance of the majoritarian and consensus democracy. The distinction between the two systems come from the first question at the beginning of the book: “Who will do the governing and to whose interests should the government be responsive when the people are in disagreement and have divergent preferences?” (Lijphart, 2012). Throughout his book, Lijphart solved this dilemma answered by saying that the majority of people should rule following their preferences. Lijphart wanted to show that it is possible to distinguish the two types of systems following the two

dimensions (Executive-parties and federal-unity) using institutional rather than political cultural factors and to prove which kind of democracy produces a better result in terms of government effectiveness and policy-making. Following this approach, majoritarian democracies need to be understood in which the representatives, elected based on free and competitive elections, reach their decisions based on the principle of majority. However, while this majoritarian model can be considered exclusive, competitive and adversarial, the consensus democracy aims to include a vast majority of people's preferences by making broad participation in the government and by pursuing policies generally accepted. For example, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and Austria are consensus democracies. In such contexts, where the separation between the various subcultures reaches high dimensions, political stability is guaranteed by a system of accommodation and compromise between the elites, who collaborate in order to bridge the distances between the various groups. They differ from majority democracies mainly due to: the presence of governments with large ministerial coalitions; the reciprocal veto, since every decision within the coalition must be accepted by every component; the recourse to proportionality as a criterion for allocating resources between different segments of society; the autonomy of the segments where each component of the coalition regulates and organizes these interests in a completely autonomous manner.

2.1.3 Duverger and the party systems

Differently from the previous studies, Duverger (1963) focused on how the party systems and different electoral laws can influence the formation and the stability of parliamentary governments. By using the numerical statistics of parties, he classified the different party systems in bipartisan and multiparty. In a two-party system, like the Anglo-Saxon one, in which there are only two main parties, a party always obtains an absolute majority of seats in parliament. The government is therefore always formed by members of a single party and is based on a single party. The other party plays an opposing role, criticizing government policy and preparing the field to become the new incumbent in the subsequent elections. Differently, in a multi-party system, like in many European continental countries, no party gets the absolute majority of seats in parliament. Therefore, government is formed by a coalition of parties that agrees on a joint program and decides on the composition of the government based on their respective strength in parliament. It is clear that, depending on the type of party system, the governments will function in entirely different ways. Indeed, Duverger (1963) sustained that governments formed in a two-party system are characterized by high stability, since they generally hold office for the entire term. On the contrary, governments formed in a multi-party system are highly unstable. This is evident in the governments of the France Fourth Republic that had an average duration of eight months and those of the Italian Republic of just over a year. Indeed, in a

two-party system, the government is supported in parliament by a strongly disciplined party with the majority of seats. Then, there is no risk of becoming part of the minority. In a multi-party regime, the government is supported by a heterogeneous coalition that is based on laborious and fleeting compromises. In case of dissatisfaction of a coalition party with government policy, the alliance risks to fail and, as a consequence, the government loses the majority in parliament and may fall due to a motion of no-confidence. Therefore, the durability and stability of the governments have a significant impact on the effectiveness of their political program. While the governments formed in the bipartisan system can conduct a coherent and efficient policy, the governments formed in the multiparty system are inefficient and inactivated. In a two-party system, the government implements the program of a single party and has a free hand in doing so, being sure of the support of the parliament. In a multi-party system, the government's program is the result of a compromise between conflicting programs of parties of different and often opposite tendencies, leading to a higher controversy and policy immobilism (Duverger, 1963).

2.2 The Italian “Stable Instability”

For a long time, the debate on the Italian party system revolved around the contrast between the interpretation of Galli (1984) the theory of "imperfect bipartitism", and that of Sartori (2005), the model of "extreme and polarized pluralism". Galli's interpretation is in the wake of the Duvergerian thesis. As discussed above, for Duverger (1969), multiparty systems are characterized by the existence of a "natural dualism". Whatever the number of parties represented in parliament, political life will always gravitate to two poles (the right pole and the left pole). Whatever the secondary conflicts may be, the fundamental conflict will always oppose two large parties or two blocks of parties. In multi-party systems, as in bipartisan ones, there is no "centre". Galli's thesis on the Italian case is consistent with the Duvergerian interpretation. Two parties entirely dominate the scene: the DC that holds the quasi-monopoly of the government; the PCI in whose hands is the quasi-monopoly of the opposition. The other parties, either represent a marginalized and irrelevant opposition, or gravitate, like satellites, in the orbit of the two major parties. However, in the Italian case, the absence of alternation differentiates the Italian party system from the other systems both bipartisan and multiparty. This absence depended on the nature of the opposition party, the Communist party (PCI) that led to two consequences: the DC, despite being only the relative majority party and therefore having to govern in coalition with other parties, exercised almost total and undisputed control over state institutions; the PCI, having no prospects of entering the government in the short term, had no incentive to introduce organizational and ideological changes, which would make it an acceptable

and viable alternative for voters. These two factors strengthened the stability of the party system, but they also determined the instability and the policy immobilism of the Italian governments.

However, as mentioned by Tarrow (1977), the abovementioned “fragmented-ideological” models are not able to predict the stability of the Italian political system. Indeed, in order to understand the relevance of political coalitions, he developed a “coalitional-strategic” model, focusing mainly on the social breadth of the coalition and the electoral mobilization. Following this reasoning, this research aimed at studying the strategies to officeholding in coalition politics that affect political survival. Indeed, the Italian political stability has not been addressed simultaneously considering different factors such as the coalition size, the selectorate size and the loyalty of the political allies. Given these conditions, the Italian case may be better explained by the Selectorate theory that considers the political leaders’ actions related to the distribution of private and public goods in exchange for political loyalty. Finally, the Selectorate theory demonstrates how the selection institutions determine the survival or death of a political mandate, influencing governmental political stability.

2.3 Introduction to the Selectorate Theory

The Selectorate theory is based on the assumption that political leaders aimed at maintaining their power to hold office and to implement their policies. In order to accomplish these goals, every political authority must be supported by a loyal group: the winning coalition. While in authoritarian states, the winning coalition may be composed of the army, religious leaders or wealthy interest groups where their strong position can influence the selection of the political leaders without recurring to the polls. In liberal democracies, instead, the winning coalition is composed of the electorate who chooses its political leader. The free and fair elections are a powerful tool to keep the leader in the office if he can keep high confidence among its winning coalition, otherwise some instruments like the motion of no-confidence or the impeachment can oblige the leader to leave the office and be substituted by a challenger.

In order to maintain high loyalty, political leaders have to balance their actions and decisions carefully. First, the selection of the amount of taxes is a double-edged sword. Taxes are essential for the state revenue, but, at the same time, an excess of taxes can be a profound reason for citizens’ dissatisfaction. Then, the amount of government income should be distributed in such a way as to prevent incumbents from leaving the office and from becoming a challenger. Lastly, the allocation of resources consists of public and private goods. In order to keep the support of the winning coalition, political leaders can provide special benefits to their close allies. However, as the winning coalition

enlarges, leaders will adopt public benefits that provide assistance and advantages to almost the whole society.

The two notions of the selectorate and the winning coalition are two key elements in the understanding of Bueno de Mesquita's theory. Political scholars employed the definition of selectorate as the relationship between the leader and the Party bureaucracy mainly in the study of totalitarian regimes, like in the Soviet Union (Stern, 1978; Bunce, 1979; Brown, 1984). Subsequently, Shirk (1993) enlarged its scope as "the group within a political party that has effective power to choose leaders", creating mutual accountability between the selectors and the political leader. Instead, Bueno de Mesquita supported the notion of the selectorate with a new element, the winning coalition, a subset of the selectorate that has the authority to rule both in democratic and authoritarian regimes. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the political leader has to keep himself in the office by keeping compact its support. Indeed, depending on the size of the selectorate relative to the winning coalition, political leaders may face different solutions. The assumption is that there is an incentive to abandon the incumbent and to support a challenger based on the possibility of being included in the new challenger's winning coalition. In case the selectorate is much larger than the winning coalition, there is a low likelihood that people who are part of the small minority in the winning coalition defect from the incumbent to support a challenger, continuing to receive private benefits from the leader. This situation is easy to find in rigged-election autocracies where the few supporters of the winning coalitions are loyal to the leader because the cost of exclusion and, as a consequence, of the private benefits is too high. In the opposite case, so when the size of the selectorate is quite similar to the winning coalition, the supporters of the leader do not gain special privileges because the leader has to provide public benefits to keep the large support but this increases the possibilities to defect from the leader a become a new challenger. This scenario is more evident in democratic systems constituted by a broad winning coalition and large selectorate where political survival is challenging to attain, and political leaders more easily defect.

2.3.1 The Selectorate (S)

Bueno de Mesquita adopted in the *Logic of Political Survival* the concept of "selectorate" coined by Roeder (1993), considering the selectorate (S) a determinant feature for the different political regimes. The selectorate is a part of the population "whose endowments include the qualities or characteristics institutionally required to choose the government's leadership and necessary for gaining access to private benefits doled out by the government's leadership" (De Mesquita et al., 2005). Differently from the unenfranchised, those in society who are allowed to vote, they also hold power to remove the incumbent and select the replacement. This means that political leaders will pay

attention only to the preferences of the selectorate, ignoring the demands coming from the unfranchised citizens.

2.3.2 The Winning Coalition (W)

Besides the selectorate, Bueno de Mesquita (2005:XI) introduced a new term, the *winning coalition* (W), “the subgroup of the selectorate who maintain incumbents in office and in exchange receive special privileges”. The size of these two features of the population is essential to understand the political mechanism of governmental survival. Indeed, both democratic and authoritarian countries may face different polities depending on the magnitude of their correlated selectorate and winning coalition, allowing the classification and comparison across all types of regime.

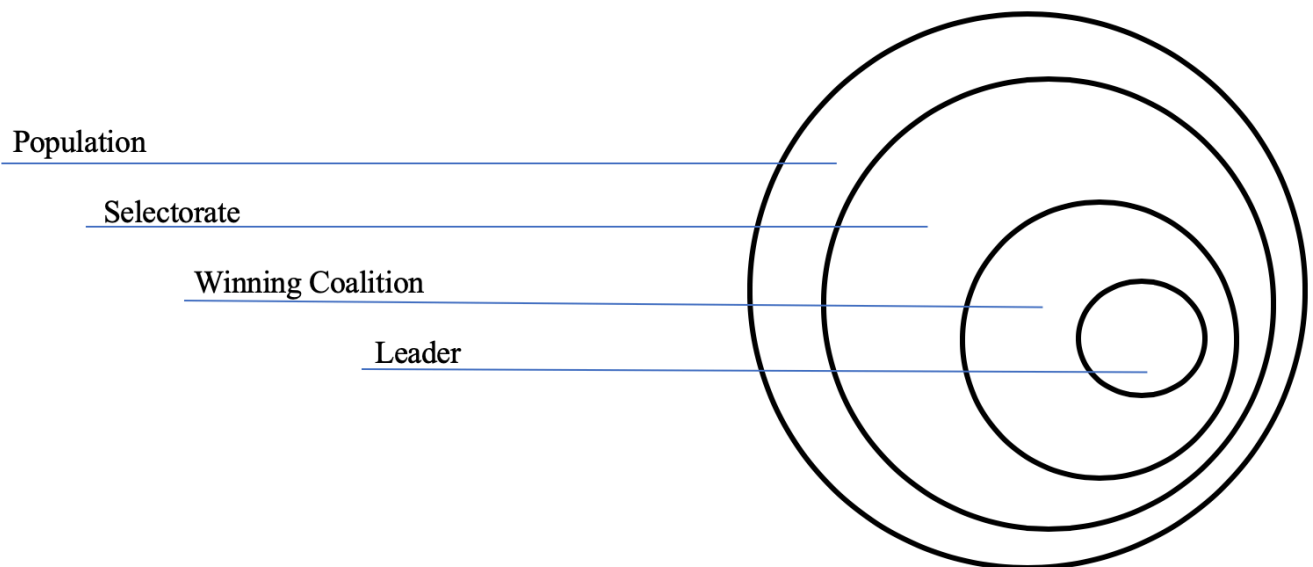


Figure 2.1: The Classic Selectorate Model

2.3.3 Political Leaders and Public Policies

Regardless of the political regime, political rulers have a relatively small set of incentives to maintain their governmental stability. Public policy is “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye, 1992) and their implementation can change the distribution of power, creating winners and losers. Indeed, policies cannot be completely neutral, and policymakers’ actions will favour only a part of the population, creating discontent for other citizens. These costs and benefits bring a political impact that influences the stability of governments in any political system. Usually, policies are defined as “good” when they satisfy the desires of a large part of the population, implementing public policies that are nonexcludable and nonrival (Olson, 1965). In this way, leaders can increase the

loyalty of their support and keep them in office. The variety of public policies is extensive, but Theodore Lowi (1972) managed to classify them into four main categories. This ranking allowed to identify the relationship between the types of policies and the type coercion, which can have an immediate or remote effect; furthermore, the field of application can be different, referring directly to the individual action or to the environment within which the action can be carried out. The "distributive" policies characterized by the distribution of benefits on an individual and particularistic basis. Social security and welfare policies fall into this category. These policies do not involve a clash between those who are favoured and those who are damaged, also because they are often services provided through the taxes of all the taxpayers. This type of policy also includes tax incentives for companies with specific characteristics; The "redistributive" policies, that visibly subtract resources from a class of taxpayers to give them to the community, are characterized by a direct confrontation between those who have to expose their money and those who request services. Adverse situations can arise between different social classes (beneficiaries and injured). A tax reform that alleviates the tax burden of the poorer classes and makes it weigh on the more affluent classes is configured as a redistributive policy according to the constitutional principle of "contributory capacity" even if it encounters strong obstacles to the resistance of the stronger classes; "Regulatory" policies are those rules or measures that govern and limit behaviour or prescribe specific obligations. They identify the immediate group or category to which they are directed, which can be limited in their freedom of action in the name of a public good or for the protection of other categories (consumers, workers). They can benefit some groups and individuals and disadvantage others. Such policies are measures that introduce ecological quality standards in the production, for example, of foodstuffs or expensive measures on the disposal of industrial waste to protect the health of the community; Finally, the "constituent" policies are those aimed at the establishment of new authorities independent of political powers (e.g. the creation of an Antitrust authority), capable of carrying out their activity without pressure or interference of any kind. The classification of public policies is essential to understand the Weberian meaning of state, i.e. "the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (Weber, 1919). Indeed, by choosing specific policies, political leaders will force subjects or groups in a given polity to comply with a given norm, risking creating conflicts and civil mobilization that threaten the governmental stability.

2.3.4 The Magnitude of the Selectorate and the Winning Coalition

In every political regime, rulers control state resources, and they can allocate them to society through public and private goods. More specifically, while the entire polity enjoys public goods, political leaders tend to provide private goods only to the supporters of its coalition, ensuring higher

public welfare. Some central predictions demonstrate that political leaders provide better wellness for the whole society as the size of the winning coalition increases (Gallagher & Hanson, 2013). These predictions are based on three assumptions: first, the unfranchised are not counted by leaders in terms of the allocation of resource. Furthermore, they do not prove any risk of rebellion since they do not influence rulers' survival. Second, every member of the selectorate has the same power to choose their leader and to be part of the winning coalition. Moreover, the selectorate is considered interchangeable because they all have the same preferences in terms of public and private goods; third, the costs of doling out private goods are proportional to the magnitude of the winning coalition. Thus, private goods become more expensive when the winning coalition increases since there is a more substantial part of the population that will benefit from the allocation of the resources. To sum up, the smaller the size of the winning coalition, the greater the incentive for the leader to provide private goods. Similarly, the larger the winning coalition size, leaders have less incentive to provide private goods, preferring to deliver public goods. This theory applied also explains the logic of Doyle's democratic peace: when rulers rely on larger constituencies (winning coalition is large), they are compelled to perform well by being more accountable providing peace and prosperity to the entire population (De Mesquita et al., 1999). Differently, when the winning coalition is narrow, political leaders are accountable only to a small group and they tend to pursue bad policies that produce privileges only for some categories, for example by providing state-granted monopolies and excluding the rest of the selectorate of public benefits, such as education and healthcare. (De Mesquita and Smith 2011).

2.3.5 The Loyalty Norm (W/S)

Individuals who form the winning coalition have access to public resources through their linkage with the leader, but the ruler's stability can be threatened by the emergence of a challenger that proposes a new and different allocation of resources. If the challenger manages to reduce the supporters of the collation, thanks a more attracting bunch of goods, individuals will dispose of the incumbent and will try to join a new winning coalition. In the Selectorate theory, the political stability or its instability highly depends on the proportion of the number of the population that choose their leaders, the selectorate, and the winning coalition that compose leaders' support. The probability of being part of the next winning coalition is equal for every person of the selectorate, this number corresponds to W/S . More precisely, the loyalty norm (W/S) is "the probability of being in a leader's winning coalition" (De Mesquita, 2005). This rule represents the threats to coalition members to be excluded from the subsequent leaders' inner circle and it influences the political decisions of the leaders in terms of policies to adopt. Naturally, it is also very likely that a substantial portion of

individuals in the winning coalitions may decide to leave the current leader, switching their loyalty towards a new challenger. In this way, the incumbent will lose his office and the new leader will form a new winning coalition. In order to form the new government, the challenger must draw some individuals from the selectorate, and since the winning coalition (W) is smaller than the selectorate (S), many supporters will be excluded. For this reason, it is imperative to remember that supporters in the winning coalition, who are dissatisfied with the incumbent leader, must weigh the costs and benefits of defecting. Indeed, there is no warranty for defectors to be included in the next leader's winning coalition and, thus, they risk losing their access to private goods, since they are considered unnecessary for the formation of the new government.

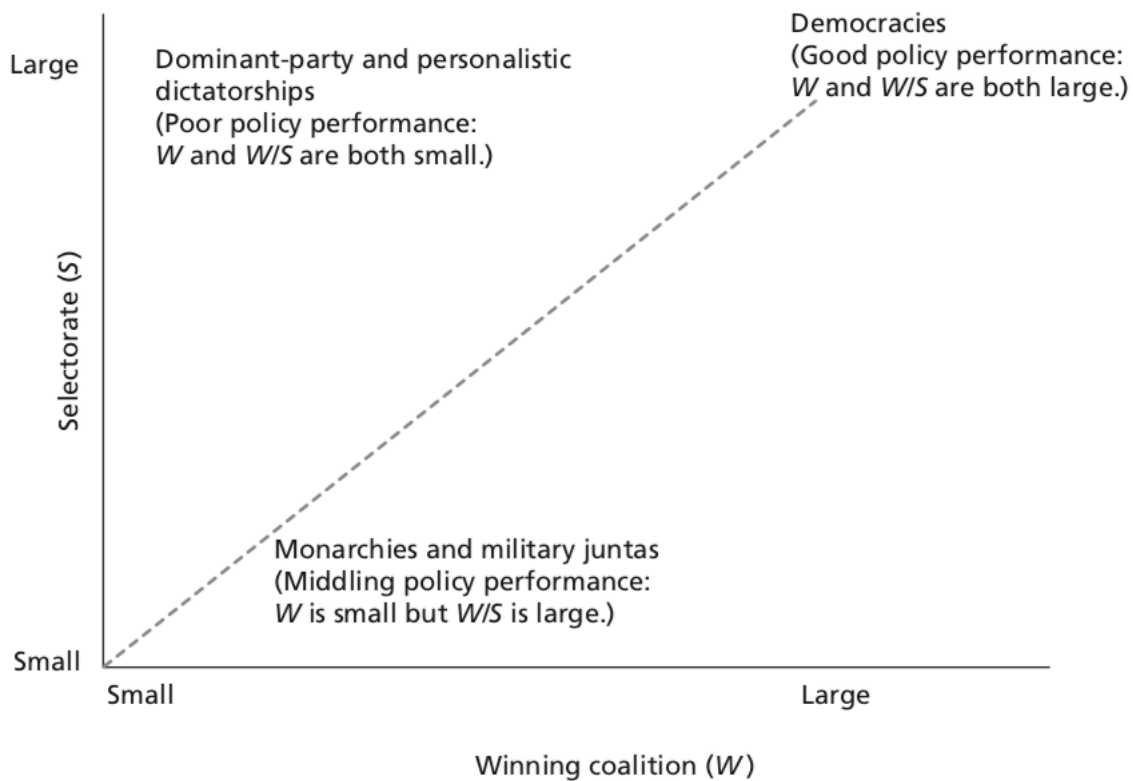


Figure 2.2: Theoretical regime-type location

The formula of the loyalty norm (W/S) outlines the political stability in politics, and hence the decisions a political ruler must take if he or she desires to stay in office. When the size of the winning coalition becomes smaller compared to the selectorate (W/S is close to 0), the risk of defecting decreases for the coalition members because there is a higher possibility to be excluded by a new challenger, driving the supporters to be more loyal towards the incumbent leader and

maintaining the governmental stability. This scenario is very likely in many rigged-election autocracies, where the members of the government are heavily dependent upon their leader. Moreover, the society will be the worst off since political leaders will provide mainly private goods to a small group of individuals, ignoring public goods. Contrarily, if the magnitude of the winning coalition enlarges (W/S is close to 1), supporters are less loyal as the private benefits decrease and the incentives to support a new leader for more privileges rises. This situation is common in most democratic regimes and leaders have not enough resources to satisfy the desires of the entire winning coalition, leading to a higher political instability.

CHAPTER 3 – Analysing Government Stability in Italy with the Selectorate Theory

The Italian Parliament is formed by two main branches, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic. Although it only has 71 years old, at the time of writing, the Parliament has already experienced eighteen legislatures with more than 60 cabinets⁴ with an average of 431 days. In the Logic of Political Survival, the political stability of political systems is determined by two foremost features: the selectorate ("the set of people with a say in choosing leaders") and the winning coalition ("the set of people whose support keeps the incumbent in office"). In the democratic country like Italy, the selectorate (S) corresponds to all the citizens who are enfranchised. Following the article 56 and 58 of the Italian constitution, citizens who are at least 18 old have the right to vote for the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, while they need to be 25 years old for the Senate of Republic. In the following study, it has been preferred to consider only the selectorate from the Chamber of Deputies for two main reasons: first, the Chamber of Deputies includes a larger number of selectorate; second, the electoral results in the Chamber of Deputies are equivalent to the results in the Senate. Only in the 2006 elections out of eighteen legislatures, the winning party did not obtain the same outcome in both chambers. Differently, the winning coalition (W) is composed of the minimum number of voters that are necessary to win the elections for a party or politicians. As the analysis will evidence it, the electoral law and the voter turnout will influence the composition of the winning coalition. The size of these two variables will be determinant for the calculation of the most essential feature of Selectorate theory, the loyalty norm (W/S), "the link between the number of people who make up the winning coalition or the selectorate and an incumbent's prospects of political survival."

In order to find the source of the Italian disease of political instability, this dissertation will analyse the four types of electoral systems that have characterized the Italian political scenario since the proclamation of the Republic. More specifically, this study will focus on the ratio of the winning coalition over the selectorate from the first government of the first legislature of the Italian Republic (De Gasperi V) until the Conte cabinet⁵, taking into account the different electoral systems and the percentage of voter turnout. Following the principle of the loyalty norm (W/S), governments with lower W/S will maintain in office longer, since there is a low probability the members of the winning coalition will defect, maintaining their loyalty towards the incumbent Prime Minister. This formula appears to hold in the Italian case. In the following comparative research, it will be tested if the loyalty

⁴ Governments which did not gain the vote of confidence are excluded from the analysis.

⁵ Data are extracted from the official electoral results of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (<http://elezioni.interno.it>).

norm can be a useful tool to explain the Italian political instability. The hypothesis will be the following:

Governments that are characterized by a low percentage of the ratio between the electorate and the winning coalition will be more durable and survive from political instability. Contrary, the ones with the highest ratio will be more threatened by the instability.

3.1 Comparative Study of the Four Electoral Systems

The electoral systems so far adopted in Italy for the renewal of the Parliament, in connection with the form of parliamentary government and the fragmentation of the political system, have never managed to reconcile the demands of governability and representativeness. Therefore, they are considered as one of the main causes of the instability of governments that characterized Italian institutional history from World War II to the present. But the indirect consequences of the political balances generated by the different electoral systems adopted with the electoral law and by the process of formation of majorities in the Italian parliamentary system have also negatively influenced the very functioning of Parliament, the effectiveness of the Government in exercising the executive power, the dynamics of political struggle between parties and even the internal dynamics of political parties.

In the next section, I will analyse the four electoral systems adopted in Italy since the proclamation of the Republic and I will test the validity of my hypothesis through the calculation of the electorate, the winning coalition and the loyalty norm.

3.1.1 The 1948-1993 electoral system: Proportional

The first electoral law of the Italian Republic was, in substance, proportional. It was adopted with the legislative decree n. 74 of 10 March 1946 for the election of the Constituent Assembly which also had the task of pronouncing on the new electoral legislation for the upcoming elections, but they never carried out this task. This law remained in force from 1946 to 1993, with one exception, in 1953, due to De Gasperi's attempted reform, the Scam Law (“Legge Truffa”).

In the Chamber of Deputies, there was a pure proportional system, in which it was possible to express up to 5 preferences in the larger constituencies, with a very low representation threshold (300,000 votes that corresponded to less than 1% of the electorate) and a system for distributing the seats, favouring smaller parties (in 1970, seventeen parties formed the Italian Parliament). In the

Senate, the electoral system worked differently, since it provided a threshold for direct election in the single-member college that was almost impossible to reach (65%); otherwise, the system returned to being a pure proportional with regional distribution of seats, according to the d'Hondt method which favoured the largest parties, proceeding with a grouping of the lists based on the votes reached by all the different candidates in every single region. In 1953, the introduction of a majority bonus was voted to assign 65% of the seats to the line that had exceeded 50% of the votes, defined as a "Scam law" by the opposition and cancelled the following year. In any case, in the Senate, the threshold necessary to reach a representation was higher than in the Chamber, and neither the list system nor the preference vote was envisaged.

As evidenced by Table 3.1, the proportional system provided three interesting aspects:

- The average of cabinet' survival was about a year, more precisely 381 days, determining the instability of coalition governments.
- The voter turnout reached the 90%, probably due to the system of preferences of the electoral system, allowing citizens to select the more representative candidate, and the mandatory vote⁶.
- Since in the proportional system, without any premium size, the government required an absolute majority, the percentage of the ration W/S is very close to 50%. This system provided the most significant W/S ratio because the magnitude of the winning coalition is almost half of the size of the selectorate. The Leone and Andreotti III cabinets are the only two exceptions to this trend with a loyalty norm close to the percentages of the following electoral systems. These two governments, indeed, managed to pass the vote of confidence thanks to the abstention of the main opposing parties.

Table 3.1: Loyalty Norm in Italy from 1946 to 1993

Leader of the Coalition	Duration of the Government in days	Selectorate (S)	Voter Turnout	Winning Coalition (W)	Loyalty Norm (W/S)	Electoral Law
	Legislature I (8 May 1948 - 4 April 1953)					PROPORTIONAL
		29.117.554	92,23%			
De Gasperi V	601			16.378.003	56,25%	
De Gasperi VI	538			15.474.276	52,80%	
	Legislature II (25 June 1953 - 14 March 1958)					
		30.272.236	93,84%			

⁶ Article 4 and 115 of DPR 361/1957

De Gasperi VII	712			11.422.696	37,73%
Pella	148			13.655.326	45,11%
Scelba	507			13.461.582	44,45%
Segni	679			13.461.582	44,45%
Zolli	408			16.898.586	55,82%
Legislature III (12 June 1958 - 18 February 1963)					
		32.434.835	94,84%		
Fanfani II	229			14.031.741	43,26%
Segni II	404			16.578.009	51,11%
Tambroni	123			15.530.928	47,88%
Fanfani III	575			19.377.017	59,74%
Fanfani IV	485			16.893.020	52,08%
Legislature IV (16 May 1963 - 11 March 1968)					
		34.199.184	92,89%		
Leone	166			11.773.182	34,42%
Moro	231			18.492.803	54,07%
Moro II	581			18.492.803	54,07%
Moro III	852			18.492.803	54,07%
Legislature V (5 June 1968 - 28 February 1972)					
		35.566.493	92,79%		
Leone II	171			19.044.681	53,55%
Rumor	239			17.820.564	50,1%
Rumor II	234			19.671.214	55,30%
Rumor III	132			19.044.681	53,55%
Colombo	560			19.044.681	53,55%
Legislature VI (25 May 1972 - 1 May 1976)					
		37.049.351	93,21%		
Andreotti II	376			17.073.161	46,08%
Rumor IV	250			18.981.219	51,23%
Rumor V	254			18.981.219	51,23%
Moro IV	446			18.981.219	51,23%
Moro V	168			20.281.658	54,74%
Legislature VII (5 July 1976 - 2 April 1979)					
		40.426.658	93,39%		
Andreotti III	590			14.251.189	35,35%

Andreotti IV	374			31.504.966	77,93%
Andreotti V	137			20.873.482	51,63%
	Legislature VIII (20 June 1979 - 4 May 1983)				
		42.203.354	90,62%		
Cossiga	244			21.111.631	50,0%
Cossiga II	197			18.991.450	44,50%
Forlani	253			20.398.985	48,33%
Spadolini	421			21.111.631	50,02%
Spadolini II	100			21.111.631	50,02%
Fanfani V	246			21.111.631	50,02%
	Legislature IX (12 July 1983 - 28 April 1987)				
		44.526.357	88,01%		
Craxi	1093			21.039.195	47,25%
Craxi II	259			21.039.195	47,25%
	Legislature X (2 July 1987 - 2 February 1992)				
		45.692.417	88,83%		
Goria	260			22.357.863	48,93%
De Mita	465			22.357.863	48,93%
Andreotti VI	629			22.357.863	48,93%
Andreotti VII	378			20.929.200	45,80%
	Legislature XI (23 April 1992 - 16 January 1994)				
		47.435.689	87,29%		
Amato	304			19.409.957	40,92%
Ciampi	377			29.033.195	61,20%
AVERAGE	381	38.084.012	91,63%	18.798.362	50,11%

3.1.2 The 1993-2005 electoral system: Mattarellum

At the end of the twentieth century, the Italian citizens upheld several referendum that concerned the electoral system: first, on 9 June 1991, a referendum for the reduction of the preferences expressed for the election of the Deputies and second, on 18 April 1993, a referendum for the repeal of some provisions of the electoral law of the Senate to suppress the norm that provided for the election in the single-member college only after obtaining a high quorum of 65% of the votes.

The results of the referenda consultation led the Parliament to the approval of a new electoral law, which introduced a mixed electoral system for both the Senate and the Chamber.

This system was characterized by the election of three-quarters of the deputies and three-quarters of the senators with single-majority majority system in single-member constituencies. The remaining seats were assigned with the proportional system: in the Chamber of Deputies, distributing them in the 26 constituencies, among the competing lists that had exceeded the threshold of 4% of the votes in the national sphere. This threshold encouraged parties to form alliances before the elections, reducing fractionalizing and ensuring more stability; in the Senate, dividing them among groups of candidates in proportion to the grades obtained in the colleges of each region by unelected candidates. The new electoral system led to electing 475 deputies with the majority system in as many single-member constituencies; 155 deputies were instead elected with the proportional system, spreading them in proportion to the votes obtained by the competing lists presented in the 26 constituencies.

From Table 3.2, these are the following observations:

- Since the first legislature, there has been a substantial increase of the selectorate corresponding to almost 20.000.000 citizens and the winning coalition has increased by 7.000 people.
- The government of Berlusconi II was the first cabinet to exceed the 1.000 days in office, becoming the longest-lived cabinet in the Italian political history.
- The average of the duration of the government in days increased up to 549 days.
- The ratio of the winning coalition over the selectorate (W/S) decreased noticeably because of reduction in the W size.
- The reduction of voter turnout was determined by different reasons: the elimination of vote preferences, the abrogation of the mandatory vote and the coalitions of many parties that caused less representation for the Italian voters.

Table 3.2: Loyalty Norm in Italy from 1994 to 2006

Leader of the Coalition	Duration of the Government in days	Selectorate (S)	Voter Turnout	Winning Coalition (W)	Loyalty Norm (W/S)	Electoral Law
	Legislature XII (15 April 1994 - 16 February 1996)					MATTARELLUM
		48.135.041	86,14%			
Berlusconi	252			20.872.688	43,36%	

Dini	486			18.135.678	37,67%
Legislature XIII (9 May 1996 - 9 March 2001)					
		48.744.846	82,88%		
Prodi	887			16.227.983	33,29%
D'Alema	427			15.203.798	31,20%
D'Alema II	125			18.417.546	37,38%
Amato II	412			15.353.239	31,49%
Legislature XIV (30 May 2001 - 27 April 2006)					
		49.256.295	81,38%		
Berlusconi II	1413			18.398.246	37,35%
Berlusconi III	389			18.398.246	37,35%
AVERAGE	549	48.712.061	83,47%	17.625.928	36,14%

3.1.3 The 2005-2018 electoral system: Porcellum

In 2005, it was introduced a proportional system for the election of the Chamber of Deputies of an entirely proportional type, with the possible awarding of a majority bonus at the national level, which replaced the mixed system previously in force. The majority of deputies (617) were elected in the national territory in proportion to the votes obtained by the competing lists presented in the 26 constituencies; one deputy was elected by the majority method in the single-member college of the Valle d'Aosta; the remaining 12 deputies were elected in the overseas district. With regard to the candidacies, the new discipline provided that the political parties that intended to present lists of candidates could make alliances through the coalition system; furthermore, parties had to indicate the name of their leader, personalizing the party or the coalition. Concerning voting procedures, voters could only express a single vote for the chosen list, without a preference vote.

Seats were divided proportionally at national level between the coalitions of lists and the lists that have passed the legal thresholds. Only coalitions that have reached at least 10% of the total valid votes and, within them, lists that have obtained 2% of the votes, were admitted to the allocation of seats. The lists that were not part of any coalition also participate in the allocation of seats, on condition that they have received at least 4% of the votes at the national level. The most voted coalition of lists (or the uncoordinated list), if it has not already achieved at least 340 seats, was given a majority prize such as to make it reach the number of seats in question.

The high threshold of this electoral system encouraged small parties to form coalitions to avoid the risk of being excluded from the allocation of seats. As a consequence, the Italian voters experienced the highest bipolarization of Italian political history. During the fifteenth legislature, all the political parties were divided into two coalitions, that caused an increase of the winning coalition since both coalitions obtained a large number of votes. However, the winning coalition decreased during the Berlusconi IV cabinet once parties got used to this new electoral system and repositioned on the political spectrum, bringing stability to the entire country. Unfortunately, the flourishing political stability was interrupted by the outbreak of the economic crisis of 2008 that led to the formation of Monti Cabinet, the largest winning coalition (63,61%) of the Second Republic, thanks to broad coalition support. Indeed, the Monti executive was considered by the wide coalition support an emergency technical government and his main task was to steer Italy out of the severe economic crisis that since 2008 had enveloped Italy and the other eurozone countries.

Differently from Lustig’s hypothesis (2012), the emergence of a “Third Pole” constituted by the Five Stars Movement did not produce a decrease of the size of the winning coalition. However, it is worth underlying that, after Letta cabinet, the winning coalition drastically decreased, reaching the lowest size with Renzi and Gentiloni cabinet. More precisely, Renzi Cabinet that lasted more than 1000 days terminated following the resignation of the Prime Minister in the wake of the defeat in the constitutional referendum on 4 December 2018. Based on the magnitude of the loyalty norm, the government could stay in power and probably become the most long-lived cabinet, overpassing the record hold by Berlusconi II. Finally, despite the low ratio of the loyalty norm, Gentiloni cabinet only lasted for 536 days but it is essential to remind that his mandate was concluded with the end of the legislature, making impossible to test the political survival of the government.

Table 3.3: Loyalty Norm in Italy from 2006 to 2018

Leader of the Coalition	Duration of the Government in days	Selectorate (S)	Voter Turnout	Winning Coalition (W)	Loyalty Norm (W/S)	Electoral Law
	Legislature XV (28 April 2006 - 6 February 2008)					PORCELLUM
		46.997.601	83,62%			
Prodi II	720			18.987.030	40,4%	
	Legislature XVI (29 April 2008 - 23 December 2012)					
		47.041.814	80,51%			
Berlusconi IV	1287			17.029.137	36,2%	
Monti	528			29.927.240	63,61%	

Legislature XVII (15 March 2013 - 22 March 2018)					
		46.905.154	75,2%		
Letta	300			19.724.459	42,05%
Renzi	1024			14.384.736	30,67%
Gentiloni	536			13.858.477	29,54%
AVERAGE	733	46.981.523	79,78%	18.985.180	40,41%

3.1.4 The 2018 electoral system: Rosatellum

In 2017, a new electoral law of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic was approved, which was applied for the first time in the elections of 4 March 2018, the Rosatellum. The new law outlined a mixed electoral system, a combination of a majority and a proportional part. Part of the seats (36%) is assigned with a majority system, while the others (64%) with a proportional system. In the Chamber of Deputies, seats that are distributed with the uninominal system are 232 out of 630, in the Senate 116 out of 315. For seats allocated through the uninominal system, each party or coalition will present only one candidate and the seat is attributed to the candidate that will get more votes. The rest of the seats will be assigned proportionally: each party or coalition will present a list of blocked candidates (not less than two and no more than four) in 20 districts for the Senate (one for each region) and 28 for the Chamber of Deputies. It will be possible for candidates to present themselves in more than one plurinominal list (no more than five), but only in one single single-member constituency. Instead, for Italians who live abroad, they will elect with the proportional system twelve deputies and nine senators. In order to enter into the Parliament, a party will have to pass a 3% threshold on a national basis, both in the Senate and in the chamber. For coalitions, the barrier threshold will rise to 10% on a national basis. The votes of the parties participating in a coalition and exceeding 1% will go to the coalition. Under the 1% threshold, however, the votes will be lost.

On 4 March 2018, the electoral results from the new electoral system, the Rosatellum, did not provide a parliamentary majority. The absence of a majority sparked a series of comments from many observers, both in the world of politics and journalism. Many of these comments focused on the new electoral law and the political forces that have approved it: the accusation was that of having produced a "programmed stalemate" by deliberately approving an electoral law that hindered the formation of a majority. In reality, this political instability was not attributable to the demerits of the law: with a

situation of tripolarism, however imperfect (the three poles received respectively 37, 32 and 23 per cent of the votes), it was unthinkable to obtain a majority in a single vote, with any electoral system. However, the Rosatellum brought the formation of Conte cabinet which provided a new winning coalition with one of the lowest percentages of loyalty norm in the Italian political history. The consequences for this result need to be verified in the upcoming years, testing if the Rosatellum may be a reason for the reduction of political instability. Finally, the percentage of voter turnout is a less encouraging factor: only 72,05% of the selectorate took part in the elections, the lowest percentage that has ever scored during the Italian elections. Moreover, this low percentage of voter turnout, combined with a slowing down in the rate of population growth, means that the winning coalition will represent an even smaller percentage of the real population.

Table 3.4: Loyalty Norm in Italy in 2018

Leader of the Coalition	Duration of the Government in days	Selectorate (S)	Voter Turnout	Winning Coalition (W)	Loyalty Norm W/S)	Electoral Law
	XVIII Legislature (23 March 2018 -)					ROSATELLUM
		46.505.350	72,94%			
Conte	-			16.430.753	35,33%	

3.2 Cross Electoral-System Comparison

The comparative study, presented in Table 4, shows the different results of loyalty norm in the four electoral systems. The hypothesis has been confirmed by the outcomes of the research, since governments that presented a high loyalty norm (W/S) experienced a less durable winning coalition, fostering the risks of political instability. This trend was very strong during the first republic. Indeed, the proportional electoral system favoured the formation of cabinets with a broad winning coalition and high loyalty norm, increasing political instability and reducing the average duration to 381 days. The application of the mixed system, the Mattarellum, brought an improvement in the Italian political survival, almost doubling the government duration from 381 to 549 days.

The results of these two electoral systems are entirely in line with the hypothesis. But the same cannot be said to the Porcellum. Indeed, despite the high percentage of the loyalty norm (but still lower than the proportional system), the duration of cabinet increased. There can be two explanations for this phenomenon: (1) the unexpected political bipolarization during the Prodi II cabinet which forced all the political parties to ally and join a coalition, fearing of being excluded from the

Parliament, increased the size of the winning coalition, and (2) the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008 that led to the formation of Monti cabinet which was supported by an extremely large winning coalition. Data from this cabinet may be considered an outlier in the research, presenting a percentage of loyalty norm equal to 63,61%, among the highest rates in the Italian political scenario. Indeed, without taking into account this observation, the loyalty norm would be in line with the average of government duration and be consistent with the hypothesis.

Finally, the lack of observations in the current system that was applied for the first time in 2018 limit part of my study. Basing on the single data obtained during the general elections of the XVIII legislature, the loyalty norm in Rosatellum is very similar to the Mattarellum and the Porcellum (excluding Monti Cabinet), this would significate more long-lived cabinets as experienced in the Second Republic. However, in order to verify if the hypothesis is still correct, future researchers will test the consistency and the statistical relevance of this analysis with more data from the upcoming electoral results.

Table 3.5: Cross Electoral-System Comparison

	Duration of the Government in days	Selectorate (S)	Voter Turnout	Winning Coalition (W)	Loyalty Norm (W/S)
PROPORTIONAL	381	38.084.012	91,63%	18.746.192	50,11%
MATTARELLUM	549	48.712.061	83,47%	17.625.928	36,14%
PORCELLUM	733	46.832.578	79,78%	18.993.669	40,43%
ROSATELLUM	-	46.505.350	72,94%	16.430.753	35,33%
AVERAGE	431	41.832.578	88,10%	17.942.909	42,56%

The correlation between the loyalty and the duration of the previous 57 governments to Conte cabinet confirms the hypothesis. As shown in table 3.5, the correlation is significant and negative, proving that, with an increase in the loyalty norm, the governmental duration will decrease. Thus, this shows that the impact of the electoral reforms on the selectorate is crucial in determining the effect of the loyalty norm on length of cabinets' survival. Furthermore, through the calculation of a regression model to measure the consequence of loyalty norm on duration (Table 3.6), the loyalty norm and its negative effect confirm the hypothesis once again: less loyalty indicates a longer length of governments.

Table 3.5: Correlation between Loyalty Norm and Cabinet Duration

	Loyalty Norm	Duration
Loyalty Norm	1.0000	
Duration	-0.2728	1.0000
Sig.	0.0401	

Through the elaboration of this model, data from the 1948-2018 period can be employed to predict the duration of Conte cabinet. Adding the constant of the regression to the coefficient of loyalty norm on duration, multiplied by the loyalty of the count government (35.55%), it is possible to obtain the length of Conte cabinet: 543 days. Although this result does not take into consideration the application of the new electoral system, data are undoubtedly valuable to investigate further studies and verify the hypothesis repeatedly.

Table 3.6: Regression of Loyalty Norm's Effect on Cabinet Duration

	(1) Selectorate	
Loyalty Norm	-855.2*	(0.040)
Constant	844.8***	(0.000)
Observations	57	
R ²	0.074	
<p><i>p</i>-values in parentheses *<i>p</i> < 0.05, **<i>p</i> < 0.01, ***<i>p</i> < 0.001</p>		

CONCLUSIONS

From the local to the national, passing through the regional, the Italian legislatures do not last very long. At the very least, they rarely last as long as they should. Nowadays, political survival seems to have returned to the spotlight, above all due to the downgrades of rating agencies and market failures on the Italian government's financial manoeuvres, accusing Italy of the absence of structural reforms and above all of the constant political instability. In short, the problem is becoming more persistent and the lack of Italian political credibility does not help to solve the issue. However, today is not the “golden age” of political instability in Italy: during the First Republic, from 1948 to 1994, governments were elected and then collapsed with an almost annual frequency. It is no coincidence that Italy is considered a classic case of political instability by several Italian and foreign political scientists.

Many scholars have spoken out about the possible causes of the instability of the Italian peninsula. Giovanni Sartori (1990), one of the most prominent Italian political scientists, analysing the Italian scenario of the First Republic, from the immediate post-war period to the nineties, described it as a polarized multi-party system. Sartori sustained that if the oppositions had converged towards the centre in a centripetal way, the instability would have been much lower. This is the case of two-party systems like the Anglo-Saxon ones in which the party in power occupies one of the two poles and the oppositions consequently converge towards the centre, creating stability rather than instability. The applicability of this theory to the Second Republic and the contemporary climate of Italian politics has several limitations. The plurality of the system persists, but the anti-system parties are no longer present as they were in the post-war period: communists and fascists constitute a now negligible political entity, having in fact migrated to the centre. What nevertheless persists in the Second Republic and constitutes a politically destabilizing factor is certainly political instability.

This thesis has provided a different approach to analyse the Italian political instability, finding an overarching explanation that focused on separate indicators that have been often overlooked. The Selectorate theory developed by Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2005) based its assumption on leaders' willingness to maintain their power and to keep in office. The model is constituted by two main variables, namely the selectorate (S) and the winning coalition (W). The selectorate indicates the subgroup of the real population who, having the right to vote, have the power to select their political leaders. While the winning coalition is formed by an even smaller group that keep the incumbents in power thanks to their support. The Selectorate theory demonstrates that the loyalty norm (W/S), the ratio of these two indicators, has a direct link with the duration of governments. Indeed, cabinets with

a low percentage of loyalty norm last longer than those with higher ones. The reason behind this argument is that when the winning coalition is small, coalition members fear to be excluded and they prefer to be loyal towards the incumbent leader, maintaining a durable and stable government.

The results of this dissertation prove that Selectorate theory can also be applied in the Italian political system: governments with larger loyalty ratios last shorter. The correlation between the loyalty norm and the government duration, based on the 57 prior cabinets, is significant and negative, proving that the different electoral systems have had a considerable impact on the Italian political stability. Additionally, the estimation of the regression model demonstrated the correctness of the hypothesis: governments that experience less loyalty last longer.

Moreover, the observations have a positive trend for the duration of Italian governments that have continuously increased their stability since the first legislature, bringing the average from 381 to 733 days. The electoral laws have played a major role in this scenario: during the First Republic, the proportional system produced very short cabinets that annually reshuffled, this kind of electoral system raised the winning coalition very close to 50% of the selectorate and, as a consequence, it decreased the loyalty of coalition members; the beginning of the Second Republic was inaugurated with a completely new electoral system that was adopted following the results of the referendums held at the beginning of the nineties that abolished the proportional system. The Mattarellum provoked a decrease in the winning coalition that helped the stability of the cabinets. Indeed, under this electoral law, Italy experienced the longest-lived cabinet, Berlusconi II; the application of the Selectorate theory, however, faced some limitations in the application of the Porcellum. The high bipolarization of the Italian electoral system in 2008 and the outbreak of the economic crisis combined with the birth of a third pole brought discordant results with the hypothesis. In the first case, the reason lays on the creation of two broad coalitions, the centre-left and the centre-right, that were composed by all the parties, causing an increase of the winning coalition. While, in the second scenario, the economic crisis that exploded in the whole European continent forced the main parties to ally and to form a technical government, Monti cabinet, that was supported by the largest winning coalition in the Italian political history. Differently from Lustig's predictions (2012), the emergence of a "Third Pole", the Five Stars Movement, brought more instability in the political system but, as evidenced from the data, it was immediately reduced with the formation of Renzi and Gentiloni government that have greatly extended the duration of governments under the Porcellum electoral system.

In 2018, following an election without a clear victor, the Conte cabinet broke the record for the most extended wait for the formation of a government that the country had ever had. The political impasse was resolved with 89 days elapsed from the date of the election to that of the new executive. Although the beginning of this government would not promise any stability, the first observation resulted from the application of the Selectorate theory tells a different story. The model allows estimating the duration of Conte cabinet, 543 days, thanks to the employment of data from the 1948-2018 period. Although the outcome does not consider the application of the Rosatellum, the results of this prediction can be helpful to extend and validate the analysis.

This study aims at proving that the chronic disease of the Italian instability can be cured and, in case of correct applicability of the Selectorate theory in the upcoming Italian elections, this positive trend would imply an extension of the government duration in the following years. Italy could finally reach the same rate of government longevity as other European countries, ceasing to be considered the case study of political instability on the part of journalists and political scientists.

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RIASSUNTO

Lo svolgimento libero ed equo delle elezioni è alla base della forma di democrazia liberale, e fondamento della responsabilità ed efficienza dei governi. Nella giornata delle elezioni, i cittadini sono chiamati a scegliere i propri delegati che, una volta eletti, saranno responsabili delle proprie scelte e azioni. Con questo meccanismo, gli elettori selezionano soggetti demandati al rappresentare al meglio gli interessi della società. Ma tutto ciò comporta un rischio.

Lupia e Strom (2005) sostengono che la scelta di un sistema democratico e rappresentativo implichi principalmente due sfide: la capacità di un governo di rappresentare i cittadini e l'abilità di aggregazione delle forze politiche. Questi due aspetti concorrono a definire la qualità complessiva e il funzionamento democratico della governance e, di conseguenza, il benessere della società.

Nei sistemi parlamentari, per la sopravvivenza stessa del governo e un'effettività delle proprie azioni, il potere esecutivo richiede il supporto di solide maggioranze parlamentari. Al giorno d'oggi, molte democrazie parlamentari non riescono a implementare riforme cruciali, come quelle economiche o relative allo sviluppo sociale, a causa dell'alto livello di instabilità causato dalle complesse e non sempre stabili dinamiche interparlamentari. Il welfare delle società dipende sempre più dalla sopravvivenza dei governi, data la difficoltà di attuare politiche pubbliche senza uno stabile potere esecutivo e una solida maggioranza nel Parlamento. I conflitti intergovernativi possono (e spesso accade) portare all'immobilismo di politiche pubbliche e/o provvedimenti.

Bisogna notare, inoltre, che c'è una forte correlazione fra crescita economica ed effettiva implementazione delle politiche. In uno studio che mette a confronto 113 paesi, fra il 1950 e il 1982, Alesina et al. (1996) hanno dimostrato questa correlazione negativa fra lo sviluppo economico e l'instabilità politica. In particolare, paesi con alta propensione a disordini politici denotano una crescita economica più lenta. È innegabile che, dalla crisi finanziaria del 2008, i policymakers hanno acquisito un ruolo significativo nella sfera pubblica, al punto tale che le loro decisioni sono responsabili di stati di ripresa economica o recessione (Bloom, Baker & Davis, 2011). Quando un governo presenta dubbie proposte riguardanti tasse e altri costi regolatori, i maggiori portatori d'interesse economico preferiscono essere attenti e posporre gli investimenti, rimandandoli a periodi più stabili. Inoltre, il grado di conflitto e un alto tasso di instabilità governativa rendono un paese meno credibile e meno stabile nel mercato internazionale del credito, e ciò ha effetti sul debito pubblico, sullo spread e sui tassi di default (Cuadra & Sapriza, 2008).

L'Italia rappresenta uno dei casi più eclatanti di come l'instabilità politica possa avere effetti evidenti sull'economia. Le elezioni del 2018 hanno portato a una maggiore instabilità, dovuta alla dubbia possibilità di formazione di un governo di maggioranza. Difatti, è stato battuto il record per la formazione di un nuovo governo post-elezioni: 89 giorni. Un ritardo che ha avuto un costo. Secondo una stima di Confesercenti (2018), l'attesa per la formazione del governo, combinata con tensioni relative allo spread, ha fermato investimenti e consumi, portando l'Italia a "bruciare" 5 miliardi di possibile crescita del PIL (0.3%) fra il 2018 e il 2019, causando una forte deteriorazione del bilancio pubblico (+7,3 € di deficit). L'instabile clima politico in Italia non è un problema recente, e per capire a pieno questo cronico disturbo politico, c'è bisogno di guardare a una panoramica della storia politica italiana. Fin dalla nascita della Repubblica Italiana, infatti, nessun governo ha mai completato l'intero mandato. Per questa ragione, il governo italiano è stato spesso definito come in un perpetuo stato di "stabile instabilità".

Durante la Prima Repubblica (1948-1994), l'Italia ha avuto il più alto tasso di crisi di governo in Europa occidentale (Miller & Strom, 2000). Nei primi cinquanta anni della Repubblica inoltre, in Italia ci sono stati più di 50 governi esecutivi, con una vita media di un anno, passando dai 100 del

più breve (Spadolini II) a più di due anni del più longevo (Craxi I). La brutale fine della Prima Repubblica ha portato a uno scenario politico diverso, con nuovi partiti e una legge elettorale prevalentemente maggioritaria (D'Alimonte & Chiaramonte, 1995; Bartolini & D'Alimonte, 1995).

La quantità di crisi di governo è diminuita nel tempo. Ma questi nuovi meccanismi elettorali non hanno risolto il problema della stabilità del governo nella Seconda Repubblica. Scienziati politici hanno completato diversi studi riguardanti le cause dell'instabilità politica del governo italiano, al fine di trovare un modello preciso da applicare nel caso specifico. Queste teorie sono focalizzate maggiormente sulla legge elettorale, il sistema partitico e sulla apatia culturale italiana, senza, però, trovare una spiegazione onnicomprensiva per la mancata sopravvivenza del governo.

Lo scopo della tesi in oggetto è di analizzare l'instabilità politica dei governi italiani applicando la *Selectorate theory* elaborata da Bueno de Mesquita (2005). Questa teoria si fonda sulla relazione tra il *selectorate* e la *winning coalition* che possono costituire sia le ragioni principali per la sopravvivenza del governo, sia le potenziali cause della sua instabilità politica. L'arco temporale dello studio parte dalla formazione del primo governo della prima legislatura del 1948 con De Gasperi V fino al governo Conte del 2018. Lo studio fornisce una ricerca quantitativa sulla durata dei governi in oggetto, focalizzandosi sui sistemi elettorali in vigore, ed elabora una formula per prevedere la stabilità politica. La raccolta dei dati è stata poi parzialmente riformulata da una ricerca condotta dallo studioso Sebastiano Lustig (2012) e dal sito del Governo italiano. Come unità di misurazione è stato selezionato il giorno, essendo l'unità più semplice a disposizione, agevolando i prossimi studiosi nel riutilizzo dei dati per proseguire lo sviluppo dell'analisi.

La *Selectorate theory* ruota attorno alla supposizione che i leader politici mirino a restare al potere per attuare le loro politiche. Tuttavia, al fine di conseguire questi obiettivi, ogni autorità politica deve assicurarsi il supporto di un gruppo di sostenitori, la *winning coalition*. Mentre negli stati autoritari, la coalizione può essere formata dall'esercito, dai capi religiosi o da ricchi gruppi di interesse che, data la loro vicinanza al vertice, possono influenzare le scelte dei leader senza ricorrere alle elezioni, nelle democrazie liberali la *winning coalition* è formata invece da una parte dell'elettorato che dispone della facoltà di scelta del proprio leader, il *selectorate*. È proprio attraverso lo svolgimento libero ed equo delle elezioni che i governanti possono mantenere alta la loro fiducia con la *winning coalition* o rischiare di rassegnare le proprie dimissioni per essere sostituiti da un nuovo leader.

Le due nozioni principali della *Selectorate theory* sono appunto il *selectorate* (S) e la *winning coalition* (W). Il termine *selectorate* è stato coniato dallo studioso Roeder nel 1993, il quale considera tale variabile fondamentale per lo studio comparativo dei diversi regimi politici. Il *selectorate* è una parte della popolazione che possiede le qualità e i requisiti istituzionali per scegliere la leadership politica e necessari per usufruire dei benefici stanziati dal governo stesso. Ciò esclude coloro che non hanno diritto al voto, che non hanno potere di destituire il governatore in carica. Questo comporta che il leader politico presti meno attenzione alle richieste avanzate da questi ultimi, privilegiando soltanto i cittadini aventi diritto al voto. Nella sua teoria, Bueno de Mesquita introduce un secondo nuovo concetto, la *winning coalition* (W), un sottogruppo del *selectorate* che mantiene i governatori in carica ricevendo in cambio privilegi sotto forma di politiche indirizzate a specifici destinatari. Le dimensioni di queste due variabili della popolazione sono essenziali per comprendere il meccanismo politico della stabilità di governo.

Per conservare il proprio potere stabile e duraturo, il leader politico deve assicurarsi di essere supportato da una coalizione vincente compatta e solida che sia soddisfatta delle politiche implementate dal governo. Il presupposto si basa sull'ipotesi che i membri della coalizione vincente siano incentivati ad abbandonare il politico in carica per supportare uno sfidante in base alla possibilità di essere inclusi nella nuova coalizione vincente. Questa possibilità è la *loyalty norm*

(W/S), il rapporto del numero della popolazione che elegge i loro leader, il selectorate, e i membri della coalizione vincente che costituiscono il supporto del leader, la winning coalition. Per formare il nuovo governo, lo sfidante deve attrarre nuovi individui, e poiché la coalizione vincente (W) è più ridotta del selectorate (S), molti sostenitori saranno esclusi. Per questo motivo, è fondamentale ricordare che i sostenitori della coalizione vincente in carica, se insoddisfatti, devono soppesare i costi e i benefici della disobbedienza. In effetti, non vi è alcuna garanzia che i disertori possano essere inclusi nella winning coalition del prossimo leader e, quindi, rischiano di perdere il loro accesso ai beni privati, poiché non sono considerati necessari per la formazione del nuovo governo.

Gli scenari politici della stabilità governativa dipendono dalle dimensioni della winning coalition rispetto al selectorate che costituiscono la formula della loyalty norm (W/S). Nel caso in cui la coalizione vincente sia molto più ristretta del selectorate (W/S è vicino a 0), c'è una bassa probabilità che le persone che compongono la piccola minoranza della coalizione vincente passino a sostenere un nuovo leader politico, preferendo avvantaggiarsi dei benefici privati del leader, inducendo i sostenitori ad essere più leali nei confronti del soggetto in carica e mantenere la stabilità governativa. Questa è una condizione diffusa nelle autocrazie con elezioni truccate o manipolate, dove i pochi sostenitori delle coalizioni vincitrici sono fedeli al leader essendo il costo dell'esclusione e dei benefici privati troppo alto. Nel caso opposto, quindi, quando la dimensione della winning coalition si avvicina al selectorate (W/S è vicino a 1), i sostenitori del leader non ottengono privilegi speciali siccome il leader è indotto a fornire benefici pubblici per mantenere il grande sostegno, aumentando le possibilità di defezione da parte dei membri della winning coalition in supporto di un nuovo leader. Questo scenario è più evidente nei sistemi democratici costituiti da un'ampia coalizione vincente e da un grande selectorate in cui la sopravvivenza politica è difficile da raggiungere, e i leader politici sono disertati più facilmente.

Per trovare le cause del disturbo cronico dell'instabilità politica italiana, sono stati analizzati i quattro tipi di sistemi elettorali che hanno caratterizzato lo scenario politico italiano fin dalla proclamazione della Repubblica italiana. Più in particolare, lo studio si è concentrato sul rapporto tra la winning coalition ed il selectorate dal primo governo della prima legislatura italiana (De Gasperi V) fino al governo Conte, considerando i diversi sistemi elettorali e la percentuale dell'affluenza.

Nella seguente ricerca comparativa, è stata testata la validità della loyalty norm al fine di spiegare l'instabilità della politica italiana. Stando alla teoria della Selectorate theory, l'ipotesi verificata è la seguente: i governi caratterizzati da una bassa percentuale del rapporto tra il selectorate e la coalizione vincente sono i più longevi, con ridotti pericoli di instabilità politica, mentre i governi con un'alta percentuale sono caratterizzati da maggiori crisi di governo.

L'ipotesi è stata confermata dai risultati dell'analisi, dal momento che i governi che hanno presentato un'alta loyalty norm (W/S) hanno registrato una coalizione vincente che ha governato per minor tempo, aumentando i rischi di instabilità politica. La correlazione fra la loyalty norm e la durata dei 57 governi antecedenti al governo Conte risulta essere significativa e, in particolar modo, negativa. Da ciò si evince che l'aumento della loyalty norm ha determinato una riduzione della durata dei gabinetti. Ancora, tale risultato prova che le riforme elettorali abbiano contribuito ad influenzare la loyalty norm e, di conseguenza, la stabilità di governo. La validità dell'ipotesi viene rafforzata nuovamente attraverso il modello di regressione, applicato per misurare le conseguenze della loyalty norm sulla durata dei gabinetti. Tale modello consolida la significatività della loyalty norm, e il suo effetto negativo: meno loyalty, più stabilità.

Questa tendenza traspare visibilmente durante i governi della prima repubblica. In effetti, il sistema elettorale proporzionale favorisce la formazione di governi con un'ampia coalizione vincente e un'alta loyalty norm, aumentando l'instabilità politica e riducendo la durata media a 381 giorni

L'applicazione del sistema misto, il Mattarellum, ha portato un miglioramento per la sopravvivenza della politica italiana, quasi raddoppiando la durata del governo da 381 a 549 giorni.

I risultati di questi due sistemi elettorali sono del tutto in linea con l'ipotesi. Tale affermazione non può essere allargata al Porcellum. Infatti, nonostante l'alta percentuale della loyalty norm (anche se inferiore al sistema proporzionale), la durata del governo nel corso delle legislature è aumentata. Questo fenomeno presenta due distinte ragioni: (1) l'inatteso bipolarismo politico durante il governo Prodi II che ha costretto tutti i partiti politici ad allearsi e aderire ad una coalizione, temendo di essere esclusi dal Parlamento, aumentando quindi le dimensioni della coalizione vincente, e (2) lo scoppio della crisi economica del 2008 che ha portato alla formazione del governo Monti, sostenuto da una coalizione vincente estremamente ampia. I dati di questo governo possono essere considerati un valore anomalo nella ricerca, presentando una percentuale della loyalty norm pari al 63,61%, tra i più alti nello scenario politico italiano. In effetti, senza tener conto di questa osservazione, la loyalty norm sarebbe in linea con la media della durata del governo in maniera coerente con l'ipotesi.

Infine, la scarsità di osservazione inerenti al sistema elettorale attuale, applicato per la prima volta nel 2018, genera un'insufficienza campionaria. Per tale ragione, lo studio si può basare prevalentemente sui singoli dati ottenuti durante le elezioni generali della XVIII legislatura dove la loyalty norm del Rosatellum risulta analoga ai valori registrati con il Mattarellum ed il Porcellum (escludendo il governo Monti); ciò significa un incremento della durata dei governi come realizzatosi nella Seconda Repubblica. A seguito dell'elaborazione di questo modello, è possibile utilizzare le informazioni del periodo 1948-2018 per prevedere la durata del governo Conte. Infatti, sommando la costante della regressione al coefficiente della loyalty sulla durata, moltiplicato per la loyalty norm del governo Conte, si determina la durata di quest'ultimo, ossia 543 giorni. Tuttavia, al fine di verificare se l'ipotesi sia corretta, è necessario che i futuri studiosi testino nuovamente la congruenza e la rilevanza statistica di questa analisi con un maggior numero di dati acquisiti dai prossimi risultati elettorali.

Questo studio mira a dimostrare che la patologia cronica dell'instabilità italiana può essere curata. In caso di corretta applicazione della Selectorate theory nelle prossime analisi, questa tendenza positiva potrebbe indicare un'estensione della durata dei governi negli anni successivi. L'Italia potrebbe così raggiungere finalmente lo stesso tasso di longevità governativa degli altri paesi europei, cessando di essere reputata il caso di studio sull'instabilità politica da parte di giornalisti e scienziati politici.