



Department of Political Science

Chair of Contemporary History

MAKERS OF ITALY?

Giovanni Giolitti, Benito Mussolini, Alcide De Gasperi and Silvio Berlusconi

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Abstract

The XX century has been the core of the formation of Italy as both a state and a nation. By the first expression, we mean its territorial affirmation and stabilization from 1861 up to modern times, while by the second one, we mean the formation of its cultural and popular identity.

The research investigates these elements by looking at the political mandates of four characters that shaped, more than others, Italian history. These are namely Giovanni Giolitti, Benito Mussolini, Alcide De Gasperi and Silvio Berlusconi.

The aim of this research is to retrace some particular aspects of their way of doing politics in different fields. More specifically, the domains under analysis will regard their historical background, their political ideals and the way in which the population reacted to that. Moreover, they will also deal with their relationship with the Catholic Church and the public works that were realised under their mandates.

By doing so, the final thesis would like to demonstrate how their influence shaped the Italian personality both from a political and social point of view. We are interested in seeing how some of the aspects they introduced could still be efficient and actual if applied to the modern Italian state in order to refresh the actual political world, which seems to be more and more passive and ineffective.

Introduction

The aim of this research is to entertain a long and deep journey throughout the Italian political history of the XX century in order to try theorizing an ideological conceptualization that could suit and improve the actual national diplomatic scenario.

Although this project may seem utopian and ambitious, the author believes that the research could rise interesting observations that may help us reflecting about the modern institutional administration, its accountability, responsiveness and the subsequent reaction of the population. In order to do so, historical knowledge is fundamental for understanding the present, planning the future and avoiding committing the errors of the past. In this research, the points of reference for this process of understanding are represented by four political characters that, more than others, contributed to shape the Italian political and social scenario from its unification in 1861 up to modern times. These men are namely Giovanni Giolitti, Benito Mussolini, Alcide De Gasperi and Silvio Berlusconi.

The author chose them according to their historical and administrative importance in the development of some of the most salient aspects of the country. The research has been divided in four main chapters, each one highlighting a specific theme, common characteristics and divergencies.

In the first one, the characters are framed in their historical context and presented to the readers one by one. In this part it is still difficult to concretely touch the common characteristics that constituted their historical and political continuity. The author believed that this general framing was necessary for a deeper understanding of the following parts of the research.

The second chapter aims at comparing the political personalities of the protagonists. Here, it is possible to start connecting their roles and provisions due to the historical introduction that was made in the first part.

The third chapter enters into a concrete confrontation due to the fact that it concerns the public works realised by our characters. In fact, the section is divided in three parts that describe building provisions, economic and social reforms. In this part it will be possible to enter into a deeper analysis of the different attitudes that the characters shown according to the historical period in which they found themselves. As an example, Giolitti and De Gasperi were more focused on the practical necessity of constructing facilities and infrastructures that could make the country more

homogenous, whereas Mussolini and Berlusconi were more concentrated on the exaltation of the nation and of their personal ideologies.

Then, the fourth chapter analyses the relationship between the State and the Church during the different mandates of the four characters. The author believed that, while investigating about Italian history, it was not possible to omit the great significance that the Vatican holds in the administrative realm of the country. Even here, our protagonists appear to have controversial reactions. In this sections, readers will understand how much they were disposed to dare in order to maintain either their stable power or their convictions.

Finally, the conclusion appears to be quite different from a usual final evaluation. As a matter of fact, it required the writing of almost a further chapter. The aim of this study is to deeply understand which are the mechanisms that let Italy becoming a more developed and homogenous country throughout the XX century in order to see the effects that it produced and that could still be produced in the future. Nevertheless, modern times are characterised by partial divisions, discontent and disadvantages. So, it will be optimal to see if we can learn something from the history and ability of these characters. In particular, it will be interesting to see how the collaboration that they earned from the population helped them in the realisation of their aspirations.

The installation of this virtuous relationship was the key element for the successful achievement of such ambitions. This shows us that the political class needs to be an example for the population, giving them the instruments and possibilities to improve society. In our conclusions, we hope to give some useful hints for showing people how they could become the main characters of their own destiny, as our four protagonists did.

Chapter 1 – Historical context

In order to make our analysis clearer and straightforward, it is necessary to circumscribe the four protagonists of this research. The national and international political context the country experienced during their mandates and the kind of decisive influence they had on it makes their personalities as the ones that maybe, more than others, marked the historical transitions the Italian state went through.

Initially, it is fundamental to understand what class of country are we talking about. This can be helped by the analysis of Guido Melis’¹ work, *Fare lo Stato per fare gli Italiani*. Throughout the book, the author analyses the communication and linkage problem between the Italian State, its institutions and the population.

These gaps dividing our country have always been present in the history of the Italian peninsula. One of the best examples of this relies in the pre-unity situation, when it was divided in nine² different States, which were partly dominated by the Austrian Empire. Within these territories, there existed distinct traditions, dialects, habits, levels of industrialization and development. But most importantly, once the unification was realised in 1861, each slice of the population wanted to affirm its characteristics to the whole territory.

The conservative attitude of the various realities coexisting in Italy has always been object of a certain number of classic literature and academic studies. One of the most famous examples is shown in the work *Il Gattopardo*³ which was set in the period between the unification of Italy and the 1910s. Here, the prince of Lampedusa describes the attitude of the Sicilian population during the tiring process of homogenization of the country. One of the most famous quotes of the whole work is: “*In order to be sure that things do not change, we have to make sure that everything changes*”⁴. This sentence contains a multitude of meanings. The prince was inviting his people to pretend to adapt to the social changes that the unification of Italy would have brought. He was convinced that by pursuing this behaviour, the Sicilian population would have been allowed to keep up with their social habits.

This was just an example to describe the general attitude of the Italian people when it comes to obey some rules, having a leading figure or institution. It is our task then, to observe how the four

¹ (Melis, *Fare lo Stato per fare gli Italiani*, 2015).

² Piedmont, Parma, Modena, Tuscany, Massa and Carrara, Vatican Territories, Kingdom of Naples, Lombardy and Veneto. These two last regions were dominated by the Austrian Empire.

³ (Lampedusa, 1958).

⁴ (Lampedusa, 1958).

characters we are interested in managed to shape the Italian population throughout the XX century and up to present times.

1.1 Giovanni Giolitti and the humped⁵ country

Our first character of interest is Giovanni Giolitti (1842-1928). The period in which he dominated Italian politics saw him as direct leader under the figure of Prime Minister but also without personally leading the executive. This is known under the name of *Età Giolittiana*⁶, which officially lasted from 1892 to 1921, even if this is conventionally indicated as being from 1903 to 1921. He is considered to be one of the most important figures in the development of the conception of the Italian State, even if he has also been severely contested.

One of the reasons of his questioned political personality relies in his involvement in the scandal occurred during his mandate as Minister of the Treasury, which led him to resign and abandon the political arena for some years. The episode is known under the name of *Scandalo della Banca Romana*.⁷

In contrast, he was the supporter of several reforms that characterized the ideological and political modernization of Italy. Since he was the first Italian leader that did not participate to the Italian *Risorgimento*⁸, his figure is associated with a greater degree of pragmatism in making the country evolve. As a matter of fact, his predecessors were mostly concentrated in the ideological and sentimental nature of the unification of the country. In his work *Memorie della mia vita*, Giolitti affirmed that humanity was divided between two scopes: the political and the economic one. On the first side, legislators would always try to modify the assets of institutions in order to attract as many voters as they could. On the other side, politicians should always aim at the homogenization of the division of goods and capital among the population, in order to improve the condition of the weaker ones.⁹

Throughout his mandates, this is exactly what he strained to realise. From the title of this paragraph, we can see the expression “humped”. This is how Giolitti labelled the Italian attitude and his

⁵ Citation from Giovanni Giolitti, *Memorie della mia vita*, Milano, F.lli Treves, 1922, cap. X. p.209.

⁶ Età Giolittiana: period identifying the almost uninterrupted central mandate of Giolitti, which lasted from 1903 to 1921, although his first mandate occurred between 1892 and 1893.

⁷ Scandalo della Banca Romana (1892): political/financial issue revealing illegal activities of the governor of the Bank and the complicity of the political figures around him, such as Giolitti, in vanishing the proves.

⁸ Risorgimento: Italian movement that gave rise to the final unification and independence in 1861.

⁹ Giovanni Giolitti, *Memorie della mia vita*, Milano, F.lli Treves, 1922.

subsequent role. He described himself as a tailor, who should not force the country to become something it was not, but rather, he had to be good at tailoring the right reforms and measures for a State which was still weak and humped, and with no intention to straighten nor correct itself. By this expression he meant all the aspects cited at the beginning of the chapter, such as the strong intention of the several realities of the Italian population to maintain their principles and traditions. Hence, he had to be able to install the accurate *liaison* that could have allowed the State and its institutions to pierce into the population.

He was truly concerned with the industrial empowerment and modernization of the country. Moreover, he was the first one after the authoritarian leadership of his predecessor Francesco Crispi¹⁰, who avoided methods of harsh repression and tried to make several efforts towards the comprehension of the requests of the population. As an example, many regulatory norms for women and children's work¹¹ were introduced exactly during his mandates.

The most remarkable novelty of his directive has surely been the introduction of the universal male suffrage in 1912.¹² As cited before, the mission of homogenization between the different parts of the population relied primarily on this. Giolitti believed that the enlargement of the electorate would have represented a cue for economic and social growth. Even though socialism was spreading in a considerably fast way at the time, he was not frightened by the enlargement of the political rights of the opposition. On the contrary, he was able to see the socio-economic growth that this would have triggered, operating in a very liberal and innovative way.

His figure was particularly important even with the upcoming of the First World War. Those years were characterised by a brief interruption of his leading position. The role of Prime Minister was in fact covered by Antonio Salandra¹³, who was pushed to overcome the decisional power of the Parliament and declare war. Even though Giolitti was outside the political picture of the time, he tried to defend and remark the rights and importance of the Parliament, when the king delivered the declaration of war. Giolitti knew that the country was too weak to take part to a similar conflict and that it did not have the obligation to do so, due to the rules established by the Triple Alliance¹⁴. As a matter of fact, this last one established the obligation of Italy to intervene in case of a defensive

¹⁰ Francesco Crispi (1818-1901): Italian Prime Minister from 1887 to 1891 and again from 1893 to 1896. He was also one of the main protagonists of the Italian *Risorgimento* (Crispi, 1912).

¹¹ 12 hours per day if the person had reached the 12 years of age, as reported in (Lacche, 2008, p. 33)

¹² Provision recommended by the Minister Luzzatti, in 1912, aiming at conquering the support and collaboration of the socialist party into the Italian Parliament.

¹³ Antonio Salandra: 33rd Prime Minister of Italy between 1914 and 1916 (Salandra, 1977).

¹⁴ Triple Alliance: 1882 pact between Italy, Germany and Austro-Hungary. The countries should have intervened in case of a defensive action in favour of one of the components of the alliance.

intervention in favour of one of its allies: Germany and Austria. Since this last one was the responsible for the declaration of war to Serbia, the Italian intervention was not necessary.

Another important aspect characterizing the *Età Giolittiana* has been the concept of political *Trasformismo*.¹⁵ He was able to adapt the circumstances of the other social actors in order to drag benefits for the country and for his image as a politician. Some examples of this can be identified through the commercial agreements taken with France after the economic blockage, the enlargement of the electorate to gain the consent of the socialist party, the *Patto Gentiloni*¹⁶ with the Catholic Church, which will be largely discussed in the fourth chapter of the research.

Finally, his political work also left some flaws. The promotion of the industrialization of the North contributed to the increase of the discrepancies with the South. This last one was experiencing the phenomenon of the *Fasci Siciliani*¹⁷, criminal organisations, poverty and underdevelopment. He was harshly criticized on this issue, especially by the intellectual Gaetano Salvemini¹⁸, who even published in 1910 an essay titled *Il ministro della malavita: notizie e documenti sulle elezioni giolittiane nell'Italia medionale*¹⁹. In his works, Salvemini marked how the weak interest of Giolitti in the Southern question would have led the territory to a great increase of criminal organizations, clientelism, violence and detachment from the rest of the country.

According to Giolitti, the situation of the *Meridione* (the Italian South) was not able to change. He affirmed that he was quite worried about “*inorganic criminal organizations*”, such as the ones present in those territories. He believed that the action of the State could not exist nor be efficient over something which was not defined. Even though he can be blamed for his disinterest in the Southern question, it is possible that he tried to avoid generating further chaos.

¹⁵ *Trasformismo*: technique used by several politicians, in particular by Giolitti, in order to take positive political advantage from diplomatic issues. An example of it can be identified in foreign affairs or in the relationship between the government and the Church.

¹⁶ Informal written agreement signed in 1913 between Giolitti and the Catholic Electoral Italian Union (UECI) in order to make Catholics support Giolitti's party in the General Election of 1913 after the universal suffrage had been conceded.

¹⁷ *Fasci Siciliani*: proletarian movement that started spreading in Southern Italy in the 1890s which strongly opposed the action of the government in such territories.

¹⁸ Gaetano Salvemini: Italian intellectual (1873-1957) (Basso, 1959).

¹⁹ Essay published by Gaetano Salvemini in 1910 where he defined Giolitti as being the minister of criminality (*malavita*).

1.2 Mussolini and the two facets of his regime

The second character of our analysis is Benito Mussolini (1883-1945). By the title of this paragraph we are assessing a question that is often made while talking about the insertion of both Mussolini and fascism in Italian history. The query wonders if this was a natural evolution or a misleading episode of the country's development. In order to be able to answer this question, we should follow the research in order to understand the details of Mussolini's figure and regime.

His participation in the Italian administration was actually initiated by Giolitti. This last one wanted to tame the new fascist movement by including it in his last government²⁰ and, as a result, the impetuous rise of Mussolini caused the end of Giolitti's political career. Before his affirmation as the Italian *Duce*²¹, he was a really important exponent of the Italian Socialist Party. During the years of the First World War, he exposed his thoughts to the public opinion and his name became popular in a short period time. He then detached from socialists by speaking himself in favour of the entrance of Italy in the War. The formers, on the contrary, believed that this would have not represented an advantage for the working class, and they subsequently took the distances from Mussolini.

After the war, he established several bonds with lots of intellectuals and political exponents of the time. He was particularly tied to Gabriele D'Annunzio²², with whom he shared the frustration of the so called *vittoria mutilata*²³. As a result, he founded in 1919, the *Fasci di combattimento*²⁴, which will then evolve, in 1921, in the National Fascist Party. His affirmation as dictator occurred between the *March on Rome*²⁵ in 1922 and the elections of 1924, where his party gained the majority of votes in a quite contested way.

His figure has been quite controversial throughout his political activity and has been object of several studies and works²⁶. On the one hand, Mussolini is generally defined as being the evil dictator that established a strong bond with Hitler and led Italy into the Second World War. On the

²⁰ 1920-1921.

²¹ Duce: Italian expression to define the dictatorial figure of Mussolini.

²² Gabriele D'Annunzio: Italian poet and writer, 1863-1938 (Chiara, 1981).

²³ Vittoria mutilata: expression introduced by G. D'Annunzio to inditate the territorial rights that had been denied to Italy after the First World War (Montanelli, Vol. 12: La vittoria mutilata , 1993, p. 133-144).

²⁴ Fasci di combattimento: opposition party founded by Mussolini in 1919 that evolved in the National Fascist Party in 1921.

²⁵ March on Rome: what is recognised as being the formal act with which the Fascist regime was imposed on Rome and Italy as a whole.

²⁶ The most important historian in the field is undoubtedly Renzo De Felice, who devoted most of his life to the study of Mussolini.

other hand, he is portrayed as being the revolutionary figure that committed himself to make Italy a great country.²⁷

As stated before, he could count on the support of several intellectuals of his time, such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Giovanni Gentile, the Futurist movement, Ezra Pound. Then, on the political side he was even appreciated by characters such as Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler. This last one even cited him in the fifteenth chapter of the *Mein Kampf*²⁸, expressing the inspiration that he dragged from Mussolini. More precisely, Hitler talked about: “*a man living in the Southern part of the Alps that, due to his fervent benevolent feeling towards his country, was disposed to annihilate the enemies at all costs [...]*”²⁹.

As a matter of fact, Mussolini is often described as being a real patriot. Several scholars³⁰ have tried to defend his position and remarking the positive deeds that he conducted to change Italy. By setting apart his eccentric behaviour and the forced way in which he took the power, one can also see the nationalistic side of his choices.

His popularity is considered to be rooted in the frustration of the Italian population originated after the Peace Treaties of the First World War. The concept of *mutilate victory*, the provisions that had been made in favour of the liberal class and the negative conditions that War had left, pushed a large part of the population to give him consent. Moreover, once he took the power, he was particularly able in giving the perception that the governmental structures had not been modified by his presence. This technique was applied also to many other sectors of public life, such as the control of the information system through newspapers, propaganda cinema and radio.³¹

A clear example of his ability in the public sector has been analysed by Guido Melis³² in his work “*La macchina imperfetta. Immagine e realtà dello Stato fascista*”³³. In his work, Melis posed two fundamental questions to the readers: who the components of the leading class during fascism were and how the State worked. In order to answer to the second question, he conducts a quite detailed analysis. As a matter of fact, the formal structures of the public administration and representation

²⁷ Further details may be found in (De Felice, *Le interpretazioni del fascismo*, 1969)

²⁸ *Mein Kampf*: autobiographic manifesto of the Nazi regime, written by Adolf Hitler and published for the first time in 1925.

²⁹ (Hitler, 1925).

³⁰ (Ferrary, 2018).

³¹ Several examples for cinematographic witnesses of the propagandistic action of Mussolini can be found on the website of the Istituto LUCE (Istituto LUCE, 2020).

³² Guido Melis (1949): Italian journalist and politician, elected as deputy of the Democratic Party.

³³ *La macchina imperfetta. Immagine e realtà dello Stato fascista*: work published by Melis in 2018.

were kept unchanged, starting from the role of the monarchy. What Melis wanted to remark is that fascism was able to avoid giving the perception of negative alterations to the population.

Moreover, the numerous public works that were realised under the regime contributed to the enlargement of his supporters. Among these, we should cite the economic aid conceded to numerous families in order to incentivize demography, the land reclamation in the territories of the *Agro Pontino*³⁴, the construction of entire new areas and facilities in the big cities and the establishment of a solid union with the Catholic Church through the 1929 *Patti Lateranensi*³⁵.

Nonetheless, the fascist system presented some flaws that led it to its dissolution. According to Melis³⁶, the fact of leaving the governmental structure almost formally unchanged, created a crack in the whole system through which opposition could reaffirm. Moreover, the ideal of reconstructing the Roman Empire and the colonialist expansion, demonstrated a strong contradiction in Mussolini's personality. In fact, when the Libyan occupation was realised in 1911 under the government of Giolitti, Mussolini defined the mission as "*an action of international brigandage*"³⁷, denying the meaning and importance of the national principles.

When he took the power, pushed by the ideal of reconstructing the Empire and making Italy comparable to the other European powers, he was the instigator of expansionistic policies between 1923 and 1936. The most popular case is the acquisition of Ethiopia³⁸ in 1936. His contradiction increased throughout the Fascist *ventennio*, even by establishing the Pact of Steel³⁹ with Nazi Germany in 1939.

Some scholars affirm that if fascism would have not been involved in the racial and war provisions of Hitler's *Reichstag*, the regime would have represented a great turning point for the fate of Italy. It was the first time in history that the population was shaped and guided towards a common ideal, despite the though methods used and the existence of a strong opposition to the regime.

³⁴ Agro Pontino: rural area of the southern-west part of the Italian Lazio.

³⁵ Patti Lateranensi: agreement signed between the Church and the Kingdom of Italy that still nowadays regulate the diplomatic relationship between the State and the Church (Patti lateranensi : testo integrale : trattato, convenzione, concordato).

³⁶ Melis (2018): *La macchina imperfetta. Immagine e realtà dello Stato fascista*. Bologna: Il Mulino

³⁷ Reported in D. Sideway, J. (2012, December). Libya in the mirror of Europe. *The Geographical Journal*, p. pp. 296-301.

³⁸ Further information can be found in (Bosworth, 2002, p. 287-309)

³⁹ Pact of Steel: military and political pact signed between Italy and Germany in 1939

1.3 De Gasperi: a man of faith

Alcide De Gasperi (1881-1954) was the last Italian Prime Minister under the monarchy and the first one of the Italian Republic. He is considered as being the man that made the democratic reconstruction of Italy after the Second World War possible and the reconciliatory figure between Italy and the war winners.

He is viewed as a revolutionary character for both the Italian and European politics, since he has been one of the founding fathers of the Union. He had the opportunity to observe and live during both the *Età Giolittiana* and the fascist regime, which gave him the possibility to deeply reflect and study a model that would have brought Italy away from the ruin caused especially by the Second World War.

During the Great War, he expressed himself in favour of the entrance of Italy in the conflict, although he originally belonged to Austro-Hungary. Once it happened, he hoped that the relationship between the two countries could have remained peaceful and neutral, since he considered himself both Austrian and Italian. When he was conceded the Italian citizenship with the annexation of Trentino to Italy, he accepted it proudly.

Throughout his political career, he has been really tied to Don Luigi Sturzo⁴⁰, who has been his Master and introduced him to the Italian Popular Party⁴¹. During the Second World War, Don Sturzo and De Gasperi posed the bases of the Christian Democracy⁴² party, which was officially founded in 1942 and remained active until 1994.

Concerning De Gasperi's approach to the fascist regime, it has to be cited that he was initially in favour of it. He may have seen its establishment as a decisive and progressive transformation for Italy. Things changed in 1923, after the approval of the *Legge Acerbo*⁴³ and the subsequent speech that De Gasperi delivered at the Chamber against the provision. He accused the National Fascist Party (PNF)⁴⁴ of having manipulated the elections and of having used violence in order to obtain the support of the electorate. Then, after Matteotti's murder⁴⁵, he declared himself totally against it.

⁴⁰ Don Luigi Sturzo (1871-1959): Italian priest and politician, founder of the Christian Democracy together with Alcide De Gasperi (Bonaccorsi, 2011).

⁴¹ Italian Popular Party (Partito Popolare Italiano, PPI): founded by Don Sturzo in 1919.

⁴² Christian Democracy: party founded in 1943 by De Gasperi and Sturzo.

⁴³ Legge Acerbo: electoral law that was approved in 1923 and that is considered responsible for having given the possibility to the Fascist party to gain the majority of votes.

⁴⁴PNF: National Fascist Party founded in 1921 by Mussolini.

⁴⁵Matteotti's murder: murder of the Italian socialist politician occurred in 1924 and conducted by the Fascist regime due to Matteotti's opposition to this last one (Gobbetti, 2014).

During the Second World War, his contrariety to the regime caused him four years of jail and a prolonged isolation from society. Then, he was denied working and found shelter in the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*⁴⁶. In those years, he studied and reflected on the political and social issues he had witnessed during his life and career. Moreover, between 1942 and 1943, he started working on the manifesto of the Christian Democracy, with which he would have entered the government after the end of the war.

He was firstly elected as Prime Minister on December 10th, 1945. During his mandate, he demonstrated his devotion for the political mission and for his country. In the public works field, he approved several laws and provisions which reinforced the Italian economic and industrial sectors. Moreover, he was able to gain the support and respect of the international community although the critical position that Italy had taken by siding Nazi Germany during the War.

During the Peace Conference held in Paris in 1946, he delivered a memorable speech thanks to which he was able to positively impress international leaders and prove the change that Italy was undergoing towards democracy and peace. Furthermore, in 1947 his relationship with the American government tightened even more. In fact, the United States became the first financial supporters for the reconstruction of Italy after the War.

Although his remarkable conduct as a leader, several people tried to obstacle his actions and to sabotage his uncorrupted comportment. One of the key events that also marked the beginning of the decline of his political career concerns his relationship with the Church, to which he was totally devoted. This episode will be further investigated in the next sections of the research.

Finally, he was the first political leader among the ones of our analysis that demonstrated a great sense of duty and of passion for the public administration and amelioration. Throughout his career, he never made pacts that included illegal or unjust provision both for the political regulations and for the people. He never betrayed nor contradicted himself on his founding principles. This will constitute a major aspect of our analysis. The idea of a political man that puts the interests of justice and correctness before his personal concerns is something that each political reality should learn from this humble man.

⁴⁶ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: set in the Vatican State, inaugurated in 1450.

1.4 Silvio Berlusconi and his new conception of politics

Silvio Berlusconi (born in 1936) is the fourth and last character of our investigation. He appears to be the most complicated and controversial figure to examine. As a matter of fact, the parameters that have been employed for the analysis of the other characters do not fit him very well. This is mainly due to the fact that the historical context in which he operated was totally different from the other ones and that he truly changed the way of doing politics. He had the possibility to be temporarily linked to both Mussolini and De Gasperi, since, when these last ones were in power, Silvio was only a child. It may have been possible that his youth was influenced by their actions and that his first reflections on the political field were linked to their figures.

Berlusconi entered the political arena in a moment of economic stability, social change and spreading of liberal principles. In those years, it can be said that the mental *ouverture* of the Italian population was making a step forward. At the same time, the political leadership needed to adapt to the changes of the society.

Firstly, Berlusconi came into the public domain as an entrepreneur. He will enter politics due to his strong friendship with Bettino Craxi⁴⁷, which he considerably supported through his television channels. When the scandal of *Tangentopoli*⁴⁸ occurred in 1993, many vacancies were left in the Italian political arena. This is when Berlusconi decided to expose himself in first person to the political life.

In 1994, he founded *Forza Italia*⁴⁹. This name aimed at pushing the Italian national team in soccer. The party was representing the centre-right concepts, in order to give voice to the slice of the electorate opposing the centre-left beliefs, which were significantly taking pace at the time. The path that he followed towards the 1994 elections has been called *discesa in campo*⁵⁰. This Italian expression refers to the language used in the football field that indicates when a player stands up from the bench and starts his match.

⁴⁷ Bettino Craxi (1934-2000): Italian politician, leader of the Italian Socialist party from 1976 to 1993 and Prime Minister from 1983 to 1987 (Pacelli, 2019).

⁴⁸ Tangentopoli: political and journalistic scandal of the 1990s in Italy that caught several exponents of the political world for corruption and support of criminality.

⁴⁹ Forza Italia: centre-right party founded by Berlusconi in 1994 characterised by its Christian-democratic, liberal, conservative and populist ideals.

⁵⁰ Discesa in campo: January 26th, 1994. The start of Berlusconi's political activity is celebrated through a televised speech that lasted nine minutes.

Secondly, his political era, which lasted officially from 1994 to 2011, is known under the name of *Berlusconismo*⁵¹. This last one has been portrayed by many contemporary authors, which have tried to explain it or even just to narrate the dynamics of Berlusconi's career. In particular, Giovanni Orsina⁵² in his work *Il Berlusconismo nella storia d'Italia*⁵³, highlights some very interesting peculiarities of his political ideology and method.

Our starting point is his conception of Italy. In fact, he was the first one among the four characters that affirmed that Italy and Italians were great in the way they already were. This appeared to be really revolutionary as a concept and attained the positive reaction of public opinion. He was the only one putting the blame of the deficiencies of the State on the ruling élite instead of on the population. Conversely to what Giolitti believed in his theory of the political man as an experienced tailor, Berlusconi was the first one in asking: "*What can be done in order to peacefully replace an incompetent and unproductive leading class?*"⁵⁴.

As a matter of fact, Berlusconi's predecessors were all deeply convinced of the fact that the backwardness and inefficiency of the Italian system was due to problems residing in the mentality of the population as a whole and the still fragmented nature of the country. The *Cavaliere*⁵⁵ did not agree with this ideal and he chose to challenge it. Moreover, he wanted to ward off the country from the centre-left ideals. These last ones had taken pace during the Cold War and seemed to be unable to straighten or modernise the country. So, he strained for gathering masses towards a common idea.

Thirdly, his success also resides in his deployment on behalf of the *civic society*⁵⁶. In this way, he managed to appear as a member of the population, and not as an alienated political representant. *Berlusconismo* is defined by Orsina as the hybrid result coming from the union between populism and liberalism. On the one hand, it manages to arrive directly into people's houses and minds (due to communication means that the other leaders of our research could not count on, most importantly television). On the other hand, he is able to reawaken the spirit of all those that did not identify themselves in communism nor centre-left ideals in general.

⁵¹ Berlusconismo: the political operate of Berlusconi, founded on the so-called "entrepreneurial optimism".

⁵² Giovanni Orsina: professor of Contemporary History and director of the European Studies master programme at LUISS University.

⁵³ *Il Berlusconismo nella storia d'Italia*: written by Orsina and published in 2013 (see bibliography).

⁵⁴ (Orsina, 2013).

⁵⁵ Cavaliere: epithet attributed to Berlusconi in 1977 by the journalist Gianni Brera due to the recognition he received from the President of the Republic Giovanni Leone.

⁵⁶ Civic society: what is recognised in Orsina's book as being the population and not the political élitarian leading class.

By citing the other differences that detached him from the rest of our analysis we can mention his commitment in public works. His entrepreneurial approach gave him the possibility of launching lots of important investments for further modernization and development of the country. At the same time, the decrees and laws that were introduced during his mandates mostly concerned financial assets to ameliorate the conditions of the working class and public structures.

His relationship with the Church represents another interesting aspect. While talking about the connection between Berlusconi and the Holy See, people often cite the figure of Cardinal Camillo Ruini⁵⁷. During the years of Ruini's operate, which coincided with Berlusconi's mandates, many milestones of the Catholic Church were put into discussion by the progression of society. The *Cavaliere* had always been tightly close to the Vatican and he did not endorse such changes. Among these topics there were artificial fecundation, bioethics in general, education and the importance of the household.

All the aspects mentioned above will be further discussed in the upcoming pages and chapters of the research. We had the possibility to see that this last character takes a different inclination from his predecessors. In fact, it is still difficult to draw conclusions on his political career since he is still present in the Italian diplomatic scenario.

Furthermore, the vast majority of written documents about him come from newspapers, that may contain biased opinions. On the other hand, Orsina's work starts by citing: "*This book does not talk about Silvio Berlusconi. It does not ask which goals he has fulfilled nor has the intention of judging his way of governing. [...] The only way to try to understand what has happened during the twenty years of his strong influence is by replacing the explanations founded on the scarce intelligence, morality and rationality of the Cavaliere's electors and by trying to overcome it*"⁵⁸.

This passage may give us a proof of the great sense of objectivity and unbiased information that can help us in setting apart the numerous scandals in which Berlusconi was involved and for which he was hardly criticised. In this way, it will be possible to further fit him in the arrangement of the research and to make him useful too in order to draw our conclusions.

⁵⁷ Cardinal Camillo Ruini: is an Italian prelate of the Catholic Church who was made a cardinal in 1991. He served as president of the Italian Episcopal Conference from 1991 to 2007 and as Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome from 1991 to 2008.

⁵⁸ (Orsina, 2013).

Chapter 2 – Political personality

This chapter aims at making a deeper insight on the characters' political personalities. We are going to look both at the mutual and divergent aspects of these four temperaments by highlighting some of their most fascinating characteristics. It will be possible to see how different generations of political leaders may have had some shared beliefs and methods that contributed to the making of a progressive evolution of the country. Most importantly, it is interesting to analyse the different reactions of the population to their figure as a whole, according to the historical period in which they operated.

The chapter will be organised in three distinct parts. The first one will deal with the common use of the previously cited political *trasformismo* mainly by Giovanni Giolitti and Benito Mussolini in order to pursue different types of interests. Then, there will be a brief introduction to the use of propaganda through the means of communication principally of the eras of the *Duce* and the *Cavaliere*. It will be particularly interesting to see how the first one was able to vehiculate his propaganda even if the media of his time were still quite experimental instruments.

In the second part, we will focus mostly on the two characters that are believed to have had the most remarkable national and international appreciation. The fact that they consist in Mussolini and De Gasperi is quite fascinating. In fact, because of their temporal succession, we will be able to compare the opposing opinions of the same human generation before and after the Second World War: those who appreciated fascism and those who supported the detachment of Italy from it.

The third part will then deal with the enlightened attitude of both Giolitti and De Gasperi in mutually working for the acquisition of the right to vote for the whole country. Although Italy was one of the last European states to achieve it, these two characters were gifted with a remarkably liberal attitude. Then, there will also be a brief reference to the political provisions undertaken by Mussolini and Berlusconi. It is important to remember that this chapter does not aim at analysing the totality of the constitutional reforms brought by our characters, but rather at highlighting the charismatic aspects that are believed to be more significant. The third chapter will deal with the political changes and provisions in greater detail.

2 . 1 *Trasformismo and propaganda*

The first comparison that will be analysed concerns the adaptability features of the policies used both by Giolitti and Mussolini. Due to the chronological proximity of their lives and mandates, the two characters appear to have several common aspects, including their use of political *trasformismo*.

It is important to initially remark the reason why the usage of this technique was so common. The Italian population of the beginning of the XX century was quite different from what can be seen nowadays. They were neither universally aware about the importance of political representation nor about the effects that this implied. The electoral rights were limited to a small portion of the citizens which was most of the times directly related or in agreement with the ruling elite.

Even if this changed in 1912⁵⁹ with the introduction of the universal male suffrage, people's political knowledge remained quite weak. They only voted or favoured the candidate or party which appeared to be able to ameliorate their basic rights⁶⁰, rather than the country as a whole. In this scenario, Giolitti was able to bend public opinion and activity towards his influence. This happened not only during his numerous elections, but also in his relationship with the Church and foreign policy.

This last aspect is really crucial since it represents one of the most renowned episodes of confrontation between the statesman⁶¹ and the future *Duce*. Due to the increasing necessity for Italy to start its colonial expansion in order to align with the nationalistic and imperialistic attitude of the other European powers, Giolitti set up the Libyan conquer. After this happened, Mussolini accused the Prime Minister of having committed an act of *international brigandage*⁶². Moreover, the occupied territory was defined as useless since it was considered empty of resources. Later on, the *Duce* changed his mind on the issue due to his strong desire generated from the reconstruction of the Roman Empire and the subsequent need of a further foreign expansion. He renounced to his initial beliefs in order to conform to nationalistic standards of his times.

Concerning De Gasperi and Berlusconi, it is quite difficult to frame them into a *transformist* structure. In fact, the former is mostly characterised by the strength of his ideals and principles, which brought him to a coherent and well-structured political action. Regarding Berlusconi, it may be the case of talking about a form of *trasformismo* that only appeared in his relationship with the Church, which will be better analysed in the fourth chapter.

⁵⁹ Introduction of the universal male suffrage: provision recommended by the Minister Luzzatti, in 1912, aiming at conquering the support and collaboration of the socialist party into the Italian Parliament

⁶⁰ Reported from De Grand, A. (2010, December 13). Giovanni Giolitti: a pessimist as modernizer. *Journal of modern Italian studies*.

⁶¹ Statesman: alternative title attributed to Giolitti due to his previous activity.

⁶² Reported by D. Sideway, J. (2012, December). Libya in the mirror of Europe. *The Geographical Journal*, p. pp. 296-301.

On the electoral side, Mussolini's case cannot be compared to Giolitti's one since he firstly assured his party with the majority of votes due to the *Legge Acerbo*⁶³ and then worked for the abolition of democratic elections. Then, with the installation of the dictatorial regime, the reason why the already present tacit consensus to his personality got even stronger becomes clear. The forms of opposition to fascism developed during the *ventennio* needed several time and external support in order to become effective. Before the beginning of the Second World War, the regime assisted to a motivated opposition in parliament, which was mainly represented by characters such as De Gasperi, Don Luigi Sturzo, Giacomo Matteotti⁶⁴ and their colleagues, which were either imprisoned, exiled or murdered. Then, during the War, the *Resistenza*⁶⁵ started taking form and later represented a fundamental element that led to the liberation of Italy from fascism.

One may think that the absence of a true opposition to the regime was due to the population's heavy submission to it. It is also possible that, especially the least advantaged parts of the population found shelter in the fascist ideology and provisions. As cited in the first chapter, the social and economic advantages that the regime promoted for the population, helped the country in recovering from the poverty that the Great War had left. All the dogmas instituted by fascism, such as the famed *Sabato fascista*⁶⁶, *Ruralismo*⁶⁷, heroism and patriotism led the population to a solid sense of community. Mussolini often remarked that fascism was introduced as a *third way*. This meant that it opposed to the both widespread capitalism and socialism, and initially it was not meant to become so harsh and violent. The event that is believed to be responsible for the turning of fascism into an authoritarian and oppressive regime is the Matteotti murder of 1924.

Concerning the strong propaganda linked to fascism, it is worth remarking that Mussolini was one of the first leaders using the mediatic communication of his time in order to spread his ideas and make the population get to know his personality. He used to deliver several speeches through the radio and the cinema was monopolised towards the exaltation and description of the regime. There are several propaganda documentaries which were produced at the time in order to spread the fascist

⁶³ Legge Acerbo: electoral law that was approved in 1923 and that is considered responsible for having given the possibility to the Fascist party to gain the majority of votes.

⁶⁴ Giacomo Matteotti (1885-1924): Italian journalist, antifascist and politician, murdered in 1924 by the fascist regime (Gobbetti, 2014).

⁶⁵ Resistenza: the gathering of all the antifascist movements that worked for the liberation of Italy after the Cassibile armistice happened 1943.

⁶⁶ Sabato Fascista: public initiative recurring every Saturday during the fascist *ventennio* where the population was employed in practising sport, studying arts, culture and politics (Piombi, 1935).

⁶⁷ Ruralismo: the fascist concept of exaltation of the rural man, due to his work and his apport to the society (it is important not to forget the socialist origins of Mussolini)

ideal which can be still consulted thanks to the *Istituto LUCE*. Furthermore, he was also able to efficiently promote the world football cup of 1934. He managed to gather the population on several domains, to create cohesion. All these novelties together identified fascism and Mussolini's leadership as being a new beginning, a true opposition to the previous governments and political ideologies.

By following this line, Berlusconi can be defined as the first political personage that exploited the power of media in a really successful way after the *Duce*. It is sure that his *discesa in campo* occurred in a totally diverse historical period and that he was (and still is) the owner of a considerable slice of the Italian television, but still, it is possible to remark some similarities. Even in the case of Berlusconi, his political personality and ideals appeared as a decisive alternative to the strong and persistent presence of the centre-left values affirmed during the Cold War. In his case, he was able to stimulate the part of the population that did not identify itself in those principles. Additionally, it is really important to understand the distinction that Berlusconi makes between legal State and real State⁶⁸. In fact, he distinguished the country in two different realities: the first one, portraying the ruling élite, and the second one representing the population, so the true indicators of the Italian people. By remarking his belonging to this second class of people, Berlusconi identified himself as a true benefactor. He was willing to walk through the path of progress together with the population, by concentrating on their main interests and necessities.

Finally, in the case of Giolitti and De Gasperi, the propagandistic aspect was quite weak compared to the other characters. They did not focus the spread of their knowledge and ideals on the media. On the one hand, in the case of Giolitti, this was not easy to carry out due to the lack of means (especially in the first years of his mandate). On the other hand, even if De Gasperi was more advantaged on this point due to the technological progression of his time, he did not experience rich propagandistic advertising. This may have been caused by the fact that they both belonged to a precise political orientation and that the true indoctrination was made by the ideals themselves. In fact, it should not be forgotten that the main reason behind the use of the media by both Mussolini and Berlusconi was aimed at gathering masses of the population around a sole and unique ideal of politics and nation, which did not correspond to the opinion of the other two characters.

⁶⁸ Cited from Orsina, G. (2013). *Il Berlusconismo nella storia d'Italia*. Marsilio.

2 . 2 *National and international appreciation*

In this part, we will mostly concentrate on De Gasperi and Mussolini in order to portrait the different nuances of the national and international appreciation they received at their time. Since Alcide⁶⁹ is chronologically considered as the *Duce*'s successor, their chronological closeness highlights very peculiar cues. It is as if both of them developed their political personalities along two parallel, yet opposing lines, occurring at the same time. Afterwards, they both had the possibility to mark the Italian political scenario: Mussolini through the imposition of force, De Gasperi through acceptance of the really delicate job of reconstructing Italy from fascist and war mistakes. It is extremely interesting to observe how political exponents and intellectuals all over the world appreciated their personalities and how this changed after the Second World War.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the years preceding the War, Mussolini was truly welcomed by both the national intellectuals and the foreign leaders. Among the first ones, it is worth citing Gabriele D'Annunzio, Mario Sironi⁷⁰ and Giovanni Gentile⁷¹. This last one is particularly important, since he was the minister who promoted the reform of the Italian scholar system in 1923 through the so-called *Riforma Gentile*⁷². Such reform introduced several novelties in the Italian educational system, including the *esame di maturità* at the end of the last year of high school. The structure of this last one has remained unchanged from 1923 up to 2018. Of course, he had a strong link even with the Pope Pius XII⁷³. Their curious relationship will be deeply described in the fourth chapter.

Regarding the international context, Hitler cited him in his *Mein Kampf* and identified him as being one of his greatest guides and inspirations. Moreover, he was really appreciated by Ezra Pound⁷⁴, Franklin Delano Roosevelt⁷⁵, Winston Churchill⁷⁶ and Mahatma Gandhi⁷⁷. This last one visited Rome on December 12th, 1931, while he was going back to India from a conference in London. The British Prime Minister, on his side, considerably applauded him in occasion of the promulgation of the new (and still actual) Penal Code in 1933. He defined him as the “*greatest legislator alive*”⁷⁸.

⁶⁹ Alcide: De Gasperi's first name.

⁷⁰ Mario Sironi: Italian painter, one of the founders of the art movement *Novecento* in Milan in 1922 (Benzi, 2016).

⁷¹ Giovanni Gentile: Italian philosopher, pedagogist, politician and writer, whose name was given to the educational reform of 1923 (Turi, 1995).

⁷² Riforma Gentile: reform of the Italian educational system setting the obligatory attendance of school up to the last year of middle school and introducing the new structure of the final high school exam.

⁷³ (Wouters, 1959).

⁷⁴ Ezra Pound: American writer and intellectual (Chilanti, 1972).

⁷⁵ F.D. Roosevelt: 32nd American President from 1933 to 1945 (Roosevelt, 1950).

⁷⁶ W. Churchill: British Prime Minister from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955 (Brennand, 1966).

⁷⁷ Mahatma Gandhi: (Gandhi, 1973).

⁷⁸ Citation contained in (Web archive, 2009)

Then, Ezra Pound enthusiastically followed his politics from abroad and even dedicated to him one of his works, titled "*Jefferson and/or Mussolini*"⁷⁹. Finally, even the American president, appreciated his devotion for his country and admired the rigorousness of his regime.

De Gasperi, on his side, handled his diplomatic relationships in a more concrete and less representative way. Initially, is important to cite that, although he enjoyed a great approval from the Italian citizens, he had several opposers in Parliament. As a matter of fact, the socialist faction did not agree on the fact that, after the liberation from fascism, the liberal component had taken the power. As a result, Palmiro Togliatti⁸⁰ would be one of his greatest contestants.

Regarding the international side, he was truly respected. Firstly, the warm response he received from the worldwide community during the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 is a symbol of his global appreciation. During the summit, he said: “*By delivering this speech in this international assembly I know that everything, except from your personal courtesy, is against me [...]*”⁸¹. In this occasion, foreign leaders were able to see that Italy had totally detached from the dictatorial and warfare ideologies of the previous regime. This was the first step towards the acquisition of worldwide support in order to reconstruct Italy.

Secondly, he became very close to the American president Harry S. Truman⁸². On January 1947, he was invited by this last one to New York and the meeting was coronated by the concession of a 100 million dollars loan from the United States to Italy. Moreover, De Gasperi was the third Italian whose presence was honoured through the typical ticker-tape parade⁸³.

Thirdly, he is considered one of the founding fathers of the European Union. In fact, Alcide had been dreaming about the unification of European countries under a solid and peaceful international community even from his youth. After the terrifying effects of both the World Wars, he decided to strive for the creation of such a Union. Between 1945 and 1954, he conceptualised, together with Spaak⁸⁴, Schuman⁸⁵ and Monnet⁸⁶, what would then become, in 1957, the Coal and Steel

⁷⁹ Jefferson and/or Mussolini: work by Ezra Pound, published in 1933.

⁸⁰ Palmiro Togliatti: Italian socialist politician (Ragionieri, 1976).

⁸¹ Citation from De Gasperi's speech in the Paris Peace Conference, 1946.

⁸² Harry S. Truman: 33rd American president from 1945 to 1953 (Gies, 1968).

⁸³ Ticker-tape parade: ceremony consisting in the throwing of several corianders in order to generate a triumphant effect.

⁸⁴ Paul-Henry Spaak: Belgian politician (Remme, 1957).

⁸⁵ Robert Schuman: French politician (Wahl, 2001).

⁸⁶ Jean Monnet: French politician (Duchene, 1994).

Community (EEC)⁸⁷. Among the other founding fathers of the Union it is also worth citing Altiero Spinelli⁸⁸, Konrad Adenauer⁸⁹ and Joham Willem Beyen⁹⁰.

Finally, the analysis of the diplomatic relationships of these two characters highlights two different classes of international leadership. On the one hand, the supporters of Mussolini in the period preceding the Second World War admired his capacity of shaping Italy under solid and ordinate instructions. They were inspired by his method and may have wanted to exploit it even in their countries.

On the other hand, with De Gasperi we see a leading class eager to restart. Their willingness marked the beginning of a new chapter in both the European and global history that will assure great advantages for the international community. This was one of the most fundamental provisions that were taken in order to allow Europe to rebuilt itself.

2.3 Two steps towards universal suffrage

There is one final important aspect that has to be analysed in completing this chapter of charismatic comparisons. We should not forget that, due to the liberal and democratic policies employed both by Giolitti and De Gasperi, the Italian population was granted the right to vote. This process developed in two main phases: the universal male suffrage authorised by the reform of the minister Luzzatti under the fourth Giolitti government⁹¹, and its extension even to the feminine population in 1945 under De Gasperi's government. This last provision was applied for the first time in occasion of the administrative elections of March 1946 and for the referendum of June 1946⁹².

Now, it is important to remark once again the reasons that pushed these two leaders to deliver such important and crucial decisions. Italy was one of the last European countries in consolidating the concept of universal suffrage. France, for example, already started to deliver on the topic after the French Revolution in 1789. The decision taken under the fourth Giolitti government was crucial. Italy was still a very young and fragmented country, where socialist ideals seemed to take pace more and more. Nonetheless, Giolitti believed that enlarging the electorate could have been a great opportunity of growth for the country, even from an economic perspective. He was not afraid about

⁸⁷ Coal and Steel Community: also known as European Economic Community (EEC), officialised by the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

⁸⁸ Altiero Spinelli: Italian politician and writer (Paolini, 1988).

⁸⁹ Konrad Adenauer: German chancellor from 1949 to 1953 (Schwarz).

⁹⁰ Joham Willem Beyen: Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1952 to 1956.

⁹¹ Fourth Giolitti government: it lasted from 1911 to 1914.

⁹² 1946 Referendum: election in which the Italian people chose the Republican regime instead of the monarchy.

giving a voice to the supporters of the opposition. In fact, the reform provided all the male citizens without penal restrictions and aged thirty years old with the right to vote.

Together with the *Luzzatti Reform*, the Italian political leaders started thinking even about the feminine suffrage. The proceedings for the consolidation of this vanished in 1928, when fascism totally abolished the right to vote. After the end of the Second World War, the Council of Ministers, led by Ivanoe Bonomi⁹³, emanated a decree that recognised women's right to vote. In occasion of the first application of the feminine suffrage, De Gasperi was called by several journalists to express his opinion on the issue. He answered that, since his family was made up by six women (his four daughters, his wife and his sister-in-law), it was unconceivable for him to deny them such a fundamental right.

Through the analysis of this process, we can see once again how leaders in different historical period can have similar visions that may match in the future. The choice undertaken by the Giolitti government was a first effort towards the modernization and democratization of the country. It aimed at making all citizens an equal part of the electorate, which would have only then been able to express their thought, even against the majoritarian view. This aspect marks the political security that pervaded Giolitti. It seems that he was sure about the influence he exercised on the electorate, so that he did not had to fear the reinforcement of the opposition. Was it rooted in his charisma or in some diplomatic compromises? We will further uncover this in the next pages.

Then, the reinstatement of the right to vote and its extension in 1945 marked the end of the monarchical era in the country. The affirmation of the Republic portrayed a more conscious population, which was projected towards the future and towards change. This great democratic effort was the missing piece for the beginning of the realisation of the European project, holding Italy as a protagonist.

In the third chapter of the research there will be a greater analysis on political reforms as a whole. This part will also include Mussolini and Berlusconi. In particular, there will be a deeper insight on the *Legge Acerbo*, and on the *Legge Calderoli*⁹⁴, also known under the name of *Porcellum*. The first one reformed the Italian electoral system before the elections of 1924 assuring the fascist party with the majority of preferences and opening the path for the subsequent cancellation of the right to vote in 1928. The second one was instituted under Berlusconi's government in order to make elections

⁹³ Ivanoe Bonomi: Italian lawyer, journalist and politician, protagonist of the affirmation of the feminine suffrage.

⁹⁴ Legge Calderoli (2005): political reform that marked the shift of the Italian electoral system from a majoritarian to a proportional one (Parlamento Italiano, 2005).

more representative of citizens' preferences instead of favouring the ruling elite. The reason why these last two aspects have not been further investigated in this part is that the author believed that the electoral provisions brought by Mussolini and Giolitti did not mark the same enlightened perspective such as the one of Giolitti and De Gasperi regarding this field.

Chapter 3 – Public works, land reclamation and modernization

This chapter will deal with all the concrete provisions and decrees undertaken by our four characters. In the context of the Italian solidification and modernization, there are several initiatives that must be mentioned according to the historical period of their realisation.

The chapter will be organised in three sections, each of them investigating a specific domain of public works. The first one will deal with the main building provisions and land reclamation. Our four leaders managed to provide Italy with modern infrastructures and new spaces for the installation of industries and the development of the economy. Lots of them are still used in modern times and the symmetric work of homogenisation from north to south has helped to country to partly fill the gaps between these two realities.

The second part will deal with the most significant economic reforms. Here the historical elements will be particularly relevant since each of these provisions concerned the amelioration of the financial situation in the light of war crisis or equalization of workers' rights. In this case, due to his entrepreneurial approach to politics, Berlusconi holds the role of main protagonist, since this allowed him to be particularly active on the field.

Finally, the third part widens our focus on the major social reforms. By this name it is meant any provision that changed the assets of the community, for example while talking about the right to vote. Since the XX century has been characterised by surprising social changes, it is worth looking at them in detail and analysing once again how each one of our characters was able to leave a trace of his action.

3 . 1 Building provisions

By this expression, we indicate all the facilities that were constructed under the governments of our reference leaders. Each of them has contributed to ameliorate national infrastructures and to facilitate communication and movement within the country and outside it.

During Giolitti's third government⁹⁵, Italy assisted to the realisation of several public works. In 1906, the *Sempione* fretwork was realised in order to facilitate the exchange and transportation of goods and people to Switzerland. Then, in 1908, after the terrible earthquake that hit both Sicily and Calabria, the government encouraged a great social mobilization that helped the two regions recovering. Moreover, in the same year the great aqueduct serving both Apulia and Campania was restored, allowing for the transmission of potable water in the two regions. These two episodes will

⁹⁵ Third Giolitti government: from 1906 to 1909.

be remarked by Gaetano Salvemini as Giolitti's few actions promoted in favour of the *Mezzogiorno*. Furthermore, it is also worth citing the land reclamation of the territories of Ferrara and Rovigo. This permitted the installation of several industries and enterprises. In modern times, the region of the *Po area*⁹⁶ still hosts almost the 70% of Italian industries.

The fascist regime is also renowned for great works of land reclamation. Among these, it is worth citing the one of the territories of the *Agro Pontino*, which were realised among 1928 and 1932. Thanks to this, a lot of diseases such as malaria and cholera were eradicated from the region. Additionally, after several clashes with the industrial trade unions, in 1925, Mussolini gathered them in one single body: *Confindustria*⁹⁷. Then, he also sorted the construction of several areas of the Italian capital city, such as the *EUR*⁹⁸ district, where the squared Colosseum was built, and the *Foro Italico*⁹⁹. These two represent still nowadays a point of reference for Rome and host several fashion and sportive events.

During De Gasperi's government, the main provisions that were taken consisted in the reconstruction of the country after the War and in the stimulation of the economy. Among his objectives, it is worth mentioning the establishment of ENI (Italian National Energy) as monopolist in the research and administration of methanol gases in the *Po area*¹⁰⁰. Then, in 1949 the so-called *Piano Fanfani*¹⁰¹ was launched. It aimed at realising a huge number of households in a short period of time and with low costs. Within a few years, the plan provided for the erection 300.000 dwellings all over the country which were mainly delivered to citizens that lost their residence during the War.

Finally, even during *Berlusconismo* there have been several infrastructural provisions which contributed to the modernization of the country. Among these, it is worth mentioning the *Grandi Stazioni* programme. This was launched in 2003 and aimed at the modernization and alignment in facilities and infrastructures of the train stations situated in ten big Italian cities. The municipalities involved were the ones of Bari, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Turin, Venice and Verona. In order to realise this ambitious project, the government invested 294 million euros.

⁹⁶ *Po area*: extended valley coinciding with the course of the Po river in northern Italy.

⁹⁷ *Confindustria*: general confederation of Italian industries (Nicotri, 2011).

⁹⁸ *EUR*: monumental district in the southern part of the city of Rome (Della Giovanna, 1968).

⁹⁹ *Foro Italico*: sportive district in the centre of Rome. It is still functioning nowadays and hosts the Tennis Championship every year.

¹⁰⁰ Area of northern Italy corresponding with the passage of the Po river. This area includes Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia Romagna.

¹⁰¹ *Piano Fanfani*: plan approved in 1949 that takes its name from the Minister of Work and Social Welfare of that time, Fanfani (Fanfani, 2012).

Then, in 2004, the so-called *Legge Finanziaria*¹⁰², which will be further discussed in the next section (regarding economic reforms) provided the country with several investments aiming at ameliorating and building airport services and regional infrastructures as a whole.

3.2 *Economic reforms*

The years following the Italian unification were particularly relevant for shaping the assets that would have brought the country towards its decisive development throughout the XX century. In this period, statesmen including Giolitti understood the importance of creating a modern market infrastructure for the country in order to try aligning with the rest of European economies.¹⁰³

Unlike its neighbouring concurrents, Italy was lacking the raw materials to foster such an economic growth. By these we mean essentially coal and iron. This gave origin to the necessity of foreign importation and the projection over new forms of development¹⁰⁴, such as the reinforcing of the economic triangle between Turin, Milan and Genoa and the land reclamation in the Po area. This allowed the installation of several important industries.

Consequently, it has been calculated that the percentage of net investment of Italian national income increased from 3.5% to 10.2% in the years between 1896 and 1910. According to a conservative estimate, the average increase in industrial production, which had been 1.1 percent in the 1880s, spurred to 4.3 percent. Manufacturing doubled in fifteen years, and from being the Mediterranean backwater, Italy made its entrance into the western European industrial area.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, lots of Italian brands were founded in this period, such as Fiat in 1899, Lancia in 1906 Alfa Romeo in 1910. All these factors together contributed to the labelling of the Giolittian era as a period of economic prosperity and stabilization before of the retroactive effects caused by the First World War.

Then, the fascist regime found itself in the position of reconstructing the country after the conflict. Everything was vehiculated by the *Duce*'s ambitions concerning Italy. Due to his desire of reinforcing the Italian national power and economic system and repristinating the ancient Empire, he actuated a protectionist policy. This consisted in the closure of the country on the financial side. In this way, the *Duce* believed that Italy would have become auto sufficient in the agricultural production, in particular in the wheat one. The strategy lasted eight years, even if the country did

¹⁰² Legge Finanziaria: (Senato della Repubblica, 2009)

¹⁰³ (Di Scala, 2009).

¹⁰⁴ (Lyttleton, 2002).

¹⁰⁵ (Di Scala, 2009).

not reach a total independency. At least, the plan was able to make the agricultural production increase significantly.

Even De Gasperi has been recognised as having promoted strategic economic reforms. One of his main concerns relied in the progressive elimination of the gaps between the North and the South of the country. The most important initiative he promoted in the field was the institution of the so called *Cassa del Mezzogiorno*¹⁰⁶ in 1950. This aimed at fostering economic initiatives that could have pushed the South towards development and growth. With the passage of the years, this investment guaranteed the realisation of 16.000 kilometres of roads, 40.000 kilometres of electric nets, 1.600 schools and 160 hospitals. In the same year, the *Legge Stralcio*¹⁰⁷ gave the possibility to several small agricultural tycoons to redistribute lands between them and re-organizing the sector with an entrepreneurial asset. Moreover, this last one provided the country with the modernization of the agricultural machineries and the possibility of renovating the soil and the resources taken from it.

Finally, Berlusconi has been quite praised for his government's economic initiatives. Here, it is necessary to start by making a deeper insight of the previously mentioned *Legge Finanziaria*. The latter was announced in 2002 and launched in 2004. It consisted in the commitment from the government of several million euros in public works, which were realised throughout the years. The repartition of this capital was distributed among savings into national funds, maintenance of infrastructures and realization of new ones. As a matter of fact, 30 million euros were dedicated to the National Fund for the completion and maintenance of public structures and educational projects throughout the Italian regions. Then, 70 million euros were addressed to the construction of infrastructures in local and national areas. Then, the cipher that was address to the project of amelioration and realisation of the airport services that were previously cited equalled 27.3 million euros. Finally, the 3% of the total investment was addressed to the maintenance and reconstruction (were needed) of cultural and architectural heritage.

¹⁰⁶ Cassa del Mezzogiorno: financial aid instituted in 1950 for the modernization and aid of southern Italy. It consisted in a decennial plan that offered 100 million lire each year until the expiration of the plan (Degli Oddi Alfieri, 1967).

¹⁰⁷ Legge Stralcio: launched in 1950 for the redistribution of the administration of lands in the agricultural sector and for the renovation of the machineries and the soil (Camera dei deputati, 2019).

3.3 Social and political reforms

In this last part it will be possible to observe how each one of our leaders committed himself in ameliorating the social conditions of the Italian population and in rationalizing the bureaucratic processes and the relationship between different sectors of the citizens.

Initially, Giolitti managed to reconcile two emerging mass opposition movements: Catholics and socialists.¹⁰⁸ As mentioned before, the former were re-introduced in the political world through the softening of the provisions indicated by the *Non-expedit* and the transitory institution of the Patto Gentiloni, while the latter were conceded the right to vote. Then, Giolitti was the first Italian leader committing himself in the improvement of the healthcare system and working conditions of the citizens. In 1904, he contributed to the creation of a unique regulatory form for madhouses. This provision aimed at avoiding abuses on the patients, which were really common at the time. Furthermore, in 1906, he instituted the charge of the work Inspectors. These last ones had the task of assuring the respect of the application of the new norms¹⁰⁹. This constituted a first step towards the protection of the working field in Italy and the demonstration of the comprehensive attitude of the Statesman. As cited in the first chapter, he was against any form of harsh repression and he revealed himself as being really open minded towards the necessities of the population. Among these, the pressures advanced from the working class were surely among the most relevant of his times.

Furthermore, the already mentioned institution of universal suffrage is surely the achievement that both Giolitti and De Gasperi shared. Within 1912 and 1945 they endowed the whole national population with the right to vote making a huge step towards democracy. We should not exclude the war was responsible for a greater sense of consciousness of the importance and necessity of this process.

In relation to the elimination of the Wars' aftermaths, De Gasperi used all means in his possession to socially help the country. He avoided the increase of war sanctions for Italy in the Paris Peace Conference, he obtained the financial aid from the United States, committed himself in setting the guidelines for the creation of the EEC¹¹⁰ and worked on a national level for the further cohesion of the population. One of his most remarkable achievements in the nation-wide domain relies in the

¹⁰⁸ (Forsyth, 1993)

¹⁰⁹ as explained in chapter 1, under the Giolitti government, the working conditions were set to a maximum of 12 hours per day. Moreover, people could work only from 12 years old on.

¹¹⁰ EEC: economic European community instituted in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome.

financing of a magazine: *Terza Generazione*¹¹¹. This journal was addressed to the young public and aimed at finding contexts of social integration that prescinded from the political orientation. As a matter of fact, the post war years were still characterised by a strong ideological division, especially among the young population. Fascist and anti-fascist aggregations were still provoking themselves. *Terza Generazione* and the other social provisions coming from those initiatives helped in dampening these tensions.

The last provision that De Gasperi was able to take before his death in 1954, was the so called *Legge Truffa*¹¹². This derogatory name, meaning fraud, was attributed to the law by his political opponents. The directive consisted in assigning the 65% of seats in parliament to the party obtaining the majority of votes during the elections. After the failure of this proposal in 1953, De Gasperi resigned from his position and left the Italian political arena.

While talking about social provisions, it is not possible to avoid citing Mussolini. Even though he has always been remarked as a quite controversial figure, his reforms are recognised for having had a great impact on Italy. As mentioned above, in concomitance to the development of the fascist the *ventennio*, Italy was in the need of economic growth. Since the import market caused the 50% of the deficit on the Italian Balance of Payments, the *Duce* decided to “close” the country. Through the application of protectionism, he thought that the country would have become auto sufficient in wheat and in agricultural production as a whole. This provision was named *La battaglia del grano*¹¹³. It lasted eight years and strongly cut the exchange of agricultural stocks with the neighbouring countries. In the end, the independence strategy revealed itself to be quite weak, but, although that, the national production level increased significantly making that economic sector grow.

Moreover, conversely to the faults attributed to his predecessor Giolitti, Mussolini managed to bring his political charisma even to the areas of the Italian *Mezzogiorno*. In 1925 he nominated Cesare Mori¹¹⁴ as prefect of the city of Palermo. This last one was featured with almost absolute powers for the administration of the island in order to fight against the criminal expansion of the mafia phenomenon. Although it is said that he mostly embraced the utilization of unconventional

¹¹¹ *Terza Generazione*: magazine financed by the De Gasperi government in order to reduce the divisions among the population.

¹¹² *Legge Truffa*: proposed by the De Gasperi government in 1953. The provision aimed at reforming the electoral system. It consisted in the assignation of 65% of the seats in parliament to the party obtaining the majority of votes (Scelba, 1953) (Quagliariello & Capperucci, 2003, p. 171-189)

¹¹³ *La battaglia del grano*: launched in 1925, it helped Italy in the increase of the production of wheat.

¹¹⁴ Cesare Mori (1871-1942): prefect of Palermo under the fascist *ventennio* (Petacco, 1978).

practices, such as torture, kidnapping and blackmailing, he managed to obtain significant results between 1926 and 1927.

In the meantime, Mussolini continued his work of exaltation of the Italian population and reconstruction of the empire. In 1927 he launched a programme aiming at encouraging the demographic growth of the country. He was used saying: “*numbers are the strength of a nation*¹¹⁵”. Through this initiative, the fascist regime started exalting the image of the family as a civic task. Women had to be exclusively devoted to procreation and cure of their progeny. Moreover, the regime levied a tax on unmarried citizens in 1927, which was then increased both in 1928 and in 1934. Conversely, the fiscal duties for numerous families were significantly reduced, and mostly prolific women were prized and publicly exalted.

Concerning Berlusconi, his main social and political provisions may be considered as being more actual since he is the most chronologically close leader to our times. Initially, due to the 2001 *Legge obiettivo*, he pushed Italian trials and bureaucracy to shorten its realisation time through the institution of some specific figures, the *Commissari*. They were responsible for the correct development of administrative matters. This provision was mainly aimed at eliminating the doggedness of the so-called *toghe rosse*¹¹⁶. By this, we mean the members of the judiciary that were known for their favourable position towards left-wing ideas and that the *Cavaliere* thought responsible for the malfunctioning of public justice.

Then, by following the line initiated by Giolitti in 1906 in the working field, Berlusconi launched (in 2003) the so called *Legge Biagi*¹¹⁷. The directive aimed at providing more flexibility for workers in terms of familiar necessities, healthcare and personal needs as a whole. On the pensions side, the *Decreto Maroni*¹¹⁸ of 2004 lowered the minimum retirement age to 58 years old. Moreover, in the years preceding the installation of his government, the Italian fight against mafia had reached incomparable results. Due to the strong commitment of the magistrates Falcone and Borsellino¹¹⁹, which both lost their lives in 1992, mafia had been significantly weakened. In order to continue this

¹¹⁵ Citation taken from the *Ascensione* discourse on March 26th, 1926.

¹¹⁶ *Toghe rosse*: expression used by Berlusconi to indicate the members of the judiciary with left-wing orientation.

¹¹⁷ *Legge Biagi*: it was launched in 2003 and took his name from the Italian professor of labour law killed by the communist terrorist group Red Brigades due to his role as economic advisor to the Berlusconi administration (D.Lgs. 276/2003, 2003).

¹¹⁸ *Decreto Maroni*: launched in 2004 and taking his name from the Welfare minister of the time (LEGGE 23 agosto 2004, n. 243, 2004).

¹¹⁹ Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino (Corriere della Sera, 2012): Italian magistrates deeply committed in the fight against mafia, and protagonists of the so called “Maxi Processo”. They were both murdered between May and July 1992.

battle, Berlusconi's government made the harsh provisions of the Article 41-bis prison regime¹²⁰ a permanent penalty for mafia leaders. The law prohibited the usage of electronic devices, encounter with other prisoners or third parties and participation to recreative activities for the concerned detainees.

Furthermore, between 2005 and 2008 three truly significant provisions were introduced. Firstly, the *Legge Calderoli* transformed the majoritarian electoral system into a proportional one, with the awarding of a majority prize. The reason why Berlusconi's government pushed for this reform was to give the population a further demonstration of their commitment against an unjust political leadership that did not represent the expressions and preferences of the population. Secondly, the ban of smoking in public places and offices was completely officialised in 2005. Finally, they introduced a law regulating artificial insemination and prohibiting research on embryonic stem cells. Among these prohibitions there were also the ones banning the pre-implant diagnosis and insemination by donors other than the husband, pushing women to be implanted after the embryo creation even in case of genetic diseases, recognising the embryo as entitled to human rights. On this last point, Berlusconi found support in the Catholic Church and in particular in the Cardinal Camillo Ruini. This specific issue will be further explored in the fourth chapter.

Having arrived at the end of this chapter it is worth drawing some considerations. We have had the possibility of portraying our four leaders as being very charismatic and concerned about the development of the country. It seems as if the totality of these provisions served as a further proof of their true devotion for the administration of Italy. Then, by taking a closer look to the way in which our protagonists realised these important works, we can highlight their different political attitudes. As a matter of fact, we can see the more pragmatic nature of Giolitti in the entity of his provisions. He was aiming at realising infrastructures that could help Italy developing faster and connecting with other countries. Then, we can see the efforts he made in order to make the social divisions start fading and realising a more homogenous aggregation in the population. So did De Gasperi. His provisions were mainly deemed at the reconstruction or providing the country with helpful aids.

Conversely, Mussolini and Berlusconi's public works aimed at also celebrating their figure as political leaders. The imponent buildings that were realised during their mandates represented their idea of being a leader and of making politics. In the case of Mussolini, this was caused by his

¹²⁰ Article 41-bis prison regime: launched in 1975, restricting all the rights conceded to "normal" prisoners for mafia leaders.

ambition of rebuilding a great country under the magnificence of an empire. Berlusconi instead, was heavily influenced by his entrepreneurial approach to politics.

Now, it is time to wonder if all this dedication and consensus has always been a constant feature of their mandates. As a matter of fact, not all diplomatic relations come from the sole, genuine devotion of their creators. Leaders often have to come across compromises and collateral pacts in order to realise what is better for their government and for the population. The next chapter will introduce the role of an institution that cannot be omitted while talking about Italian administration and history: the Church. In this context, it will be finally possible to see and judge the degree of loyalty and coherence that our four characters either maintained or not in front of the representants of the Catholic religion.

Chapter 4 – the State and the Church

While investigating about Italy, it is impossible to omit the presence and importance of the Catholic Church. Its relevance does not only depend on its geographical presence on the territory, but rather, it is one of the fundamental components of the Italian national identity. For how much politics wanted to take the distances from it and realise a laic State, fundamental decisions and changes always had to pass through the Vatican approval. This concept has been particularly relevant throughout the XIX and XX centuries, starting from the forced annexation of the Vatican territories to the Kingdom of Italy¹²¹.

This chapter will not be based on a direct comparison between the attitudes of the four leaders. It would rather be a descriptive section that will analyse their single affiliation with the Church. It is precisely here where we will be able to see that political power alone may have not been always sufficient in leading the country. Moreover, we will see that in some occasions, lust for power and the necessity to protect their interests, may have pushed our leaders to disown their beliefs and principles in order to find compromises with the Church. It can be said that here it will be finally possible to distinguish between the true devotion to leadership and faith from the desire for power.

The chapter will be divided in three parts. The first one deals with the *transformist* attitude that emerged even in this context from both Giolitti and Mussolini. The main focus will be centred on the *Patto Gentiloni* established in 1913 and on the *Patti Lateranensi* of 1929. These two represented the main steps towards the establishment of an agreement between the two institutions, which appeared to be fundamental after the hostilities provoked from the *Questione Romana*¹²². Here, *trasformismo* appears to be once again the gluing factor between the attitudes of these two characters. As a matter of fact, none of the deals signed between them and the Church can be considered as totally being the genuine result of a deep faith.

The second part regards the totally different attitude hold by De Gasperi. His relationship with the Vatican was characterised by a serene cohabitation that only changed when this last one challenged Alcide's firm principles. In fact, the Church needed the support of the Prime Minister in order to obstacle the rise of the communist party, even if this included using unjust measures. De Gasperi did not accept this and preferred marking the end of his political career instead of being dishonest.

¹²¹ annexation of the Vatican territories to the Kingdom of Italy: September 20th, 1870.

¹²² *Questione Romana*: expression by which one refers to the harsh relationship between State and Church after the forced annexation of the Vatican territories to the Italian Kingdom in 1870 (Calura, 1926).

The third part concerns the quite delicate and debated position of Berlusconi. In fact, this section is inevitably linked to some of the scandals in which he was involved. It will be possible to observe how the *Cavaliere* approached to the three pontificates that marked his political era and how his relationship with them changed throughout the years. Initially, he will be considered as the most similar political figure to the previously active DC. This provided him with a strong support from both Wojtyła and Ratzinger's pontificates. Then, after his shocking accuses, his image changed, demonstrating that also the relationship between the two institutions has come to a structural alteration.

4.1 Religious transformismo

From the term *transformismo*, our mind immediately recalls the figure of Giolitti. In fact, this has been his key technique in the political field in order to make all decisions and diplomatic interventions merge in a sole direction: the consensus towards his government. In this section we will see that also another one of our characters made use of this method in order to consolidate its stability in the political field. The first concept that has to be clear by initiating this last part of our research is that the Church has always covered a truly impactful role in the Italian scenario. This is the reason why political leaders always had to come to terms with it.

When Giolitti first got the power in 1892, the relationship between the State and the Vatican was quite harsh. As a matter of fact, the forced annexation of this last one to the Kingdom of Italy, had occurred in a quite abrupt way, provoking a great schism between the two institutions. In one of his speeches contained in the volume *Discorsi Parlamentari*¹²³, Giolitti affirmed that there was nothing his government could do in order to soften the severe relation with the Church. He believed that both institutions should accept and respect the existence of the other one and that no one should vociferate on the conduct of the other one. He defined them as “*two parallel lines whose paths should have never crossed*”.¹²⁴

Inevitably, things changed as social assets changed. In the previous sections it has been often remarked how much Giolitti supported the enlargement of the electorate and the importance that this meant for him. It has also been said that he did not fear the possibility of a left-wing victory to the elections after the concession of vote to its supporters. Now, we discover that this was not totally true. The reason why Giolitti did not fear socialist expansion was that even his followers had broadened.

¹²³ See bibliography (Giolitti, *Discorsi parlamentari*, 1953).

¹²⁴ *Idem*.

In 1913¹²⁵, when the general elections were coming closer, Giolitti had a dispute with the priest Romolo Murri¹²⁶. This last one was a member of the clergy that supported socialist ideals. In the light of the association between the Church and the working class, the Statesman realised that he would have needed further support in order to win the elections. So, he decided to come to pacts with the clergy and assuring their support to the liberal faction. This last one was called *Patto Gentiloni*, which consisted in an informal¹²⁷ agreement contracted between Giolitti's liberals and UECEI¹²⁸. The pact took his name from the director of the latter, the count Vincenzo Ottorino Gentiloni¹²⁹.

Here, it is necessary to take a little step back. The Catholic Electoral Italian Union (UECEI) was instituted by Pope Pius X after the *Non expedit*¹³⁰ of his predecessor Pius IX. The aim of this aggregation was to guide Catholics in their political orientation and choices, in order to reintroduce the clergy to national politics.

After the stipulation of the pact, the radicals that previously joined the Giolittian majority, left the parliament in sign of protest, when instead Catholics supported the Statesman's liberals in the elections and managed to win. They gained 47% of the votes and obtained 270 seats in parliament out of 508.

The *transformist* entity of the *Patto Gentiloni* resides in two main aspects. On the one hand, Giolitti was able to deny his convictions regarding the absolute distinction he made between the fate of the State and the one of Church years before. His incoherent act was welcomed by tacit agreement by the Catholics, but not by radicals. These last ones preferred leaving the parliament instead of accepting this disjointed decision.

On the other hand, Giolitti was smart enough in not making the agreement under a written form. In fact, as soon as the elections were over and the radicals accused him, he denied the existence of the pact as a whole, so that his credibility could not be challenged.

Mussolini's approach to the Church was quite similar, even though it came from a much deeper incoherence. While Giolitti only wanted (by his initial convictions) to maintain the laicity of the

¹²⁵ During Giolitti's fourth mandate, which lasted from 1911 to 1914.

¹²⁶ (Zoppi, 1935).

¹²⁷ It was never put under written form.

¹²⁸ UECEI (1909): electoral catholic Italian union (Dall'UECEI all'UELCI : cinquant'anni di storia, 1996).

¹²⁹ Vincenzo Ottorino Gentiloni (1865-1916): Italian catholic politician and one of the first leaders of *Azione Cattolica* (Malgeri, 2000).

¹³⁰ *Non expedit* (1868): papal disposition with which Pius IX prohibited the participation of members of the clergy to political polls.

State, Mussolini was originally moved by a true disdain for the Vatican. During his years as a young exponent of the socialist party, he declared himself as atheist and deeply insulted the Church. One of his most renowned offences refers to his belief about the existence of a sentimental relationship between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene.

His anticlerical behaviour started changing only after his failure in the 1919 elections. Although he continued to deeply disregard religion in his thoughts, he understood the necessity for an agreement. Once he had eradicated his regime due to the support of the liberal promoters of the Crown, he realised he was missing a fundamental piece for his final stabilization as a leader: the Vatican's consensus. In fact, the establishment of an agreement between the two parts was only a matter of time, since parties such as the one of Don Sturzo (Partito Popolare) had started participating to the governmental activity. So, in 1923, he started reasoning on the possibility of offering Catholics an agreement that would have peacefully softened the tensions between them. His intention to sign this pact was also deemed as putting an end to the *Questione Romana*.

On February 11th, 1929, the *Patti Lateranensi*¹³¹ were signed between the Church and the Italian Kingdom. They consisted of three documents. Firstly, the *Trattato*¹³², aiming at recognising the sovereignty and independency of the Church. From this manuscript, the institution of the Vatican State was finally recognised.

Secondly, the *Convenzione finanziaria*¹³³ regulating the exchanges between the two parts. The Vatican was exempted from the payment of import taxes to its territories, while the Italian Kingdom committed itself in the payment of 750.000.000 *lire*¹³⁴ per year. This sum equalled the monetary compensation caused by the government acquisition of the territories previously belonging to the Church.

Thirdly, the *Concordato*¹³⁵ defining the civic and religious interactions of the two institutions. On the social side, the laws on marriage and divorce were conformed with the catholic standards. On the educational field, the teaching of religion became mandatory and Catholicism was declared as the official national creed. Two days after the signature of the *Patti*, during a discourse in Milan, Pope Pius XI¹³⁶ publicly praised the figure of Mussolini for the first time. He declared him as a

¹³¹ (Patti lateranensi : testo integrale : trattato, convenzione, concordato).

¹³² Idem.

¹³³ Idem.

¹³⁴ Lira: the Italian currency of the time.

¹³⁵ (Patti lateranensi : testo integrale : trattato, convenzione, concordato).

¹³⁶ (Jacini, 1950).

“man of providence”. By this expression he exalted his pacifying role. He had been the first man, after more than fifty years from the start of the *Questione Romana*¹³⁷ that managed to concretely make the two parts come to an agreement.

Although this may have appeared as novelesque ending, it was just the beginning of an even more incoherent mockery. Many scholars affirm that the signing of the agreement was necessary for both parts in order to maintain their credibility. As a matter of fact, Mussolini had the possibility of finally affirming his figure as a benefactor of society that even shared catholic principles. The common sense of the Italian population of the time was tightly bent to religious creed. In fact, his consensus increased even more after 1929.

In relation to the Vatican, the issue is even more astonishing. On the one hand, the Pope wanted to finally regulate the rights and advantages that the Church could obtain by the end of the *Questione Romana*. On the other hand, he could feel that fascism was taking the totalitarian control of the country. Pius XI wanted to be sure that his institution would have remained in a powerful and reference position despite the degree of totalitarianism that the regime could have achieved.

4. 2 An incorruptible faith

The case of De Gasperi appears to be totally different. Although his deep catholic devotion, he always supported the idea of laic State. This holds true even if the name of his party, Christian Democracy, may mislead our considerations. The DC¹³⁸ was founded on principles that may sound as a religiously based creed, but that, if correctly observed, reveal a totally different entity.

De Gasperi's party was found in 1942 by basing on the principles of democratic and social Christianity, popularism, conservatism and *Europeismo*. All these factors come from the deep reflections that Alcide made during the years of social distancing caused by the Second World War. By democratic Christianity, he meant the typical attitudes and social norms belonging to Catholics that could also be valid in a political scenario. They regarded principles of fairness, incorruptibility and transparency, which were more present in De Gasperi's religious ideology rather than in current politics of his time. Then, popularism (which has not to be confused with populism!) was a concept founded by Don Sturzo that promoted liberalism, broad participation of the people and laic principles. The whole concept was then coronated by a dose of conservatism (inviting at the

¹³⁷ (Calura, 1926).

¹³⁸ DC: acronym for Christian Democracy.

observance of socially correct behaviours that condemned authoritarianism) and *Europeismo*, which aimed at gathering different nations under the same principles of cooperation and stability.

When the Italian Constitution was promulgated in 1947, De Gasperi wanted to integrate the regulations under the *Patti Lateranensi* under the seventh article. This action was particularly appreciated by the communist party, and this contributed to the realisation of a forced but peaceful cohabitation in parliament. Of course, after the relationship with fascism, even the Church proudly supported his government. This union gave rise to the flourishing of a new country, which seemed to be open and welcoming the democratic evolution of the State. This is why it may sound absurd to hear that the Vatican will be one of the initial causes of De Gasperi's decline.

Unfortunately, once the right to vote was re-established, political divisions started to come out again. This time, the failure between the capitalist (in a broad sense) and socialist ideals were clashing in an even more violent way, which would give rise to the *Cold War*. Of course, this political division was once again reflected by the national political situation. Many liberal governments around Europe were trying to contrast the political expansion of socialism through all the means they had at their disposal.

In Italy, this came out due to the general elections of 1948. De Gasperi found himself in a quite inconvenient situation. The United States were intimidating Italy of excluding them from the *Marshall Plan*¹³⁹ if a socialist coalition would have won the elections. Alcide feared both the USSR and the USA's menaces, but he hoped for a positive outcome of the polls since he was not intentioned to use his power in order to bias the results in his favour. After months of tensions, the DC won the elections with 48% of the votes.

After four years of general relief, the spectrum socialist spectrum socialism reappeared. This time the elections in question were the administrative ones of the city of Rome. The Vatican immediately intervened trying to persuade De Gasperi in avoiding that communists would have taken the power. They could not imagine the capital city, their homeland, being in the hands of the opposition.

Even in this occasion, De Gasperi maintained his point and refused the numerous pressures received by the preacher Riccardo Lombardi¹⁴⁰ on behalf of Pope Pius XII. He declared that if he would have been forced to influence the outcome of the votes, he would have renounced to his political career¹⁴¹.

¹³⁹ Marshall Plan: plan financed by the USA in order to reconstruct Europe from the Second World War.

¹⁴⁰ Riccardo Lombardi (1908-1979): Italian preacher (Martina, 1991).

¹⁴¹ Citation from (Montanelli, I Protagonisti, 1976, p. 136-139).

The elections ended in favour of the *Lista Cittadina*¹⁴² party, with 33.49%, while DC was following them with 31.14%. As a consequence, the Pope started refusing Alcide's visits and consultations. Being truly disheartened by this reaction, De Gasperi made an official communication to the Vatican in which he explained:

“As a Catholic, I accept the humiliation, even though I do not know how to justify it. As Italian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and the authority and dignity that these two charges entail – even in my private life – left me so astonished that I must request the secretary of State the possibility of clarification¹⁴³”.

The opportunity for explanation never occurred and De Gasperi resigned the year after due to the *Legge Truffa* issue cited in the third chapter. Five days before his death, he told his daughter Maria Romana:

“Now I have done everything that was in my power, my conscience is in peace. God makes you work, allows you to make plans for the future, gives you energy and life. Then, when you start thinking you are indispensable, he suddenly takes everything away from you. He makes you understand that you are just useful, that it is time for you to go. But you do not want to, you would like to keep on to completely end your job. Our poor human mind is not made for abandoning the object of our passion to others, most of all if it is incomplete¹⁴⁴”.

By the analysis of this unique relationship, it is possible to start shaping how our conclusions could be. We have seen the life of a man that was truly indifferent about the external factors that could have obstructed his career as a leader. He cherished a true devotion both for his political role and for his Christian faith. He only wanted to hold his mandate if this was dictated by precise and correct rules. He was even able to deny his consensus to the figure he most respected, the Pope. None of among his predecessors (the ones cited in this research) dared doing a similar thing. They always preferred putting aside their convictions in favour of political convenience. Here it is time to start questioning ourselves about how much personal interest may bias and obfuscate individual decisions.

¹⁴² Lista Cittadina: founded in 1947 and merging the Italian Communist and Socialist parties, respectively led by Palmiro Togliatti and Pietro Nenni (Tamburrano, 1987).

¹⁴³ Citation from (Montanelli, I Protagonisti, 1976, p. 136-139).

¹⁴⁴ Citation from (Montanelli, I Protagonisti, 1976, p. 136-139).

4. 4 A contested position

This section is undoubtedly the most delicate and difficult to write on. So, it is fundamental to remark once again that this part is not deemed at judging the conduct of our last character. Rather, it aims at exploring the different circumstances that arose between the government and the Church at his time. In fact, Berlusconi had the possibility to assist to three different pontificates: the one of Pope Wojtyla¹⁴⁵, Pope Ratzinger¹⁴⁶ and Pope Bergoglio¹⁴⁷. Throughout the years, he interacted with the Holy See and their relationship varied according to the different events occurring.

It is important to say that the catholic world where Berlusconi found himself was not the same of his predecessors. As a matter of fact, Italy had been led for almost forty years by Christian Democracy and, according to some scholars¹⁴⁸, public opinion could no more make a distinction between catholic and political principles. With the advent of Pope Wojtyla's pontificate, things changed. He wanted to revise the *Concordato*¹⁴⁹ in order to separate the identities of the two institutions. This was finally realised in 1984 under the government of Bettino Craxi. The provisions that enshrined the division included making the teaching of catholic religion in school optional and equalizing the meanings and obligations of the religious and civic marriage. This aimed at dissolving the link between the two establishments since society had experienced a great change that led it to an increasing detachment from religion.

Having clarified this chaotic scenario, we can start contextualizing our character. He made his *discesa in campo* in 1994, exactly ten years after the revision of the *Concordato*, and during the dispersion of the exponents previously belonging to the DC. During the first years of his government, the position of the Vatican towards his personality was quite uncertain. Things started concretizing due to the favourable support of two key personages and the strategic actions of Berlusconi. As a matter of fact, he managed to attract many of the previous supporters of Christian Democracy and to avoid that they could have had the intention of joining the centre-left coalition. Due to this, the Church started considering him as the natural successor of the DC's principles.

To this concern, the first key character of his affiliation with the Vatican was Giulio Andreotti¹⁵⁰. He was both a tight friend of the *Cavaliere* and also a faithful figure to the Pope. He expressed his

¹⁴⁵ Pope Wojtyla (1920-2005): Pope John Paul II from 1978 to 2005 (Oram, 1979).

¹⁴⁶ Pope Ratzinger (1927): Pope Benedict XVI from 2005 to 2013 (L. Allen, 2000).

¹⁴⁷ Pope Bergoglio (1936): Pope Jorje Mario Bergoglio, from 2013 and still ongoing (Innocente, 2015).

¹⁴⁸ (Ceci, 2020) (M. Warner, 2012).

¹⁴⁹ Concordato: third part of the *Patti Lateranensi* signed between Mussolini and the Church in 1929 (Patti lateranensi : testo integrale : trattato, convenzione, concordato).

¹⁵⁰ Giulio Andreotti (1919-2013): Italian politician, great exponent of the DC and protagonist of Italian politics for the majority of the XX century (Franco, 1954).

positive opinion on him by remarking his solid faith and his good intentions in order to ameliorate the country after the divisions brought both by *Tangentopoli* and the Cold War.

As a result, the relationship between Wojtyla and Berlusconi was quite serene. They both shared the aversion for the communist regime and the maintenance of some fundamental social principles, even though the Church and the State had been formally divided. The second strategic figure was the Cardinal Camillo Ruini, who represented the symbol of the catholic support given to Berlusconi during both Wojtyla and Ratzinger's pontificates.

The most significant episode regarding his figure relies in the abrogative referenda of 2005. These were four and concerned the modification of the Law 24/2004¹⁵¹. This last one regarded the regulations on the medically assisted fecundation, the circumstances in which this could be applied and the people that could receive the treatment. Since the issue truly alarmed the Vatican, Ruini tried to persuade Catholics to deny their vote. He assumed that a broadening of the Law would have violated the main existential principles for human life professed by the Church. As a result, most of the Christian believers started complaining about his radical opposition, distancing themselves from the ideologies of the Vatican. In the end, the referenda did not achieve the quorum.

Berlusconi supported Ruini in his battle against the expansion of the Law, by remarking catholic principles. Moreover, those years were also characterised by the putting into question of several milestones of the Vatican. The main ones were procreation, the value of the family and the educational system. On the political side, the *Cavaliere* tried to mitigate. His action was truly appreciated by the clergy. Furthermore, in June 2008, he will have a long meeting with Pope Ratzinger, aiming at establishing a “*constructive cooperation*”¹⁵². This last one regarded the collaboration in the international relationship field, the institution of both communitarian and economic aid to families, immigration and ethic themes. This tight bond was also witnessed by the fact that, under Berlusconi's mandates, the only laws that passed were in accordance to the catholic principles.

The situation drastically changed in the upcoming years. As a matter of fact, the *Cavaliere* found himself at the centre of numerous scandals regarding fiscal fraud, drugs distribution, criminal affiliation and juvenile prostitution. Because of this last point, he was firstly trialled in 2010. The event that triggered the accuse was the one of a girl called Ruby. After her, he was involved in

¹⁵¹ Launched on February 19th, 2004 on the norms regulating the medically assisted fecundation (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2004).

¹⁵² Citation from (La Repubblica, 2008).

several further scandals of the same type. Among these, one of the most renowned is the one of the *olgettine*. This term comes from the name of a Roman district, Olgiata¹⁵³, where the *Cavaliere* was supposed to pay loans and sexual performances to these girls that were later recognised under the name of *olgettine*.

He was lately partially¹⁵⁴ absolved by the Court of Cassation in 2014. The year before, Pope Francis had started his pontificate. Although Berlusconi was not part of the Italian political arena in that precise moment, the Pope felt the necessity of expressing his opinion on the status of the *Cavaliere*. During an interview released in 2015, Francesco¹⁵⁵ said: “*the law may get up to a certain point, but human morality is something different [...]*”. With these words, it was clear that the clergy led by Pope Bergoglio was not disposed to hide Berlusconi’s wrongdoings under the veil of hypocrisy. His support to the Church in the first years of his career and his professed devotion were no more sufficient to make him a respectful figure in front of the Vatican’s eyes.

The scenario that this last evaluation brought to our eyes is quite different from the ones previously analysed. Here, we found ourselves in front of an apparent faith that will never be explained. A man that is accused for so many unjust and illegal acts may be thought to be totally dissonant from religious faith. Although it is not our task to judge this, we can make some reflections. In this case the two institutions did not need each other in order to affirm their position. The difference in the social assets that was mentioned at the beginning of this part of the chapter was referring exactly to this. The separation occurred in 1984 released the two bodies. This is why all the occasions of communion that arose after may be identified as being truer, more transparent. It was no more a matter of convenience, but a matter of genuine intellectual proximity.

Some people even identified it as the end of a long period of tacit hypocrisy between the two institutions. The Church needed the State in order to make itself respectful and powerful while the government needed to be aligned to the common sense of citizens by supporting the Vatican. In the actual historical period, this is no more true. Diplomatic relationships are mostly experienced through social media and television. Opposing opinions will hardly lead to the blast of a war as it could have happened in the past. This is the reason why the territorial cohabitation of the two institutions has become quite straightforward. In conclusion, the relationship between Berlusconi

¹⁵³ Olgiata: residential district in the northern part of the city of Rome.

¹⁵⁴ The expression “partially” refers to the fact that although Berlusconi has been absolved from the accusations deriving from the sexual scandals, he is still being processed for the action of corruption in judiciary acts, especially concerning the Ruby scandal.

¹⁵⁵ Pope Francesco Bergoglio.

and the Vatican lasted as long as they could have a shared position and ended when the Pope Francis identified him as someone ethically guilty who did not deserve the Catholic appreciation.

Conclusions

We hope that the whole content of this thesis has managed to bring the readers throughout the XX century, understanding its key protagonists and events. Our conclusions would require another chapter to write, since our final evaluation is made of all the numerous information we have collected all along this path.

In this century, we have assisted to the growing phases of a relatively young Italian State. It can be said that each one of the leaders supported a specific phase of this evolution and had to balance its provisions and approaches according to the historical period that the country was experiencing. In this century, we have assisted to the growing importance of the media, their power in vehiculating public opinion and guaranteeing the stability of the different governments. As a matter of fact, our four leaders are often remarked for having had some of the longest mandates of Italian history. Their permanence conferred solidity to the country and shaped its personality as a whole.

At the beginning of this research, the final goal was that of using our characters in order to create a sort of conceptualization that could have been useful to understand and lead modern Italy. After all the road that this research has run across, it may appear rather challenging to draw a final evaluation. In fact, there are several possible arrangements for our protagonists in order to try finding an optimal final solution.

Initially, one can make a distinction by focusing on the leaders whose mandate lasted longer, namely, Giolitti, Mussolini and Berlusconi. By this it may be possible to mark them as the ideal type of political figures that created stability in the country. This peculiarity may be really useful in order to guarantee growth of the nation and faith in politics from the citizens, who could count on the stable presence of a specific leading class. Although that, this consideration appears to be unprecise, since, even though De Gasperi's administration lasted for only eight years, he inaugurated forty years of Christian Democratic governments that acted in his name and continued what he had started both politically and socially.

Furthermore, one can chose to analyse the characters by groups of two. On the one hand, we should gather Giolitti and De Gasperi's personalities. As a matter of fact, they can be identified for being the most pragmatic among our protagonists. Giolitti has been the first Italian leader after the *Risorgimento* who was detached from this ideology and could really see the tangible problems of the country. This brought him to be really rational in his decisions and provisions, acting directly on the most evident flaws of Italy. So did De Gasperi. The difference is that

Alcide found himself in front of a country that had been weakened and destroyed by a global war.

On the other hand, one can make a narrower analysis on Mussolini and Berlusconi. There are several aspects that could be compared in their political personalities. For example, their (although differently) way of exalting the Italian population. On the one side, we have the figure of the *Duce* who wanted to create a powerful nation that took strength and prestige from the charisma of both its leader and its citizens. On the other side, Berlusconi encouraged the population in changing the political world of his time and gave them solid methods of action. He made them feel supported and represented from politics.

Then, they could also be compared for their strategic use of the media. Differently from Giolitti, who was not able to figure out the enormous power that these means held, Mussolini and Berlusconi used them really wisely. The former found in them the opportunity of affirming his hegemony and teaching people daily practices and costumes that belonged to the regime, creating a national feeling and dogma. Berlusconi instead, found the perfect way of fascinating the audience. People were attracted from his new way of doing politics, the fact that it seemed so easy and straightforward to participate, learn and express themselves. Both of them inaugurated a new way of doing politics at their time, which revealed to be truly attractive and successful.

A further division could be made by considering Giolitti, De Gasperi and Berlusconi as the three who supported liberal principles and even democratic ones. In this sense, one may label them as being the “good” or “fairer” characters of our analysis. At this point, as hinted in the first chapter of our research, it would be the moment of asking ourselves what fascism represented for Italian history. Was it a misleading parenthesis of our past? Or was it a continuative and inevitable element of our evolution? As the author previously mentioned, this research does not want to give preferences to our characters, but rather, it seeks to be truly objective. By looking at fascism from the point of view of the research, it has to be evaluated as being a part of the process of formation and growth of Italy as a whole. The fact that it brought both good and evil things is an objective truth that characterises every element of human life and that may vary in their intensities according to both the historical and practical realities of a country.

Although that, the author believes that these divisions between our characters could not be effective in formulating our conclusions. The fact that the four characters have been chosen for this analysis and the studies that we have made on them, demonstrated the uniqueness of their

behaviour and action. So, if we wish to get to a final conceptualization that could suit modern Italy, it is important to take into consideration all of them once again.

In order to explain the preliminary function of each of our characters and their subsequent regimes, the author attempts to introduce a metaphor which compares the relationship between our leaders and the population as the one between parents and sons. This means that each protagonist found himself in a particular phase of the growth of the country, that strongly characterised the way in which each of them acted and approached public administration.

If we start our interpretation from the Giolittian era, we should draw our attention on the philosophy of the tailor that the statesman loved citing. While designing a political approach that could suit the humped country, Giolitti knew that he had to be particularly careful. In this sense, the relationship may be compared to the one of a parent with a little child, who is not capable of adapting nor correcting himself. Italy was in the first phase of its growth. Its population was mostly unalphabetized, North and South seemed to be two different nations and a lot of work was needed in order to fill these great gaps. This phase was quite delicate and the adult had to be particularly good at seconding the infant. In fact, we saw Giolitti welcoming the claims of the population in order to avoid revolts and subsequent violent forms of repression. He enlarged the rights and benefits of his “son” with their subsequent responsibilities, making him start growing and walking alone through the initial path of the industrialization process and national progress as a whole.

Nonetheless, the growing process can cause the child to lose his road, to doubt about its capacities, to be misled from his development due to external factors. This metaphor can be sided to the historical period that corresponded to the post Great War years. As we already reminded, Italy suffered deeply its consequences, slowing down the processes of both development and homogenization it had started in the Giolittian era. Along the research, we have noted that the disadvantaged conditions of the post-war Italian population could have been one of the main responsible factors for the establishment of the fascist regime. As during the teenage years of a child, these represent the periods of major clash between the offspring and adults. Both of them want to affirm their temperament and obtain the respect of the other part.

Usually, the victory belongs to the one who better knows how to impose its personality and decisions on the other. In our case, the dictatorship was stronger than our “adolescent” country, whose identity was forcibly shaped during the *ventennio* by men who believed that their authoritarian actions could only represent the best choices for the growth of Italy. Once again,

one may doubt about the validity of the provisions brought by fascism. Overall, the country was able to recover from the war faults and to further strengthen the nationalistic feeling. The author believes that this also contributed to the creation of a determined *Resistenza*¹⁵⁶ that was able to overthrow the dictatorship once the “adolescent” country decided on which side it wanted to stand.

Once Italy managed to come out from the totalitarian regime and the Second World War, its greatest desire was the one of affirming its personality. In fact, De Gasperi’s government coincides with the beginning of the Italian “adulthood”. The reaffirmation of the opposition in the political field and the blooming of reforms and innovations witnessed the radical change that the population experienced after the end of both the war and the dictatorship. The austerity of the past helped that no-more “adolescent” country distinguishing between what it wanted to become or not. This helped it in preferring the republican government over the monarchy and the progressive elimination of fascisms in favour of homogenization and democratic progress. This is the general feeling that helped Italy recovering from such a heavy period. It can be said that national identity was finally taking shape under a greater sense of democratic consciousness and maturity.

Then, between De Gasperi and Berlusconi’s mandates, the country entered a new phase of changes and uncertainties. The initial stability conferred by the succession of the Christian Democracy governments was then replaced by corruption, scandals and political disorders. These were then attributed to the population. The leading class accused the people of being responsible of their political faults, making them feel truly disillusioned towards politics. Italy only started recovering after the arrival of a leader that was disposed to justify and support them. This last one was Berlusconi. He took people’s side and showed them a social prototype to their own best advantage. This vision really convinced the country, which was even a more mature adult at the time. The population wanted stability, certainties. They wanted to have a political guide that cared about their interest and that could have re-introduced people to active politics. Problems arose again when even the *Cavaliere* managed to let the population down. After great progress, promises and his entrepreneurial approach, Berlusconi revealed himself as having flaws that attributed him to the greatest errors of his predecessors.

¹⁵⁶ Italian opposition movement to fascism that, together with the allies, freed the country from both the war and the regime (Battaglia, 1953).

During his adulthood, Italy was (and still is) looking for stability, for a leader to trust. The presence of uncertainties is making it be nostalgic of the old times, and this may sometimes even entail missing the authoritarian regime. In fact, people talk about the efficiency and rigour of the past, of the greater sense of doing politics, of the courage of protesting and the ability to change the world.

This happens because modern governments are fragmented. They no more aim at creating a beneficial sense of cohesion. Italian politics is just a matter of who screams louder, of who has the most complicated political programme, of who gathers the greatest number of supporters by generating their sense of resentment. Those who want to become the Italian leaders start by presenting themselves rather than their political aspirations. They talk about eliminating the enemies that create inefficiencies, but they are not able to understand why public services cannot guarantee stability. They blame their opponents, but they do not want to reflect about their own behaviours, to start reasoning on their flaws rather than on the ones of the others.

And so does the population. People have lost the energies that brought them fighting for their rights in the past. Modern society seems to be suspended in a temporal phase where mobilisation appears to be no more necessary. People are tired of being active. They discovered the art of complaining and became really good players at it. In the end, they just look for the leader who better expresses their complaints without truly reacting.

The characters of our research had nothing to do with this. They marked a political era that was based on a great feeling for the country. The general will and good were the main themes of interest, and people recognised it. This allowed for the installation of a virtuous circle between two main actors: a responsive, accountable government and a reactive population.

The author believes that this was mainly due to the fact that these charismatic leaders were really determined in doing their job. As we already mentioned, the methods that they adopted may be source of contestation, but what we wish to remark once again is what they managed to convey to people in order to mobilize this positive mechanism of mutual collaboration.

If one could take various characteristics of our leaders, it would be possible to conceptualize a model that includes all the most relevant positive aspects and excludes the negative ones.

On the one hand, it would be advisable to consider the progressive and pragmatic attitude of Giolitti and De Gasperi in responding to the social development through the request of the increase of rights and safeguard of citizens. It is necessary to remark once again how their

enlightened perspective projected the country towards the democratization of its institutions and a more active and inclusive socio-political participation of its people.

On the other hand, Mussolini and Berlusconi shall be recognised the merit of having taught Italians to appreciate themselves. They took out the best from the country's flaws. They showed people that a nation could have become great even without the primate of richness and development. They showed Italy that they could work on that.

Of course, each of our leaders made mistakes, some of them greater than the ones of the others. We should not forget about the opportunistic behaviour that Giolitti, Mussolini and Berlusconi showed towards both the Church and the opposition. We should be able to make a distinction between the just and unjust compromises that these men had to find in order to maintain their stability, since not all actions can be justified. One clear example of this relies in the fascist affiliation to Nazism. As a result, we must not underestimate the brutal consequences that the installation of the fascist regime caused. Consequently, we cannot omit the scandals in which Berlusconi was involved. Political leaders should serve as guides for the nation, they cannot be the source of misleading examples, especially if these come from their personal lives. As Habermas remarks, the private and public sphere must never interfere, mostly when they may represent a problem for public administration.¹⁵⁷ Humanity proceeds by following the examples of the figures that it interprets as being its guides. If leaders commit errors, the population will feel justified to do the same. Additionally, the personal mistakes of our frontrunners are nothing but a demonstration of the limits of both their good faith and irreproachability. In doing so, they unveil the essence of the evil part of politics that seems to be reigning nowadays: personal interest over the communitarian one.

Despite that, our characters were overall able to contribute to the formation of a country that, if wisely used, could be the protagonist of great things. Having arrived at our conclusions, the author believes that it is worth doing some final recommendations.

As members of the international community, we have the moral duty not to underestimate our past and to take inspiration from it for a better future. The leading class has the moral duty to work for the general benefit of the population without considering their individual advantages and interests. The institutions have the moral duty to make citizens aware of the fundamental role they hold. The population is responsible for the control of the government's actions, in order

¹⁵⁷ (Habermas, 1962).

to make sure that no one takes advantage of his position. Lastly but not less importantly, citizens have the moral duty of educating themselves to politics. Elections must become a moment of tangible exchange of opinion, of effective expression of the majority. If we do not want to be the authors of further events of fragmentation and destruction, the passivity and social apathy that the XXI century seems to be producing must disappear. History teaches us that democracy and stability of our country were long and hard results to achieve. If we wish to realise a more liveable, just, representative and efficient country, we must become the main characters of our destiny, as our four protagonists did.

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Abstract (in Italian)

Lo scopo di questa ricerca è quello di analizzare le caratteristiche della politica italiana del XX secolo attraverso quattro personaggi che hanno, più di altri, forgiato l'Italia moderna, per poter individuare gli aspetti che potrebbero essere tuttora attuali ed utili nella nostra nazione moderna. I protagonisti in questione sono Giovanni Giolitti, Benito Mussolini, Alcide De Gasperi e Silvio Berlusconi. L'approccio storico a queste figure ci conduce lungo un secolo ricco di avvenimenti, cambiamenti drastici, due conflitti mondiali, ricostruzione, corruzione e ripresa economica. L'analisi degli eventi passati è un requisito fondamentale per comprendere il presente, progettare e idealizzare il futuro.

La necessità di ricostruire e confrontare le caratteristiche dei personaggi in analisi ha richiesto una divisione della ricerca in quattro specifiche aree concettuali. Nella prima parte vi è la collocazione storica dei protagonisti attraverso la presentazione delle azioni e provvedimenti principali caratterizzanti il loro mandato politico in quanto leader. In questa parte è possibile avere una prima inquadratura dei personaggi, iniziando a delinearne il profilo politico e le caratteristiche ideologiche.

Nella seconda parte vi è un'analisi più approfondita della personalità politica dei personaggi, elemento che svela al lettore il motivo fondamentale per il quale ciascuno di loro è stato scelto per la ricerca. È possibile infatti fare un primo confronto tra le loro caratteristiche, notandone punti di forza e debolezza, continuità storica ed elementi di rottura.

La terza parte entra nella specificità dei singoli mandati attraverso l'analisi delle opere pubbliche realizzate da ciascuno dei protagonisti. Con questa espressione si intendono l'attuazione di bonifiche e la costruzione di infrastrutture nelle aree più bisognose, la promulgazione di leggi concernenti riforme economiche e sociali, quali il suffragio universale e i piani d'aiuto finanziario per la ricostruzione del Paese a termine dei due conflitti mondiali. Inoltre, viene rimarcata la continuità dei vari protagonisti, nel tentare di rendere l'Italia sempre più omogenea e armoniosa.

La quarta parte tratta l'argomento più distintivo, e al contempo cruciale dell'intera ricerca. Si tratta del rapporto spesso controverso tra lo Stato e la Chiesa. Il legame unico al mondo tra queste due istituzioni rappresenta uno dei tratti distintivi fondamentali della storia italiana. È inevitabile menzionare il Vaticano in merito alle vicende della politica nazionale, poiché esso ha sempre costituito un elemento di eccezionale importanza all'interno di quest'ultima.

Dopo questa breve introduzione, occorre analizzare con maggiore dettaglio ciascuno dei personaggi in questione.

Giovanni Giolitti occupò un ruolo da protagonista nella politica italiana attraverso molteplici mandati che si susseguirono, pressoché ininterrottamente, tra il 1892 e il 1921. Egli guidò l'Italia dagli anni che seguirono l'unificazione, fino allo scoppio della Prima Guerra Mondiale e oltre. Questi trenta anni furono pieni di avvenimenti che contribuirono a cambiare il volto del neo-Paese verso una prospettiva più moderna e avanzata. Nella ricerca viene analizzata la sua competenza amministrativa in ambito pubblico e il suo sovente ricorrere al cosiddetto "trasformismo politico". Quest'ultimo rappresenta un concetto strettamente legato alla sua figura, che implica lo smussamento e l'adattamento degli assetti socio-politici verso la chiave di lettura ed esecuzione più utile al protagonista ai fini del mantenimento della sua stabilità politica. Questa modalità viene spesso identificata anche sotto il nome di opportunismo politico.

Vi sono due episodi fondamentali, tra loro collegati, nei quali Giolitti si distinse per l'utilizzo di questa tecnica. Il primo fu senz'altro la concessione del suffragio universale maschile. Infatti, Giolitti era conosciuto per la sua politica liberale e la sua tolleranza verso le esigenze e le proteste del popolo. Egli evitò l'attuazione di violente repressioni, cercando di assecondare le proposte avanzate dai cittadini. In questa occasione, la concessione del diritto di voto (seppur con specifiche regole e restrizioni) fu il risultato di un ampliamento dei diritti della popolazione, che garantisse alle masse operaie di esprimersi in sede di voto. Ciò comportava un notevole aumento del sostegno dell'opposizione, ma Giolitti non ne sembrava preoccupato, poiché credeva fermamente nel fatto che la partecipazione popolare potesse arricchire il Paese economicamente e socialmente. In vista dell'avvicinarsi delle elezioni, egli volle essere però certo del suo trionfo elettorale. Nonostante fosse un fermo sostenitore della divisione tra Stato e Chiesa, Giolitti ricorse al Patto Gentiloni, stipulato per assicurarsi il voto dei cattolici. Dopo che le elezioni lo decretarono vincitore, si ritrasse dal Patto negandone l'esistenza, evitando che la sua credibilità fosse messa in discussione. Infatti, mantenendo l'accordo in forma strettamente orale, nessuno poté provare la sua alleanza opportunistica con i Cattolici a discapito delle sue ferme credenze sulla divisione tra Stato e Chiesa.

In ambito di crescita sociale e nazionale, Giolitti conseguì grandi cose. In seguito al suffragio universale maschile, egli si impegnò per la stesura di una regolamentazione univoca per i manicomi, spesso ritratti come luoghi di abusi e prese di potere, e per i diritti dei lavoratori. Inoltre, a livello di opere pubbliche ordinò la realizzazione del Traforo del Sempione nel 1906 e della bonifica dei territori della Pianura Padana. Questo rivela il forte pragmatismo contenuto nel suo carisma politico, il quale gli permise di individuare con oggettività i difetti e le mancanze del Paese.

La sua figura politica fu particolarmente innovativa poiché egli si pose dinnanzi all'Italia tramite la metafora di un sarto. Nello svolgere il suo mestiere, egli rimarcò l'importanza di dover essere particolarmente abile nel tessere un abito che calzasse perfettamente allo Stato, poiché esso era gobbo, piegato sulle proprie ragioni e principi, e soprattutto senza alcuna voglia di cambiare. Questa figura particolarmente innovativa rappresenta un simbolo che tutt'ora riassume perfettamente la sua indole politica.

Negli ultimi anni del suo mandato, Giolitti fu affascinato dall'ascendente figura di Benito Mussolini, il quale gli successe ufficialmente dopo le elezioni del 1924. Con quest'ultimo si entrò in un periodo molto controverso della storia italiana. La ricerca non mira a giudicare le azioni del Duce dal punto di vista dell'orientamento politico, bensì tenta di mettere in luce gli aspetti più significativi del regime fascista a livello economico e sociale. In particolare, l'analisi del ventennio ci permette di approcciarci realmente alla popolazione italiana del tempo, a riflettere sul motivo del consenso popolare ricevuto dal fascismo. Spesso si sottovaluta l'importanza dei cittadini nel mantenimento dell'egemonia, del consenso. Questo è possibile, però, solo se il governo, democratico o meno che sia, è in grado di garantire dei benefici tangibili ai suoi cittadini. In questa ricerca si rimarca come il regime abbia dato sostegno e senso di comunità alla popolazione, attraverso iniziative pubbliche, premi finanziari e occasioni di collettività. Tra queste sono da citare il Sabato fascista, la Battaglia del grano, l'incremento demografico e il Ruralismo. Sotto quest'ottica, l'Italia comprese il concetto di comunità nazionale, il quale fu senz'altro funzionale al successivo sviluppo della Resistenza e alla fine del regime e della Seconda Guerra Mondiale.

Dal punto di vista delle infrastrutture, il fascismo fu fondamentale nella ricostruzione dell'Italia a seguito della Grande Guerra, e il desiderio di ripristino dell'Impero fu la principale motivazione. Intere aree della capitale, tuttora utilizzate e funzionanti, quali l'EUR e il complesso del Foro Italico, vennero realizzati negli anni di massima affermazione del regime. Inoltre, la bonifica dei territori dell'agro pontino permise il debellamento di numerose malattie quali tifo e colera dall'area del Lazio. In seguito, le politiche economiche protezioniste e la "programmazione" dell'incremento demografico favorirono una crescita significativa del Paese. Infine, si può osservare la vicinanza a Giolitti dal punto di vista del trasformismo politico attraverso il rapporto tra la Chiesa e il Duce.

Quest'ultimo si professò sempre fortemente contrario alla religione cattolica. La sua opinione dovette cambiare a seguito dell'insuccesso riscosso nelle elezioni del 1919. Mussolini comprese che per far accettare la sua figura politica dalla popolazione, doveva poter contare sull'appoggio dell'istituzione che più univa gli Italiani in quegli anni: la Chiesa. Così, dopo anni di contrattazioni

e proposte, nel 1929 il Pontefice acconsentì alla firma dei Patti Lateranensi. In questo modo Mussolini si assicurò la comunione e il sostegno reciproco tra le due istituzioni e l'attitudine favorevole del Papa. Ciò costituì un grande elemento di crescita per l'approvazione del Duce e del regime tra la popolazione.

Fra i membri dell'opposizione al fascismo che riuscirono a resistere fino alla fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, troviamo il personaggio di Alcide De Gasperi. Egli fu l'ultimo Primo Ministro dell'Italia monarchica e il primo di quella repubblicana. Questo espediente ci preannuncia l'importanza di questo personaggio dal punto di vista politico. De Gasperi permise la ricostruzione edile, politica e morale dello Stato, attraverso una meticolosa opera di mediazione nazionale e internazionale.

Tramite il successo riscosso alla Conferenza di Pace di Parigi nel 1946 e al successivo viaggio negli Stati Uniti, egli si guadagnò il sostegno degli Stati partecipanti, il loro aiuto economico e la parziale riduzione delle sanzioni di guerra provocate dall'affiliazione dell'Italia al nazismo.

Inoltre, egli promosse numerose riforme a favore della ricostruzione del paese, come il Piano Fanfani, il quale garantì la realizzazione di oltre 300.000 abitazioni, e l'istituzione della Cassa del Mezzogiorno. Quest'ultimo progetto permise al Meridione di ricevere infrastrutture e collegamenti per poter finalmente iniziare ad uniformarsi al resto del Paese. Dal punto di vista sociale, De Gasperi incoraggiò diverse iniziative per sradicare l'ideologia fascista dalla mente degli italiani e favorire uno spirito democratico e repubblicano. Inoltre, nella riforma della Costituzione Italiana, egli mantenne le clausole stabilite dai Patti Lateranensi raccogliendole sotto il settimo articolo del documento. Questo gesto gli permise l'accettazione positiva da parte dell'opposizione socialista, la quale garantì una convivenza più ordinata in parlamento.

Il suo rapporto con la Chiesa resta indubbiamente l'aspetto più cruciale della sua personalità. Egli era un uomo molto devoto e vicino al Papa, per quanto professasse la necessità del mantenimento di uno Stato laico. Contrariamente ai personaggi precedentemente analizzati, in questa occasione fu la Chiesa stessa a tentare di utilizzare il potere del Primo Ministro a suo favore. L'evento cruciale fu rappresentato dalle elezioni comunali di Roma del 1952, dove la carica di sindaco rischiava di essere conquistata dall'opposizione socialista. Non potendo tollerare la possibilità di un simile risultato, il Vaticano chiese a De Gasperi di utilizzare la sua influenza per manipolare le elezioni. Forte della sua onestà, egli si rifiutò, ricevendo in cambio il disprezzo del Papa e la rapida perdita del supporto da parte del Vaticano.

Nonostante questo finale infelice, Alcide De Gasperi contribuì fino alla sua morte a porre le basi dell'attuale progetto di unità europea, realizzato nell'ottica di creare una grande cooperazione internazionale che evitasse conflitti e contrasti tra gli Stati a livello economico, politico e sociale.

L'ultimo personaggio analizzato nella ricerca è Silvio Berlusconi. A differenza dei suoi predecessori, egli rappresenta una figura politica alquanto diversa a causa del suo posizionamento storico e della sua attitudine. Berlusconi, infatti, si affacciò ad un mondo politico fortemente mutato. Nel 1984, sotto il governo di Craxi, i Patti Lateranensi furono revisionati, sancendo la scissione tra Chiesa e Stato e restituendo un maggior grado di laicità alla pubblica amministrazione dopo quasi trenta anni di governi democristiani. Inoltre, lo scandalo di *Tangentopoli* causò una grande perdita di fiducia nei confronti sia del governo che della politica in generale. In questo scenario, Berlusconi effettuò la sua *discesa in campo* portando la sua attitudine imprenditoriale del tutto innovativa. Grazie alle sue doti incantatrici a livello di comunicazione ed esposizione della sua persona all'opinione pubblica, conquistò rapidamente la simpatia di gran parte della popolazione italiana. La chiave del suo successo risiede nella sua considerazione del popolo. Egli fu il primo a lodare i cittadini italiani per la loro natura pura, attribuendo le colpe di corruzione, scandali e inefficienza del paese alla classe politica.

Inoltre, i suoi governi promossero numerose riforme e iniziative per dare maggior stabilità economica e modernizzazione al paese. Tra questi è opportuno citare i piani di rinnovamento delle infrastrutture ferroviarie e aeroportuali, le somme stanziare per la realizzazione di queste ultime e per il restauro di quelle già esistenti. A livello sociale, furono varati diversi provvedimenti per migliorare le condizioni dei lavoratori, rendendo la lotta alle mafie più efficiente tramite l'inasprimento delle sanzioni e la modifica del sistema elettorale da maggioritario a proporzionale.

Anche nel suo caso, il rapporto con la Chiesa diede spazio a numerose riflessioni. A fronte di trenta anni di governi democristiani, il Vaticano voleva essere certo che vi fosse un degno erede alla guida del Paese, nonché alleato, nonostante la formale scissione dovuta alla riforma del 1984. Giulio Andreotti e il Cardinal Camillo Ruini ricoprirono un ruolo fondamentale nell'accettazione della figura di Berlusconi da parte della Chiesa. Entrambi infatti lo esaltarono agli occhi del Pontefice (al tempo Karol Wojtyła), permettendo loro di instaurare un piacevole rapporto. I due si confrontarono per anni sulla lotta al comunismo, l'affermazione dei principi cattolici nello stato laico e i cambiamenti sociali che il nuovo millennio stava portando con sé.

A tal proposito, Berlusconi e Ruini tentarono di sensibilizzare la popolazione a sfavore dell'inseminazione artificiale in occasione del referendum abrogativo del 2005. Quest'ultimo

verteva ad ampliare le clausole sull'argomento già contenuto nella legge 24/2004. Essendo il tema particolarmente delicato e contrastante con i principi cattolici, le due istituzioni cercarono di dissuadere la popolazione dal voto, impedendo il raggiungimento del quorum. Questa occasione di sostegno e vicinanza tra Berlusconi e la Chiesa proseguì anche durante il pontificato di Ratzinger. Le cose cambiarono all'indomani delle numerose accuse che Silvio ricevette in merito a scandali sessuali, prostituzione e corruzione. A seguito della sua parziale assoluzione nel 2014, Papa Bergoglio, subentrato a Ratzinger nel 2013, si pronunciò contrario al suo stile di vita e personalità politica. Egli disse che per quanto la legge avesse potuto assolverlo, il peso che si portava dietro era insostenibile per essere perdonato dalla morale umana. Così, dopo numerosi anni al centro della politica italiana e di una stretta alleanza con la Chiesa, Berlusconi fu costretto a fare un primo passo indietro.

Questo evento si dimostra particolarmente rilevante per la nostra ricerca. Ad eccezione di De Gasperi, gli altri personaggi si erano sempre serviti dell'influenza della Chiesa per accrescere la propria approvazione, per poi distaccarsene. Nel caso degli ultimi due protagonisti, è la Chiesa ad allontanarli, seppur per motivi diversi. In particolare nel caso di Berlusconi, Papa Bergoglio non si fece limitare dalle circostanze che vertevano a mantenere l'equilibrio del rapporto tra il Vaticano e lo Stato. Al contrario, egli espresse il suo parere sincero e trasparente, nonostante si trovasse davanti ad un uomo molto importante per l'Italia del tempo.

Le conclusioni di questa tesi tentano di riassumere gli elementi salienti del percorso analizzato. Per questi si intendono i principali punti di assonanza e dissonanza tra i nostri protagonisti. Ciascuno di loro si trovò davanti ad importanti scelte e responsabilità che trasformarono profondamente il Paese nel corso degli anni. Seppur con metodi e regimi diversi, vogliamo credere che l'obiettivo primario di ognuno di loro fu sempre quello di migliorare l'Italia.

Per avere una visione più completa delle azioni dei protagonisti, nella conclusione vi sono quattro possibili divisioni di questi ultimi, a seconda degli aspetti analizzati in ciascun caso. Esse riguardano la lunghezza dei mandati, la divisione ideologica tra "buoni" e non, l'uso dei media e lo spiccato pragmatismo di alcuni dei nostri leader. Ciascuna di queste suddivisioni però esclude almeno uno dei nostri protagonisti dall'analisi. A questo proposito, l'autrice preferirebbe parlare di uno schema composto da caratteristiche apportate da tutti i personaggi in questione, poiché l'esclusione di anche solo uno di loro, impoverirebbe la concettualizzazione finale. Questo va oltre le definizioni classiche di regime o ideale, poiché non vuole rappresentare né una forma di totalitarismo, né qualcosa di troppo astratto e utopico.

Per arrivare a ciò, l'autrice utilizza una metafora che paragona il rapporto tra i protagonisti e la popolazione italiana a quello instaurabile tra genitori e figli. Ciascuno dei personaggi è stato una guida fondamentale per le differenti fasi di crescita che il Paese e la sua popolazione hanno affrontato durante il XX secolo. Questo potrebbe aiutare i lettori nell'ulteriore comprensione e collocazione dei leader all'interno del percorso della ricerca.

Quest'ultima riflessione tenta di mostrare come per realizzare uno Stato forte e ricco dei principi apportati dalla storia, è necessario trovare il giusto equilibrio tra istituzioni e popolazione. Le prime devono assicurare ordine e rigore, finalizzato non alla sottomissione dei cittadini ma alla creazione di sviluppo e vantaggi per questi ultimi nei limiti della correttezza dettata dalla legge. L'illegalità deve essere smantellata, l'inefficienza dimenticata. La politica deve essere condotta da persone con vocazione, amore per il bene pubblico e della comunità. Per fare questo però, è fondamentale formare i cittadini. Solo nel momento in cui questi ultimi sentiranno di appartenere al Paese, ne difenderanno i principi. Solo quando non si sentiranno abbandonati, daranno la vita per far sì che qualunque problema venga risolto attraverso il rispetto delle regole e lo stimolo reciproco. Solo quando avranno dei buoni insegnanti a guidarli, potranno aprire gli occhi su tutti gli errori quotidianamente commessi e impegnarsi a rimediare, da veri autori del proprio destino e di quello del Paese, come mostratoci dai nostri protagonisti.