BERLUSCONISM AND ITALY

A HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

Giovanni Orsina

Italian and Italian American Studies
Stanislao G. Pugliese
Hofstra University
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Contents

Introduction

This book is not about Silvio Berlusconi. Its aim is not to analyze his objectives or his behavior, whether he governed well or badly, or whether he was guilty or innocent of the charges brought against him. These are all very important questions, but we need time before we can answer them with the necessary distance and objectivity and in a way that is not unduly influenced by contemporary debate. We also need the benefit of documents that are not currently available.

This book is about Berlusco*nism*—the substance of Berlusconi's public discourse, why it was successful, and why it was not. This book will examine whether Berlusconi's ideological and political project was a coherent, single entity, and if so, what its core features were. How did it manage to attract millions of votes in six national elections over a twenty-year period despite all the controversies, failures, gaffes, and trials? Why did Berlusconism—a longer-lasting and magnified version of similar phenomena that have occurred elsewhere—take place in Italy of all places? How does it tie in with the history of Italy?

This is not the first book to have tried to answer these questions. There is now a vast interdisciplinary literature on Berlusconi and Berlusconism in Italian and other languages. Historians, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and linguists have all had their say. This book, however, takes a different standpoint, addressing issues that have hitherto been neglected if not totally ignored. It is based on the assumption that there is considerable political substance to Berlusconism and that this has been one of the main reasons for its success. For this reason alone it deserves to be taken seriously and analyzed carefully.

Up to now scholars have underestimated the contents of Berlusconism and have focused more on its forms and instruments. This kind of "instrumental" work has highlighted the immense resources that Berlusconi had at his disposal when he decided to "enter the political

stage." These include his massive financial means, his control of commercial television, and his business empire, which had offices and personnel in all parts of the country and was not only flexible, dynamic, and innovative but hierarchical and closely dependent on a charismatic leader—a powerful yet still docile machine (Calise 2000 and 2006; Poli 2001). Studies have also focused on the many ways in which Berlusconi constructed and transmitted his political message: his intense, professional use of political marketing and opinion polls; the obsessive care he took with his image; his consistently optimistic and reassuring tone; the way he positioned himself as the leader at the center of the picture; his propagandistic use of personal characteristics such as his success in business, wealth, and inexperience in professional politics; his storytelling ability; his skill in creating a bond with Italians by communicating a sense of identity, a shared way of thinking and behaving, and a desire to imitate (e.g., Amadori 2002; Abruzzese and Susca 2004; Belpoliti 2009; Mancini 2011; Ventura 2012).

There will be very little discussion in this book of these "forms and instruments," which, though Berlusconism could not have existed without them, have been thoroughly researched already and do not in themselves provide a sufficient explanation for it. If these forms and instruments had been devoid of political content, they would have worked for far less than twenty years, if at all. Berlusconism has certainly been simple in its communication and even simplistic in its contents, but this did not prevent it from putting forward a precise idea of Italy and an equally clear program that was in line with much of Italian public opinion, particularly that of the mid-1990s. If Berlusconi's ideology is not taken seriously, and Berlusconism is viewed only in terms of instruments rather than contents, then it cannot be completely understood.[1]

Second, the contents of Berlusconism need to be examined from a long-term historical perspective. There have been a good number of analyses of Berlusconism that take account of its historical background, but with some exceptions (Chiarini 1995; Tarchi 2003; Lazar 2009; Graziano 2010), these have tended to look for its origins in the recent *Tangentopoli*[2] period or to go only as far back as the 1980s. It is argued here, without underestimating the influence of the Thatcherian/Reaganite 1980s and the Italian political crisis of the early 1990s, that the

roots of Berlusconism go back much further—to the beginning of the Republic or even to the *Risorgimento*. A further point is that analyses of Berlusconism from a long-term perspective tend to interpret it as the consequence and manifestation of deep-rooted anthropological or quasi-anthropological characteristics of the Italians: their sectionalism, amoral familism, lack of civic sense, mutual distrust, dislike of rules, faith in a "strong leader," and tendency not to trust public institutions and to try to either protect themselves against them or exploit them (e.g., Santomassimo 2003; Ginsborg 2004; Stille 2006; Severgnini 2011; Ceri 2011; Mancini 2011; Crainz 2012). Without denying the validity of this approach, Berlusconism will be explored here from a different but complementary standpoint, viewing it not just as the consequence of the "Italian anomaly" but also as an attempt to resolve that anomaly. It will do so, once again, on the premise that the politics of Berlusconism needs to be taken seriously if its success is to be understood.

Third, it is argued that Berlusconism can only be properly explained if the analyst endeavors to see reality from the perspective of its voters. Berlusconi's universe and that of the millions of Italians who voted for him is Ptolemaic, whereas up to now it has been studied from a Copernican perspective. This perspective is radically different from that of the Berlusconi electorate and explains its behavior by assuming that it was the consequence of a macroscopic intellectual and/or moral defect. This moralistic perspective was on show in Umberto Eco's famous appeal in April 2001, in which he classified the Berlusconi vote into two categories: the "motivated electorate," which was by no means stupid but completely immoral, and the "entranced electorate," which was lacking in both intelligence and moral fiber (Eco 2001).[3] This approach is also to be found in a less explicit or extreme way in more structured, less confrontational studies of Berlusconism.[4] Not only is the Copernican moralist perspective lacking in objectivity, but it is also wrong. Ricolfi (2002) has shown, on the basis of convincing empirical evidence, that the Italian left and right cannot be distinguished in terms of different *amounts* of civic sense and morality but different *types* of civic sense and morality. We therefore need to replace Copernican interpretations based on lack of intelligence, morals, or rationality on the part of the Berlusconi electorate with an analysis of their *diverse* intelligence, *diverse* morality, and *diverse* rationality. This is the Ptolemaic

perspective that is needed if we want to truly *understand* a Ptolemaic subject like Berlusconism.[5]

Nor can Berlusconism be studied from a purely Italian perspective. On the contrary, it needs to be viewed as an unusually intense and lengthy demonstration of trends that have recently characterized almost all democracies.[6] There is an immense international literature on the transformation processes that have taken place within democratic political systems between the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century, and a plethora of terminology and conceptual categories has been used to describe them: postdemocracy, counterdemocracy, audience democracy, teledemocracy, videocracy, personalization of politics, leaderization of politics, antipolitics, populism, and so on.[7] Although they adopt different perspectives, all these studies seem to point in the same direction: the inability of political institutions, which are by nature slow and hierarchical, to represent and satisfy the needs of societies that have become highly complex, impatient, and undisciplined.

This inability to represent complex societies has a number of manifestations and consequences, which the international literature has examined in depth and which can only be briefly mentioned here: the crisis of political parties, ideologies, and traditional electoral practices that has been evident for years; the loss of legitimacy by state institutions and their governing class, the growing distance between institutions and the "people," and the subsequent rise of different kinds of antipolitical and/or populist movements; the tension between the medium/long-term timespan needed to carry out serious reform and the pressure for immediate results; the prevalence of a critical, destructive political mind-set as opposed to a constructive one; the imbalance between the weight of an antiquated state apparatus, from which the public expects immediate and effective solutions, and the increasing limitations imposed on national governments by supranational globalization processes; the increased personalization of politics, seen as the only way to create a form of trust and representation that can overcome the rift between the institutions and the people; the subsequent change in the form of trust and representation, which can no longer be based exclusively on common political ideology or party membership but needs to include mechanisms of personal

identification and shared prepolitical values; and last but not least, the essential role of the media in shaping modern politics. These aspects of the contemporary crisis of democracy have all featured so strongly in Berlusconism that Italy can be regarded as a particularly advanced case of postdemocracy—a laboratory that other countries should study carefully (Lazar 2007, 46; 2009, 137ff.). This book thus aims to answer the question of why Berlusconism happened in Italy by examining its place in Italian history.

One obvious answer might be *Tangentopoli*. None of the other "old" democracies experienced a political crisis as unusual and far-reaching as the Italian one at the end of the twentieth century. The events of the early 1990s in Italy caused the party system, which had become sclerotic over time and been outgrown by the country, to disintegrate, opening up a terrifying political vacuum. This vacuum caused the aspects of postdemocracy outlined before to develop particularly strongly. *Tangentopoli*, however, cannot explain everything. The Italian problem, as will be shown in later chapters, runs far deeper—if it did not, we could not explain *Tangentopoli* in the first place. We therefore need to dig deeper to uncover the fragile historical context from which Berlusconism arose, how Berlusconism sought to address this fragility, why its policies seemed reasonable during that particular historical period, and how it is that Italian democracy went so much further than other democracies down the "post-twentieth-century" road.

There are five chapters in this book. Chapter 1 examines the "Italian question" over the long term, starting from the *Risorgimento*, looking particularly at the problem of the relationship between the state and the political elite, on the one hand, and the country, on the other. Chapter 2 explores the questions raised in Chapter 1 in relation to the post-1945 republican era, particularly the role of the political parties and the nature of public aversion to them and to politics in general, as well as the changing relationship between the left and right during that period. The final paragraph of Chapter 2 summarizes the main arguments of the first two chapters and is intended as a shortcut to the heart of Berlusconism for readers who are less interested in its historical background. Chapter 3, which is to some extent the core of the book, analyzes Berlusconi's politics by focusing particularly, although not exclusively, on his public speeches. It attempts to describe the

core features of Berlusconism and identifies its relationship with the "deep-rooted" history of Italy described in the first two chapters. It also explores the extent to which Berlusconism can be regarded as liberal, populist, antipolitical, and/or "right-wing." Chapter 4 discusses the Berlusconi electorate, using mostly secondhand research on electoral data and public opinion but interpreting its findings in a novel way. Its final section draws Chapters 3 and 4 together, defining the political supply and electoral demand of Berlusconism in terms of the "politics of skepticism." Chapter 5 deals with the rise and fall of Berlusconism, analyzing its different phases and the reasons for its relative failure. The epilogue discusses the reasons behind the appearance of figures such as Mario Monti and Beppe Grillo on the political stage during the decline of Berlusconism, analyzes the political events of 2013, and draws some tentative conclusions regarding the legacy of Berlusconi and its lesson for Italy.

The Italian Question

All countries are historically peculiar, but some are more peculiar than others. Italy is one of these countries, high up the table of peculiarity, and it is particularly unhappy about being there, because its historical and political uniqueness is based on characteristics that are more negative than positive: institutional weakness, reciprocal delegitimation by opposing political forces—what Cafagna (2003) has called "divisiveness"—verbal and other kinds of radicalism, and deep mistrust between the state and the citizenry.

Much has been written, in some cases extremely well, about the causes of this unhappiness. In fact, almost all scholars of Italian history and politics have implicitly made this problem the starting point of their analyses. The debate is a long way from reaching a conclusion, and there is a sense in even the best work that something is missing and that certain key elements have not been identified or described. However, if the premise put forward in the introduction to this book is correct—that Berlusconism was both a product of the uniqueness of Italian history and an attempt to resolve it—then this peculiarity needs to be explained. This first chapter will therefore attempt to put this "Italian question" into its proper perspective.

In this chapter, the years between 1861 and 1992 will be treated as a single entity. This does not mean that liberal Italy, fascist Italy, and republican Italy—an oligarchy, an authoritarian regime with a strong totalitarian streak, and a democratic regime—are in continuity and can be assimilated to one another. Their historical, ethical, and political differences are glaringly obvious. Yet despite their diversity, there remains a common thread running through these regimes whose strength and persistence is all the more startling precisely because the transformations

taking place around that thread have been so radical. One of its most important features is the constant and widespread separation between the "legal country" and the "real country": a dysfunctional relationship characterized by profound mistrust between the political elite and state institutions on the one hand and "the people"[1] on the other. It is argued here that the relationship between the political elites and "the people" is the best perspective from which to view Berlusconism.

Modernity and the Mediterranean

Modernity/backwardness is the most important conceptual pairing in the history of unified Italy and has characterized it since its beginnings. The *Risorgimento* political elite was acutely aware that between the end of the eighteenth and the start of the nineteenth centuries, several North European countries, particularly Great Britain, had entered a different historical era or, in Henry Maine's (1996) words, had left the vast, serried ranks of the stationary societies and had formed a small union of progressive ones. Although the Italian liberals were well informed of the dangers of this historical transformation and were determined to reduce its possible negative impact and potential risks (e.g., see Romeo 1995 on Cavour), they generally had a very positive opinion of progressive societies and a negative view of stationary ones. For the liberals, modernity, though it needed to be managed carefully, was a good thing. They also thought that Italy had no choice and that a country that was unable to jump onto the bandwagon of progress was destined for an irrelevant life on the fringes (Greenfield 1934; Romani 1994).

At the same time, the *Risorgimento* leaders were also convinced that Italy was in a serious state of economic, social, and cultural backwardness and that it was about to lose out on an important historical opportunity—possibly the only historical opportunity—for progress. The origins of unified Italy, and to a certain extent the entire history of unified Italy, have been positioned between these two polar opposites— European modernity on the one hand and the "Mediterranean lateness" of Italy on the other.[2] If, for the liberals, the aspirations were European and the diagnosis Mediterranean, then there could only be one cure: to make sure that the whole country, willingly or unwillingly, took off

in pursuit of modernity as soon and as energetically as possible. Guglielmo Ferrero, who was born in 1871 and died in 1942, was one of the most acute contemporary observers of late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century European history, particularly of liberal Italy and its collapse into fascism. According to Ferrero (1942, 249), the fall of the ancient régime and Napoleon's invasion of Italy in 1796 had opened up "a vacuum, an immense vacuum, a frightful disease from which Italy has suffered since 1815 . . . What efforts have not been made to fill this vacuum with something, to rekindle the fragments of the old spirit, to kindle a new spirit! Into it have been thrown all the mysticisms and all the philosophies of every age and every country, authoritarian and liberal, bourgeois and socialist, religious and atheistic, Catholic and anti-Christian, nationalistic and humanistic, Guelf and Ghibelline, materialistic and idealistic, immanent and transcendent. Everything slid into this immense vacuum and disappeared, swallowed up by nothingness." Everything fell into the vacuum and disappeared, says Ferrero, but for two basic passions that are "easy to kindle but hard to satisfy": the desire for wealth and the need for power—that is, the aspiration for Italy to be put on a par with the great nations of Northern Europe, which were both rich and powerful, and that it should do so as soon as possible, because the "exalted desires of the country" would not let time take its course. "National feeling . . . always wanted to push forward with all haste, was constantly impatient with the inevitable inferiorities of the youthful state, never accepted either the long delays in a necessary period of preparation or the momentary checks."

The history of Italy since the *Risorgimento* has thus been dominated, though in different ways, by the question of how the country could be *forced* (i.e., dragged willingly or unwillingly, and very quickly) out of its state of moral and material decay. This operation could only be carried out by political means (the state, a party, a revolution), and "the enforcer" could only be a modernizing elite—a cohesive group, clear in its objectives and able to frog-march the country to its destination at double speed. This is the common thread running through Italian history, from the *Risorgimento* to the Republic, that was mentioned before: the conviction that a public apparatus should be constructed and defended that would be able to *correct* Italy in the shortest time possible, both morally by reeducating its "soul" and materially by setting its

"body" straight.[3] This common thread is not the key to understanding the whole of Italian history, but it does open the door to an understanding of a number of important areas that are particularly relevant for interpreting the events of the last twenty years.

This "corrective frog-march" thread can also be viewed from the perspective of Michael Oakeshott's dichotomy between the *politics of faith* and the *politics of skepticism*, which is particularly helpful in understanding Berlusconism and its electorate. The politics of faith is one in which—to reduce a complex and nuanced argument to its core—"the activity of governing is understood to be in the service of the perfection of mankind" (Oakeshott 1996, 23). It has a clear idea of what is good and bad, claims to know how to achieve the good and avoid the bad, and hence tries to take control of historical processes. At its most extreme it becomes totalitarian, but it also has more moderate reform-minded versions: what is important is not the radicalism with which it pursues its aims but the fact that it is pursuing them. Nor is a politics of faith worried about extending the scope of political power, which it regards as positive; it thinks that power should not be too restricted by rules and regulations, that politics is morally superior to any other activity, and that politicians are "at once the servants, the leaders and the saviors of society" (ibid., 30). The politics of skepticism, on the other hand, does not seek perfection at all and does not think that government is necessarily a *good* thing. Rather, it believes that it is a *necessary* thing, given that human interaction needs to be ordered to prevent it from degenerating into conflict, but that the pursuit of perfection is for individuals—if they wish to pursue it. From this skeptical position, then, politicians are human like the rest of us, and their power needs to be regulated and restricted: "Finally, in the politics of skepticism the activity of governing is manifestly nothing to be enthusiastic about, and it does not demand enthusiasm for its services. The rulers will occupy an honored and respectable, but not an elevated, place; and their most notable qualifications will be that they claim no godlike capacity for directing the activities of their subjects."[4] According to Oakeshott, the contemporary world is indelibly marked by the politics of faith prevailing over that of skepticism. In the last two centuries, the idea that the functions of politics should be regarded as fundamentally corrective and pedagogical is not just an Italian phenomenon but a Pan-European

one, as the example of France shows (Jaume 1990 and 1997; Rosanvallon 2007). It could be argued, however, that experience of this phenomenon has been more intense in Italy and that it has had uniquely Italian characteristics[5]—that in Italy the politics of faith has not only prevailed over the politics of skepticism but also itself become lost in the complexities and contradictions of its national history.

There are many reasons for this (Galli della Loggia 1998), and some can be mentioned here. First, the idea that Italy had only a few centuries previously been in the vanguard of civilization has had some bearing. This awareness served to increase the sense of frustration, the haste, and the impatience, and it widened the gap between Italian intellectual aspirations and the concrete reality of Italy's situation (Chabod 1996). The fragility and inefficiency of the state apparatus also played its part. There were no instruments immediately available that could be used to "correct" the country, so they had to be designed on the spot at the very moment that they needed to be used, and this led to serious complications (Romanelli 1995a; Cassese 1998; Pezzino 2002). Another major influence was the social and cultural effect of Catholicism, which was slow and reluctant to accept modernity (Mozzarelli 2003).

Finally, the relationship between politics and society was made even more complex by the view that the North and South of the country had reached different stages of civic development. Modernity has been at the same time a model to be imported to Italy from abroad and a model to be imported to Southern Italy from the North. This overlap between the "external search" (Italy looking out to Europe) and the "internal" one (Southern Italy looking to Northern Italy) did not make the frog-march any easier (Dickie 1999; Huysseune 2006). The inclusion of the territories of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies in unified Italy boosted the statist and corrective attitudes of the liberal establishment: in theory it would have been much more moderate, but its deep mistrust of Southern Italy caused it to act against its own convictions and opt for a centralized state (Scirocco 1990, 420ff.; Romeo 1995, 499ff.; Romanelli 1995b; Ziblatt 2006).

To sum up, if the experience of Italian history has been "more peculiar" than that of other countries, and if the politics of faith has been stronger but less successful in Italy than elsewhere (France is the obvious point of comparison in this case), this is partly due to a uniquely

complex set of circumstances. These include genuine backwardness, perceived backwardness, real and perceived geographic differences in degree of backwardness, frustration regarding the backwardness, aspirations to (some form of) modernity, a need to define the modern objectives to be pursued as "articles of a politics of faith," a desire to speed up the historical transformation process, a need to define a virtuous elite that could lead the operation, and finally the inadequacy of the instruments needed to carry it out.

Popper and Plato

In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper accused Plato of causing "a lasting confusion" in political philosophy by starting his argument with the wrong question—"who should rule?" According to Popper, the right question is, "How can we so organize political institutions that bad or incompetent rulers can be prevented from doing too much damage?" (Popper 2011, 114–15). Throughout the history of unified Italy right up to the present day, the striving for modernity and the need to identify a modernizing political class has meant that the question that has been asked has been the Platonic one.[6] The consequence of this has been that once the elite was identified, it immediately became irremovable, thus contravening one of the most important corollaries of Popper's theory—namely, that one of the basic limits on power is that bad or incompetent rulers can be replaced. It is no accident that in the history of Italy no political class—liberal, fascist, or republican—has ever been peacefully replaced (Salvadori 1994). Moreover, any internal changes within those political classes, such as the rise of the so-called *Sinistra storica* (Historical Left) in 1876 or the creation of the center-left governing majority in the early 1960s, only came about as a result of the shifting power balance within the political elites rather than from the pressure of public opinion. So it is no accident either that these changes never occurred after an election; on the contrary, elections were always held after the changes had been made in order to legitimize them ex post (Sabbatucci 2003).

The argument in the first section of this chapter suggests that the Platonic rather than the Popperian option might well seem the sensible choice for Italy. If the basic problem was the country's backwardness,

and the main solution was a form of enforced modernization, it was fairly natural to assume that the identification of a modernizing elite was a more urgent priority than deciding on the limits to its possible abuse of power. This is because limiting the abuse of power might limit the power itself, which was badly needed to carry out the work effectively, and because introducing the possibility that the elite could be replaced would mean putting it at the mercy of the society that it was supposed to be modernizing, thereby making it far less able to operate efficiently. The oligarchical structure of Italian politics should not necessarily be regarded as the consequence of the selfishness or dishonesty of the Italian political class or its supposed need to defend and reproduce social hierarchies, as the prefascist Italian liberals were often accused of doing. On the contrary, on many occasions in Italian history oligarchies came about with the best of intentions and from a sincerely held conviction that this was the only way for Italy to save itself from a Mediterranean destiny of misery, hardship, and stagnation. Indeed, in some cases, the elite's corrective and pedagogical approach was only supposed to be temporary—a walking stick that could be thrown away once the modernizing process of moral and material growth was under way and had become self-sustaining.

In these circumstances the Platonic option was a sensible choice; it was so sensible, in fact, that for certain historical periods it was regarded as inevitable by a number of scholars. In one of the most significant analyses of the prefascist era, historian Alberto Aquarone wondered how a unified Italy had been able to "overcome all the crises of its infancy and adolescence without reneging on its liberal origins." In his view, the reasons were to be found mainly in "political-administrative centralism and in the exclusion of most people from the political process during the first crucial post-unification phase" (Aquarone 1972, 282). In another classic historiographical study, Pietro Scoppola produces a not totally dissimilar argument from Aquarone's in his description of the origins of republican Italy and the early role that political parties played in it. According to Scoppola, "the rise of the mass parties as the leading protagonists of Italian politics" cannot by itself be equated with "the unqualified success of the new Italian democracy"—on the contrary, the former contained "a number of problems and contradictions which were destined to characterize Italian political life for a considerable

time." Despite this, however, the preeminence of the parties was "a necessary and inevitable premise" and even "a historical necessity" (Scoppola 1991, 98).

Although the new generations of historians would do well to question the use of the word "necessity" when describing Italian history, Aquarone and Scoppola have strong arguments on their side. However, whether or not particular choices were avoidable or inevitable, the problem of their adverse side effects, of which Aquarone and Scoppola were both well aware, still needs to be addressed. One such example is the fact that the corrective programs, which were originally supposed to be temporary, were extended indefinitely; Italy never made enough progress, or was never *considered* to have made enough progress, to render the programs no longer necessary. Another is the slow but sure degeneration of the programs and their moral foundations when they came into contact with society. Another is the inability of these programs to close the gap between the elite and the people—in fact, overlapping interests, opportunism, and clientelism produced utilitarian relationships between the elite and the people that reinforced their mutual distrust. Why was it, then, that the corrective and pedagogical strategies used by the Platonic elites for the last 150 years did not work as well as was hoped?

Italy's Varied Backwardness

Some of the components of Italy's backwardness are objectively quantifiable: lack of infrastructure, productive capacity, technical skills, wealth, and low levels of literacy. It is much harder, however, to identify and measure its ethical/political deficiencies and to provide simple, immediate solutions to them. The first page of Carlo Levi's novel *Christ stopped at Eboli*, published in 1945, provides a powerful illustration of how complex the divide was that separated, or was thought to separate, the more backward parts of Italy from European civilization:

> Christ did stop at Eboli, where the road and the railway leave the coast of Salerno and turn into the desolate reaches of Lucania. Christ never came this far, nor did time, nor the individual soul, nor hope, nor the relations of cause to effect, nor reason nor history. Christ never came, just as the Romans never came, content to garrison the highways without penetrating the mountains

and the forests, nor the Greeks, who flourished beside the Gulf of Taranto. None of the pioneers of Western civilization brought here his sense of the passage of time, his deification of the State or that ceaseless activity which feeds upon itself. No one has come to this land except as an enemy, a conqueror, or a visitor devoid of understanding. The seasons pass today over the toil of the peasants, just as they did three thousand years before Christ; no message, human or divine, has reached this stubborn poverty. We speak a different language, and here our tongue is incomprehensible. (Levi 2000, 12)

Until the 1960s, it could be claimed that Italy's moral backwardness was dependent on its material backwardness and that once the latter had been solved, the former would automatically disappear. However, after the impressive economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s—the so-called economic miracle—it became clear that the two were to a certain extent independent of each other. To make things even more complicated, Italy's moral backwardness is made of cultural and ideological components, which can be distinguished in the abstract, even though from a historical point of view they are closely intertwined.

Italy's ideological backwardness is the consequence of the considerable impact of the political schisms brought about by the French revolution on Italian history (Salvadori 1994; Bedeschi 2002; Di Nucci and Galli della Loggia 2003; Ventrone 2006; Cammarano and Cavazza 2010). The breadth and degree of polarization of Italian ideologies, spanning the gulf between the radical left and the radical right, meant that the elites' approach to the modernity problem was continually having to face up to completely incompatible alternative approaches. Whenever the modernizing elite represented "the system," the opposition took on the ideological guise of "the antisystem." The culture of these antisystemic oppositions—how radical they were, the political form they presented themselves in, and the way they came to be part of the institutions—all depended on variables that cannot be analyzed here. However, it is important to bear in mind that throughout Italian history the relationship between the governing elites and their modernizing programs on the one hand and the antisystemic ideologies on the other has taken on very different forms of varying degrees of incompatibility. Some opposition forces rejected any form of modernity, while others suggested an alternative form or even pursued the same modernizing program as the elite but with different means. Sometimes they even accepted the same means but claimed that they had to be used in

a more radical, Jacobin way. In many cases the modernizing elite was rejected by the very culture that had nurtured it—accused of betraying its origins in some way, of having compromised its morals, or of being incapable of pushing its own program through. In all these cases, accusations about means and objectives were mixed up with a rejection of particular personalities: the accusers were convinced that the wrong answer had been given to the Platonic question, that the elite had turned into an oligarchy, and that the solution to the problem was to identify and bring a new elite to power—the right elite, this time.

Cultural backwardness is a much more complex phenomenon to understand than ideological backwardness. First, there is no consensus between scholars that it really exists, and this lack of consensus seems itself to be culturally based. On the one hand, cultural explanations of Italy's peculiarities have mostly come from scholars outside Italy, particularly Anglo-Saxon authors. On the other hand, a number of Italian scholars have claimed that the peculiarities of Italian political history cannot be attributed to its supposed "anthropological" fragility or to an "Italian conception" of social life and power relations but to specific economic, institutional, or political/ideological causes. However, this Italian position may also be attributed to a psychological removal of sorts on the part of the scholars themselves. Since mind-sets are extremely resistant to change, no Italian intellectual would be eager to jump to a conclusion that Italy is condemned to a Mediterranean destiny.[7]

Yet it seems impossible not to take account of cultural factors, however vague they might be, when exploring the Italian question. From the misery of the nineteenth century to the relative prosperity of the twentieth, from a regime of limited franchise to an authoritarian one to a democratic one, from the politics of notables to that of mass parties, from the capture of Rome to the hegemony of the Christian Democrats, from Camillo Cavour to Silvio Berlusconi, 150 years of Italian history have been highlighted by a split between the legal country and the real country, by a deep mistrust between the institutions and the "people," and by widespread illegality. It is difficult not to wonder if there is not something wrong with the Italian mind-set—not some kind of genetic flaw but something that has a historical origin, which is not impervious to the effects of economic development, state intervention, and

political and ideological conflict but is also "viscous," hard to change in the short term, and, if not handled with considerable care, liable to get worse rather than improve. It is also impossible to ignore cultural factors in a historical analysis of Berlusconism simply because Italy's presumed ethical weakness has often been used as an explanation for the rise of Berlusconi's politics.

Claims that Italy's "socio-cultural backwardness" (Altan 1986) really exists do not mean that everything about it has been understood. This is particularly true for questions about its origins; about the extent to which its moral quotient depends on economic, institutional, or political/ideological factors; about the way in which it has interacted with religion and the Italian Catholic tradition; and about how far back its origins go—back to the unification of Italy (Galli della Loggia 2010), back as far as the Spanish conquest of the South (Cuoco 1999), or even as far as the Middle Ages (Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995). Last but not least, the geographic distribution of the backwardness, especially the split between North and South, is a notoriously difficult historical problem, particularly because it has been such a politically sensitive topic.

To sum up, the issue of cultural backwardness is extremely intricate, and it remains an open question. The problem cannot be addressed in detail here, but for present purposes it is important that the question has been aired and its complexity recognized.

The Paradoxes of Jacobinism

It was these material, ideological, and cultural aspects of national backwardness that corrective intervention by the modernizing elite aimed at. The arguments in favor of such intervention can be summarized as follows: for the first hundred years after unification, Italy lagged far behind other nations in terms of the main quantitative ways that modernity is measured—income, productivity, infrastructures, and literacy levels—and it suffered from an excess of political division, a lack of belief in its institutions, and illegality. The new modernizing elite needed to some extent (a historically variable extent: liberal Italy was different from fascism; fascism different from the Republic) to isolate itself from the backward society and set up a process of material

development and national education that could absorb both ideologically antisystemic opposition and any manifestations of Italians' mistrust of their institutions. This gradual narrowing of the ideological and cultural gap would in turn lead to the elite becoming increasingly less isolated and eventually to a reconciliation of the legal country and the real one, with the latter becoming as civilized as the former.

Although, as has already been stated, the reasoning behind this was not without foundation, it did have one obvious logical contradiction—that the elite was pursuing an aim using means that were in direct contradiction to the objective.[8] The elite aimed to consolidate its own legitimacy, to drain the lifeblood out of the antisystemic opposition, and to build a relationship of trust with the "people." At the same time, it claimed that this could only be achieved through its own immovability, by isolating and defending itself as much as possible from the surrounding environment and imposing its will on the country from on high. The contradiction is thus that it was aiming to reduce the distance between the legal and real country by maintaining and maybe even increasing that distance. The ultimate objective was economic, social, cultural, and political modernity, but the instrument for achieving that aim was premodern. In the rest of Western Europe, institutional modernity was achieved when the Platonic question of who should govern was replaced by the Popperian one of how the governing class could be peaceably replaced. In Italy, the instrument still responded to the Platonic question.

This contradiction makes it highly likely that the modernizing elite, even supposing it remains a virtuous one, ends up being regarded as distant, arrogant, intrusive, and a stranger in its own country (Maffesoli 1992, 588ff.; Oakeshott 1996, 95 and 106). As an example of how this problem was present prior to the unification of Italy, Vincenzo Cuoco's *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* (*Historical Essay on the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799*), first published in 1801, provides a telling description:

> The Neapolitan nation could be considered as divided into two peoples, kept apart by two centuries of time and two degrees of climate. Since the cultured part had been educated using foreign models, its culture was different from the one that the nation as a whole required, and which we could hope to develop only from our own faculties. Some people had become

French, others English; but those that had remained Neapolitan, which was the majority, were still uncivilized. Thus the culture of a few was of no help to the nation as a whole, and the nation in turn came almost to despise a culture that was of no use to it and that it did not understand. (Cuoco 1999, 154)

However, historical circumstances were destined to weigh even more heavily than logical contradictions. Almost miraculous internal and external conditions were required if the modernizing elite was to stay virtuous: in the first place, it needed to have ethical qualities and technical abilities that were out of the ordinary; it also needed to be cohesive, farsighted, and clear in its objectives, as well as powerful and confident in its own power and in the weakness of the challenges it might be faced with; it needed to remain isolated from society. Society, in turn, should have a low "viscosity"—that is, it should be able to react promptly to the stimuli of the elite. If any of these conditions were to fail, then the modernizing elite itself risked being sucked into the vicious circle of ideological and cultural backwardness. It would itself become part of the problem and would end up reinforcing it.

This kind of implosion is not just an abstract hypothesis; it has actually taken place in Italian history. It was by no means guaranteed that a Platonic political class would preserve its initial virtues over time. Whether the elite was liberal, democratic, or even fascist, it was particularly difficult for it to remain immune to societal pressure. Political elites were permeable to outside interests because of the very ideological and cultural backwardness that their "impermeability" was supposed to be preventing: their need to halt the rise of the antisystemic oppositions forced them to put down their own grassroots in the country, and the country's willingness to embark on a cynical, exploitative relationship with the authorities provided them with a mechanism for doing this: clientelism (Graziano 1979; Musella 2000). The political classes were also weakened by their own internal divisions, and this undermined the coherence of their early projects because, when added to their external conflict with the antisystem opposition, it made competition for the support of sections of society all the more fierce.

These divisions were aggravated in turn by two additional phenomena. The first of these was that the idea of modernity that was coming from abroad was not at all simple and unambiguous—on the contrary,

there were multiple and conflicting ideas of modernity on offer. It is no accident that the most politically successful moments of Italian history, or at least those in which government policy has been at its most compact and coherent (the 1860s and 1870s, the 1940s and 1950s), have taken place when an elite, enthused with energy at the start of a new regime, has taken on board a reasonably coherent view of modernity that has then become hegemonic in the West for some time. The second was the various waves of social, ideological, and political enlargement of the governing classes, such as the "parliamentary revolution" of 1876 and the rise of the *Sinistra storica* or when the Socialist Party joined the center-left governments in 1962–64.

The fact that the modernizing elites' reformist attitude became visibly weaker and their objectives more difficult to achieve had no effect on their monopoly of power nor on the heavy public and political apparatus that they had set up. On the contrary, the obstacles that were put in their way made it even stronger: the more "viscous" and difficult to manage Italy became, the more firmly the elite held on to its power over society. Power thus became not a means but an end in itself. The increasing influence that social interest groups managed to acquire over the institutions slowed the corrective and pedagogical projects almost to a state of paralysis without resolving the problem of the distance between the elites and "the people." The benefits that were supposed to accrue from the separation between the legal and the real country were lost, but the negative consequences of the separation remained. This produced a paradoxical situation in which politics and civil society were at the same time too close and too distant: too close because social interest groups had gained immediate access to the institutions via the political class, and too distant because the proximity had given rise to an exploitative relationship based on the exchange of immediate benefits but without producing any sense of long-lasting mutual trust and legitimacy (Farneti 1971; Graziano 1979). Donna Caterina Laurentano's invective in Luigi Pirandello's *I vecchi e i giovani* (*The Old and the Young*), first published in 1913, is one of the many literary examples of how the political elite, having lost its original Jacobin tendencies, ended up being drawn into an exchange of social favors:

> Perhaps you will kindly tell us, then, how those ideals have been converted
> to reality for the people of Sicily? What have they gained by them? How

have they been treated? Oppressed, taxed, neglected, slandered! The ideals of Forty-eight and Sixty? Why, all the old people here cry: "Things were better in the old days!" And I say the same, do you hear? . . . all the injustices . . . the vilenesses of the unfair, one-sided administration of our communes, bound hand and foot for years past to the local cliques, which abuse them in every way under the protection of the Prefects and Deputies . . . the infamous power of the gangs who are poisoning the air of our towns, as the malaria poisons our countryside! (Pirandello 1928, 128)

To sum up, the phenomenon of the monopolistic (but virtuous) privatization of the state by the Platonic elite turned into a negatively pluralistic privatization of the state by the many social interest groups that had managed to gain access to those in power—a process that was much more open than the previous one but that was also chaotic, shapeless, and completely unable to achieve the desired aim of an authentically public state. As a consequence of all these paradoxes and contradictions, failed Jacobin programs and virtuous processes going bad, the confusion between the legal Italy and the real one, social interests and political power, became almost impossible to disentangle.[9] It also produced a completely distorted version of the modern distinction between public and private (Oakeshott 1996, 5). It was legitimate to carry out abuse in the public sphere that you would be ashamed to do in private—something that Ignazio Silone, another astute observer of the peculiarities of Italian history, did not fail to notice: "I grew up in a mountainous district of southern Italy. The phenomenon which most impressed me, when I arrived at the age of reason, was the violent contrast, the incomprehensible, absurd, monstrous contrast, between family and private life—in the main, decent, honest, and well-conducted—and social relations, which were very often crude and full of hatred and deceit" (Silone 1950, 88).

Despite 150 years of considerable material and moral progress, the "Jacobinism gone wrong" that has characterized the history of Italy was unable to resolve the problem of Italy's ideological and cultural backwardness. It may even have made it worse (Fukuyama 1995, 361–62; Magatti 2000). The modernizing elites, which right from the start were regarded by most of the country as alien and authoritarian but could still use their own virtue and progressive programs as a shield, gradually lost that shield but still remained alien and authoritarian. The more aggressively their virtue was flaunted, the more the

country enjoyed watching it dissipate. The surfeit of moralism in Italian public life, which in recent times has turned into an excessive faith in the cleansing powers of the judiciary, cannot be understood without taking into account the bigger picture: it is the consequence of the original Platonic error, of the importance that virtue has had in the selection of the elites and of the subsequent implosion of these elites and their work.

The Unobtainable Truth

The degeneration of the political class had a direct impact on laws and institutions. Right from the start of the liberal, fascist, and republican regimes, laws and institutions were aimed more at supporting the modernizing project than at building up a network of rights and rules that would be valid for all citizens.[10] Once again the quality of the elites, their isolation from society, and the progressive projects they were pursuing supplied the historical justification for this. However, the justification turned to dust as the political class became increasingly permeable, social groups gained prominence, and rules and institutions became instrumental to the interests of one clan or another. The legitimacy of laws and institutions is fragile, intolerant of lies and hypocrisy (Ferrero 1942), and in Italy it crumbled, as the laws and institutions, which had been presented as serving the community as a whole, were subordinated to the needs of particular interest groups. Though the historical circumstances were different in each case, three regimes that had lasted for decades dissolved in a matter of months because the relationship between the elite and the "people" was not based on mutual trust, and the regimes' legitimacy was not deep enough to project the political class beyond its own failures. On the contrary, the regimes' legitimacy was fragile and short-term, based as it was on the elites' ability to resolve problems and hand out benefits. When this failed, the whole house of cards came crashing down.

Looked at in this light, it comes as no surprise that the entire history of Italy has been strangled, and continues to be strangled, by a particular attitude toward institutions and rules—a mix of hostility, defensiveness, evasiveness, exploitation, resignation, and opportunism—the clearest possible manifestation of the cultural backwardness that so

many political projects have unsuccessfully tried to put right. This mind-set has lasted for 150 years, surviving two world wars, three different types of regime, and the social transformations of the "economic miracle" because, tragically, it is a *completely rational* one. If rules and institutions are universally regarded as and to some extent actually are the instrument of one particular interest group or another, and the principles legitimizing them are regarded as a mere rhetorical varnish that not even the political class is prepared to apply any longer, then evading or exploiting these rules and institutions is the only logical choice. The attitude of the free rider (the person who travels on the bus without paying for his or her bus ticket) is antisocial if everyone pays, but it is rational when no one pays (or if there is a perception that no one pays). You need to be heroically selfless to agree to be the sucker— the only idiot who pays for everyone else's ride (Putnam 1993, 164–67).

This explains why Italian opposition forces not only have not been discouraged from a subversive and/or populist approach but have even had an incentive to be subversive/populist (Pombeni 1993; Salvadori 1994; Salvati 1997) and also why corrective projects, which had been designed as a remedy for Italy's ideological backwardness, ended up making it worse. As the country doctor F. J. said to a young Ignazio Silone, "There's no half-way house here; you've got either to rebel or become an accomplice" (Silone 1950, 101–2).[11] If the governing body presents itself as an immovable and virtuous elite and then degenerates, the person who opposes it must by definition be antisystem. Moreover, since modernizing programs maintain a distance between the elite and the people, playing the populist card is an important tactic for any opposition. This card has almost always been used in a politically opportunistic way: the corruption and the unrepresentative nature of the elites were criticized in the name of an alternative elite that was presumed to be more virtuous, more closely connected to the "better" section of the populace (whether it be socially, geographically, or culturally), and able to produce a program that was more suited to transforming the country for the better. Very rarely was there *structural* rather than opportunistic populism, aiming to bring about a profound and permanent change in the relationship between political power and the people and to free all of them from their corrective straitjacket. In

this case, the reaction to too much politics meant rejecting politics as a whole, and rejecting an elite meant rejecting any elite.

The division of the populace into self-referential clans that were armed against each other (McCarthy 1995a; Galli della Loggia 1998) can also, though not exclusively, go under the heading "Jacobinism gone wrong." As noted before, laws and institutions tend to be regarded as the personal property of the modernizing elite rather than a guarantee for all, and as a result any outsider political and social interest group will deny them legitimacy and try to defend itself against them or take them over. We have also seen how ideological divisiveness is increased by corrective and pedagogical programs designed to get rid of the divisiveness. However, in order to fully comprehend the importance of clans in Italian history, there are two further factors that need to be considered. The first is that the selection processes used by the elites to elect themselves and to choose their subordinates could not be open or meritocratic, or at least not fully so, because the quality of the candidates was subordinate to clan membership. The second is that segmentation into clans is not only about rules, institutions, ideologies, and elite selection processes but about the destruction of any possible progressive public debate that might produce a shared "truth," rather than a version of the truth designed to justify a particular political or social interest position. Writer and journalist Ennio Flaiano explained this clearly in 1972:

> Age has convinced me that nothing can be made clear: in this country that I love the truth simply does not exist. Countries much smaller and more important than ours have their own single version of the truth, but we have an infinite number. And the reasons? It is up to the historians, sociologists, psychoanalysts and round tables to work out the reasons. I just have to deal with the effects. And a few others alongside me. Because almost everybody has a solution to propose: their truth, i.e. one which does not contrast with their own interests. An art historian should also be invited to the round table to explain the influence of the baroque on our national psyche. In Italy the shortest line between two points is the arabesque. We live in an arabesque network. (Flaiano 1996, 355–56)

Italian intellectuals have not stayed on the sidelines of Italian history but have been actively involved in all the events that have been described in this chapter. Not only have they taken up a particular position, but

very often, though not always, they have done so without question-ing the Platonic idea that virtuous elites needed to be identified and modernizing programs enacted. They have even put themselves for-ward as a new governing body destined to transform the country. It is significant that the contribution of Italy to modern political science has been to focus on the inevitability of elites (Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto) and on the connection between the elite and the truth (Antonio Gramsci), and it is no accident that political thought based on faith in the spontaneous development of civil society in Italy has been so frag-ile (Carlo Cattaneo). It is also significant that in *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann, a writer who was well aware of the problem of political modernity and how it "travels" from one country to the next, uses an Italian and not a French character, Lodovico Settembrini, to epitomize a "literate of civilization" that is quintessentially French, democratic, illuminist, and Jacobin.

Was it really inevitable that Jacobinism "went wrong"? Scholars like Aquarone and Scoppola, as already seen, have theorized that cor-rective and pedagogical programs were necessary. Almost all studies of liberal and republican Italy are placed within an interpretative spec-trum with the necessity of these programs at one end and their fail-ure at the other (Orsina 2006a). They are at opposite ends because if it is genuinely claimed that the failure of a program was inevitable, it is much harder to claim that the proposal behind it was also inevita-ble. By and large, historians have stressed the necessity of the correc-tive programs very strongly but then been much more cautious and nuanced about their failure. They have done this in a number of ways: by denying the failure, claiming that the results had been mainly posi-tive and that any failures were due to unavoidable contingencies; by trying to identify alternative historical paths that, if followed, might have made the original program more successful; and by describing the failure and trying to reconstruct its historical origins but without claiming that it was necessary with the same vigor with which they had defended the necessity of the original program. Aquarone, as has been shown, viewed the Jacobin decisions of the *Risorgimento* ruling class as inevitable. However, when it comes to explaining the crisis of liberal Italy and the advent of fascism, he denies, citing T. S. Eliot, that history can be understood as an inevitable destiny: "In the grey area between

ideals and reality, between the impulse and the action, in the grey area between conception and creation, between the potential and the actual, there—not just in the structure—lies the essence of the object of historical study, which is in many respects impossible to grasp" (Aquarone 1972, 332). This view of history and historical research is in line with the approach taken in this book and recent developments in historiography internationally (Oakeshott 1991, 151–83; Ferguson 1997). In general, it is the relationship between the course of human events and the idea of "necessity" that is problematic. This difficulty, however, is to be found at both ends of the interpretative spectrum in which historians of Italy work: it is doubtful whether the failure of the Jacobin programs was really inevitable, but it is also doubtful whether the Jacobin programs themselves were indispensable in the first place.

For present purposes, however, there is no need to posit the necessity of the failure of corrective and pedagogical programs, particularly the republican one, in order to understand Berlusconism. It is sufficient for the failure to have actually occurred and for most of the country to have recognized it as such. Without wishing to minimize Italy's exceptional moral and material growth or to negate the huge differences between the liberal, fascist, and republican regimes, it is hard not to recognize that the three political-institutional systems between 1861 and 1992 were failures. In the first place, they all ended badly—the republican regime better than the liberal one and the fascist one worst of all. Second, the very same political cultures that had inspired them declared them to be failures (for the republican era, see Mastropaolo 1996 and 2000). Finally, in the 150 years since unification, Italy has still not been able to resolve the problem of ideological and cultural backwardness: political relations have remained chaotic, unable to organize themselves in an orderly and constructive way around a stable and recognized institutional axis (Lippolis and Pitruzzella 2007), and the relationship between the elite and the people is still filled with deep mistrust (Sciolla 2004).

Illiberal Italy

In liberal Italian circles, it is customary to complain bitterly that Italy is a deeply illiberal country, and the analysis in this chapter has illustrated

the many and multilayered historical phenomena that have made it so. It is illiberal in the first place because when it took its first modernizing steps after unification, civil society was too feeble to accompany and support them. As John Stuart Mill wrote, "Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne, if they are so fortunate as to find one" (Mill 2003, 81). In mid-nineteenth-century Italy, that state had not yet been reached: the conditions needed for the virtuous circle of freedom and progress to take place were not there. To overcome this problem, the modernizing elite tried to construct the foundations of freedom by authoritarian means (Romanelli 1988). As is well known, the state and the elite of that period called themselves liberal, and within certain limits, imposition from on high is not necessarily incompatible with liberalism, especially in its continental version (Jaume 1997). However, in this case the imposition was heavy for a number of reasons: first, because the country was regarded as very backward; second, because the relationship between the elite and the country was complicated by the Catholic question; and finally, because the fear of "missing the modernity boat" caused them to move too quickly. If patience is one of the cardinal virtues of liberalism, then an element that makes Italy an illiberal country is its anxiety.

Italian division into clans is also completely incompatible with the workings of a liberal society. Liberalism is often depicted, mostly by its critics, as an ideology of fragmentation, divergence, and difference. This is certainly true, but it is only part of the story. The other part is in what binds the divergent parts together and how they integrate to produce a progressive outcome: sociality, mutual trust, and a deep conviction that collaboration is convenient for everyone, that the institutions need to be respected, that rules need to be widely accepted, and that it is not impossible to get ever closer to the "truth," even though it is impossible to grasp it completely (Seligman 1992). When Mill refers to humanity being able to improve through discussion, this is precisely what we are talking about. The term "discussion" contains the idea of disagreement as well as cooperation, and the idea of "improvement" refers to progress that can only occur from this kind of collaborative meeting of

different positions. Clans are the exact opposite of this. By privatizing the laws, the institutions, and the truth and subjugating them to sectarian interests, clans make it impossible for different positions to meet in a neutral area under an arbitrator who can be trusted by all parties to produce shared progressive results. The confrontation becomes destructive because it makes it rational for the players involved to try to seek an overwhelming victory and destroy the opposition once and for all, rather than to try to continue to play, in the belief that playing the game is in itself beneficial in the long run even if you are temporarily on the losing side.

It is no accident that many of the attempts that have been made to anchor Italian politics to shared anticlan objectives have come from the liberal camp. Luigi Einaudi, the first president of the Italian Republic, is one of the few godfathers of twentieth-century Italian liberalism. His famous phrase *conoscere per deliberare* (to know in order to deliberate) can be read in these terms: our understanding of reality can never be certain, but we can still have some knowledge of it; this knowledge, though fragile, needs to be accepted by all parts of society—individuals and groups. The discussion that subsequently develops around this shared understanding of a problem cannot deviate too far, because it is empirically sound, and the final decision will flow from this orderly, balanced discussion. The insistence of so many prefascist liberals on technical, administrative aspects of state activity and their ultimately unrealistic hope that over time this might limit political discretion can be explained by their fear that an ideological debate with no empirical foundation would become uncontrollable (Cammarano 1993; Pombeni 1993). The same could also be said of the scholars who brought modern political science to Italy in the 1950s, Norberto Bobbio, Bruno Leoni, and Giovanni Sartori—who all belonged to different sects of the liberal "church." Modern politics, in their view, needed above all a modern political culture, whose foundation was solid and protected from controversy. This culture would use words and concepts with a precise and universally accepted meaning, tied to an underlying reality, that could not be excessively distorted by ideology and wishful thinking (Sartori 1979; Graziano 1986; Morlino 1989; Bobbio 1996).

2

The Antifascist Republic and Its Parties

Italian liberals of the prefascist era did not like political parties. For years it was thought that they did not understand them, but then it was realized that they understood them only too well and that it was precisely because they understood them that they rejected them (Pombeni 2010). The conclusions at the end of Chapter 1 suggest that the liberals did not like parties because they had become the focus of political divisions, strengthening the antisystem forces and challenging attempts by the modernizing elite to protect the institutions, the laws, and the truth from political dissent. The corrective and pedagogical project that the liberals had been pursuing since the *Risorgimento*, in sum, was not compatible with a politicized society. In the long term, however, liberal attempts to sterilize political divisions were unable to resist the pressures of modernity and democracy. After the First World War the liberals lost their dominant position, and the Catholic, socialist, communist, and fascist parties arrived in force on the electoral and parliamentary scene. One of the main causes of the collapse of the prefascist system was the coexistence of liberal constitutional conventions, which could work only in the absence of organized mass parties, with the "party" laws that Luigi Sturzo and his Catholic People's Party wanted to impose on Italy (Orsina 1996 and 2008). The deadlock was finally broken by abandoning the liberal camp altogether and organizing society into a single party rather than a number of different parties representing social divisions; this single party would then select the new elite, develop a new corrective project, and rebuild social unity from the top down. This is how fascism came into being, with Italy moving from

a complete lack of party organization and control over civil society to an excess of both.

As is well known, party pluralism returned in the postfascist period. However, these parties resurfaced within a political tradition that had not managed to resolve the problem of the relationship between the real and the legal countries—between institutions, laws, and truth on the one hand and individual interests, divisive ideologies, and opposing clans on the other (Pombeni 1993). Much has been written about the rise of the "Republic of the parties" and its fall during the *Tangentopoli* period. Most of this research has been broadly supportive, claiming that although the Republic of the parties was by no means perfect, its positive aspects outweighed the negative ones, and that there was no alternative to it or that the alternatives would have been worse (e.g., Scoppola 1991; Mastropaolo 1996; Lupo 2004; Gualtieri 2006; Ventrone 2008). This line of thinking argues that parties were an essential instrument on the "road to democracy" down which Italy had started after twenty years of dictatorship and a devastating military defeat. Parties were thus an important vehicle for democratic culture, participation, and social mobility and helped bring the country out of its economic and cultural backwardness to an overall level of development that had been unimaginable at the end of the Second World War.

This interpretation of the Italian Republic is broadly correct. Yet there are two problems with it. The first is, as mentioned in Chapter 1, that once again it interprets the postwar history of Italy in terms of "necessity" and loses sight of alternatives that would not necessarily have been worse than the path that was chosen. The second is that by stressing what went well, the argument fails to explain why the Republic of the parties ended so badly with the *Tangentopoli* scandals and fails to see that the degeneration of the republican political system was to some extent due to its internal dynamics. However, for a study of Berlusconism, it is vitally important to explain *Tangentopoli*. So although it is quite legitimate to view the Republic of the parties as generally positive, this chapter will focus on its limitations—why it failed once again to deal with the mistrust between the elite and the people, which is argued here to be at the heart of the Italian question, and how this failure was linked to the political divisions of the postwar period, particularly the problem of the representation of the right-wing electorate.

The Parties of the Republic

Since the end of the nineteenth century and the work of Mosei Ostro-gorski and Roberto Michels (Quagliariello 1996), political science has understood the two-headed nature of the political party—as a vehicle both for bottom-up representation and democracy and for top-down control and education. The postwar Italian parties certainly carried out the first of these two functions. Their contribution to the construction of republican democracy was decisive and irreplaceable, and in terms of the political history of Italy, it was strongly *discontinuous* with both the "politics without parties" of the liberal period and the one-party fascist state. However, the parties also spent a significant amount of energy on the second function—top-down education and control. In this respect, they were in *continuity* with the fascist regime and to some extent with the liberal one, too. They presented themselves as the new virtuous elite in answer to the Platonic question, discussed in Chapter 1, of who should govern Italy. They regarded Italy as immature and back-ward and aimed to introduce a new reeducation program, or rather a number of different and often diverging reeducation programs. The two functions were supposed to interact with each other to produce positive results—an organic link with the people would prevent the parties from being perceived as an elite body and would garner consent for their projects, and implementation of the projects would improve the material and moral condition of the people, who would increas-ingly come to trust the parties. The parties would thus function as a deus ex machina, able to produce a positive dynamic that would reduce, and finally eliminate, the gap between the legal and real countries.

Twenty years of fascism had shown that the transformation of Italy through political parties was indispensable, particularly when inter-preted through the eyes of Piero Gobetti, who saw fascism as the "auto-biography of the nation," the necessary product of a national tradition that needed to be rejected and reversed. Adding to the desire to change a "misshapen" country was the memory of the historical climate of the 1930s and 1940s: the economic crisis, the devastation of the war, the search for models that were alternative to liberal democracy and capitalism, and the unexpected military success of the Soviet Union. It was also helped by the hope for renewal brought by the antifascist movement and the Resistance—the so-called Northern wind. Not all

the ideas for renewal that had been circulating before the founding of the Republic were compatible with a political system based on the hegemony of political parties. Some of them, such as those of the short-lived but intellectually influential *Partito d'azione*, had been strongly antiparty because they regarded parties as an instrument of repression and not an expression of a bottom-up revolutionary spirit (Polese Remaggi 2004). However, when it became clear that revolutionary ideas had no immediate chance of success in postwar Italy (Chabod 1961, 138–44), the only option for the people who wanted to transform the country radically was to turn to political parties. Like the constitution, political parties also became trustees of a "promised revolution" that would compensate the country for the "failed revolution" of 1945.

It is easy to justify the claim that the communist or socialist parties aimed to reeducate the country and set it straight and that they were the trustees of a radical new beginning as well as being strongly Jacobin. The same could not so easily be said of Christian Democracy (DC), the party that was to become the centerpiece of the Italian political system and govern the country for almost fifty years. The policy of *doroteismo*, adopted by the most important political faction of the DC (the *dorotei*), refers to a gentle form of politics that adapts to the ebb and flow of social life and is in many ways the opposite of Jacobinism. However, although it would be wrong to say that the DC was a statist party, let alone a revolutionary one, it would be equally wrong to deny that it harbored a strong desire to reeducate Italy and to carry out radical reforms. The influential Giuseppe Dossetti and his followers, for example, had a strong link to the spirit of the Resistance movement, which demanded ethical reform in Italy by political means. They insisted that the parties become agencies of reform in Italy to the extent that Dossetti's opponents accused him, not without reason, of having a Leninist idea of the party.[1] The statist tendencies in the DC were initially kept in check by Alcide De Gasperi, prime minister from 1945 until 1953 (Craveri 2006; Pombeni 2007a), but they reemerged in the second half of the 1950s when De Gasperi died and the "second generation" of Christian Democrats came to power. This generation had grown up during fascism and was not particularly sensitive to liberal concerns about limiting the power of the state (Del Noce 1960; Moro 1979 and 1983; Giovagnoli 1991; Bocci 2003). Their statism was

prevented from having an entirely free rein by the more conservative areas of the party, yet they still had a profound impact on the development of the Italian political system. Although in terms of government actions, it is hard to say whether the more conservative or more radical areas of the DC had the upper hand, the antifascist, progressive, and corrective areas certainly prevailed from a cultural point of view. What the Christian Democrats said their policies were did not coincide with what they actually did in government: the party presented itself as more Jacobin than it really was.[2]

The parties became absolutely central to the republican political system for three reasons. First, they had managed to "freeze" the revolutionary spirit that had come about as a result of the war, the Resistance, and antifascism, and they had become its guardian. Second, the prefascist institutions had been discredited by twenty years of fascism and the catastrophic management of the armistice with the Allied forces on September 8, 1943 (Aga Rossi 2000). Third, the monarchy, the symbol of those institutions, had been banished after the June 2, 1946, referendum. The end of Resistance leader Ferruccio Parri's government and Alcide De Gasperi becoming prime minister at the end of 1945 were the key moments when parties came to prevail over both the desire for an immediate revolution and the institutions and personalities of the "old" Italy (Orsina 2007).

France is a useful point of comparison for the Italian political situation in the immediate postwar period. French parties had also come to the fore at the end of the war but were opposed by the formidable Charles De Gaulle. Symbolically, De Gaulle's opposition to party government consisted in a charismatic form of politics with deep roots in the history of France, which became an open challenge after his Bayeux speech on June 16, 1946; from an institutional point of view, he imposed a series of referendums that weakened the parties' claim that the task of representing the country should fall to them alone (Guerrieri 1998; Quagliariello 2002, 2003, and 2009; Le Béguec 2011). In Italy there was none of this: no *Général*, no referendum on the powers of the constituent assembly or the text of the constitution, no Bayeux speech. In sum, there was no offer of an alternative to the parties.

The dominant position of the parties in the new institutional architecture and their swift infiltration of civil society, accustomed to

statist party rule after twenty years of fascism, are strong markers of continuity between fascism and the Republic. Historical research has traditionally tended to view state institutions as the place where that continuity was more blatant and parties as strong elements of discontinuity with the authoritarian regime; only in the last twenty years have scholars *rediscovered* a thread of partyocracy linking the authoritarian and the democratic regimes, even though it was a "mono-partyocracy" before the war and a "multi-partyocracy" after it. In 1993, in his book *La grande slavina* (*The Great Landslide*), the best analysis to date of the crisis of the Republic, Luciano Cafagna wrote of partyocracy as a "fascist legacy" (Cafagna 1993, 61–65). In April of the same year, the argument was repeated in a speech to the Italian Parliament by Prime Minister Giuliano Amato (Amato 1993). Understandably, the idea that the republican parties were somehow the heir to the National Fascist Party did not appeal to antifascist culture. Over time, however, the idea seems to have gained credence in historiographical circles (e.g., Pezzino 2002, 63–67; Lazar 2007 and 2009; Gentile 2008; Ventrone 2008, 113ff.; Crainz 2009, 25ff.). The term *rediscovered* rather than *discovered* is used deliberately here. In liberal circles, the risk of mass parties perpetuating the conformist spirit of single party membership and activism in the postfascist period had already been noted since the war of liberation (Capozzi 2008 and 2009; Giordano 2010; Nicolosi 2012; but see also Baldassini 2008, 151ff.). Also on the Catholic front, a perceptive observer such as philosopher Augusto Del Noce had noticed elements of continuity between fascism and the antifascist Republic as early as 1945, though with a focus on political violence rather than party organization:

> De Maistre writes "A counter revolution should be the opposite of a revolution, not a revolution-in-reverse." In other words, post-fascism should not be fascism-in-reverse (antifascism) but the-opposite-of-fascism (that is, freedom and not violence). Every period of political crisis is immediately followed by the anti- (an almost biological reaction) and the post- (a deliberate reaction). When he is violent, the oppressor denies his victim any humanity, and the victim thus comes to see the oppressor as a brute force to be eliminated, not as a human being. In this way fascism generates antifascism and antifascism generates anti-antifascism or neo-fascism etc. and the spiral of violence continues. (Del Noce 2001, 107)

Right-Wing Antipartyism

The persistence of partyocracy between the fascist and republican periods brought about a rejection of the parties in the postwar era. As already noted, some left-wing elements that had hoped for an immediate revolution after liberation distrusted the parties.[3] However, the most vigorous antiparty response came from the right. The *Uomo qualunque* (Common Man) movement, which emerged between the end of 1944 and mid-1945 and became a political movement at the start of 1946 before dying out in 1948, was the first and most aggressive organized reaction to the dominant political position of the corrective, antifascist parties (Imbriani 1996; Giannini 2002; Setta 2005). *Qualunquismo*, as its founder, the playwright Guglielmo Giannini, interpreted it, is possibly the purest form of liberal populism that Italy has ever experienced. The only dividing line Giannini was interested in was the "horizontal" line separating the political elite, or professional politicians (for whom he used the acronym UPP; *uomini politici professionali*), from the common "crowd," whom the politicians were exploiting but who did not need politicians at all, as it was entirely able to look after itself.

As regards the "vertical" division between left-wing and right-wing, Giannini considered the major twentieth-century ideologies of fascism and socialism to be a mystification—instruments of the UPP aimed at deceiving ordinary people by getting them to support a cause that was irrelevant to their interests and that might make them forget that the real dividing line was the "horizontal" one and that the real enemy was the political elite. Giannini did not regard his movement as "right-wing," because he rejected the very division between left and right. Nor did he regard it as fascist or close to fascism. On the contrary, he rejected the ideology of fascism, its hostility to individual diversity and liberty, and its Jacobinism; he also held it responsible for sending his only son to die in battle at the age of twenty. However, he rejected the ideology and Jacobinism of the antifascist parties with equal vehemence, regarding them as examples of fascism-in-reverse rather than the opposite of fascism.

Giannini's solution to the problem of the division between UPP and ordinary people was not to look for an alternative elite that was neither fascist nor antifascist nor to look for an alternative statist project. He rejected the very idea that politics could radically transform society. According to *qualunquismo*, public institutions should undertake

purely administrative tasks and be managed by "a good accountant who would start work on January 1 and end on December 31 and could never be re-elected" (quoted in Setta 2005, 6). Social change was not to be regarded as undesirable but should occur as a consequence of spontaneous developments in civil society rather than of political action. In relation to John Stuart Mill's conditions for liberty quoted in Chapter 1, Giannini would have argued that postwar Italy had indeed reached a level of civilization at which freedom was possible. Moreover he viewed civil society as a collection of ordinary individuals and rejected collective social, national, or ethnic identities, as the following extraordinary passage shows: "Let us suppose that Italy was to give Veneto away to Yugoslavia and Yugoslavia was stupid enough to take it. What would happen for the Crowd? Nothing . . . The only real change: the prefect of Venice would be Slav not Neapolitan or Piedmontese. Is it so important for the man in the Crowd whether a prefect is called Milan Nencic or Gennaro Coppola or Alberto Rossi? Should he give up his life or that of his children for so little?" (Giannini 2002, 101). Giannini can be considered a radical and structural populist, because he did not reject the existing elite in the name of an alternative one. Instead he denounced the horizontal division between UPP and the people and wanted to heal it with an extremist measure—a state that was entirely administrative. Giannini's populism was also liberal to a certain extent, because it did not recognize any form of collective identity that might distinguish one individual from another, endangering their "commonness"—the equality of ordinary people of whatever class, race, or nation.

The *Uomo qualunque* (UQ) movement did not last long, for both logical reasons (the politics of antipolitics is a clear contradiction in terms) and historical ones (in the early years of the Cold War, it was almost impossible to avoid having to make a "vertical" choice between East and West; Einaudi 2001, 240–41; Del Noce 2001, 487). However, the movement also showed that a large section of Italian public opinion was, so to speak, anti-antifascist. This sentiment would come to characterize the whole history of the Republic; it went way beyond the demise of the UQ movement and became part of the long-term construction of the Berlusconi phenomenon.

We still do not know very much about anti-antifascist Italy. Historians have studied it very little because it is not easy to study and because

almost none of them have any sympathy with it. When historians have studied it, rather than explore the core of anti-antifascist public opinion, they have analyzed its more visible political, institutional, or cultural aspects—the parties who tried to represent it (*qualunquisti*, neofascists, monarchists, or liberals), the Catholic and Christian Democratic right, or its intellectuals, like the journalists Leo Longanesi and Giovannino Guareschi. Since it has been studied very little and liked even less, anti-antifascist Italy has often been presented as an undifferentiated unit. Most studies of the Republic have focused on democracy, mass parties, and reformist or revolutionary programs to which anti-antifascism was considered relevant only as an "obscure" form of opposition, an obstacle to be overcome, or the symbol of an amoral, conservative country that needed to be reeducated. It represented the "other" Italy, its internal workings were not interesting, and it was important only because it was a hindrance.

Studies of anti-antifascism itself, however, suggest that it was multilayered, with a diverse set of values, hopes, and memories.[4] This anti-antifascist research is highly complex and cannot be analyzed in detail here. However, the diversity of anti-antifascism needs to be noted, because Berlusconism developed out of this tradition, and the inability to comprehend the Italian right after 1994 is also due to a lack of understanding of its origins.

What all shades of anti-antifascism had in common was their anticommunism and their opposition to the corrective, pedagogical ambitions of the republican party system. These two elements complement each other, as the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was considered (and to a certain extent, actually was) the quintessence of antifascist partyocracy. Within this identification of a common enemy, there were different political orientations, which included five groups. The first were those who were *nostalgic about the twenty-year fascist period*. This group contained three subgroups: those who supported the authority and conservatism of *fascism as a regime* and were hostile to parties and democratic dialogue because they were convinced that it caused disorder and endangered the unity of the nation; those who supported *fascism as a movement* and were hostile to *parties* because they hoped for the return of *the single revolutionary party*; and finally those who supported fascism as a whole and the leading role in the world that

it seemed to have brought to the nation and its people in the 1930s.[5] The second group were *conservatives*, who may have been nostalgic about fascism themselves but who also believed that it was finished and were prepared to accept party democracy as long as it did not get ahead of itself or lapse into communism. The third group were *liberals*, who were strongly antifascist but who wanted their antifascism to be the opposite of fascism; they were convinced that mass parties were giving rise to fascism-in-reverse and they were always in doubt whether they should integrate with the Republic or openly oppose it in the name of an alternative idea of democracy. The fourth group were *nationalists* who were worried about the unity, coherence, and efficiency of a state that was being increasingly occupied and fragmented by parties, but who did not necessarily want authoritarian solutions. The fifth and final group was apolitical. They were "tired of the twentieth century" and the endless ideological and political mobilization since the First World War; they were still traumatized by the 1939–45 conflict, did not want the fascist project to be replaced by a new antifascist project, and wanted to be left in peace. To use the famous expression of conservative writer and journalist Giuseppe Prezzolini from 1922, they were the people who wanted to enroll in the "Congregation of the Apoti, people who do not drink"—that is, people who had no intention of swallowing an excessive dose of politics once again.

Although, historically speaking, it is difficult to distinguish these anti-antifascist tendencies, which very often came together within a single person, a number of analytical distinctions can be made. The first of these is to separate out the revolutionary and militant neofascists; they are certainly anti-antifascist, but they live in a world apart (Tarchi 2003, 95). The second is the distinction between populist, antipolitical sentiment and the political right: populism, particularly in its more individualistic and radical form like Giannini's, does not identify with the right, because it denies any distinction between left and right.[6] The third and perhaps most important distinction that needs to be made is that there were varying degrees of right-wing opposition to the Republic of the parties: there were those who were antiantifascist because they were conservative or revolutionary fascists, those who were anti-antifascist because they were hostile to parties and democracy as such, and those who were anti-antifascist because,

without wanting a return to authoritarianism, they opposed *the specific form* that party democracy had taken in postwar Italy.

The Impact of the 1960s

The Cold War, as we shall see later in this chapter, certainly had a negative impact on the Italian Republic, particularly over the long term. However, the ideological polarization of 1948 and the widespread feeling that a choice had to be made between two civilizations did have two immediate effects that can be considered partly positive. By highlighting the "vertical" division between left and right, splitting the alliance of antifascist parties and anchoring the Italian political system to the West, the Cold War made the horizontal division between the political elite and the people less important. Early negative populist reaction to party government was quelled, at least temporarily: in 1948 most of the anti-antifascist votes, including those that had previously gone to the UQ movement, went over to the Christian Democrats. In 1948, moreover, not just the DC but the entire party system grew stronger and began putting down roots, particularly in Southern Italy (Giovagnoli 1991, 253ff.; Tarchi 2003, 100–103; Ventrone 2008).

The dramatic choice that had to be made between East and West, coupled with the crucial role that antipolitical and right-wing public opinion had played in the elections, acted as a brake on the governing parties' more ambitious plans for reform. Most historians have viewed this in a very negative light and regarded it as an important factor in the downhill slide that had started in 1945—the steady "suffocation by continuity" of any hope of renewal that had been raised by antifascism and the Resistance (e.g., Lanaro 1992; Storia dell'Italia Repubblicana 1994). Although this view is plausible to some extent, three points suggest that a quite different interpretation is also possible. The first is that moderation of reformist ambitions was necessary in order to meet the populist challenge and for parties to take root in various sections of Italian society. The second, which is connected to the first, is that if the country, which was essentially moderate if not conservative in outlook and had been scarred by the war, were to be subjected to greater radicalism, its reaction might be extremely dangerous.[7] The third point is that recent historical research has defended and reassessed the choices

made by the De Gasperi governments in the 1948–53 years, especially in terms of economic policy, and has cast doubt on the idea that more radical alternatives would have produced better results (Ballini, Guerrieri, and Varsori 2006; Salvati 2011). In this respect the Cold War probably also had a positive effect: it made the governing class, which had different ideas of modernity (Orsina 2010, 105–28; Polese Remaggi 2011), more compact by binding its decision making to the strong and coherent Western framework of that time (Ruggie 1982).

The ten years of political conflict between 1953 and 1963—from the failure of the new electoral mechanism that had been devised for the 1953 elections to strengthen the centrist governing alliance to the birth of the new center-left parliamentary majority in the early 1960s that included the Italian Socialist Party (PSI)—is a crucial phase of Italian history, particularly with regard to the history of the party system, the relationship between the elite and the people, populist hostility to partyocracy, and the various right-wing groups. In order to understand this phase, it is important to bear in mind the international context and the shift to a different stage in the Cold War (Romero 2009), as well as the generational and cultural changes between the 1950s and the 1960s (Judt 2005, 226–37). Beside these more general elements, two specific developments are particularly important for the present analysis.

First, as already shown in Chapter 1, for the first time in Italian history the relationship between material and ideological-cultural backwardness broke down. Italy's economic miracle did not solve all its problems of development—the limitations of the "miracle" have been clearly highlighted by historical research—but there is no doubt that as a result of the extraordinary period of economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, Italy finally became one of the developed countries, thereby ending its century-long quest for modernity, at least in the material sense. This is partly true in the nonmaterial sense, too—in 1962 the percentage of married couples unable to sign their marriage banns due to illiteracy was less than 1 percent.[8] The economic transformation of Italy had gotten the political and intellectual elite excited about Italy's prospects, because they saw it as a chance to overcome its ideological and cultural backwardness if it could be linked to economic progress. However, it had also gotten rid of one of the main excuses for Italy's

ethical and political backwardness and one of its possible solutions. Until the 1960s it had been possible to view "the Italian question" as a poverty issue, believing that once poverty had been resolved, any political problems of radicalism, divisiveness, lack of legitimacy, antisystemic opposition, and general mistrust of institutions and elites would simply disappear. After the 1960s the poverty explanation became much harder to justify.

The second aspect, connected to the rise of the new center-left governing majority, is comparative. Between 1958 and 1969, France and Germany, the two countries with which Italy has been most frequently compared and which had made their own way down the rocky path to political modernity, became reasonably stable. They had taken very different routes. Germany had stayed within the parameters of the parliamentary and party system that had been set up after the war and by the end of the 1960s had become a mature competitive democracy— first via the grand coalition of 1966–69 and from 1969 via collaboration between social democrats and liberals. France, on the other hand, had given up its Fourth Republic, fragile party-centered parliamentarianism after the 1958 crisis and gone over to Fifth Republic semipresidentialism. The message to Italy from the French and German experience was unequivocal: Italy was now increasingly alone and increasingly peculiar in its political backwardness. And the less backward it became from an economic and social point of view, the more peculiar it became politically.

Faced with this challenge, Italian politics did not stand still. However, the solution it devised, a new governing majority to include the socialists, was unsuited to solving the problem of Italy's ideological and cultural backwardness. A number of historians, though not all, claim that the degeneration of the political system that culminated in Tangentopoli started in the 1960s, and their general verdict has not been kind to the center-left alliance (Cafagna 1993; Salvati 1997; Ballini, Guerrieri, and Varsori 2006; Salvati 2011). Despite this, they have tended to defend it with the usual "necessity" argument—namely, that there was no alternative to it or that it was the "least bad" option, an argument that is dubious in terms of both method and content (Orsina 2006a and 2010). What role, then, did the dissolution of the centrist majority that governed Italy from 1948 to 1957 and the rise of the new center-left

alliance have in creating a set of long-term conditions that can help to explain Berlusconism? This is a complex question that requires analysis of four different aspects of 1960s politics.

The first of these concerns the weight and role of political parties. Some of the international and domestic conditions that had made the 1948–53 legislature quite unique had disappeared, and a significant part of the governing class believed that the time had come to implement the profoundly transformational programs that antifascist cultures had long been hoping for. The parties, particularly the DC, which since 1954 had an energetic new secretary general, Amintore Fanfani, improved the structure of their organizations and tried to make themselves immune to the conservative influences of the entrepreneurial class and the Catholic Church by finding new sources of finance (Orfei 1976; Baget Bozzo 1977; Malgeri 1989; Scoppola 1991). Over the years their ability to infiltrate the state institutions and control sociopolitical dynamics, both of which had previously been autonomous, became much greater.[9] At the same time, the state machine was also expanding fast. In sum, the parties had taken control of a public instrument that was becoming larger, more pervasive, and increasingly powerful.

These structural changes went hand in hand with significant cultural changes, two of which will be briefly mentioned here. The first was the arrival of the "second generation" DC leaders such as Fanfani and Aldo Moro. Having grown up during the fascist period, they were far less tied to the liberal social and economic legacy and much more convinced than De Gasperi of the need to use the state to lead society. The second was the strengthening of antifascism and the parallel weakening of anticommunism. The memory of the struggle for liberation, which had mostly been kept alive by the left during the 1950s, had now become central to the culture of the Republic; it had been popularized but was also more supported by parties, government, and institutions (Crainz 1986; Focardi 2005; Orsina 2005).

The revival of statist programs coincided with the most radical transformation of society that Italy had ever known. This was no accident— the elite had to manage the changes and wanted to exploit this window of opportunity. However, economic development was not just making Italy a more modern and mature country; it was also becoming more complex and hard to come to grips with. It was becoming increasingly

difficult for parties to "express the will of the people" as the first of the two functions of parties we have mentioned, while the second function—"reeducating the people"—was becoming ever more important. Thus the renewed corrective ambitions of the parties, with their structural and cultural corollaries, increased as their powers of representation decreased: the more tightly they squeezed the country, the more the country wriggled its way out of their grasp.

The second aspect to be considered involves the ability of political institutions to make fast and effective decisions. The increase in parties' ambitions coincided with an increase in the decentralization and diffusion of policy-making capabilities, without which their ambitions were destined to remain unfulfilled (Scoppola 1991; Lanaro 1992; Vassallo 1994; Craveri 1995; Bini 2006; Orsina 2010). This decentralizing process took place at different levels and at different times. The crisis of the centrist governing alliance of the 1948–57 period was caused by the emergence of deep divisions between and within the four parties of government—divisions that had temporarily been silenced by the Cold War, international pressure, De Gasperi's personality, and the DC's electoral success of 1948. This was not a simple division between left and right but a complex web of interrelated institutional, economic, cultural, and political differences.

The rise of the center-left brought the Socialist Party into the governing coalition (Pinto 2008; Mattera 2011). This greatly increased the ideological heterogeneity of the governing alliance, which widened to the left, but without narrowing to the right. The small liberal party did go over to the opposition, but conservative views were still strongly represented within Christian Democracy—building the new alliance without causing a major split within the DC was one of Aldo Moro's miracles (D'Auria 1983). Moreover, the political inclusion of the PSI and the cultural revival of antifascism weakened the barrier that the Cold War had produced in Italian politics. Although the PCI was still excluded from power, the foundations were laid for the development of a consociational political system during the 1970s. This further increased the number of decision-making centers and powers of veto and reduced the efficiency and coherence of Italian public institutions.

The third aspect to be examined is the relationship between the parties and the republican rules and institutions. All the aforementioned

events of the 1953–63 period contributed to a particular and unnecessary reinterpretation of the Italian institutional setup that tied it closely to the political parties. As already noted, during the 1940s and 1950s there had been criticism of partyocracy by the left as well, and that criticism was regarded as legitimate. From the 1960s, however, regardless of its actual content, opposition to partyocracy was delegitimized as right-wing extremism (Chiarini 1992 and 1994; Lupo 2004; Capozzi 2008 and 2009). The strengthening of the process of convergence of the parties toward a shared constitutional terrain played a decisive role in enabling the country to overcome the political conflicts of the 1970s while remaining democratic. This is the main argument used by historians who argue for the "necessity" of the center-left: if the government majority had not been widened to include the socialists, democracy would not have survived or would at the very least have been in grave danger (see particularly Scoppola 1991).

However, it is also true that the constitutional terrain that was being shared by the parties was a fragile one (Scoppola 1991; Fabbrini 2000; Pezzino 2002; Ventrone 2008). This was because of the weight of the tradition described in Chapter 1—namely, that institutions and laws were not important in themselves but only insofar as they were of use to the modernizing elite. It was also due to the persistence of ideological divisions, particularly those brought about by the Cold War. But the withering away of the ideology of the nation-state that had begun with the *Risorgimento* also played an important role. This ideology could lead (and in the interwar period had actually led) to antidemocratic rejection of parties and political dialogue, but it could also be a barrier against the overexpansion of parties in the name of the national interest. With the arrival of the center-left, this ideology was rejected because of its negative aspects, but with the rejection its potentially positive influence was also lost (Del Noce 1978, 9; Orsina 2010). As already noted in relation to government actions, the weakening of the divisions that had been brought about by the Cold War as well as party convergence toward a shared constitutional terrain did not produce a coherent political synthesis but a "pluralistic juxtaposition" of diverging projects. Laws and institutions were not valued in themselves as having greater legitimacy than political forces but remained instruments of the occupying parties. The fact that first the socialists and then the

communists were also allowed to occupy the institutions did not mean that the institutions were becoming genuinely public but only that the number of people entitled to "privatize" them had grown.

A similar argument could be made about the issue of truth, raised at the end of Chapter 1, which showed how contemporary political science in postwar Italy had started out in a broadly liberal environment and had aimed to "anchor" the highly polarized public debate to clear, indisputable data. The aims of some of the architects of the center-left alliance, in line with the culture of the entire Western world at that time (Latham 2000), were equally technocratic. They hoped to develop a coherent modernizing program of state intervention that would be "objective" because it was based on scientific knowledge of the reality of life in Italy (Favretto 2003, 129ff.; Pombeni 2003).

These two attempts at objectivity were largely unsuccessful, as the center-left technocrats were overwhelmed by the political and ideological divisions that fragmented the alliance they were advocating. There were a number of specific reasons for this failure. The first of these was that the project itself was contradictory: aimed at modernizing Italy, it was letting in a number of value-laden premises, dressed up as methodology, by the back door, while pretending to provide value-free descriptions and solutions (Matteucci 1971; Bobbio 1996, xiv–xvi). Moreover, because the project wanted to produce a practical outcome, it struggled not to get sucked back into ideological party warfare: it was very difficult for scholars not to be exploited by one political camp or another, whether they wished to be or not. A good example of this was the confrontation between the two main interpretations of the 1960s Italian party system: Giovanni Sartori's polarized pluralism (Sartori 1982) and Giorgio Galli's imperfect two-party system (Galli 1966). Looking back, these two models, though intended to be more descriptive than analytical, seem to reproduce the intellectual split within the "Western camp"; Sartori's model was closer to the logic underlying the centrist alliance of the 1950s (i.e., it was based on the distinction between the democratic parties on the one hand and totalitarian parties of left and right on the other), while Galli's was closer to the logic of the center-left (namely, progressives against conservatives, communists against Christian Democrats).

Driven by a need for objectivity and modernity, Italian political science focused closely on material, economic, institutional, and party variables while paying less attention to historical, cultural ones (Matteucci 1971; Graziano 1986). Early studies of the latter kind, carried out mostly by foreign scholars, were either criticized or largely ignored in Italy. The problem of Italy's cultural backwardness and its deep historical roots regained scholarly attention in the 1970s and 1980s when it became clear that the problem had not been resolved by the economic miracle (Farneti 1971; Graziano 1979; Altan 1986), but it was only partly addressed. The debate was often framed in a value-laden, almost militant fashion and aimed merely at finding a quick-fix solution to the "Italian question." It thus failed to extricate itself from its partisan quagmire. This attitude—to quote Del Noce (1957) again—was inspired not so much by the idea that Italian culture was ill-equipped for an understanding of the country and needed to be better aligned with it, as by the exact opposite idea—that the country was ill-equipped for the standard of civilization expected of it by Italian culture and needed to be subjected to a new corrective project that was to be enacted by a political elite that would be better than the previous one (Altan 1986, 247).

The main consequences of the first three aspects of the crisis of the centrist alliance and the rise of the center-left coalition in Italian politics can be summed up as follows. The political elite of the 1960s tightened its grip on society and the state, aiming to impose some kind of statist modernizing project. The state then began to grow considerably and to widen its sphere of activity. Within the elite, the Cold War ideological barriers grew weaker, though they did not disappear completely. The increase in the number of parties allowed to take part in public decision-making processes, allied to persistent ideological differences and competition for electoral support between and within parties, made it harder to govern effectively and made it impossible for any coherent corrective and pedagogical project to be put into practice. The legitimacy of institutions, laws, or "truth" was subordinated to politics—and politics was not a place where decisions were made and public interest safeguarded but a place where most if not all significant groups were granted their share of power and resources. All this took

place while Italian society was undergoing profound change, becoming more modern and increasingly diversified.

Unsurprisingly, the parties were only able to keep the system under control for more than twenty years by means of continuous, detailed mediation aimed at satisfying particular interest groups while at the same time producing a mountainous public debt. Parties, particularly the DC, were colonized and split into feuds, the distinction between public and private was largely lost, and the problem of cultural and ideological backwardness was left unresolved. Institutions and laws were left without legitimacy and treated as either enemies to resist or prey to exploit. Public discourse remained noisy, partisan, and discordant. The level of political divisiveness remained high. There was continual mistrust between the elite and institutions on the one hand and the people on the other, and interaction was limited to short-term bargaining for favors. It is therefore no surprise that with the arrival of *Tangentopoli* the people immediately discarded the elite in disgust, as if they had never voted for them, and that Italy's clan structure survived intact with new party clans being added on to the old ones.

There is much to suggest that from the late 1960s the weakening of the vertical ideological split between the parties was matched by a strengthening of the horizontal opposition between the elite and the people (Pilati 1997; Tarchi 2003, 109ff.; Colarizi, Craveri, Pons, and Quagliariello 2004; Morlino 2006). The processes of political mobilization and ideological polarization taking place during the 1970s can be interpreted in this light, as can the rise of the Radical Party and its use of the referendum, particularly the 1978 referendum on the abolition of public financing of parties, in which 43 percent voted in favor despite most of the parties being against. Studies of public opinion show clearly that the 1968–72 period was the first important phase in Italians' gradual detachment from the parties (Maraffi 2002, 315ff.). As already noted, the horizontal split is neither left-wing nor right-wing but can occur on either side, on neither side, or on both sides. However, at the start of the 1960s the developmental trend of the Italian political system—revival of antifascism, entry of the Socialist Party into government, discourses on "structural" economic reforms, increase in the state economy, gradual inclusion of the PCI in mainstream political dynamics—put the moderate, conservative, anti-antifascist part of

public opinion in a very uncomfortable position. This is the fourth aspect of the rise of the center-left and the subject of the next section.

Hold Your Nose and Vote DC

As already shown, in 1948 the vertical split brought about by the Cold War had caused anti-antifascism to be absorbed by the parties, particularly the DC. The 1953 elections, which had seen the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) get 6 percent of the vote and the monarchists 7 percent, clearly showed how fragile and easily reversible this integration of anti-antifascism had been. The crisis of the centrist alliance between 1953 and 1960 had been marked by the problem of how to deal with the right-wing electorate. It had been a problem for the DC, which until 1954 had been unsure whether it should come to an agreement with the right-wing parties and had eventually decided to make tactical use of them (Baget Bozzo 1974). It had also been a problem for the right-wing parties themselves, which had always been torn between populist and/or antisystem protest against the Republic, which would bring them votes but lose them legitimacy, and integration into the Republic, which would win them legitimacy but lose them votes (Chiarini 1995; Ignazi 1998; Parlato 2014). It was a dilemma for the liberals, too, mirroring the situation of the monarchists and the MSI. The liberals were integrated into the antifascist Republic of parties, though on its right-wing periphery, and refused to budge from that position, but they also tried to win over the anti-antifascist electorate from the monarchists and neofascists and reeducate it. However, attempts by their leaders to achieve this—Leone Cattani's bringing down the Parri government in 1945 and Giovanni Malagodi's policies in the second half of the 1950s—were unsuccessful. When anti-antifascist voters followed their own convictions, they went with the opposition, siding with the MSI and the monarchists. When they voted tactically, they sided with the DC, and only very rarely and in small numbers with the liberals (Orsina 2007 and 2010).

In March 1960, after one of the longest and most complex crises of the republican period, in a situation of dramatic political stalemate, a government led by DC politician Fernando Tambroni was formed. The government, made up entirely of ministers from the Christian

Democracy Party, could only survive in Parliament with the votes of the neofascists. In late June and early July of that same year, a clash between antifascist demonstrators and police in several cities ended in bloodshed and casualties. On July 19, Tambroni resigned. This episode is crucial to explaining the profound and long-lasting shift to the left in Italian politics, of which the formation of the new center-left alliance in 1962–64 was only the first political outcome. At a cultural and ideological level, all forms of anti-antifascism were deprived of any legitimacy, and a very specific interpretation of antifascism became the founding stone of the Republic. From an electoral/political perspective, anti-antifascist votes quickly realigned with the governing majority, particularly the DC, when it became clear that the more radical ambitions of the center-left had been abandoned, that the DC was the most effective deterrent to the expansion of communism, and that particular interest groups could get easy access to state funding and policymaking. It was no accident, then, that the parties who in the 1950s had been picking up and thriving on anti-antifascist votes were the ones who in the 1960s and 1970s ended up on the sidelines. The liberals, who were almost always excluded from the governing majority and rather ineffective in opposition, progressively declined from their electoral peak in 1963 to the point that in 1976 they almost failed to get into Parliament. The monarchists completely disappeared from view. The neofascists did better at the polling booth, but it was clearly a protest vote for a party that had no real political chance in the current climate (Orsina 2014).

By the late 1960s, then, a significant part of anti-antifascist public opinion was voting DC. However, to use the famous expression of the conservative journalist Indro Montanelli during the 1976 election, they were doing so while "holding their nose"—they were voting out of opportunism rather than personal conviction (Chiarini 2004; Diamanti 2009, 43ff.). Their characteristic mistrust of the Republic and their antiparty, antipolitical attitudes were even reinforced by the prospect of revival of corrective and statist projects and a certain kind of antifascism, the left-wing bias of the national political system, and the increasingly visible degeneration of government policy into clientelism, partyocracy, and state handouts.

A number of scholars have stressed the political influence that these moderate, conservative, anti-antifascist votes held and blamed them for the failure of the center-left reforms. These votes were certainly influential. However, according to Aldo Moro's strategy, the inclusion of the socialists in the government was subordinate to safeguarding the unity of the DC—that is, to keeping its conservative fractions on board. And it was only to be expected that moderate votes and politicians would have a moderating influence. Furthermore, conservative resistance certainly contributed to the slowing down of center-left reforms, but the internal divisions of the new alliance had an even stronger influence on this process. More important than the political role of anti-antifascism was perhaps the full and active part it played in the privatization of the laws and institutions—that is, in the division of the spoils and the public purse. While it was busy denying the Republic of parties any legitimacy, it was also busy exploiting it as much as anyone else and building up its own internal cohort of sectional interests.

The 1980s and the Crisis of the Republic

The crisis of the early 1990s and the sudden rise of Berlusconism can be traced back to a number of causes described before: the paradox of a state machine becoming increasingly weighed down and overrun by political parties while at the same time being increasingly unable to govern the country (Cotta and Isernia 1996); the growing distance between the parties and the country; and the presence of an "underground" right that for the most part was represented politically but not culturally by the DC and was hostile to the antifascist Republic, though not necessarily to democracy. These were the reasons why the structure of Italian politics remained so fragile that it was unable to withstand the impact of two violent external shocks that took place at that time: the end of the Cold War, which, as already noted, had brought stability to Italy and kept the anti-antifascist right inside the DC, and the process of economic and monetary integration with Europe, which made it no longer possible to use devaluation and the public debt to "lubricate" the political system.

The social, cultural, and political changes of the 1980s also had a big influence on the collapse of the Republic of parties and the rise of

Berlusconism (Mastropaolo 1996; Santomassimo 2003; Gibelli 2010; Ginsborg and Asquer 2011; Crainz 2012). What can be synthetically described as the processes of modernization of Italian society made it increasingly difficult on the one hand for political parties to represent their voters (Colarizi, Craveri, Pons, and Quagliariello 2004; Gervasoni 2010; Orsina 2012a), while on the other it generated the kind of mind-set, hopes, and desires that Berlusconi would come to represent culturally through his media empire and politically through his parties (Pilati 1997; Abruzzese and Susca 2004; Graziano 2010). It is also likely that the relaxation of the ethical standards of the political class and the individualistic, market-oriented spirit of the Thatcher/Reagan era, as well as the socialist leader Bettino Craxi's insistence on breaking up the duopoly of PCI and DC, served only to exacerbate the weaknesses of the republican setup: the colonization of the institutions by particular interest groups, the corruption, and the reckless use of public funds to prop up a system that could not survive any other way. However, from the perspective of the workings of the political system, the 1980s cannot be detached from the previous two decades. The main political hiatus in the pre-1992 Republic was not the formation of the five-party governing coalition in the early 1980s but the creation of the center-left alliance in the 1960s.

Moreover, the processes of individualistic modernization that are regarded as typical of the 1980s did not start during that decade, and Italy was certainly not the only country involved. Even from a cultural perspective, it is hard not to interpret the 1980s as being continuous, at least to a certain extent, with the 1960s. The liberation of the individual that had been theorized during the 1960s, albeit in confused and contradictory ways, was supposed to break up traditional institutions in order to build a better world. Yet the improved structures did not fully materialize, and it was mostly the destructive aspects of the 1968 movement that remained: emancipation from the chains of the past. However, "the past" in Moro's Italy was not the same as that in, for example, De Gaulle's France: in Italy the wave of critical thought that had been magnified and sped up by the 1968 movement was not pitted against the longstanding tradition and solid institutions of France but the very fragile Italian state and the contested national identity that had been constructed during the one hundred years since unification. As

anthropologist Tullio Carlo Altan noted, commenting on the rejection of the fusty values of the *Risorgimento* during the 1960s: "You need to reach a target, before you can overcome it" (Altan 1986, 170). The possibility remains that Italy started deconstructing the nation-state before it had finished building it—thereby throwing out at least some of the baby with the bathwater.[10]

The 1980s focused the liberated individuals of the 1960s on the market (Gozzini 2011). This did not only take place in Italy, but it may have had a more negative impact in Italy than elsewhere. Once again, however, one of the main reasons this happened is that the fragile political institutions were unable to cope with social transformations. They were unable to either support developments in society by evolving in harmony with them or counter any social fragmentation effects by bringing the country together politically. The long-term weakness of the republican political system was to blame for this. To take a concrete example, the real anomaly of Italy during the 1980s was not the fact that all national commercial televisions were in the hands of Berlusconi and that this led to a lowering of the cultural standards of Italian television. It was the fact that on the one hand the political system was unable to discipline the Italian media other than by reproducing the preexisting power structures, while on the other the only way the public service channels could challenge the mass popular appeal of the private television channels was to go after the same mass audience rather than maintain their own standard of quality.[11]

The Arch-Party

To conclude this chapter, the question of the Communist Party needs to be addressed explicitly. Historians have discussed Italian communism in considerable detail and from many angles. This section will deal with only those aspects of communism that are indispensable for an understanding of the success of Berlusconi's anticommunist stance.

From the end of the 1960s, many political scientists and intellectuals thought that the Communist Party was the only possible solution to the problem of Italy's cultural backwardness, which neither the center-left nor the economic miracle had managed to improve. Historian Luciano Cafagna (1993, 65) has explained clearly why this was the case:

> The success of the communist party can largely be explained by the fact that it seems to have a quality that is only too and valuable in a country like Italy which is prone to self-recrimination . . . What is this rare "quality"? It is its sense of organization. It is the seriousness with which it treats the relationship between "saying" and "doing." It is the disciplined commitment of its members to what they are called upon to do in society . . . It is the wonderful myth of Gramsci's "Modern Prince," like Machiavelli's at the start of the 16th century, the savior of Italy. And like any savior, it becomes the focal point of everything, to which other needs can be sacrificed.

When viewed through rose-tinted spectacles, the PCI seemed to bring a positive kind of diversity to bear on Italy's longstanding and apparently irredeemable flaws—a strong moral sense, obedience to the rules, a sense of the collective, subordination of personal interests to those of the group, an ability to take a medium- or long-term view, and an organic relationship between the political elite and the people. A less benevolent view of communism, however, would highlight two other aspects, one a form of negative diversity and the other a form (also negative) of nondiversity or exemplarity. In the first place, if communist diversity is to be viewed positively in relation to Italy's cultural backwardness, quite the opposite is true in relation to its ideological backwardness. Over the years the PCI changed considerably and played an important educational role in absorbing subversive elements in Italy and giving them an electoral and parliamentary role. For a long time, however, its adherence to liberal democracy was certainly not full or unconditional, and during the 1940s and 1950s it was extremely fragile. What is worse is that it was the PCI's ideological backwardness (its revolutionary tendency) that "saved" it from cultural backwardness. Its positive diversity thus depended on its negative one, and the withering away of the latter caused the former to disappear. This connection is part of the Italian tradition—revolution as the only way to straighten out a country that was too distorted to be reformed and too viscous to compromise with without being corrupted. In the words of the doctor F. J. to the young Ignazio Silone, quoted in the first chapter, "There's no half-way house here; you've got either to rebel or become an accomplice."

The second aspect has already been referred to at the end of the Cafagna citation before: the party as "the focal point of everything, to which other needs can be sacrificed." In the history of the Republic, the PCI was the "arch-party"—the most party-like of all the parties, the one

with the most radical corrective and pedagogical program, the most antifascist, the one with the most cohesive, determined, and virtuous elite, the model for all other political parties to copy or risk being wiped out by at the elections. These characteristics of the PCI are linked to the question of ideological and cultural backwardness described before: clarity of objectives and organizational coherence were crucial if the PCI was to bring about a revolution in the country and prevent it from slipping back into the typical Italian quagmire. However, the communist "arch-party" also shared the same defects as the other republican parties and to an even greater extent: obsession with the Platonic question, Machiavellianism, sectarianism, self-reference, the conviction that everything should be subordinate to the party interest, including the institutions, the laws, and the truth. Historian Silvio Lanaro (1992, 68) has explained this "negative non-diversity" of the PCI very clearly:

> The real disease afflicting the "new party" . . . the excessive pedagogism, the clerical hypocrisy, the identification of the "father-party" as a providential agent of history, the inflexible and sado-masochistic concept of the mission to be accomplished, the cancelling out of any individuality, the constant sacrifice of a spirit of criticism to the need to obey the hierarchy (shown by correction, repenting, expulsion and confession—all carried out in public) that characterizes those who delude themselves that a serious democracy can be built by using an ethical and conceptual armament that would be good for a dictatorship or to fight a civil war; as if a system of representation, the construction of a political class and electoral procedures could be baptized by democratic centralism, by permanent secretaries and immovable governing classes.

In circumstances such as these, it is unsurprising that the anti-antifascist component of public opinion not only regarded communist diversity as radical, "anthropological," and negative—so radical that in cartoons the anti-antifascist journalist Giovannino Guareschi drew communists with three nostrils—but thought it was dangerous and that they should defend themselves against it (Pertici 2003). This component included those who thought that the PCI had not really accepted the values of liberal democracy, as well as those who accepted that the PCI had improved ideologically but still thought that, with or without democracy, it had become a "superclan"—a clan that was one of the many Italian clans, perhaps better than them because of its positive features,

but also more cohesive, more authoritarian, more hypocritical, more dangerous, and more irritating because of its ability to acquire moral and cultural consensus.

Ignazio Silone's essay *Uscita di sicurezza* (*Emergency Exit*) is a particularly good illustration of this. There are two emergency exits in the book: in the first phase, the emergency exit is *the Communist Party itself*—that is, the PCI was the emergency exit from the downward spiral of cultural backwardness that Silone had found to be so oppressive. In the second phase, he looked for an emergency exit *out of the Communist Party* when he realized that the PCI's one-way revolutionary policy, under a thick ideological coating, was not too dissimilar a mechanism to the one he was trying to escape from, in which institutions, laws, and the truth were subordinate to sectional interests, even though in this case those interests were supposed to be collective, noble, and utopian. There is a particularly significant anecdote in the text about the relationship between Machiavellianism and truth. Regarding the question of the relationship between the Communist Party of Great Britain and the trade unions, the Russian delegate Pyatnizky in a meeting of the executive of the *Comintern* suggested that the British party should make a public statement about its intended behavior and then do the exact opposite: "The English Communist interrupted: 'But that would be a lie.' Loud laughter greeted this ingenuous objection, frank, cordial, interminable laughter, the like of which the gloomy offices of the Communist International had perhaps never heard before. The joke quickly spread all over Moscow, for the Englishman's entertaining and incredible reply was telephoned at once to Stalin and to the most important offices of State, provoking new waves of mirth everywhere. The general hilarity gave the English Communist's timid, ingenuous objection its true meaning" (Silone 1950, 109).[12] This is not to say that there was no difference between the postwar PCI and the *Comintern* of the 1920s. However, Silone places his own political biography between the two extremes of Southern Italian cultural backwardness and revolutionary communist Machiavellianism, and that is why he is able to show us on the one hand why the idea of entrusting the PCI with the task of halting the downward Italian spiral was both reasonable and filled with contradictions and on the other how deep the roots of anticommunism went and how they were not simply ideological.

Toward Berlusconism

As already noted in the Introduction and as subsequent chapters will show, it is essential to take a long-term perspective if Berlusconism is to be fully understood. Since we have come a long way already, this section aims to summarize the main points of the first two chapters.

Throughout the history of Italy there is a strong and continuous thread of corrective and pedagogical approaches to the problem of the relationship between the legal country and the real one. This approach is based on the belief that Italy is morally and materially backward and that it can only be modernized by straightening it out and reeducating it as quickly as possible. The statist approach believes that the instruments of this modernization can only be political (public administration, party mobilization, revolution) and that as a result it is important to identify the "right" political elite, provide it with the right instruments, and keep it as long as possible away from the influence of society. In Oakeshott's terms, the politics of faith have prevailed in Italy over the politics of skepticism. The former is convinced of its ability to identify what is good and impose it on society, while the latter is simply an arbiter between different social subjects' competing visions of what the good is. This corrective and pedagogical thread cannot contain the whole of Italian history, nor can it explain the colossal differences between the liberal, fascist, and republican regimes. However, the statist perspective on the relationship between the legal and the real country has had a considerable effect over the 150 years since unification.

It is extremely difficult to assess the extent to which this effect has been positive or negative. Historians looking at different phases of Italian history have good reason to argue that it was impossible for political elites to adopt anything other than a corrective approach. Italy has made extraordinary progress since unification, and those who think that the same or even greater success could have been achieved using other approaches must prove their case. If the previous two chapters have stressed the limitations and failures of the statist tradition, this is not because the history of that tradition is filled with failure or because it has been a total failure but because its limitations and failures need to be highlighted if Berlusconism, which was in many ways a reaction to it, is to be properly understood.

In theory, the various political projects aimed at reeducating and straightening out Italy expected the virtuous legal country to elevate the backward real country to its own level of civility. By closing the gap between the legal and real countries, Italy would then become a "normal" part of the Western world. In practice, however, things went rather differently, and for a number of reasons: Italy proved more impervious to these programs than had been expected, the political elites were rarely solid and cohesive, and the state was too weak and inefficient to sustain such an ambitious project. However, the main reason was that the legal country never managed to isolate itself from the real country for very long and ended up being colonized by it. This colonization did little to weaken the power, arrogance, and authoritarian disposition of the political institutions, but it did manage to prevent them from pursuing the aims of the corrective projects that were the only reason that could justify their power, arrogance, and authoritarianism. What is worse is that although the theoretical aims were continually being brandished in front of the "people," they were in fact being replaced by the promotion of the private interests of the lobbies that had managed to take control of the legal country.

The corrective and pedagogical projects not only failed to achieve their objectives; often the end result was the exact opposite of what they had been hoping for. They confirmed the long-standing Italian conviction that the state was an enemy from which people had to defend themselves and made it reasonable for citizens to look after their own individual interests and those of their clan and to exploit the laws, the institutions, and the truth for these ends. They made revolutionary extremism and populism look desirable (and in certain cases inevitable), increased the gap between rhetoric and reality, and destroyed any distinction between public and private. They were unable to close the gap between the legal and real countries and left the legitimacy of the institutions and the political elites hanging by a thread. This failure was made all the more apparent both by the extraordinary successes that had been achieved in other fields—economic development, the modernization of society and culture, the solid acquisition of liberal democratic values—and by comparison with the institutional and political progress of France and Germany, countries on which Italy traditionally modeled itself and whose difficulties it shared. Viewed

in this light, it is understandable why in the three regime crises that have occurred in 150 years of history, Italians have thrown out political classes overnight whose legitimacy had seemed solid until then, and it is easy to see why at the start of the twenty-first century, the "Italian question" continues to revolve around the very same issues that concerned it in the nineteenth century.

Italy's reaction to the failure of any particular governing class has invariably been to look for a new one supposedly better equipped, both morally and technically, to carry on a process of profound transformation of the country. It thus continued to experiment with and reject one political elite after another, perpetuating the Platonic question of who should govern the country. But it never acquired the Popperian hallmark of modern liberal democracy—that is, the construction of an institutional mechanism that could enable those in government to be peacefully replaced when they were found wanting. Imprisoned in its Platonism, the Italian political tradition (with some notable exceptions) has given very little weight to institutional mechanisms and has tended to subordinate them to politics. It has not tried to safeguard the neutrality of the institutions or their ability to serve different political elites and manage their alternation in power. Instead it has wanted its institutions to serve the "right kind" of elite that would manage the modernizing project efficiently.

Chapter 1 described the corrective and pedagogical tradition in general terms, while Chapter 2 has concentrated on the republican era and identified the political parties as the means by which the modernizing projects were to be carried out. It also started to explore a number of areas that will be the subject of subsequent chapters. First, it has looked at the problem of the right-wing in the republican period. It would be better to refer to *right-wings* in the plural, since it was a political universe that was more pluralist than has hitherto been recognized and included several groups of different neofascist orientation as well as conservatives, liberals, and antipolitical populists. During the republican era the interaction between left–right and legal-country–real-country divisions was complex. They did not develop independently of each other but did not completely overlap either. Although the division between "the two countries" involved public opinion on both left and right, there is no doubt that opposition to the republican parties

and their attempts to correct the country was stronger in what has been called here the "anti-antifascist" part of public opinion.

The first two chapters have also shown that the early 1960s, with the rise of the center-left and the inclusion of the Socialist Party in the governing majority, was a watershed period in the republican era. The center-left established the supremacy of the party system within the public sphere while at the same time reiterating its corrective and pedagogical objectives. However, by increasing the number of parties in the power-sharing majority, it made it all the more difficult to produce a coherent, long-term government policy, and all this was taking place at a time when Italian society was undergoing one of the most radical transformations in its entire history. In the three decades that followed, the legal country thus became increasingly weighed down, less efficient, and less representative. The center-left moved the Republic's ideological center of gravity further toward antifascism and away from anticommunism, squeezing the various right-wing groups together, removing their legitimacy, and condemning any criticism of partyocracy as antidemocratic, and in so doing it pushed a large number of moderates underground, depriving them of any form of culture, visibility, or representation. These moderates were hostile to the antifascist statist project and to the inclusion of the PCI and its gradual acquisition of a central position in politics, but they were unable to express this opposition except in the form of a protest vote for marginal parties. Their anticommunism, pragmatism, and hope of taking part in the "privatization of the state" led them to vote for the DC, whom they distrusted and whose policies they did not agree with. While anti-antifascism began to gain a foothold in the Republic and to carry political weight, it was also a potential source of antipolitics and antipartyism, not entirely right-wing but certainly not left-wing either, and ready to pounce if the right circumstances should arise.

Finally, this chapter has briefly examined the communist question. The PCI was in many ways the apex of the corrective tradition—at its best in its ethical stance and at its worst in its arrogance, self-reference, and partisan bias. It was both an "arch-party" and a "superclan." Although the PCI was regarded by many as a possible solution to Italy's cultural backwardness—its fragmentation, individualism, widespread illegality, and lack of a sense of the general interest—the PCI's

ideological backwardness and its dubious relationship with liberal democracy were a problem. That it was both a problem and a solution was in fact two sides of the same revolutionary coin. Only by keeping all the elements of this complex, historical framework in mind, some of which were able to survive the turning point of 1989, is it possible to understand the part that anticommunism played in the advent of Berlusconism.

3

Berlusconism

Berlusconism begins where the lines of argument described in the previous two chapters intersect: the corrective and pedagogical tradition, the inability of this tradition to resolve the Italian question, the antipolitical reactions it brought about, and the ideological and cultural marginalization of the right in the republican era. Berlusconism came into being largely as a result of Italy's relative inability to achieve progress using Jacobin methods and deliberately and proudly presented itself as their exact opposite. Whenever the real country was viewed in a negative light and placed under the control of what was considered a more progressive legal country, Berlusconi would project the real country and its ability to modernize in a positive light and the legal country as self-referential, hostile, and unproductive. By doing this, and by doing it in the way he did, Berlusconi was a unique historical figure, and his "entering the political stage" was a moment of profound historical change: *since the unification of Italy, no political or government leader capable of winning elections and commanding a parliamentary majority had ever dared to say so openly and explicitly that Italians were fine as they were.* The positive, reassuring messages that Berlusconi sent out to the Italians about the Italians, continually accentuating the positive and minimizing the negative while at the same time criticizing the broadcasting of negative images of Italy, were not just a product of political communication, nor, once he was in power, did he use them just to defend the achievements of his governments and avoid criticism. They were the very heart of his ideological and political position.

Throughout the history of Italy there have certainly been a number of Italian political figures and governing forces who rejected the corrective tradition and attempted less Jacobin solutions to the Italian

problem. This approach is encapsulated by Giovanni Giolitti's famous analogy comparing the politician to a tailor who has to make a suit for a hunchback and tailors the jacket to fit the hump, and it is typified by the politics of the moderate fraction of the Christian Democracy Party known as the *dorotei*. In these cases, however, any decision to defer to civil society was usually accompanied by a pragmatic, ironic, and anti-ideological approach, which did not openly challenge cultural Jacobinism and concentrated instead on the day-to-day management of power. Berlusconi, however, did not behave like this: he made an ideology out of the positive character and self-sufficiency of civil society and turned it into a propaganda weapon and consensus-building tool; he did not limit himself to *non*intellectualism but was openly *anti*-intellectual.[1]

To put this into practice, Berlusconi relied on the positive myth of civil society, which had become increasingly strong and widespread in Italy since the 1980s.[2] By the end of the 1970s, the socialist leader Bettino Craxi, in search of new political opportunities for his party, had already begun emphasizing recent social development and change in Italy, claiming that politics and the institutions should adapt to the new climate (Colarizi and Gervasoni 2005; Musella 2007; Spiri 2012). Craxi was not alone in calling on civil society: Marco Pannella's radical party; the Christian Democratic politician Mario Segni, who in the early 1990s created a successful movement for electoral reform via a referendum; as well as Enrico Berlinguer's *Partito Comunista* and its successor, Achille Occhetto's *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*, all helped to create the wave that Berlusconi subsequently surfed better than they and anyone else had done. He rode it better for three reasons: first, because he successfully connected the myth of civil society to a reduction of state intervention; second, because he was not afraid to position himself politically on the right, where there was considerable space for antipolitics, and finally, because he was a more credible representative of civil society than Craxi, Pannella, Segni, and Occhetto, who were professional politicians from top to toe.

To get a clearer idea of the novelty of the Berlusconi phenomenon, it is worth comparing him a little more closely to Craxi, the politician to whom Berlusconi has been likened more than any other, and often with polemical intent.[3] Craxi is undoubtedly an important figure in

Berlusconi's genealogy, because of his insistence on the positive nature of civil society; his emphasis on the speed and efficiency of leadership; and his ability to use the language of ordinary people, shorten or eliminate political mediation, and cut through obstructive vetoes (Colarizi and Gervasoni 2005, 95; Gervasoni 2010, 39ff.). Craxi also distanced himself from a certain kind of antifascist culture and became more receptive to the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI; Parlato 2014). Craxism, however, as a consequence of its leader's personal history, party tradition, and cultural referents, remained firmly on the left. Indeed, the fact that in Italy the spirit of the 1980s was mainly represented on the left is a further sign of how underground and lacking in legitimacy the pre-Berlusconi anti-antifascist right really was. Furthermore, Craxi may have thought that politics should be adapted to the country and contained within certain limits, but he would never have doubted the nobility, autonomy, or primacy of its mission. The same reasoning applies, to an even greater extent, to the use to which the myth of civil society was put by the communists and postcommunists. As Giovanni Belardelli (1994) wrote in a discussion of the resurgence of "anti-Italianism" in progressive political and cultural circles brought about by Berlusconi after the 1994 elections, postcommunist appeals to the "real" country as an instrument for renewing the "legal" one inevitably raised "the suspicion that they mostly wanted to take people's aspirations and dreams seriously in order *to correct them*" (868–69; italics in the original text).[4]

The Politics of Berlusconism

Quite apart from his declarations of love for Italy, starting from the well-known phrase "Italy is the country that I love," which began his January 26 1994, "I am entering the political stage" broadcast, Berlusconi's public statements are filled with messages of support for the real country. These are clearly foregrounded in his first speech in February 1994 and reiterated in subsequent ones:

> If we now enjoy a good standard of living, this is due to the millions and millions of Italians who continue to do their duty every day, leaving their houses every morning to go to schools, factories and offices, and it is to them that we owe our well-being and the freedom which we now enjoy. We owe it to

the hard work of our teachers and farmers, to the skill of our entrepreneurs, particularly the managers of small and medium-sized businesses, and to the genius and talent of our craftsmen, our traders and all the people who take on the risk of self-employment. (Berlusconi 2000, 24–25; Berlusconi's first political speech, Rome, February 6, 1994)[5]

According to Berlusconi, if things were not working out, if the country lacked confidence, and if businesses were losing their market share, the public institutions and the political elites were to blame rather than society. They were depressing the country, draining it of confidence by stressing its failures and hiding its successes, and were unable to give it a unifying aim or direction. They shackled it with petty rules and regulations. Why, for example, were the numbers of tourists in Italy decreasing while visitors to France and Spain were on the increase? In Berlusconi's view, since "there is no way Italian tour operators could possibly be responsible for this or be less able or willing to work or less enthusiastic than their Spanish counterparts," it must be down to the country's political leaders (Berlusconi 2004, 76; speech to *Federalberghi*, Genua, November 12, 2000).[6]

Berlusconi's approach to the long-standing problem of Southern Italy, the *Mezzogiorno*, though not a particularly significant element in his speeches, was identical:

Above all, the *Mezzogiorno* needs confidence, the rule of law and a sense of hope. Our *Mezzogiorno* is the only real development tank for the whole of Italy. The *Mezzogiorno* is on the move, there is a new spirit of entrepreneurship and an increase in employment, which may be temporary, hidden from view and underground. Our duty is to free up these spontaneous forces in the South that want to get ahead, that haven't given up and that struggle every day in a hostile environment. We have to change the rules and make use of the intelligence and natural resources that already exist in the South as well as bring in new energy from outside. (Berlusconi 2001, 279; closing speech after the first FI congress, Milan, April 18, 1998)[7]

The "new Italian miracle" theme, first mentioned in the speech of January 26, 1994 (Berlusconi 2000, 292), was part of this same ideological approach and went beyond mere propaganda. Here Berlusconi claimed that Italy was now fully mature and the country's extraordinary growth in the postwar period meant that it should no longer be treated like a backward, premodern nation. He evoked the political and economic

climate of the 1950s, traditionally dubbed an "economic miracle," stressing the crucial role played by the free market and private entrepreneurs in the growth process, and he projected this vision of the past into the future.

As the diagnosis changed, the therapy also needed to be changed. According to Berlusconi, if the Italians no longer trusted the political elites and state institutions and the problem lay with the latter, solutions could not be found by adapting the real country to the legal country but by doing the exact opposite—adapting the legal country to the real one. This adaptation needed to happen on three separate but connected levels: the transformation of the Italian state into a friendly, minimal one; the replacement of traditional Italian hyperpolitics with hypopolitics; and the construction of a new political elite made up of nonprofessional politicians.

The State as a Friend

As regards the state, Berlusconi argued that changes would involve making it less burdensome by reducing the areas in which it could intervene, requiring it to do less but do it better. This meant introducing a radical discontinuity in the history of unified Italy, "something new in the history of the twentieth century, a history of state intrusion, of the administrative system that had been introduced after unification. It is an administrative system which still suffocates us, while the reality of our 100 cities is much closer to the Anglo-Saxon model . . . I explained to the leaders of the European People's Party that *Forza Italia* is also about a fight against state oppression, which has gone on for the whole of the twentieth century and which got stronger under Giolitti, Mussolini and even the DC [Christian Democracy]" (Berlusconi 2000, 102; speech to the national congress of the FI youth movement, Rome, December 11, 1999).[8] Perhaps more important, the state also needed to be made *qualitatively* different—to change from being "arrogant and a stranger to the concrete lives of our people" to being "a friendly state at the service of its citizens"; it should not frighten the Italians but instead guarantee their "right not to be afraid" (Berlusconi 2001, 32; 2000, 38–39 and 131).[9]

A crucial element in Berlusconi's rhetoric, which is at the heart of this transformation, is that of trust. He specifically targeted the rebuilding of trust between the institutions and the people, a lack of which was shown in the first chapter to be one of the main problems at the heart of the "Italian question." This rebuilding was designed as a process of reeducation, but this time of the institutions, not of the people. It was the state that would have to make the first move and change its behavior radically by having faith in the Italians. Only then would the Italians start to have faith in the state.

In the same way, he claimed, the Italians would show respect for the law when the law showed respect for the Italians.[10] Although Berlusconi's speeches do not show support for illegality,[11] his being on the side of the real country in its interaction with the legal country meant taking a radically different approach to the eternal question of the difficult relationship between Italy and the law. From this new perspective, he argued that widespread illegality was not the consequence of some strange, anthropological defect in the Italians but because the laws themselves were vexatious, incomprehensible, and unreasonable. Tax evasion was not the consequence of greed or selfishness but simply the result of taxes being too high overall and disproportionately high compared to the quality of the services they were supposed to be financing. It would therefore be not only pointless but wrong to try to sort out the "Italian question" by reeducating the country; instead, taxes should be cut and laws simplified, because "when the state asks you for something you think is right, you are the first to want to be at peace with the state and your own conscience" (Berlusconi 2000, 149–50; speech to the first national assembly of the FI women's movement, San Remo, March 28, 1998). This reversal of the standard approach to taxation was highlighted in an impromptu speech in Verona in 1999, a speech that also stressed the theme of trust:

> They have promised to reduce the tax burden but when you look a little closer, what does that imply? The promise is tied to a decrease in tax evasion. They've turned the problem upside down. We say, and we have always said, that the tax bands of the Treasury, which has no faith in the taxpayer, have been set on the assumption that taxpayers, particularly self-employed workers, declare only half of their income. So, from this position of mistrust, what does the Italian state then do? It sets very high tax rates because they think "I'll tax you double because you only declare half." All of us believe that if

taxes are going to work, they have to have the support of citizens. All of us are convinced that citizens pay their taxes out of a sense of duty to their fellow citizens. (Berlusconi 2000, 223; Tax day, Verona, May 27, 1999)[12]

Hypopolitics

Berlusconi's search for a different way of doing politics—his second pathway for adapting the legal to the real country—never arrived at a total rejection of politics. He reiterates his support for the nobility of politics, which he describes as "something great," "the highest moment of confirmation of man's social character," as having a "religious foundation, in the sense that its values, rituals and symbols are the perfect glue for binding a community together" (Berlusconi 2004, 62 and 211–12). After 9/11, he also denied that "ordinary people" had the right to mind their own business when fundamental questions were being asked of society:

> We are moderate, calm and peaceful even when we are in pain. We are hardworking, gentle people, who want to live in peace. We do not like the rhetoric of war or the mystique of courage, we do not beat our own drum . . . But we will never be people who back away from the concrete drama of history, who stand above the fray in order to avoid heavy responsibility or sacrifice, who do not want to compromise their position, who give up, who retreat out of cowardice, whose selfishness makes them forget innocent victims. (Berlusconi 2004, 231; USA Day speech, Rome, November 10, 2001)

If Berlusconi's politics is not *anti*politics, however, it is what one might call *hypo*politics, quite distinct from the Italian tradition of *hyper*-politics (Galli della Loggia 1998; Cantarano 2000). To use Oakeshott's distinction analyzed in Chapter 1, Berlusconi could be described as a skeptical politician in a historical context marked by an excess of politics of faith.

There are three main areas of difference between *hypo*- and *hyper*-politics. The first, as has already been shown, is that hypopolitics is a less intrusive kind of politics produced by a smaller and more unassuming state and is aimed at stimulus and growth rather than directing the spontaneous activities of civil society or taking them over. Second, as Berlusconi's speeches demonstrate on numerous occasions, hypopolitics aims to concentrate less on itself, on its own ideological divisions

and power struggle, on *politics* as a self-referential game, and to focus more on *policies* and the concrete management of a community. This makes it a different kind of politics from the politics of "arguments, words, gossip, reciprocal vetoes and backstage negotiations," and it is much more concerned with "achievements and with doing things" (e.g., Berlusconi 2000, 20; 2004, 211–12).

Third, the language of Berlusconi's hypopolitics, which in this case bears some resemblance to antipolitics, is no different from the simple, concrete, commonsense language of the ordinary man (Amadori 2002; Abruzzese and Susca 2004; Benedetti 2004; Bolasco, Galli de' Paratesi, and Giuliano 2006; Ventura 2012). "I get asked what the new politics is," said Berlusconi in the Senate on June 20, 2001, continuing as follows: "It means forging consent on the basis of a carefully constructed commitment, it means transforming a promise into a written contract with no get-out clause, it means the end of mystification and of jargon which is incomprehensible to ordinary people, it means that our institutions have to get closer to communities and be subject to the same contractual obligations as the ones that underpin civil society" (Berlusconi 2004, 192–93; see also 2001, 97). Berlusconi had said something similar on April 18, 1998, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic's first elections, during his closing speech to the first congress of *Forza Italia* (FI), the party that he had founded in 1994. This was perhaps his most ideologically complete speech, and it is worth quoting in full because it contains many of the aforementioned themes as well as several topics that will be discussed later:

> I see in all of you assembled here today, and in our eight million voters, the people of freedom, the very same people who, on the 18th of April 1948, chose democracy, who chose the West; the very same people who kept Italy anchored to democracy while so many intellectuals—apart from a few brave, free spirits—sheltered under the red flag; that very same hardworking, tenacious people who managed to salvage an underdeveloped wreck of a country from the ruins of war and turn it into one of the most prosperous countries in the world; the very same people who are the majority in Italy and who on the 27th of March 1994 identified in *Forza Italia* the very same values of 1948, the very same principles in which we believe and which are the bedrock of our civil and political endeavors. These values are not the complicated ideological abstractions of politicians and political scientists but the simple, basic values of good citizens and the founding values of all the great Western democracies. (Berlusconi 2001, 280–81)

It is noteworthy how, in the ideology of Berlusconism, the contrast between the common sense of the man in the street and hyperpolitics, particularly communist and postcommunist hyperpolitics, is not just a linguistic question about the self-regarding terminology of politicians but something more concrete, even existential. To express this contrast, Berlusconi's speeches make frequent use of the binary love–hate opposition: "The Italy we imagine is not like theirs, which is about prohibition and hatred. Ours is a different kind of Italy, honest, proud, tenacious, just, serene, prosperous, an Italy which above all knows how to love" (Berlusconi 2000, 279–80; speech to the Lombardy administrators, Milan, January 15, 2000).[13] Although the definition of Berlusconism as the "party of love," which began to circulate after Berlusconi was attacked by a mentally disturbed person in piazza del Duomo in Milan at the end of 2009, has produced a not unjustified ironic response, given the details of Berlusconi's personal life that have since been made public, it still has real political substance. It contains a rejection of an excessive, ideological, and divisive form of politics, which, instead of mediating and reconciling fractures in society, makes them worse and adds more. There is also a genealogy for this aspect of Berlusconism: *Uomo Qualunque* founder Guglielmo Giannini's rejection of professional politicians and the ideological rifts they created and "artificially" kept alive followed the same line of argument; a similar contrast between "natural" human solidarity and "artificial" ideological divisions can be seen in another of the main proponents of the antipolitical and anti-antifascist Italian tradition, Giovannino Guareschi, and is a major theme of his stories about Don Camillo, Peppone, and their *Mondo piccolo*.[14]

A Political Elite of Nonprofessional Politicians

The final area in which the legal country was to be adapted to the real country was the training and selection of the political elite. The Berlusconi approach to this question was the natural consequence of what has been described before: the reversal of the relationship between state and people and the different way of doing politics was to be accompanied by the creation of a new political class, coming directly from civil society (see particularly Campus 2010). If civil society was the depository of

all virtues, then it must also be the only possible source of "good" politics. This new political class was to be made up of people "with direct experience of life and its hardships rather than of the machinations of 'backroom politics'" (Berlusconi 2001, 33–34; speech at the Senate, May 16, 1994), and its archetype and leader was, of course, to be Berlusconi himself. Looked at from this point of view, it is easy to understand how Berlusconi might appear to many to be the leader of a true revival of a country that had been colonized by politics for years and could now not only get this weight off its back but also start to colonize politics in return (Schedler 1997, 9ff.). How many entrepreneurs who had sat, perhaps unwillingly and resentfully, in the waiting rooms of public administrators saw in Berlusconi the chance to radically turn the tables to their own advantage and to the advantage of those like them?

The notion of the new political class is a continuing refrain in Berlusconi's speeches. He often used it as part of a diatribe against partyocracy and professional politicians, in relation to which *Forza Italia* was presented as a brand-new movement—"We have to remain a living force in society, we must not become a party, a bureaucratic party" (Berlusconi 2000, 140; speech to the first national assembly of the FI women's movement, San Remo, March 28, 1998)—or when radically reversing the approach to public morality:

> That is why we liberals, unlike the anti-liberals, do not think that the market is based on individual selfishness. You have read what our great thinkers have written. I have read it in the words of Einaudi and Adam Smith, who said it before Einaudi: markets need individual interests to be wedded to an acceptance of the moral principles of loyalty and of a work ethic. And we continue to say this and say it openly: if only there were the same morality in politics that there is in the market; when we say that we are the standard bearers of a new morality in politics, it means that we are standard bearers of a morality that we have learned in the market, and that is absent in politics, where we would like to introduce it. (Berlusconi 2000, 116; speech to the national congress of the FI youth movement, Rome, December 11, 1999)

Most of all, the theme of the new political class reconnects to the question of the efficiency of the institutions and the ability of the political class to focus on the real needs of the country. In his first public speech, Berlusconi said, "We know how to revive the economy of Italy! There is no one in Italy who can make this promise, who can make this

claim with more credibility and more authority than the man standing before you now!" (Berlusconi 2000, 23; Berlusconi's first political speech, Rome, February 6, 1994). A few months later, on May 20, 1994, in the Chamber of Deputies, he said, "Referring to the Treasury and Industry ministers, people have joked about the 'the culture of the mini-factories'; I tell them that the mini-factories are sometimes more useful than the mini-offices where they manufacture their 'mini-speeches'" (Berlusconi 2001, 58).

The promise to finally make the Italian state more efficient by applying the managerial standards of the market to the public institutions was one of the cornerstones of Berlusconism (Prospero 2003; Campus 2010; Musso 2008). This promise, as well as being connected to the production of a new political class, was also linked to a number of other themes that have already been mentioned—the idea of hypopolitics intent on "doing things," a desire for revival, and "counterattack" by areas of society that had suffered from political oppression.

The creation of a new political class also has three significant corollaries that need to be addressed. The first is a specific aspect of the consensus that Berlusconi achieved by presenting himself to his electors as "one of you"—that is, as the guide and archetype of a new elite arising from civil society. Commentators have rightly stressed, though sometimes overstressed, how important identification between leader and people has been for the success of Berlusconism. Berlusconi's critics have repeatedly underlined how strongly this identification was connected to illegal or unethical behavior, arguing that the number of votes for a leader who acted with impunity increased as a consequence of the rule-allergic electorate's hopes for similar impunity. The same explanation is given for Berlusconi's supporters' indulgence toward his legal difficulties and the attention he paid to his business interests during his time in politics and government: "We tolerate him and he justifies us" (Severgnini 2011, 53; but see also Stille 2006; Mancini 2011; Ceri 2011).

However, when looked at from the point of view being adopted here—namely, that of Berlusconi's turning of the Italian question on its head—the identification between Berlusconi and his electorate in relation to legality can be interpreted differently. It means emphasizing not so much Berlusconi's impunity and his followers' desire for impunity as his status as a victim and his electors' desire not to be victims

any longer. In the eyes of his electors, Berlusconi was an Italian citizen who was being tormented by an oppressive bureaucratic state and was defending himself as best he could. The assumption that, as a victim among victims, he could sympathize with his fellow citizens—that is, share their same sense of anger and frustration—would subsequently appear to them the best guarantee that he would try to change things (Mennitti 1997, 8).

Viewed from this perspective, the judicial investigations and trials to which Berlusconi has been subjected appear simply to be further evidence of Italian public powers exercising Jacobin oppression, whether it be simply in the form of unconscious and automatic application of excessive, unreasonable, or unfair regulations or, as many of Berlusconi's electors maintain, deliberate judicial persecution. This argument is based on the conviction that at least part of the Italian judiciary had turned into yet another Italian corporative and self-referential clan, had formed a competitive alliance with the "communist clan,"[15] and had used laws and institutions for their own particular purposes in order to do away with rival groups. Within this frame of reference, the judiciary had so little credibility itself that it was unable to destroy Berlusconi's credibility, no matter how numerous or important the accusations and trials were. From the same point of view, the care with which Berlusconi looked after his business interests could seem both an act of self-defense and also a foretaste of a new kind of politics, aimed at promoting social interests rather than at obstructing and suffocating them. It could also be made to seem the price you had to pay in order to have an effective, managerial style of government: he could look after his own problems so long as he looked after Italy's.

The second variation on the theme of the renewal of the political elite is the question of political behavior. Berlusconi has not been a serious political leader: his political life has been notorious for its gaffes, inopportune jokes, and fooling around. His "horns" gesture during the EU summit photo shoot in Caceres in February 2002 and his heavily ironic remark in July 2002 comparing the socialist MEP Martin Schulz to a Nazi concentration camp guard (Campi and Varasano 2013, 357 and 413) earned him considerable notoriety. What is of interest here is not why Berlusconi did these things but why this behavior did not damage him electorally and why it may even have made him stronger.

The answer lies once again in the political nature of Berlusconism: his lack of seriousness is not only an exquisitely political act but entirely coherent with the portrait of Berlusconi that is being set out here. It shows not only that Berlusconi was an ordinary person that people could identify with—"the man next door, the one you get to know and learn to trust, just . . . unusually rich, able, and incredibly determined" (Giuliano Ferrara in *Una storia italiana* 2001, 39)—but also, and above all, that politics was not all that serious really and that people in government were not in any way superior to ordinary people (Prospero 2010). Once again, Berlusconism seems to be defined by the politics of skepticism, convinced that politicians are people just like everyone else and taking politics lightly and reducing it to a game on the understanding that real life is somewhere else (Oakeshott 1996, 110–13). This behavior was all the more appreciated in Italy, because, imbued as it had been with the politics of faith, the country had gotten used to seeing politicians being introduced as exceptional people and politics as a terribly serious and important activity.

Berlusconi's "entering the stage" has so far been presented as a moment of radical *discontinuity* in Italian history and as an attempt to overturn the traditional way of dealing with the historical divergence between the real and the legal country by suggesting that the latter needs to adapt to the former rather than the other way around. However— and this is the third corollary of our analysis on Berlusconi's proposal of a new political elite—when we examine the nature of the new political class that would be required to undertake this operation, Berlusconi is in absolute *continuity* with the history of Italy. Even though his solutions are unique, his basic question is the same Platonic one there has always been: how to identify a virtuous elite that can address and resolve the Italian question once and for all. In this respect, the relationship between institutions and politics was not being treated by Berlusconism any differently from the way it had been treated before: what counts is *who* holds the power, not *how* power is organized, disciplined, and limited.

This emphasis on a renewal of the political class helps explain Berlusconi and his movement's insensitivity to institutions, both in their existing form and as targets of possible reform. Even though such insensitivity and emphasis goes beyond Berlusconism and is characteristic

of the Italian question in general,[16] there is no doubt that it is more marked in the case of Berlusconi and certainly more visible than it has been in other cases. This is partly an obvious consequence of the devaluation of public life that came about as a result of the "sanctification" of civil society. In Berlusconi's speeches there is no doubt that the state is the "bad guy," and even though the ultimate aim is to turn it back into a "good guy" by saying that a different, better state is possible, the negative connotations associated with it still remain. This partly depended also on the fact that Berlusconi, who had proposed a new, efficient, and decisive brand of leadership, found himself working as an outsider in institutions that had been geared toward working with the previous, totally different political system. Finally, it was a consequence, as will be shown next, of the populist aspect of Berlusconism and its need for *immediacy*, to the extent that institutional safeguards appeared to be damagingly restrictive checks on rapid and efficient public response.

Even though Berlusconi addressed the "Italian question" in the usual Platonic and non-Popperian terms, his "entering the stage" created the conditions for a shift to a different kind of institutional setup. Italian public life now had a bipolar structure for the first time in fifty years of republican history. In order to understand how this happened and what its effects were, the discussion now needs to be moved away from distinctions between real versus legal country and political class versus people, to focus instead on Berlusconism in the more traditional light of the differences between right and left. This discussion will conclude with an analysis of the relationship between the bipolarist Berlusconi and the Platonic one.

Berlusconism, the Plural Right, and Bipolarism

Chapter 2 described the context of the Italian plural right in the post 1962–64 period following the establishment of the center-left coalition governments. On the one hand, the majority of right-wing voters were de facto integrated into the Republic, were not without political influence, and were able to share privileges and resources. However, they had no cultural voice or legitimacy and were largely unhappy with the parties they voted for, starting with the DC. The right was a broad-based but unstable electorate, which was critical of the parties of the so-called

constitutional arc—those who had written the 1948 constitution, rang-
ing from the liberals to the communists—and its underlying antifas-
cist culture. It was an area that the processes of modernization and the
cultural climate of the 1980s probably reinforced, further weakening
parties' ability to represent it and increasing dissatisfaction with the
state and politics, which were regarded as invasive and inefficient. After
the political breakdown of the early 1990s, brought about by the cor-
ruption scandals of *Tangentopoli*, the right-wing electorate was on the
move and up for grabs (see among others Chiarini 1995; Mastropaolo
1996; Tarchi 2003; Colarizi, Craveri, Pons, and Quagliariello 2004).
The parties that the plural right had voted for until then, with the sole
exception of the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, had collapsed
under the weight of judicial investigations, and the plural right's hos-
tility to partyocracy and antifascism had been reinforced (indeed, the
right was convinced that its prejudices had finally been justified) by the
results of the judicial unveiling of political corruption.

Berlusconi's political project was antistate, based on the sanctifica-
tion of civil society and its capacity for self-determination, and against
antifascist partyocracy and hyperpolitics. The anti-antifascist plu-
ral right was therefore the natural home of Berlusconism. Unlike the
DC, which took votes from the right-wing electoral area but failed to
express its culture, Berlusconi was only too pleased to immerse himself
in it and to represent it in its entirety, ideologically as well as politically.
Even though one might argue that Berlusconism was created artificially
through a political marketing operation by identifying an electoral area
that could be exploited (Amadori 2002, 95–108), Berlusconi clearly
shared at least some of the complex and varied anti-antifascist right-
wing values and prejudices.

Berlusconi's Three Clocks

Viewed from the long-term perspective described before, Berlusconi's
relationship with the Italian plural right is made up of three layers.
In the name of each of these layers, Berlusconi tried to set the clock
back three times. From 1994, he tried to turn the clock back to 1989.
When discussing Berlusconi's robustly anticommunist position, schol-
ars frequently take an equally robust ironical stance: where was this

famous communism after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Empire? The irony, however, is misplaced and makes an understanding of the Berlusconi phenomenon all but impossible. Berlusconi's anticommunist position needs to be taken seriously simply because it was the means by which Berlusconi came to be in such close harmony with a considerable section of the electorate.[17] This harmony was engendered by presenting the rise to power of the postcommunists as having been achieved through a paradox—that of "the Berlin Wall falling on the heads of the winners rather than on the losers" (Berlusconi 2000, 79). This paradoxical outcome was regarded as unacceptable primarily because of the persistent ideological fallout from the Cold War, which had ended only a few years previously and which in Italy had been a source of considerable political animosity. The fact that there was no longer a communist "threat" at an international level did not make their one-time adversaries' victory any easier for the plural right to digest, particularly because communism was regarded as having been a historical failure.

The paradoxical outcome was also unacceptable because of the way in which the right had experienced the political breakdown of the early 1990s. As has already been shown, anti-antifascist public opinion undoubtedly supported judicial initiatives against political corruption. It saw the work of the judiciary as highlighting the failure and degeneration of the statist republican project and the oppressive, self-referential political power that had sprung from it. Naturally the anti-antifascists preferred to forget how their own, albeit reluctant, vote had contributed to this degeneration and how much they had profited from it. However, after enthusiastically supporting the destructive part of the magistrates' activity, when it started to become clear that, unlike the government parties, the postcommunists had managed to survive the judicial war and were about to take control of the reconstruction of the national political system, anti-antifascism had become increasingly critical. Anti-antifascists regarded the situation as all the more unfair because they were convinced that the Communist Party had taken part in republican power-sharing and had been equally responsible for its degeneration. Moreover, they considered it to have been part of the system of illegal party funding, if not its prime mover, since it had been

financed from behind the Iron Curtain to stir up and distort political conflict in Italy during the Cold War period.[18]

This leads to the second characteristic of Berlusconi's anticommunist appeal to his electorate—namely, that it was perfectly integrated into the ideological framework of "good" civil society, antistatism, and hypopolitics described before (Shin and Agnew 2008, 9ff.). Berlusconi's electors' aversion to the parties that had sprung from the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was a natural consequence of their original opposition to the corrective and pedagogical ambitions of the antifascist Republic; they regarded the postcommunists as the heirs of the prototypically statist and antifascist "arch-party."[19] Thus alongside "historical" anticommunism—rooted in both the remote Cold War and the recent *Tangentopoli* periods—there was also a more immediate political-ideological kind of anticommunism existing in the present: "Their credo is centralism, dirigism, statism, the opposite of ours, which is subsidiarity . . . from this credo of theirs you get the idea of a State which does everything, which controls everything, the professor State, the doctor State, the teacher State. It is a State which is the exact opposite of what we think: our State only looks after essential services, and does it properly, and gives its citizens total freedom to look after the rest" (Berlusconi 2000, 83; speech on the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Rome, November 9, 1999).

This aversion to the arch-party was reflected in the third and perhaps most important aspect of Berlusconi's anticommunism—criticism of the "superclan." This was also independent of the Cold War ideological framework. As Chapter 2 has shown, the Communist Party had seemed able to solve the problem of Italy's cultural backwardness because it had a "sense of organization . . . the seriousness with which it treats the relationship between 'saying' and 'doing' . . . the disciplined commitment of its members to what they are called upon to do in society" (Cafagna 1993, 65). This was the positive side of the coin. However, its negative side was marked by its being both ideologically far removed from liberal democracy and absolutely committed to party interests. The collapse of the Soviet Union had removed the former but, in the eyes of anti-antifascist public opinion, it had not removed the latter (Quagliariello 2007). For many, the end of *communism* had not meant the end of the *communists* as an aggressively sectarian and self-referential

center of power, which was neither intellectually secular nor plural-
ist. Berlusconi's speeches return continually to this anticommunist
theme, criticizing the communist prioritizing of party over individual
conscience and denying that there could be anything positive in the
diversity of the postcommunists ("We do not recognize any moral
superiority in you. You are by no means the different, healthy or better
part of the country that you would have people believe"; Berlusconi
2000, 96; speech on the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall,
Rome, November 9, 1999). Above all, he reiterated the theme of the
lie—the communists' instrumental approach to truth, which in his view
typified the superclan.

Berlusconism's three-pronged, anticommunist approach—outrage
at the outcome of the Cold War, hostility to the arch-party, and hostility
to the superclan—actually went beyond anti-antifascism. Of course, it
had no appeal for the "orthodox" part of antifascist public opinion: the
postwar development of this kind of antifascism made it incompatible
with anticommunism (Orsina 2005), and if it was against the Republic
of parties, that was only because the Republic was *insufficiently* "politi-
cal" and statist. However, Berlusconi's anticommunism did appeal to
those like the socialists and radicals, who were ideologically antifas-
cist while at the same time keeping their distance from the Commu-
nist Party, were critical of parties in general, and thought more leeway
should be given to civil society.

Berlusconi also tried to turn the clock back to the 1950s (Gins-
borg 2003, 37–39). As has already been emphasized, the Berlusconian
rhetoric of the "new economic miracle," with its corollaries—material
well-being, social growth, private enterprise, political and cultural
conservatism—aimed to resurrect memories of the 1950s before the
plural right (that complicated mixture of conservatism, free-market
liberalism, antipolitics, and patriotism) had been deprived of cultural
legitimacy and full political representation.

Finally, by making the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* and its
postfascist 1994 successor, the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), respectable,
Berlusconi was turning the clock back to the 1930s. As Chapter 2 has
shown, this third "layer" of anti-antifascism was structurally different
from the two previous ones. Part of this difference emerges in Berlus-
coni's speeches, in which he notes approvingly how *Alleanza Nazionale*
had "abandoned the centralism, dirigism, and corruption-bashing

moralism which characterized its past" (Berlusconi 2000, 65; opening speech at the first FI congress, Milan, April 16, 1998). Many commentators have also underlined the distance, to be discussed in Chapter 4, between *Forza Italia*, which was liberal and based in the North, and *Alleanza Nazionale*, which was statist and based in the South. However, these differences need to be seen as part of a wider picture. Although in the postwar years the MSI had often resorted to antipolitics and suffered from internal ideological divisions, it still maintained the culturally hyperpolitical position of fascism and the republic of Salò (Chiarini 1995; Tarchi 2003; Parlato 2014). Paradoxically, AN thus seemed less incompatible with antifascist culture than *Forza Italia*, because it had the same "twentieth-century-style" structure as antifascism, whereas FI professed to be largely, though as we will see not totally, a post-twentieth-century movement.

Chapter 2 has described the two types of antifascism identified by the Catholic philosopher Augusto Del Noce: fascism-in-reverse, which used the same methods as fascism but for opposite ends, and the opposite of fascism, which, perhaps more radically, rejected those methods. It could even be argued that the anti-antifascism of *Forza Italia* and *Alleanza Nazionale* are to be distinguished in the same way, with *Alleanza Nazionale* being closer to antifascism-in-reverse and *Forza Italia* to the opposite of antifascism, or, to take the argument even further, that antifascism and neofascism take the same hyperpolitical approach but use it for different ends, whereas Berlusconism is hypopolitical. The distance between AN and the republican culture was reduced by two other factors that affected FI only marginally: the first was AN's need for legitimacy and recognition after so many years of isolation, and the second was the pragmatism that had filled the ideological and cultural void brought about by the abandonment of a relevant symbolic reference point that the memory of fascism had provided (Ignazi 1994; Ruzza and Fella 2009, 141ff.).

Berlusconism and Bipolarism

Viewed from the perspective of the overall workings of the institutions, one positive outcome of Berlusconi's "salvaging" of the anti-antifascist right was that he brought into the political arena areas of public opinion

that had been distant from it and realigned politics and country on an ideological terrain. Above all, he grasped the unique political opportunity offered by the ending of the Cold War and the two centuries of conflict after the French Revolution by providing the country with a bipolar political system and making it possible for two opposing factions to alternate in government. Berlusconi claimed this achievement for himself a number of times, particularly the bipolar structure: "This alliance has built something which was not here before; it has made bipolarism and a majoritarian democracy possible in Italy" (Berlusconi 2006, 15; speech at the national seminar *La proposta di una nuova Casa comune*, Rome, May 20, 2005).[20] The previous month he had told the Senate that this had been his main political achievement: "I would like to be able to conclude my adventure . . . in the political history of the country, by leaving a legacy of a system made up of two political forces: the Moderates and the Left, which confront each other as the great democracies do, and which guarantee a stable government for the country as well as well-being, justice and freedom" (Berlusconi 2006, 95; prime minister's reply to the Senate, April 28, 2005).[21] The role that Berlusconism played in creating and improving a bipolar system based on alternation needs to be tempered by some of the points made before. The fundamental importance that he attributed to civil society and the human values that bind it together does not mean that political dialectic had no value for Berlusconi. However, his diffidence toward ideology, as well as his belief that ideological conflict opened up excessive and largely artificial divisions in the country, considerably reduced the space available for dissent and limited it to a choice between technical solutions that were all equally instrumental to the needs of a self-regulating society. Moreover, as has been shown, hypopolitics is defined by its opposition to the hyperpolitics of communism and postcommunism, to which Berlusconi denied any legitimacy and by which he was himself denied legitimacy with equal virulence. Even though Berlusconism had created the conditions for "Popperian" alternation, it was still at heart Platonic: the new political class it was proposing was the direct expression of the virtues of civil society and hence a virtuous elite. And virtuous elites are designed to rule forever, not to compete and alternate in power.[22]

This helps explain why the bipolar structure of the Italian political system since 1994 has been so conflicted and chaotic (Lippolis and

Pitruzzella 2007). Up until the fall of the Berlin Wall, the split between East and West had frozen the Italian public space and made alternation impossible, producing in Giorgio Galli's famous phrase an "imperfect biparty system." It was a biparty system because it was based on two major parties (the DC and the PCI) and imperfect because the international situation made it impossible for the communists to govern. The end of the Cold War completely opened up the game, and Berlusconi's "entering the stage" and his salvaging of the anti-antifascist right made bipolarism possible. However, Berlusconism, with the complicity of anti-Berlusconism, produced an almost equally "imperfect bipolarism," because it was also based on a profound, delegitimizing split between hyperpolitics and hypopolitics. This split had inherited the contents, logic, and slogans of the previous one: the relationship between the anticommunist tradition and Berlusconi's opposition to hyperpolitics has been discussed at length, but there are also close links between anti-Berlusconism and antifascism (Orsina 2006). The tension between Berlusconi's clear desire for unity and his equally clear ability to divide is one of the many paradoxes of Berlusconi's political career. On the one hand, Berlusconism condemned hyperpolitics because of its presumed power to create artificial fractures in what it imagined to be a calm, cooperative society, while on the other it reconnected to an equally vehement form of anticommunism that it declared to be "ready made" in a country that was clearly not all that calm and cooperative. The "party of love" had itself been a party of hate, even though it presented its own hatred as a necessary defense against the hatred of others, and by doing this Berlusconi artificially widened the gap between hypopolitics and hyperpolitics even further (Cantarano 2000).

The beginnings of Italian bipolarism were thus inevitably nailed to the mast of Berlusconism, but since the mast itself was crooked, these beginnings were also distorted (Calise 2006). With hindsight, any early hopes that bipolarism could turn out to function independently of the dominant political figure of Berlusconi and turn into formal institutional arrangements written into the constitution proved to be unfounded. Berlusconi's alliance was in a position to carry out constitutional reform in one of two ways. Either it could do it autonomously, using solely its parliamentary votes, or it could do it via a left–right agreement with the opposition, in recognition of the fact that, with the

end of the Cold War, Italy had a unique historical opportunity to fully modernize its politics and institutions. However, the first option was hindered by Berlusconism's Platonic component, which, as has already been shown, favored renewal of the political elite over institutional questions, while the latter option was impeded by the nature of imperfect bipolarism and the reciprocal delegitimation by the two warring factions. and the reciprocal delegitimation by the two warring factions.

Defining Berlusconism

Although using a simple formula to describe a complex phenomenon is always a risk, a definition of Berlusconism as an ideology can now be attempted: Berlusconism *is an emulsion of populism and liberalism* (or at least a certain kind of liberalism).[23] To this formula should be added three further elements. The two main components of the definition—populism and liberalism—have equal weight, and for this reason it would be wrong to talk of "liberal populism" or "populist liberalism," because either expression distorts the formula one way or the other; the two can be distinguished from a logical point of view, but from a concrete historical perspective they are inseparable. They only managed to progress together without diverging because of a third, equally strong but problematic element: the conviction that the Italian people were already liberal.

Berlusconism resembles an octopus with three tentacles. The head of the octopus is the myth of the "good" civil society, and the three tentacles are the "friendly, minimal state"; hypopolitics; and the identification of the new virtuous elite. Good civil society and hypopolitics contain both populist and liberal elements, the friendly, minimal state leans toward the liberal side, and the new virtuous elite is markedly populist. The sanctification of the people, regarded as the depository of all virtues, and the corresponding attack on the elite that had "betrayed" it are typically populist themes. In the case of Berlusconism, however, given Berlusconi's idea of the people (not dissimilar to Guglielmo Giannini's) as a diversified and pluralist collection of individuals open to the outside world rather than a homogeneous group with no internal splits and bound together by ethnic, historical, and cultural links, the populism is mixed with liberalism.[24] Berlusconi's support for

Italianness can also be considered a form of patriotism, if not nationalism. Again, however, it is a paradoxical form of national pride: there is emphasis on a collective identity based on common history and traditions (a history and tradition steeped in Catholic values) but even more on a shared individualistic, skeptical, and hypopolitical mentality. This convergence is based on a tendency to diverge—an army of people who do not intend to obey orders.[25]

A number of commentators have insisted on the material and symbolic importance that Berlusconi's television empire has had on his political life by claiming that, in Berlusconi's rhetoric, "the people" were above all a people of consumers (Susca 2004, 73; Ruzza and Fella 2009, 205–8). This argument, though not without foundation—the dream or illusion of material well-being was a fundamental part of Berlusconism—is one-sided. In the first place, Berlusconi was interested in producers as well as consumers (Mastropaolo 2000, 29–30; Musso 2008, 142). Judging by his speeches, he addressed the producers to a far greater extent, and as Chapter 4 will show, most of them voted for him. Second, his interpretation of Italy as a friendly, sociable, and cooperative country was more than just economic.[26]

The key aspect of Berlusconi's idea of Italy is not to be found exclusively in the consumerist message of commercial television but in the fact that the idea itself, ambiguous and unstable as it was, was "suspended" between the notions of "people" and civil society. On the one hand, Berlusconi's Italy was an articulate, modern, and multiform *civil society*, made up of autonomous, mature, and sociable individuals; it was hypopolitical but not antipolitical. That is, it accepted politics as an expression of free disagreement and differing interests, but it was hostile to excessive, ideological, and polarizing forms of politics, which might introduce "artificial" and nonnegotiable divisions.[27] On the other hand, it was a *people* that, though not conceived of in ethnic or national terms, was regarded as unitary, homogenous, and straightforward in its goodness and in its being wedded to certain basic human values. In this sense it was antipolitical—tending to reject not just the excesses of politics but politics *tout court*, since politics' every form represented an element of division.

It is their respective conceptions of "the people" that define the ideological difference between Berlusconism and the Northern League.

Since, for Berlusconi, "the people" is made up of individuals and is a "quasi-civil society," its enemy is excessive government by *any* political power. The Northern League saw "the people" as a far more closed concept and defined it in regional if not ethnic terms—its enemy was *Roman* political power.[28] This difference, which is considerable, meant that the *Lega* exhibited a more populist streak than Berlusconism. While Berlusconism was structurally, albeit ambiguously, liberal, the Northern League was federalist, separatist, and only liberal at its own convenience (Tarchi 2003, 149–55).

Berlusconism was thus an emulsion of liberalism and populism, but only liberalism *of a certain type*—an extreme right liberalism. Although scholars generally distinguish the liberal right and left by their approach to the economy—the right is usually more favorable to free markets and the left to state intervention (Kirchner 1988; Delwit 2002)—this may be the wrong way to frame the debate. The differences in the liberal right's and left's approaches to the economy is the consequence of a deeper disagreement regarding how the relationship between the state, politics, and civil society should be conceived. Liberalisms of any shade depend on the ability of a civil society based on individual freedom to equip itself more or less spontaneously with a progressive and well-ordered structure. As the quotation from Mill in Chapter 1 has shown, this can only develop when a certain level of civilization has been reached. Moreover, the institutional context in which individuals interact is fundamental, and the state and politics play an important supporting role in facilitating, accelerating, and correcting society's organization of itself.

Within this framework, liberals can be positioned on the left–right axis according to their degree of faith in, and patience with, this process. The liberal right has faith in the virtues of civil society and gives it time to resolve its problems, with the state and politics playing only a marginal role, while the liberal left is more impatient, attributing much greater importance to the state and to politics (Orsina 2012b). This is why Berlusconism, founded on absolute faith in civil society and the idea of the "friendly state" and hypopolitics, is defined here as *far right* liberalism.[29] It should be stressed that this is not conservatism, because it does not conceive of society as an unchanging entity: it wants it to be stable and orderly but in a state of perpetual and progressive

transformation (Hayek 1960; for a critical view, however, see Freeden 1996, 298–310). Berlusconi's optimism, exaggerated and ridiculous though it may sometimes be, also has liberal features; pessimism and fears about the future are not liberal attributes.

Berlusconi's liberalism is right-wing not just in theoretical terms but also historically, in as much as he had made use of political traditions that in the republican era had been on the right; these included the small amount of anti-Jacobin liberal culture that still existed, widespread antistate and antipolitical *qualunquismo*, and the faith of some sections of society, particularly in Northern Italy, in their own ability. It is with regard to the latter "cultural-geographic" element that Berlusconism and the Northern League are at their closest. Berlusconi's political proposal could only have arisen in Lombardy (and more precisely in the area of Lombardy called Brianza) because Lombardy, more than any other region of Italy, is characterized by a lively, enterprising, and organized civil society that is convinced it would do equally well, if not better, with less state intervention. It is no accident that Carlo Cattaneo, the quintessential Lombard thinker, is the Italian intellectual with whose work Berlusconism can be most usefully compared (see also Chapter 1).[30]

It is well known, however, that civil society elsewhere in Italy is not as lively, enterprising, and organized as it is in Lombardy, and it is in this respect that Berlusconism's ideological emulsion has shown itself to be unstable and contradictory. We have stated before that liberalism and populism could only coexist on the basis of a precise and quite daring premise: that the Italian people were already liberal, able to look after themselves, and ready to do so. It was only on this assumption—that is, by postulating not only that the Italians were perfectly able to put up with a liberal program but that it was exactly what they were asking for[31]—that it became possible to reconcile the idea that the country was fine as it was and did not need to be reeducated with a program for the reconstruction of a "friendly state." Without that postulate, the emulsion of liberalism and populism would have exploded.

The idea that Italy was ready to manage on its own and was in need of liberal recipes, however, was largely a fiction, or at least an exaggeration. The premise became all the more fictitious the further away the country drifted from the optimism of the 1980s and the closer it came

to the twenty-first century, the pessimistic aftermath of 9/11, and the pending economic crisis (Ginsborg 2004, 160; Ginsborg and Asquer 2011, xxviii–xxix). It was no accident that from the late 1990s, Berlusconism, following its "people," started to tone down its liberalism. This, however, was not enough for it to resolve its internal contradictions, because the ideas of the friendly state and the minimal state were a crucial part of Berlusconi's political presence and a unifying factor between his policy and his biography. The contradiction between the populist and liberal elements of Berlusconism was therefore bound to remain.

Whereas the head and the first two tentacles of the Berlusconi ideological octopus are a mixture of populism and right-wing liberalism, the third tentacle—the new elite and new leader whose virtue is guaranteed because they come from civil society—is largely populist. Liberal theory is naturally antimonopolistic and supportive of competition at every level; its problem is not to identify an elite but to open up competition *between* elites. Liberalism's faith in civil society does not produce a conviction that it is able to express a good political class but that it is able to make the right choice between competing political classes.[32] Liberalism aims to divide up power and to restrict it, but Berlusconi, though he sometimes referred to the principles of liberal constitutionalism (Berlusconi 2000, 111 and 280–81), tried to concentrate power and was critical of institutional checks on his sphere of action. Indeed, it is significant that Berlusconism's separation from liberalism comes at the very point at which it is most in line with Italian history. Equally significant is the fact that this very movement away from liberalism was one of the main reasons for its success, as Chapter 4 will show.

To conclude, all the aspects of Berlusconism classified here as populist can be regarded as belonging to *the utopia of immediacy*. The term *immediacy* is meant in its current temporal usage, implying that Italian society is perfect in the here and now and can be subjected to a liberal program with immediate positive effects (Hermet 2001). Immediacy also means absence of mediation—that is, a rejection of professional politicians who construct unnecessary and parasitic worlds that are alien to the daily life of the man on the street—and faith in the ability of the "people" to manage their own destiny directly (Mény and Surel 2000, 73–75). From the point of view of Berlusconism, then, the hard core of populism is this utopia of temporal and structural immediacy.

Both are incompatible with liberalism, which needs patience and time and is based on the premise that having different spheres of human activity is a fundamental guarantee of freedom.[33] Chapter 5 will show how the contradiction between the populist desire for immediacy and the liberal need for mediation had a negative effect on the history of Berlusconism.

The Berlusconi Voter

Chapters 1–3 looked at Berlusconism "from the top down"—its policy, its ideology, and its place in Italian history. This chapter will examine it "from the bottom up," looking at who the Berlusconi voters are and what makes them tick. These are complex issues involving millions of "ordinary" people who leave little trace and are hard to interpret. Over the last twenty years, particularly the last ten, experts in public opinion, communication, and electioneering have analyzed vast quantities of data on Italian voting behavior and provided us with a credible picture of the votes cast and the motivations behind them. This chapter aims to show how the historical interpretation of Berlusconism outlined in the first three chapters is not only confirmed by the electoral data but can shed light on some of the issues raised by the data that scholars have hitherto only partly explained.

Who Voted for Berlusconi?

Electoral studies have highlighted the relationship between the left–right split and the socioeconomic differences between self-employed workers and state employees. In the five elections that took place between 1994 and 2008, the parties and coalitions led by Berlusconi got a considerably higher percentage of votes from the self-employed and professionals and a much lower percentage from state workers, while the opposite applied to the center-left coalitions.[1] These data are particularly interesting because in the pre-*Tangentopoli* era there was no close correlation between type of employment and voting behavior; voting before *Tangentopoli* was more in terms of local political traditions ("red" communist areas versus "white" Christian Democratic ones)

than of socioeconomic criteria. The reckless use of public debt had solved potential clashes between diverging social interest groups by achieving state growth through borrowing rather than taxation of private wealth. When, for a number of reasons, public debt increased to unsustainable levels, conflict raged as to who should pay it off—should the state slim down or should civil society transfer some of its resources to the state? The *Tangentopoli* "earthquake" brought this question to the forefront of political debate: in the new bipolar setup, most of the diverse social groups that had been part of the government majority for years, particularly former Christian Democracy (DC) voters, went over to the center-right, and a minority shifted to the center-left. One of the decisive factors was employment: self-employed DC voters tended to vote for Berlusconi and state workers against him (Bellucci 1997).

These dynamics show once more how Berlusconism came about as a result of the division between the public state and private civil society. Although Berlusconism was a consequence of that division, it also strengthened and probably even widened it. The relatively broad consensus Berlusconi achieved among the self-employed and the lack of consensus among state workers suggests that voters had clearly noticed his preference for civil society and the private sector. However, the socioeconomic data does not tell us anything about the motivations behind this preference or the way it was communicated by Berlusconi, nor about how it was received by the public. As will be discussed later, studies clearly show that the Berlusconi vote was not simply a matter of social class, motivated by economic interests ("voting with your wallet"), but was based above all on political, ideological, and moral questions. Self-employed and state workers, moreover, are broad categories, yet taken together, they amount to only a quarter of the Italian electorate. How did the other three quarters vote—the private sector employees, the pensioners, the students, and the housewives? And what were their reasons? Explorations of this question need to go beyond voters' social and professional position and include other characteristics.

Electoral studies do not show the center-right electorate, especially the *Forza Italia* voter, in a particularly favorable light. This is shown in a study of the 2001 elections published in the journal *Il Mulino*: "The center-right electorate, and the *Forza Italia* electorate in particular, is *on the periphery*—in generational terms (the elderly), in social terms

(women, pensioners, the unemployed), in geographical terms (small towns), in cultural terms (people who do not read), in political terms (uninterested in politics and lacking in knowledge of politics) and even in relational terms (indicators of sociability show greater social isolation among center-right voters, particularly *Forza Italia* voters)" (Corbetta 2002, 480). The description illustrated here is particularly pointed, given that it was published in a prestigious but nonacademic journal of political debate. But even the more specialist journals paint a similar picture and not just about the 2001 elections. The center-right electorate seems to be "alienated" and "atomized," "handicapped by a lack of political and cultural resources" (Caciagli and Corbetta 2002, 440; Legnante 2002, 242). Berlusconi's strength was thus his ability to represent "Italian society as it is, in all its backwardness, traditionalism and anti-politics" (Itanes 2001, 175), and to have "freed up the average anti-political and uncivic Italian" who "sees the world of social order, collective action and politics as coming from a different planet" (Cavazza, Corbetta, and Roccato 2006, 127). Corbetta's *Mulino* article (2002, 488) concludes by describing it as "a vote which comes from deep down in our sectionalism and ideological prejudices rather than from a reasoned analysis of alternative programs. In this sense a vote for a 'new' party based on these values is 'a vote for the same old reasons.'"

   Although these claims are based on clear data, they do raise several questions of interpretation. How can we reconcile Corbetta's description with the fact, raised at the start of this chapter, that Berlusconism is strong among the self-employed—namely, in the categories that "show greater dynamism and promote change more than others" (Diamanti and Mannheimer 2002, 142–43)? On the one hand the center-right electorate is socially, culturally, and politically on the fringes, while on the other it is economically enterprising. It is alienated, atomized, and apathetic, yet it is also able to produce growth and innovation. Researchers have tended to explain this blatant contradiction by suggesting that within the Berlusconi electorate there are in fact two groups, and that Berlusconi's coalition used "a carefully mixed approach that enabled them to appeal to voters actively involved in the economy who were dissatisfied with the current political and institutional set-up . . . while at the same time using persuasive language for the more traditional part of the electorate—a constant presence in Italy's political and

electoral history" (Itanes 2001, 81; see also Itanes 2006a, 57–59; Lazar 2007, 79–83). Three findings make the theory of the "two Berlusconi electorates" even more plausible. First, electoral research highlights how socially, geographically, and culturally diverse the Berlusconi vote really is (Diamanti 2009). Second, although there are clear indications of lesser political involvement of the center-right electorate compared to the center-left, these are not huge differences in a country that is not particularly interested in politics and has little faith in the institutions.[2] Finally, the center-right, which is much stronger than the center-left in the more marginal and apolitical areas of the Italian electorate, is in fact only slightly weaker in the more central, politicized part, in which it still got a 45 percent share of the vote.[3]

Although the "two electorates" argument is certainly an important part of the narrative, it still does not tell the whole story. For a more complete picture, we need to explore the categories of *nonpolitical voters*, which make up a considerable part of the Berlusconi vote: people who say they are not interested in politics, who take very little notice of electoral campaigns, who know very little about current affairs, and who think they have no influence on institutions and distrust them. Many of these are, so to speak, *passive nonpolitical voters*—lacking in cognitive resources, on the fringes of politics, and socially, geographically, and generationally on the periphery of society. Many others, however, can be considered *active nonpolitical voters*: they are uninterested in public life not because they do not have the cognitive tools to engage with it but because they have made a deliberate choice to keep their distance from it. This may certainly be due to indifference to the common good, social egoism, selfishness, and lack of civic spirit, but it perhaps also may be due to the fact that they do not feel that they are being understood or represented, that their needs are being properly met, or that they perceive politics as distant and as having nothing to do with them.[4] A study of the 2006 elections highlights the role of this active nonpolitical element of the Berlusconi electorate and the reactive aspect of its nonpolitical orientation. It shows that active nonpolitical voters fail to participate not because they are not interested in participating but because they do not think that the kind of participation on offer works well and believe that participation *under these conditions* is a waste of time (Cavazza, Corbetta, and Roccato 2006).[5]

Viewed in this light, one might hypothesize that the Berlusconi elec-
torate is split into three groups rather than two: a group of socially
and culturally "central" voters, who are competent and interested in
politics and more relevant than some studies give them credit for, a
group of equally "central" voters who think that it is not worth spend-
ing too much time on Italian politics as it is (the active nonpolitical
voters), and a group of socially and culturally marginal voters who are
thought to be lacking in cognitive resources (the passive nonpolitical
voters). According to the Cavazza et al. study, this third section of the
Berlusconi electorate is part of the "alienated" category of voters—that
is, of socially marginal voters who feel that politics does not have any
objective consideration for them but who also believe that they them-
selves do not have the necessary subjective skills to take part in politi-
cal life. However, these alienated voters—conservative,[6] uninterested,
and politically unskilled as they are—are not so hopeless that they can-
not understand what is going on around them and cannot act on that
understanding; from 2001 to 2006, a higher percentage of these voters
than of any other category moved from the center-right to the center-
left because they were unhappy with the Berlusconi government.[7]

This statistic is worth examining more closely. All studies of voting
shifts show that from 1994 to 2008, Italian voters tended to avoid chang-
ing their vote from one coalition to another. Maybe they abstained,
maybe they changed party within a coalition, but only rarely did they
"jump the divide" (Natale 2002, 302; Schadee and Segatti 2002, 344).
Who were the voters who showed more of a tendency to switch sides
from right to left or vice versa? Research on the 1996, 2001, 2006, and
2008 elections all show the same result: "The people who change sides
are not the citizens who are well informed about the alternatives on
offer, who are interested in politics, who join in the debate and who
come to a rational decision. On the contrary, the people who change
sides are the ones who are distant from politics, who view it as specta-
tors and hear it as a confusing and distant echo" (Itanes 2006a, 76; see
also Itanes 2001, 105; Itanes 2008, 59ff.). Thus it is the "low quality"
voters who are the ones who are more prepared to change their vote
from one side to another in accordance with their assessment of the
political situation.

And what about the "high quality" voters? These are the voters who ought to have all the necessary tools to judge the success or failure of the actions of various governments, such as the 1996–2001 center-left government's decision to join the euro and its political instability, or the 2001–6 center-right government's breaking of the contract with the Italians and its political stability, or the psychodrama of the 2006–8 center-left government. Would these high quality voters make a rational decision to change their vote from one side to the other? The following extract describes their situation: "What was the social and cultural make-up of the voters who were close to a particular party in 2001? . . . Our research shows a quite *surprising* picture—that of a socially 'central' voter, educated, residing in urban areas, well-informed and interested in politics. These characteristics are unique to the Italian electorate, which in this respect is very resistant to change. In fact . . . the general trend in Western countries in the last two decades is for the educated and politically sophisticated voters not to identify with a particular party" (Maraffi 2002, 319; my italics).[8] Unlike the more developed democracies, the Italian high quality electorate tends (or tended in 2001) to identify itself with a party. This tendency would seem to mirror the tendency of the low quality voter to change sides and leads to the conclusion *that in Italy people who are interested in politics are militant about it, while people who are not militant are not interested in politics.* This picture, which scholars find so surprising, is not surprising at all when viewed from the perspective taken in the first two chapters. In a country where politics has always been divisive and polarized and has made it impossible to establish an empirically based and socially shared "truth," it is obvious that voters with a knowledge of and interest in politics rarely take a dispassionate view of the public interest and in most cases cannot avoid taking sides. This is the way of Italian intellectuals: never betray your side, not even when it deserves to be betrayed.

In this situation, the very idea of applying "high" and "low" quality to voters—*civis nobilis* and *civis marginalis* in Sani's words (Sani 2007)—has to be reconsidered. In fact, if in a secular political society, the "good" voter is one who understands politics and is sufficiently unprejudiced to change his vote in accordance with government policies and performance, we must conclude that there are very few "good" voters in Italy—less than 5 percent, according to De Sio, and growing at

a snail's pace (De Sio 2007, 149, Table 5.6). Voters who have the cognitive skills to make a free choice lack the psychological ones, while those who have the psychological skills lack the cognitive ones.

Viewed in this context, Berlusconi's success was based on his extraordinary ability to exploit an electorate that was certainly nonpolitical but as a result was also less inclined to stick to an a priori stance in favor of one party or another.[9] Further proof of the way Berlusconi managed to win votes that were relatively free from a priori judgments can be found in Ilvo Diamanti's research on electoral geography (Diamanti 2009). He identifies two patchworked "blue areas"—that is, territory in which *Forza Italia* has been particularly strong and has remained so over time. One of these areas is in the North and one in the South. They are very different, but what they have in common is that they are both areas in which the communists and all the other main parties have traditionally been weak (Diamanti 2009, 100, Fig. 4.9; 118–20). In other words, Berlusconi's party put down roots where no other party had done so before. Further analysis of Diamanti's maps highlights another interesting point about *Forza Italia*'s roots in the South: their distribution overlaps significantly with that of the *Uomo qualunque* movement in the 1946 elections. *Forza Italia* did not necessarily put down roots in all the areas where UQ had been successful half a century before, but UQ had been successful in all the areas in which FI was strong.[10] This suggests that if *Forza Italia* is connected to a previous tradition, it is the long-standing antipolitical tradition we need to look at.

In sum, the Italian political arena of the last twenty years also seems to be divided up in terms of *the degree of importance attached to the political arena itself.* The center-right coalitions and parties led by Berlusconi got more support from voters who invested little cognitive and psychological energy in politics, either because they had very little to invest in the first place or because they preferred to channel it in other directions—that is, a less knowledgeable vote but also a less prejudiced one. The left-wing parties opposed to Berlusconi, on the other hand, got more support from voters who invested a reasonable amount of cognitive and psychological energy in politics—that is, a more knowledgeable vote but a more biased one. Itanes's research on the origins of the difference between left and right in Italy (2006b, 124–26), which works on individual self-definitions of "left" and "right" rather than on the electorates, confirms this asymmetry, which, as has already been

suggested, seems to be deeply rooted. Studies of the electorate thus seem to reinforce the argument in Chapters 2 and 3 regarding the development of the relationship between antipolitics and the right during the republican era before and after *Tangentopoli*. They show that opposition to the republican parties and their corrective programs, which first became apparent with the UQ movement, has continued over time and that there is a connection, though not a perfect overlap, between this opposition and the left–right split. It is a connection that is both theoretical, since the left believed much more than the right in the transforming power of the state, and historical: given that the republican parties were antifascist and in theory progressive, those who disliked them had no other choice than to be antiprogressive and anti-antifascist.

Why Did People Vote for Berlusconi?

Considering all this, Berlusconi's ability to galvanize voters has been remarkable. Not only did he attract voters who were not very interested in politics, but he did so not by trying to change their antipolitical mind-set but by reinforcing it, almost as if he was trying to sell a used car to a buyer who thought he did not really need it by highlighting its many defects. One of the main driving forces behind this "miracle" was undoubtedly his leadership. The verdict of research on this topic has been unanimous: in surveys of the 2006 election, more than a third of those who had voted for Berlusconi's coalition (*Casa delle Libertà*; CdL) and half of the FI voters declared that their vote had been motivated mainly by the leader, compared to only one seventh of those who had chosen the left-wing alliance.[11] As well as showing the effect of Berlusconi's leadership on the CdL vote, studies also show clearly that leadership counted for a lot more among voters who said they were right-wing or center-right as well as for people who were not very interested in politics and lacking in cognitive resources (Itanes 2001, 135ff.; Itanes 2006b, 166–60; Barisione 2007, 170–71; Sani 2010). This correlation is partly due to the more authoritarian tendencies of the right, but it also shows that strong leadership is particularly suited to winning over the nonpolitical vote because of its promise to simplify public life (Taggart 1995 and 2002, 164–77).

Although it can be argued that Berlusconi's personal charisma was in itself a key factor in his success, this does not mean that the Berlusconi electorate believed all his electoral promises. Unlike the stereotype of the charismatic leader and the gullible electorate—Umberto Eco's "fascinated voters"—many center-right voters were careful not to fall in love with Berlusconi (Itanes 2006b, 124–26; see also Diamanti and Lazar 2002; Lazar 2007, 31). They were extremely prudent and thought that they should give him a chance to show what he could do and/ or that the alternatives were even less attractive then he was. The non-political vote was thus a fragile addition to the Berlusconi electorate and its interest was only lukewarm. This was only to be expected, since these voters invested very little intellectual or emotional energy in politics and did so very cautiously.

The part played by television in keeping Berlusconi in touch with his electorate is obvious. In 2001 the center-left coalition got far more votes from those who got political information from newspapers but fewer from those who got it from television (Itanes 2001, 122–23). However, the relationship between voting preference and television use is much less obvious. The correlation between time spent watching television and voting preference, for example, does not seem to be significant. To take one example, the highest point of difference between the CdL and the left-wing coalition was registered as *most favorable to the CdL* for *those who did not watch political broadcasting on television* (Legnante 2002, 247).[12] The strongest correlation was between vote and preferred television network: right-wing voters preferred Berlusconi's three Mediaset channels, while left-wing voters preferred the three state-owned RAI channels. Research tends to rule out the theory that this correlation is due to the immediate persuasive powers of the electoral propaganda put out by Berlusconi's television networks, because the effect is visible over the long term. It is more plausible that the correlation is not one way—from television to politics ("I vote for Berlusconi because I watch Mediaset")—but two way ("I watch Mediaset because I vote for Berlusconi"), and it thus seems more likely that both voting preference and television preference are based on previous, more general value judgments.[13] This is a further sign, and perhaps the clearest of all, that the core of political Berlusconism is rooted in the gap between public and private—that is, a point-blank rejection of politics

and parties by one section of the country in the name of the autonomy of the market and civil society. The Berlusconi voter objected to the way RAI had been taken over by political parties, its overspending, its dull, self-referential obsession with domestic politics, and its license fee, but above all to the way that politics had been using it for decades as its own personal pedagogical instrument aimed at "bringing the Italians out of the jungle."[14]

Leadership and television are hardly an original way to explain Berlusconi's success. However, surveys of the 2001 election show some surprising findings. The center-right electorate, though lacking in cognitive skills, had clearer ideas than the other electorates as to why they had voted in the way they did; they could point out very specific issues that had motivated their choice and had given great importance to the program—an aspect of elections generally requiring "the most complex cognitive mindset . . . the highest level of intellectual skill and mobilization" (Maraffi 2002, 337–38; see also Legnante 2002)[15]—as well as to the leadership. It is highly likely that in 2001 the incongruence between the Berlusconi electorate's lack of competence or interest on the one hand and its care and skill in coming to a voting decision on the other is to be attributed to the effectiveness of Berlusconi's political campaign, which, as shown in his "Contract with the Italians," was precise, well-timed, incisive, and clear in its priorities (Legnante 2002, 269).[16]

However, for the electoral campaign and the contract to be effective, the electorate on the receiving end needed to be susceptible to reason—that is, reasonably unprejudiced. What we have just dubbed an incongruence—the fact that Berlusconi voters, lacking in political acumen, were more interested in electoral programs and better able to articulate the motives behind their choice than other voters—may be only an *apparent* incongruence. Although their political commitment and cognitive skills were modest, they were also the most open-minded and least biased voters, whereas the more skilled left-wing voters were more partisan: they voted on the basis of party loyalty first and coalition preference second, and they were therefore less able to give a specific reason for their vote and less interested in programs (Maraffi 2002, 306).

Politics and programs were thus a relevant component in Berlusconi's electoral success. If one also accepts the argument that Berlusconi

was a "program-person,"[17] the "embodiment" of a political program, then even the importance that leadership had in motivating his voters may also have been a question of political reasoning and not just of faith. If we consider Berlusconism from the point of view of its electorate, its political contents can be illustrated by two intersecting circles—a right-wing circle and a liberal circle—all contained within an ellipse of anticommunism. These are the same components as those described in the analysis of Berlusconi's speeches (Chapter 3), though the relative strength of each is different—the "top down" political supply was certainly less right-wing and more liberal than the "bottom up" political demand.

It has already been noted that the center-left and center-right coalitions were impervious to change—very few votes changed sides between elections. Not only were the two voting blocs stable, but this stability was the product of the years before 1994. The crisis period of the early 1990s shook the Italian party system to the core, but it did not weaken the barrier that had separated the parties of government from the left-wing opposition parties during the Cold War. Research shows clearly that the voting blocs remained stable from the first election after *Tangentopoli*, in which the left was unable to take advantage of a huge shift in votes that took place almost entirely between the center and the right, up through to the 2008 election (Bartolini and D'Alimonte 1995, 448–49; Segatti 1997, 226–28; Diamanti 2009, 200–220). It is fairly clear that the early stabilization of the center-left and center-right blocks that started in 1994 was dependent on the fact that the split between the two coalitions had not happened in a vacuum but had been based on previous differences. This seemed "to crystalize age-old arguments and divisions rather than reflect new points of difference" (Schadee and Segatti 2002, 365–66).

Diamanti has half-jokingly referred to the Berlin Wall as having been replaced by an "Arcore wall"—Arcore being the small Lombard town where Berlusconi has his most important place of residence (Diamanti 2009, 200–220). This echoes a previous claim made by Sani and Segatti (2002, 272–73) that "the inertia of the past" had been "perhaps facilitated by the fact that the main protagonist of the 1994 elections [Berlusconi] had never stopped repeating that behind the new facade of the other coalition (the Progressives) was the 'same old' communist

opposition. Looking at the results, Berlusconi's decision to baptize the new Italian left in very old water was an effective one." Berlusconi certainly played a significant part in keeping anticommunism alive beyond 1989 and 1994 and in making the "inertia of the past" even stronger, but given the extent of anticommunism, it is difficult to believe that it had not already been there; Berlusconi discovered anticommunism and amplified it, but he did not create it. According to Itanes's data, more than half the voters in 2004 who said they were right-wing also said they were "very" or "quite" afraid of communism. This percentage had certainly increased after a decade of Berlusconi propaganda, but it was still too high not to have been rooted in a genuine fear. Regarding the inertia of the past, Itanes's data also show that when left-wing voters were asked to define themselves more clearly, a third of them chose to call themselves "communist." Rather than being "made in Arcore," the political wall in the last twenty years seems to have been "made in Italy" (Itanes 2006b, 112 and 50).[18]

Alongside the thread of anticommunist sentiment that continued after the decline of international communism and the collapse of the republican party system, there is also a marked discontinuity regarding the Italians' perception of their own political position on the left–right continuum. Between the end of 1993 and early 1996, the percentage of Italians who positioned themselves on the center ground decreased considerably. What was lost by the center (the 12 percent of interviewees) was gained by the center-right and the extreme right until by the mid-1990s the number of voters on the right equaled the number on the left. This left–right equivalence was a totally new phenomenon (Baldassarri 2007; but see also Chiarini 1995, 154–56; and Biorcio 2010b). Once again the development of political society had followed in the footsteps of a changing party system: a center party, the DC, disappeared and a center-right party, *Forza Italia*, appeared; the neofascist MSI became "officially respectable"; and the voters changed their political self-perception because the parties had changed position. The change, however, was too sudden for there not to be other factors involved, and this is a further demonstration of the argument of Chapters 2 and 3. A considerable portion of the electorate voted for the governing parties, particularly the DC, without liking them or feeling that they were truly being represented by them because they felt

themselves to be more right-wing than the parties were. When asked, they said they were "from the center" out of habit or political correctness, but as soon as they were given the chance, it took them only a few months to change their wardrobe and put on right-wing clothes. These clothes were presumably more comfortable to them and would probably have been worn earlier if they had not been regarded as distasteful.

Research shows clearly that a considerable part of the Berlusconi coalition and party vote shared values that are traditionally regarded as right-wing. On issues such as the death penalty, immigration, homosexual couples, or the teaching of religion in schools, the center-right and center-left electorates were not always diametrically opposed, but they were still visibly different (see Itanes 2001, 71ff.; Cartocci 2002; Itanes 2006a, 158; Maraffi 2007b). More generally, the Italians showed a rather high level of coherence between their overall political profile and their voting habits: the vote may not have reflected a particularly refined choice, but it was not lacking in logic (Bellucci 2002; Sani 2007; Bellucci, Segatti, Schadee, and Barisione 2010; Schadee, Segatti, and Bellucci 2010). Generally speaking, on these issues the electorates of *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Forza Italia* had a fairly closely aligned, right-wing orientation; there were a few exceptions, such as AN's lesser interest in Catholic and church questions. However, this was not the case with regard to parameters showing "closeness to" or "distance from" politics. According to the 2001 data, if we look at "political interest," "knowledge of and participation in politics," "electoral campaign interest," and "party affinity," the AN voter profile was almost identical to that of the main party of the left, the *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS), and was much more politicized than that of *Forza Italia*.[19]

It was claimed before that the split between politics and antipolitics was connected to the split between left and right but did not completely overlap with it. The 2001 comparative data regarding AN and FI shows one of the reasons why this is the case. Between the 1940s and the 1980s, the neofascist tradition inherited by AN had opposed the governing parties because it wanted a different kind of politics, not less of it. It was hyperpolitics-in-reverse they were looking for, not the opposite of hyperpolitics. As scholars have suggested (Sani 2002, 279–80),[20] AN voters clearly considered leadership much less important than FI voters did, because the leader of the coalition was not the leader of

their party, whereas for FI he was. However, AN voters may also have attributed less importance to leadership because Berlusconi's leadership was inextricably linked to a hypopolitical message that they found unacceptable even though they were voting for his coalition.

Finally, alongside the right-wing circle and partly in overlap with it, we find the liberal circle, mostly made up of economic liberalism. This liberal component also had a considerable impact on the Berlusconi vote. First, economic policy programs and their relative levels of liberalism/statism played a conspicuous part in the electoral campaigns— more so in the 1990s than in the 2000s (Bellucci 1997; Sani and Segatti 1997; Legnante and Sani 2002). Second, opinion surveys show that assertions like "we need to lower taxes even if it means reducing public services," "businesses should be more free to hire and fire," or "the health service should be privatized" clearly separated center-left and center-right voters, even though the gap was reduced over time and especially in 2008, as will be shown in Chapter 5.[21] Third, the liberal ideological component also influenced the vote independently of voters' socioeconomic status. As already noted, Berlusconi got a considerable number of votes from entrepreneurs and the self-employed. Within these professional categories, however, his percentages were much higher among voters who also supported his liberalizing program.[22] More generally, it should also be noted that Itanes's 2004 data show that when interviewees who defined themselves as right-wing were asked to use more specific adjectives to define their political orientation, 50 percent of them included, among others, the adjective "liberal." When asked to mention a single defining adjective, more than 11 percent chose "liberalism" (Itanes 2006b, 50 and 58, Tables 2.1 and 2.3).[23] These are clear signs not only of the impact of Berlusconism but also of a "groundswell of support" for liberalism going back to the 1980s (Bellucci and Petrarca 2007, 217).

The Politics of Skepticism

Why was the Berlusconi program so successful for so long? What historical conditions made the core policies of Berlusconism so attractive to the Italians? Research has highlighted a number of factors. Clearly the resources at his disposal for communicating his message were critical:

his political career would have been impossible without the money, the business, and particularly the television stations. It is equally clear that a great deal can be explained by the immediate historical context of the early 1990s, when he first entered the political arena. The cultural transformation of the 1980s, when the positive aspects and self-sufficiency of civil society and the market economy came to the fore and when the state was regarded as part of the problem rather than the solution, played an important role. *Tangentopoli* was another key ingredient, because it opened up a political gap on the right by removing the traditional representatives of voters who were more instinctively aligned with Berlusconi than with the parties that had catered for them until then. *Tangentopoli* also changed the terms of the anticommunist debate by taking it beyond 1989. It weakened the parties, the Republic, and the antifascist ideology that had nourished them since the 1960s, and it allowed a new kind of hypopolitical, antiparty, and anti-antifascist discourse to develop.

Compared to other studies, two further arguments explaining Berlusconi's success are put forward here. The first is that Berlusconi's success and above all his durability were not just a question of the available resources (money, business, television) but because the message itself contained real political substance. The second is that the political substance had a long history, and that at the heart of the Berlusconi phenomenon was an extraordinarily effective mix of continuity and discontinuity with Italian history since unification. Berlusconism was able to become part of the national political tradition by addressing some of its basic questions while at the same time completely turning it around with policies that were new and convincing at that time.

The main question of the national political tradition that Berlusconi tried to answer was the Platonic one—how to identify a virtuous new elite that would finally be able to solve the country's problems. Discontinuity in this case would have meant emphasizing the role of the institutions and the idea that the elites should alternate in power according to the wishes of the voters. Berlusconi's decision in favor of continuity was a winning one. It is much more comprehensible to Italian voters to say, as he did, that you will deal with problems immediately and personally than to suggest a rethink of how problems should get solved. Berlusconi was also able to exploit the strength of continuity by

making use of the traditional Italian way of confronting public problems; by presenting his own leadership and putting forward the idea that a new political class would emerge from civil society without any form of mediation, he was using language that was perfectly comprehensible to potential voters. This was because the elite had trained the public to look not at how institutions were organized but at who was in power—and even more at who should be excluded from power. The elite had also deluded them into thinking that once the right people were in power, all the country's problems would be quickly resolved, as if by magic.

By virtue of this populist "immediacy," Berlusconi certainly made exaggerated promises to the electorate. Yet the Italian public pinning its faith on the healing powers of a regime change had not started with Berlusconi. There had been similar hopes in the early 1960s after the rise of the center-left, even though in this case the so-called circulation of the elites had consisted merely in removing the liberal 3 percent from government, including the socialist 14 percent, and keeping the 48 percent of Christian Democrats, republicans, and social democrats firmly on board. In sum, questions of leadership, anticommunism, and the "magic" of Berlusconism were effective in the ballot box because they talked about "virtues" and "vices"—a rhetoric that the Italians had been well versed in and understood only too well.

Berlusconi's basic question was thus in line with the Italian tradition, but his answer turned the traditional Italian approach on its head. His claim that civil society was positive and that it should give rise to a non-Jacobin political class was a sharp break in the Italian political tradition. This form of discontinuity was as successful at the polls as the continuity discussed before. The inability of the corrective and pedagogical programs to resolve the Italian question played its part in making Berlusconian discontinuity seem attractive. Recent events like the collapse of the antifascist Republic were clearly influential in this, but viewed over the long term, the failure of fascism and even the more distant failure of liberal Italy also had an effect. As already shown, Berlusconism exploited a vein of dissatisfaction that had been apparent since the emergence of the UQ movement in the 1940s and UQ's rejection of fascism and antifascism in their hyperpolitical, revolutionary, and totalitarian forms.

Comparison with the UQ movement is also helpful when looking at the position of Berlusconism in Italian history. Giannini's form of *qualunquismo*, which Chapter 2 has shown to be extremely positive about the ability of civil society to progress autonomously, is the closest precursor to Berlusconism. It viewed society as a set of individuals rather than an organic, historical, or ethnic structure, and it reduced the space available to politics and the state to a minimum. The UQ movement, however, was a "flash in the pan" minority, whereas Berlusconi's parties won elections, supported governments, and were a significant part of the history of Italy for two decades. The differing fortunes of the two movements can partly be explained by their different structures: UQ was a Southern phenomenon, while Berlusconism came from the North—Lombardy in particular. Berlusconi had economic, organizational, and communicative resources that Giannini could only dream about; UQ was more aggressively antipolitical than FI and so suffered more from the consequences of the contradiction of any political movement whose rhetoric rejects political methods.

The failure of UQ and the success of Berlusconism can also be explained by their different historical contexts, both global and national. As Augusto Del Noce noted at the time, UQ's decision to reject politics at the start of the Cold War, when vitally important political decisions were being made, was a losing proposition, and it was no accident that the DC used anticommunism as a way of winning back votes from UQ. FI's hypopolitical stance after the fall of the Berlin Wall at a time when globalization was in the ascendency was more in line with the spirit of the age. As regards the context at a national level, Berlusconism also had two huge advantages over UQ. First, it was much easier to project a positive belief in the ability of Italian civil society to progress in the 1990s than in the late 1940s; Berlusconi could indulge in rhetoric about a "new Italian miracle," recalling memories of the 1950s and 1960s, while Giannini obviously could not. Second, party-based democracy had not yet been tried in 1945–48 and so had not yet failed. A representative oligarchic regime had been tried but had not been able to withstand the impact of the processes of democratization and the political storm at the end of the First World War. A mass single-party regime had been tried, but it had been devoured by its own ideological ambitions. But a pluralistic and representative regime of universal suffrage had not been

tried, and it was possible to argue against supporters of antipolitics at the end of the Second World War that this kind of mature, democratic politics was unknown in Italy. In 1994 this objection was impossible to make. Comparison with UQ thus shows how important it was for the success of Berlusconism that it arrived after the collapse of the republican version of the corrective and pedagogical tradition and was able to exploit not only the post-*Tangentopoli* political vacuum but the deeper structural malaise that had afflicted Italy since unification.

In Oakeshott's terms, Berlusconi was able to embark on a politics of skepticism in Italy because of the failure of various versions of the politics of faith, and it can now be argued that *skeptical* is the most suitable adjective to define the Berlusconi voter. In order to describe the Berlusconi electorate, scholars have normally used the "average Italian" stereotype. A number of such definitions were quoted at the beginning of this chapter: the Berlusconi voter is supposedly antipolitical, alien, and hostile "to the world of social order, collective action and political representation." Economist Paolo Sylos Labini has gone even further, describing it as a "petty bourgeoisie" whose main aim is "to make money by any possible means—it is almost a creed. Acquisition is a categorical imperative: luxury, social prestige, sexual conquest" (Sylos Labini 2006, xxiv–xxv). Even Roberto Chiarini, a historian who is not prejudiced against anti-antifascist Italy, has highlighted the Berlusconi electorate's lack of civic sense and excessive individualism (Chiarini 1995, 69–75).

However, since we are dealing with millions of voters spanning a number of decades, there must be some doubt as to the full reliability of these descriptions. In the first place, the idea that the average Italian is antipolitical flies in the face of the fact that Italian history is drenched in politics and often in hyperpolitics.[24] The results of the studies of the Berlusconi electorate analyzed throughout this chapter are certainly compatible with the stereotype described before, but that stereotype is not the only possible way to make sense of them. From a politics-of-faith perspective, the results confirm the stereotype, because in the politics of faith, politics is always on the side of the truth and any rejection of politics must be wrong—the consequence of a lack of morality or of understanding. From a politics-of-skepticism perspective, however, a different picture emerges: lack of political commitment is not caused by an "original sin" of lack of civic sense, but by a reaction (which may be exaggerated and

aimless but is not without reason) against a kind of politics that is not at all always on the side of the truth.

The Berlusconi voter, at least to some extent, rejects politics *a posteriori*, not *a priori*. It is the attempt of common men and common women (the latter above all, since the Berlusconi electorate is more female than male) to protect themselves against the failures of the elites that have governed Italy for 150 years. We saw in Chapter 1, quoting Ignazio Silone, that the contrast between a healthy private life and a corrupt public sphere is one of the most glaring negative features of the Italian question. Silone, who was more intelligent than most and was coming of age at a time when the politics of faith was at its height, found a hyperpolitical emergency exit from this contradiction in communism (though he came to regret this choice). But for many other ordinary people in more skeptical eras, the emergency exit was to return to their families and private lives and to have as little to do with politics as possible.

For all these reasons, *skeptical* describes the Berlusconi electorate better than the worn-out stereotype of the "average Italian." As a concept it is less prejudiced against antipolitics and therefore allows for a much deeper understanding of Berlusconi's success, which remains to a certain extent impervious to stereotypical explanations. The *skeptical* label does not rule out the possibility that stereotypes are true—namely, the degeneration of skepticism into cynicism and a lack of civic sense—but it considers them to be a possibility, not a necessity. Stereotypes might and quite often do turn out to be true, but *this does not happen all the time and is not inevitable*.

Berlusconi was successful because the *contents* of his skeptical program were in line with the desires of a skeptical electorate. However, the *form* in which the contents were presented was not at all skeptical. It was the hyperbolic form that was typical of the politics of faith, and it was presented as the final, perfect solution to the age-old Italian problems. Even though, as has been shown, these claims were themselves treated with some skepticism by the electorate, Berlusconi's strength was in his extraordinary ability to politicize antipolitics (Cantarano 2000)—that is, to propose a political utopia based on the marginalization of politics. The mobilization of the collective aimed to reduce the power of the collective. In this politicizing of antipolitics, Berlusconism

is a link between the twentieth century and what might be called the "post-twentieth century."[25] French historian Pierre Rosanvallon has well described the "counterdemocracy" of our contemporary age—the prevalence of suspicious, critical, and destructive attitudes to politics, allied to an inability "to develop a comprehensive understanding of problems associated with the organization of a shared world" (Rosanvallon 2008, 22). This negative post-twentieth-century component has certainly been present in Berlusconism, but it cannot be claimed that Berlusconism, despite its significant contradictions, did not address problems from a comprehensive perspective or provide Italians with a program for organizing a shared world. For this reason, Berlusconism can to a certain extent be considered the last political child of the Italian twentieth century. The convergence of both critical and constructive elements in Berlusconism suggests that we are dealing with a classical phenomenon of transition that remixes aspects of the recent and remote past and transforms them into something new and forward-looking. It is no accident, then, that Berlusconism spiritually belongs to an age of transition such as the 1980s. The politics of Berlusconism is the last of the many proposed solutions to the Italian question, and its failure, which will be discussed in Chapter 5, leaves behind a vacuum that is even larger than the one it had set out to fill.

5

The Rise and Fall of Berlusconism

When analyzing political phenomena from a historical perspective, it is as dangerous to talk about "failure" as it is to talk about "necessity." In relation to what, for example, is a particular movement or person or party supposed to have failed? Did it fail because it did not get the results it had set out to get? Or because it did not do what scholars writing with the benefit of hindsight think it should have done? Or because it degenerated over time? Or because it did not leave a worthwhile legacy? Questions like these are always answered on a number of different levels and never with a simple or unanimous conclusion.

In many ways, to call Berlusconism a failure would be absurd, particularly in terms of its political presence. It won three national elections and innumerable others at European and local levels. It provided Italy with four governments that lasted for a total of almost ten years and left a profound mark on Italian political history for twenty years. It defined an era that future historians will probably call "Berlusconian" (Gibelli 2010, 6–7), putting Berlusconi alongside only three other Italian politicians (Crispi, Giolitti, and De Gasperi) who have given their name to a particular historical period, albeit a shorter one. Furthermore, as previous chapters have shown, Berlusconism has had an effect on Italian political life that can be regarded as both coherent with its objectives and in some ways beneficial. By politicizing antipolitics, Berlusconi was able to involve parts of society in public life that very few people had been able to reach; he restored representation for the anti-antifascist right, aligning elite ideology more closely with society's values, and thereby partially closing the gap that had already been present in 1945

and that the changes of the 1960s had made even more evident. Above all, Berlusconism created the conditions for a bipolar political system with opposing sides alternating in power.

On the other hand, the prevailing assessment of the policies enacted by Berlusconi's governments is negative.[1] However, it is with a less specific and more profound kind of failure that this chapter is concerned. If, as has already been argued, the aim of Berlusconism was to provide an original solution to the long-standing Italian problem of the relationship between the real and the legal country by turning the traditional corrective and pedagogical approach on its head and emphasizing the positive and autonomous character of civil society, then it was clearly not achieved. In November 2011, when the fourth Berlusconi government fell, the country was in the same political position as it had been in 1992–94, but the situation was even more serious (Bosco and McDonnell 2012). There was political upheaval, fragmentation and paralysis of political parties, continuous episodes of corruption and bad government—more so on the Berlusconian side than elsewhere—with inadequate institutions that could not be reformed, rejection of traditional parties by public opinion, and strong antipolitical movements.

It can of course be argued that the Italian question is very difficult to solve, that the Berlusconi solution needed different conditions and more time in order to work, or that little else could have been done. This is certainly the case, but it is also true that Berlusconi had promised the country a definitive solution, and that this promise, which had played a crucial part in his political success, was not kept. Berlusconi himself has admitted implicitly as much in his speeches since 2005, in his electoral campaigns of 2006 and 2008, and even in his 2007–8 decision to found a new party, the *Popolo della Libertà* (PdL). Public opinion and electoral studies have shown that the Italians, even Berlusconi's own supporters, shared the view that Berlusconism had failed.

This chapter will explore the reasons for the failure of Berlusconism over four phases. The first three each came after an election: the "revolutionary Berlusconism" of 1994–96, the "consolidation of Berlusconism" from 1996 to 2001, and the "Berlusconism of government" from 2001 to 2006. The fourth stage began in 2006 and is the most problematic, because it is not yet over. It is argued here that the period between the

regional elections of 2005 and the political elections of 2006 is the turning point in the history of Berlusconism—the moment when it became clear that the Italian question could not be solved and Berlusconism's policies changed markedly as a result. This was the moment when Berlusconism, as we have defined it here, came to an end. The remaining years were simply a residue of Berlusconi without Berlusconism.

1994: Revolutionary Berlusconism

The high point of Berlusconism—when its distinctive features were at their strongest—was at the start. The spirit of 1994 was embodied by the fall of the Berlin Wall and by a sense of optimism regarding globalization. Italy had suffered the collapse of the republican party system—an event that had been traumatic but had also inculcated hope for a fresh start and a new solution to the Italian question. Berlusconi had intercepted this desire for change by using a message that was not just plausible and coherent but also exciting. As already shown in Chapter 3, many people in the early 1990s, and not only on the right, were convinced that civil society would be able to support the renewal process. This general air of confidence suggested that the entrepreneurial class would be able to point Italy in the right direction, and it also united the populist and liberal sides of Berlusconism. Italy had been undergoing social, economic, and cultural changes since the 1980s and seemed finally ready for freedom from the state and self-determination without having it forced down its throat.

The fall of the first Berlusconi government at the end of 1994, after a mere eight months in office, was a wake-up call and a lesson that Berlusconi would never forget (Gentili 2011, 64). His 1994 government had failed to turn the tide of Italian history for two main reasons—because it lacked the resources to do so, and because of the violent reaction that its attempt was destined to provoke. Berlusconism lacked resources in a number of ways. First, it did not command enough *political* resources. Even if the country had been able to govern itself in the way that Berlusconi said it would, which is doubtful at the very least, the training and selection of a new political elite (i.e., the transformation of the managerial acumen of the entrepreneurial class into political skill) was not something that could take place overnight.[2] While waiting for this

to happen, Berlusconism had to make do with the political culture and class that had survived the *Tangentopoli* storm. Inevitably this was of poor quality because culturally the right had produced very little for thirty years, while politically it had been ruled by a governing class that had been destroyed and delegitimized by the judges.

However, the main reason for the poverty of Berlusconi's political resources was that his hypopolitics had deliberately chosen to act in discontinuity with 150 years of Italian history. This will become clear if we look briefly at the situation in the United Kingdom and the United States—the political models that Berlusconi claimed to be following. In the 1960s and 1970s, the American Republicans and British Conservatives maybe got fewer votes than they had in other historical periods, but they were certainly not political or institutional outsiders. Important ideological work had been carried out, for instance by British think tanks such as the *Centre for Policy Studies*, the *Institute for Economic Affairs*, and the *Adam Smith Institute*, which Thatcherite governments would take advantage of later. In Italy, none of this kind of work had taken place.[3] Moreover, in both the United States and the United Kingdom there is a strong political tradition defending the autonomy of the individual, civil society, and the market against state encroachment. Oakeshott has shown that the politics of skepticism cannot be viewed as "merely an opposition to the politics of faith"; it is an autonomous political option based on "ancient traditions . . . patiently considered and reconsidered in each generation and applied to the current situations of the modern world"—this is the case "at least in England" (Oakeshott 1996, 89). In Italy, the political traditions based on skepticism rather than on faith are extremely fragile, and the kind of politics they have embodied has been mainly negative and defensive. Italian skepticism has not been a culture of government but a culture of protest against multiple versions of the politics of faith.

Second, in 1994 Berlusconi did not command enough *institutional* resources, because public institutions were strongly opposed to him and wanted to get rid of him as quickly as possible (Pilati 1997; Capano and Giuliani 2003; Roncarolo 2007; Salvati 2011, 119–21). Berlusconi's impatience with this kind of institutional barrier was highlighted at the end of Chapter 3. He believed that unmediated consensus around a leader should immediately be transformed into executive decisions and

viewed any limitation on his decisions as a violation of popular sover-eignty. This impatience has been attributed to Berlusconi's populism—his desire for immediacy and rejection of complexity as well as his conviction that all-embracing solutions could be achieved through the speed and efficiency of new, nonprofessional politicians and their leader. However, Berlusconi was also operating at a time when the Ital-ian system of institutional checks and balances counted for much more than the decision-making system. This had already been the case at the start of the Republic, and it had become increasingly so during the 1960s and 1970s, as institutional powers of veto had encroached on the public space to the extent that it could only be politically sustained through an economically unsustainable use of public funds. In this light, Berlusconi's impatience with institutional checks can be regarded less as abstract populism and more as a protest at the specific Italian situation. It was a request for simplification but also for a rebalancing of priorities.

Third, since 1994 there has been an extraordinarily intense and long-lasting hostility to Berlusconism in the higher echelons of Italian public opinion.[4] This animosity, which includes books, newspaper and magazine articles, satire, films, talk shows, tweets, and Facebook posts often bordering on the hysterical, is documented in the electoral stud-ies analyzed in Chapter 4. Put very simply, of all the political "objects" in circulation, Berlusconi was the one with the strongest emotional charge. These emotions were also largely negative, since Berlusconi seems to have been detested far more strongly by the left than he was loved by the right. Itanes's data (2004) show that more than 75 percent of the center-left electorate said they were afraid of him; this percentage was much higher than that of the center-right electorate who said that they feared communism (Itanes 2006b, 109–12; Barisione 2007).

The violence of anti-Berlusconism is not incomprehensible, and not simply because of Berlusconism's manifest flaws. State elites, who had been trained and had for decades been used to regarding themselves as modern-day guides for a backward society, could not forgive the radical paradigm shift that Berlusconi had put in place. The intellectual elites were even less forgiving, since their sense of moral superiority toward a country they despised (the term *despise* is an extreme one, but it is not inappropriate) was an essential component of their identity

and self-perception. For them, politics was the only form of collective action possible for pursuing the common good and building a "normal" country, and the way in which Berlusconi justified and openly encouraged the Italians to avoid politics was intolerable to their way of thinking. They could not possibly accept that their status and role could be diminished or mocked by Berlusconi's message, nor that they could be replaced by a new elite from the world of private business and industry, which they had always viewed with condescension and even hostility. Since, as has been argued, Berlusconism was a radical form of discontinuity with the past, it was inevitably going to provoke an equally radical response.

This reaction took the form of an implacable attempt to occupy the moral high ground and have a monopoly on "truth." The anti-Berlusconian elites showed themselves unable to consider the motivations of others (by "others" is meant at least half the country) or to reflect critically about themselves, their errors, and the clear historical limitations in their approach to the Italian question. For instance, they generally avoided asking how much of the ethical crisis of the early 1990s came from within the republican culture, and often from its "better" part. In a reversal of Gavroche's irony in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* ("*Je suis tombé par terre, c'est la faute à Voltaire*"), the anti-Berlusconian elites never thought that any blame could ever be attributed to Voltaire (i.e., to progressive intellectuals and culture) or to politics as a tool for improving the world. Instead they continued to attribute it to the cynical, individualistic, and antisocial part of Italian society that was so obstinately reluctant to submit itself to the diktats of progressive intellectuals and their culture. If progressive thinking was regarded as "not just irrepressible but also incorruptible . . . always true" (Valiani 1955, 111), Berlusconism appeared to them to be not just an error *of* culture but an error *against* culture—an intolerable obscenity and an absolute evil, as fascism had been (Del Noce 1993 and 1995). Removing this political cancer became an urgent, ethical imperative for the elites that was more important than anything else—so important in fact that it became the excuse for subordinating the very institutions and the very legality that the elites had so consistently (and rightly) criticized Berlusconi for ignoring. In the clash between Berlusconism and anti-Berlusconism, in Ennio Flaiano's (1996) words, the truth was

liquefied. To put it another way, paraphrasing Flaiano once again, since 1994 there have been two types of Berlusconism in Italy—that of the Berlusconians and that of the anti-Berlusconians.

The violent reaction against Berlusconi restricted his sphere of action because it came from within the social and professional classes— journalists, teachers, intellectuals, and bureaucrats—against whose will it is difficult to govern a country, because they make up the backbone of the state. Here the argument about anti-Berlusconism reconnects to the argument about the lack of political and institutional resources that Berlusconi could command. The Italian state machine was not only much more careful about guaranteeing rights and counterbalancing powers than making decisions; it was also imbued with a culture and with personnel who were against Berlusconism—the very same culture and people that Berlusconism had arisen against. Two electoral indicators, mentioned in Chapter 4, show how widespread the perception of this mutual hostility was. The voting patterns of state employees since 1994 leaned strongly toward the left, whereas the center-right electorate consistently stated that it had very little faith in the institutions— bureaucracy, Parliament, President of the Republic, magistrates, public broadcasting, and so on (Cartocci 2002). This was probably due to the fact that right-wing voters were generally (and not only in Italy) more diffident than left-wing voters and less convinced that they could influence state decisions (Itanes 2006b, 151ff.), and it was partly a consequence of Berlusconi's propaganda. However, it could also be argued that Berlusconism did not create these sentiments but merely reflected and enhanced a right-wing view, already present in Italian culture, that Italian institutions were biased toward the left. By politicizing antipolitics and making the Italian right respectable again, Berlusconi was trying to take control of the public institutions in order to turn them in on themselves. The institutions, quite understandably, put up as much political, cultural, and corporative resistance as they could.

In any discussion of the anti-Berlusconism of the state institutions and the categories working within them, it is impossible not to mention the judiciary. Chapter 3 has explained why Berlusconi's legal problems were not an important issue for his voters and shown how they confirmed his status as a "victim" of the state apparatus, strengthening his appeal as a representative of people/civil society against the institutions.

It was also claimed that this was connected to the widespread convic-
tion among the Berlusconi electorate that part of the judiciary had
become just another of the many Italian clans and was committed to
protecting its own interests rather than the laws and institutions.

Two further points can be made on this subject. First, one does not
need a conspiracy theory to see how, starting with *Tangentopoli*, part of
the judiciary had taken up an objectively strong political role. The "liq-
uefying" of the truth, brought about by the clash between Berlusconism
and anti-Berlusconism, had produced an inextricable link between the
political and the judiciary.[5] On the one hand, there was the politiciza-
tion and mediatization of judicial investigations. This is exemplified
in the episode of the subpoena sent by the Milan prosecutors, publi-
cized by the *Corriere della Sera* and served on Berlusconi in November
1994 while he was chairing a UN summit on organized crime, or in the
widespread use of telephone tapping, which in any other liberal juris-
diction would be considered an abuse of power. On the other hand,
Berlusconi passed, or attempted to pass, numerous *ad personam* laws,
showing himself to be totally insensitive to the problem of institutional
reform and only able to address these questions from the point of view
of his own immediate personal interests. Second, the anti-Berlusconian
actions of some sectors of the judiciary were probably the main limita-
tion on Berlusconi's sphere of action and thus a major contributing
factor to his failure. This is true not only in relation to the events of
1994 but for the entire 1994–2013 period.

1996–2001: The Consolidation of Berlusconism

Disappointment at the early end to his first experience of government
had an immediate effect on Berlusconi's 1996 electoral campaign,
which was defensive in tone and much less effective than the previous
one (Poli 2001, 108; Campi and Varasano 2013, 180). However, the 1996
election also anticipated what would be in store in the five years ahead.
Berlusconism had shown itself to be more durable than many had pre-
dicted: it lost the election, mostly as a result of the Northern League
withdrawing its support from the right-wing coalition, but it kept a
respectable share of the vote. The *Forza Italia* percentage was only mar-
ginally less than it had been in 1994; this was particularly significant

because, although it had lost a considerable number of voters, it had also gained the same number of new ones (Natale 1997, 228–29). There were also signs of a change in political personnel: a good many 1994 candidates did not campaign in 1996, and a number of "survivors" of the pre-*Tangentopoli* period returned. Thus between 1994 and 1996, the percentage of experienced politicians among *Forza Italia* parliamentarians doubled, even though there were still many fewer than in *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) or the left-wing parties (Verzichelli 1997a, 320–22 and 339–40; 1997b).[6]

From 1996 onward, Berlusconism began to put down roots, as the few existing studies of the question have shown.[7] As regards organization, from the publication of the new party statute in 1997 right through to 2001, *Forza Italia* evolved from a movement to a full-scale political party via a system of subscription, collegiate bodies, and rules for selection of political leaders. It put down local roots by penetrating local communities and building up consensus ahead of the 2001 election. It also entrenched its political know-how by continuing to recruit political "veterans" more at a local than a national level (Verzichelli 2002; Diamanti 2009, 129–36). These three areas of development were intertwined and self-reinforcing and were subsequently interpreted as a sign of the "normalization" of Berlusconism, a sign that it had discarded its original lightweight model of party organization and its inexperienced political elite. It is no accident that the man in charge of restructuring *Forza Italia* was an ex–Christian Democrat, Claudio Scajola, and that the opponents of his project were the "new boys" who had come from Berlusconi's business empire and had assisted him from the outset.

This process of normalization, typified by the entry of *Forza Italia* into the European People's Party in 1998, also affected the ideology of Berlusconism, which started to move away from its liberal, promarket position toward a more moderate, conservative, Catholic one. Giuliano Urbani, perhaps the most important liberal theorist of the first phase of Berlusconism, remarked that "Milton Friedman was highly influential in 1994, less so in 1996 and had almost disappeared by 2001. Our allies, external and internal, had been asking for this transformation, seconded by the re-emergence of people and cultures of the pre-*Tangentopoli* period inside *Forza Italia* . . . After 1998, the year of the great transformation, I was in difficulty" (quoted in Marino 2012,

281–82).[8] The changes in the bimonthly magazine and publisher *Ideazione*, the most important cultural institution of the Berlusconi political area, though partly determined by contingent circumstances, were a further sign of the ideological shift within *Forza Italia*. The journal moved its emphasis away from classical liberal thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Friedrich von Hayek, Benjamin Constant, Lord Acton, and Elie Halévy to communitarianism, the identity of Italy and Europe, and intellectuals with a far less direct connection to liberalism such as Allan Bloom, Hannah Arendt, Hans Morgenthau, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn. At the same time, while continuing to reassert the novelty of his entry into politics, Berlusconi's assessment of the first fifty years of the Republic and its governing parties became more positive. He claimed that for all its limitations, it had still been an era of freedom that had anchored Italy to the West.[9]

However, this transformation of *Forza Italia* from movement to party also had the immovable object of Berlusconi in its way—the leader who had been there before the party had come into existence and in the final instance controlled it. Contemporary observers, writing at the very moment the change was taking place, had guessed that the leadership factor might be a severe limitation on the party's ability to develop into an autonomous and vital organism (Poli 2001). Scholars writing some years after the events with the benefit of hindsight could argue that leadership had indeed been crucial and that the attempt to institutionalize Berlusconism should be viewed as a failure (Hopkin 2005; Calise 2006; Paolucci 2006; Moroni 2008). None of these studies, however, have noted that the constant, inevitable, and necessary presence of Berlusconi also hampered FI's ideological development as well as its organizational one.

In contrast with this shift in emphasis from liberalism to conservatism is the fact that the ideological contents of Berlusconi's speeches between 1994 and 2001 were made of the same kind of populism-cum-liberalism outlined in Chapter 3: the positive nature of civil society, the idea of a new, nonprofessional political elite, hypopolitics, and a Thatcherite/Reaganite reduction of the role of the state in the economy. If these were Berlusconi's core policies, then the late 1990s do not mark any major change in Berlusconism. As argued in Chapter 4, the 2001 elections were basically in continuity with the 1994 elections.

The fundamentals of Berlusconism were the same, and its electors voted for the center-right not just because they disliked the center-left but because they had decided, though with the usual dose of caution and skepticism, that Berlusconi's political project deserved a second and full chance after the half-chance they had given it in 1994.

2001–6: Berlusconism of Government

Berlusconism arrived in government with two different organizational, ideological, and political positions. On the one hand, there was Berlusconi's leadership, which was instinctive and energetic and wedded to the rhetoric of civil society's ability to blossom once it had been freed from the shackles of politics and the state. On the other hand, there was the political structure of *Forza Italia*—its party, governing class, and culture—which had evolved in a more conservative direction in the late 1990s. The two had different, though not irreconcilable, needs and moved in different directions (Pilati 1997).

The development of FI's political structure was aiming at a progressive institutionalization of Berlusconism. It was supposed to strengthen the grassroots, reconcile Berlusconism with part of the establishment, and increase its ability to govern. However, it also brought with it a risk that the original revolutionary spirit of Berlusconism might get lost and the Italian political tradition would gain the upper hand over Berlusconi's hypopolitics. This risk was made all the more evident by the fact that between 2001 and 2006 the center-right shift from liberalism to conservatism got stronger (Colarizi and Gervasoni 2012, 124–37). This was partly a consequence of 9/11, when a distinctive foreign policy was developed and conditions for a more liberal economic policy became increasingly difficult to achieve (Cotta 2002; Cotta and Verzichelli 2003; Guarnieri and Newell 2005; Lazar 2007, 85–108). As happened to the *Uomo qualunque* (UQ) movement during the Cold War, conflict between civilizations increased the influence of faith politics on skeptical and nonpolitical Berlusconism. All this did nothing to help bring about a minimal state and a self-governing civil society. The ideological development of the center-right also had to address a number of ethical and biopolitical issues that came to the fore at the beginning of the new millennium and reached their peak in 2005 with

the referendum on assisted reproduction (Martini 2006). The 2004 *Forza Italia* Charter of Values, which stressed Western values and the transatlantic pact between Europe and the United States while rejecting ethical relativism and promoting a strong link between liberalism and Catholicism, is testimony to the cultural climate of the time. It should be noted, though, that the document lies almost entirely within the field of liberalism, though on its right wing, and is wedded to a free, though not unrestricted, market economy (Forza Italia 2004).[10]

Stressing Berlusconi's leadership and his supremacy over any form of political structure—that is, quite the opposite of the institutionalization of Berlusconism hypothesized before—was a way of confirming the "revolutionary" character of Berlusconism in Italian history. However, it also made it harder to manage its contradictions. As Chapters 3 and 4 have shown, Berlusconism was structurally ambiguous. On the one hand, it was antipolitical, negative, and populist. Its electorate was skeptical, fragmented, and angry, and it exploited this anger by promising voters the advent of a new miracle-working, nonpolitical politician at the head of a new miracle-working nonpolitical political class, who would be able to provide a simple, rapid solution to every problem. Berlusconism guaranteed immediacy rather than mediation: immediate success meant that results would arrive at once; immediate language meant plain speaking without jargon; immediate representation meant politicians being like the ordinary man in the street. On the other hand, Berlusconism was also political, positive, and liberal: in its own way, it had an overall vision of the past, present, and future of Italy, and it attracted the skeptical voter because of its skeptical but realistic program, whose realism was demonstrated by its desire to reproduce the actual historical experience of countries such as the United Kingdom that had been a source of inspiration for Italy since unification. This ambiguity was extremely helpful in the ballot box, but it was a source of difficulty in government. In particular, if it was going to achieve even a small number of its policy aims regarding institutional reform and redefining the relationship between the state and the people, Berlusconism needed a lot more political mediation and a lot less immediacy.

Regarding Berlusconi's relationship with the institutions, much has already been said. The Platonic lack of interest in the way institutional powers were organized and regulated, which has been shown to be a

constant feature of Italian history, was shared by Berlusconi. It has been argued that this was an important part of his electoral appeal and was reflected in his populist hostility to procedures, checks, and balances. However, it was also shown that the republican tradition had placed excessive emphasis on procedures, checks, and balances and paid little attention to the moment of decision making and that this imbalance was a hindrance to Berlusconi. We can now go further. The institutional question has revealed the contradictory nature of Berlusconism. On the one hand, Berlusconi needed to be successful immediately and believed it would be a waste of the country's time and energy to stop and try to reform the very institutions that his rhetoric of immediacy had promised to bypass. On the other hand, institutional reform was the only possible way for the rhetoric of immediacy to translate into real immediacy by creating the conditions for efficient government. Berlusconi thus became a hostage to the contradictions of Berlusconism and, mesmerized by the miraculous image of his own leadership he had created, failed to recognize institutional reform as a priority. In fact, the center-right only managed to pass a reform of the Italian constitution in 2005, right at the very end of the 2001–6 legislature, when the Berlusconi government had lost all momentum and reformist zeal, and then the center-right left the reform to its own destiny with the 2006 referendum, which it went on to lose (Bull 2007; Campi and Varasano 2013, 520).

At the end of Chapter 3, the core element of Berlusconian ideology was identified as the positive nature of civil society *as it actually was* and the rejection of statist projects designed to change it. It was defined as having both a liberal and a populist side, which could only coexist on the condition that civil society as it actually was was already liberal and was ready and willing to get itself organized. It was also noted that at the outset Berlusconism was motivated by a strong conviction that these conditions were already in place. Toward the end of the twentieth century and the start of the new millennium, this conviction became increasingly difficult to maintain. This change of spirit was partly due to the historical climate of the time. Berlusconi enjoyed his first long period of government, 2001–6, at a difficult time, when EU restrictions deprived him of a number of tools of economic policy. After the successes of the 1980s and 1990s, liberal culture was in a period of

decline; vast swathes of public opinion, partly as a consequence of 9/11, were no longer optimistic about globalization. It was not seen as an opportunity to be seized but as a threat to defend oneself against (Lazar 2009, 96–97).

The argument that Italian society was already liberal, however, was difficult to maintain for more profound, long-standing reasons, which Berlusconism had been able to ignore in the second half of the 1990s when in opposition but could not ignore when in government. After 150 years of "statist correction," Italy had had its fill of state intervention. The country had been held back and angered by the state, but it had also been supported and subsidized by it. For the reasons described before, the relationship between public and private interests, and the desire for freedom and protection had become a Gordian knot that could not be unraveled. Berlusconian populism, which was basically conservative, was obliged to take the expression "accept the country as it is" at face value: whatever its actual condition, Italy should not be forced to change in any way. Berlusconian liberalism, on the other hand, which was basically revolutionary, felt that "the country as it is" meant "as it would 'naturally' have been if state intervention had not 'artificially' distorted and corrupted it," and that the state should therefore be dismantled. This would be an extremely painful process, because the state apparatus had penetrated so deeply into society that it was difficult to eradicate, particularly if one did not want the country to suffer and wanted to maintain his electoral support.

Berlusconism was thus faced with a further paradox: liberalism as a theory of a state that was not neutral but hyperactive, since it was required to dismantle itself and to return increasing amounts of resources, power, and autonomy to society, even to parts of society that did not even want them.[11] This paradox could only be managed through political mediation. Reform would be painful in the short term and results could only be achieved over the long term. Italians had to be persuaded to be patient and accept that they would suffer now in order to be rewarded later, and this would require vast political resources, including pedagogical ones.

Could these two aspects of Berlusconism—leadership and immediacy on the one hand and an increasing need for political mediation on the other—merge harmoniously together, or would they inevitably

end up getting in each other's way? They were in many ways naturally opposed to each other, but a more productive merger than the one that took place between 2001 and 2006 might perhaps have been possible. Institutional reform and a restructuring of the relationship between the state and society were the areas where populism and liberalism clashed, highlighting the contradictions of Berlusconism. Yet they could also have become areas where convergence was possible. Reforming the institutions and rolling back the state would have taken a lot of time and political energy, but it would also have strengthened the leadership: the former by anchoring the leadership to the institutions, the latter by achieving what the leadership had promised. Even the fragility of the center-left opposition could have helped if the center-right had exploited it to gain time to put the reforms in place, instead of using it to cover up its own mediocrity.

Between 2001 and 2006, the two contradictory components of Berlusconism weakened each other. Political mediation remained insufficient, and Berlusconi's leadership became visibly weaker as a consequence of the lack of immediate success that he had promised.[12] If Berlusconism was unable to "institutionalize itself"—namely, to turn itself into a proper party, give the country a new constitutional asset and political class, and free itself from the fortunes of its leader—most of the responsibility should be attributed to Berlusconi himself. In 1994, Berlusconi was able to fill an enormous political vacuum overnight all by himself—a phenomenon with few or no precedents in political history. He used his personality and the immense economic, organizational, and media resources at his disposal to create a potential political majority in an industrialized country of 60 million people in a very short space of time. He represented an area of interests and opinions that had had no culture or legitimacy for thirty years and that the magistrates had deprived of political representation. At the outset, one might have thought that Berlusconi's individual role as a surrogate political structure or function would have been just temporary and that the structures would be created over time under his leadership, and his surrogate work would become less important. However, this did not happen, or at least there was not enough of it.

The antipolitical, anti-institutional, anti-intellectual, "immediate" character of Berlusconi's rhetoric did not help. This was not because

his deeds were supposed to match his words but because he was convinced about what he was saying and this made him blind to the need for political mediation. Above all, Berlusconi never had the slightest intention of allowing his creation to develop in a way that meant that it could do without its creator. This is a natural instinct—the age-old instinct of Chronos, who ate his own children so that they would not be able to dethrone him. Natural instinct though it was, it proved to be damaging to the political fortunes of Berlusconism. Needing to develop an ideology, an organization, and a party that was independent of its leader, Berlusconism lacked any powers of political mediation. Hence it could only exist as a consequence of Berlusconi's leadership, which did not allow it to build up any means of political mediation that could enable it to free itself of him. Berlusconism thus found itself to be locked in a vicious circle. In Ovid's words, the relationship between Berlusconi and Berlusconism was *nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum* (I cannot live with you or without you). As well as being the main obstacle to the institutionalization of Berlusconism, Berlusconi's leadership between 2001 and 2006 also lost its dynamism. This brings us to the turning point in the history of Berlusconism.

2005–6: The End of Berlusconism?

From 1994 to 2001, Berlusconi's speeches varied very little in tone and content, but in 2005 their tone changed considerably, in a way that even affected their contents. Signs of change were already visible in 2002, only a year after winning the election. Berlusconi continued to stress the energy and potential of Italian civil society if it could be freed from limitations imposed by the state, but he was also starting to complain about the restrictions on his government's sphere of action and the difficult legacy left by his predecessors and to claim that his government had achieved much more than critics were saying (Berlusconi 2004, 235ff.). Three years later, following his defeat at the 2005 regional elections, the optimistic and constructive approach of the late 1990s gave way to a more defensive and complaining one (Roncarolo 2007).

From that moment on, Berlusconi's rhetoric focused on vindicating the many reforms he had introduced and blaming what he had been unable to achieve on political and institutional obstacles. He described

the absence of sovereignty over economic policy as follows: "In a situation like this, what can a European government do? I'd like to know the answer because as an entrepreneur with over 50 years of experience I have no solution; I repeat, I have no solution. The solution does not depend on the national government" (Berlusconi 2006, 91–92; speech at the Senate, April 28, 2005). He blamed the legacy of the progressive 1996–2001 governments, criticizing the left for the "pessimism . . . that they broadcast everywhere" (41). He criticized internal dissent among the right-wing coalition partners for weakening his government, making it less effective, and ruining its image: "I don't think that much more could have been done. What was not done was because of one party or another. If I were to run an electoral campaign against my coalition partners, I would know who to blame for the things that didn't get done" (46–47; speech at the constituent assembly for a unified center-right party, Rome, September 20, 2005).

This defensive attitude, which was so different from four or five years previously, meant that Berlusconi could no longer ask for positive support for his coalition and his program with the same conviction. Instead he asked for negative support: his electors should keep voting for him mainly to prevent the opposition from coming to power. This kind of aversion to the left in general, and anticommunism in particular, had always been at the heart of Berlusconi's rhetoric. From 1994 to 2001, however, Berlusconi had asked for a two-pronged vote—against the left and in favor of himself. His *antispeeches* (to exclude the bad guys) had always been indistinguishable from the *prospeeches* (to give power to the good guys). What is more, the *pro* part of Berlusconi's rhetoric, generous with its promises as it always was, was even more important than the *anti* part. However, in the second half of 2005 the approach seemed to be very different. The *pro* part of the speech was mainly about the past, aimed at defending what had been done rather than setting out new ideas, while the future was talked about rather negatively in terms of opposition to the left. The argument had a tripartite structure: vindication ("I have achieved a great deal"), followed by justification ("for no fault of my own I couldn't do any more"), followed by exclusion ("even if you are not happy, you should vote for me because I'm better than the others"). Vindication and exclusion are visible, for example, in an October 2005 speech in which Berlusconi argued that his coalition

should "take care to get a few clear messages across . . . The first is to say what the government has achieved, in other words how we have governed, and I think that we have done some very important things. The second is about things we have not done but which we should still be proud of. For example, we have not used our power to restrict anyone's freedom or against the opposition. We haven't stolen anything and we haven't turned our government into a merchant bank. We haven't put our hands into the Italians' wallets . . . We have protected everyone's freedom" (Berlusconi 2006, 57–58; speech at the constituent assembly for a unified center-right party, Rome, October 18, 2005). A few weeks later, the need to exclude the progressive alliance from power was put forward even more forcefully: "Over many decades the communist left managed to create a social block, infiltrating what Gramsci called the 'casemates' of power. The left controls too much in Italy: they control the schools, the universities, the newspapers, the televisions, the trade unions with their ubiquitous local branches (an amazing source of propaganda), the government of 16 regions out of 20, 77 provinces out of 110, around 6,500 municipalities out of 8,000. If we give them the majority in parliament and the government we will be under a regime" (109; speech at the national assembly of the *Riformatori Liberali*, Rome, November 30, 2005).

The 2006 electoral campaign followed the pattern set out in Berlusconi's 2005 speeches: defense of the five years of government followed by the negative aspects of the center-left and the damage it could do if it got into power (Itanes 2006a, 95ff.; Mancini 2007; Legnante and Sani 2007; Campus 2010). As pollster Nando Pagnoncelli has noted, the 2006 version of Berlusconi, compared with 2001, "replaced the dream with fear" (quoted in Vespa 2010, 218–19). The assumption implicit in this new rhetoric—that since Berlusconi had partly failed it was no longer possible to count on his ability to achieve things and even less on his abilities as a "revolutionary"—was fully supported by the moderate electorate. It took a negative view of the outgoing government and was no more sanguine about the ability of the center-right coalition to resolve the country's problems in the future (Itanes 2006a, 216–17 and 222, Tables 13.2 and 13.5). It was also less interested in Berlusconism's policies than it had been in the past. As Chapter 4 has already shown, many 2001 Berlusconi supporters had voted for him because they

believed in the policies he had promised to fulfill. In surveys, a much higher percentage of center-right than center-left voters gave a specific reason for their vote, and the reason was almost always an aspect of policy such as reducing taxes or increasing employment. When asked whether they had voted mainly for a program, a leader, a party, or a coalition, a good number of them said they had voted for a program.[13] In 2006, this figure went down considerably, while the percentage for the center-left stayed about the same.[14] So in 2001, a policy-based electoral campaign won a lot of support, but five years later there was very little interest in policy, in either Berlusconi's "top-down" political offer or his voters' "bottom-up" political demand.

Electoral studies provide a further demonstration of how Berlusconi's promised "turnaround" had failed to materialize. As noted in Chapter 3, Berlusconi's argument was that the relationship between Italians and the state was based on mutual distrust and that the state, not Italians, was to blame for this; his solution was not to reeducate Italians but to radically transform the approach of the state, believing that once the state started to have more confidence in the country, the country would have more confidence in the state. The question of "faith" was thus fundamental to this argument. It was to be expected that voters who mistrusted the state and thought they had little power to change it would be favorable to this argument, and research has shown that this was the case. One would also expect, however, that if Berlusconism had worked, the sense of alienation among its voters would have decreased, but this did not happen. Although not too much importance should be attributed to this—after all the Italian sense of mistrust is deeply rooted and not much was to be expected to change in a few years—it is still a small sign pointing in the same direction as the ones already discussed.[15]

Berlusconi's rhetoric and campaign style as well as the attitude of his voters suggest that 2005–6 was a watershed moment. To those claiming that the liberal policy aspects of Berlusconism are of secondary importance (Campus 2010), that he was speaking to the guts of the country rather than its head (Abruzzese and Susca 2004; Mancini 2011), or that he had never had his own political program but had simply "deduced" it from opinion polls (Amadori 2002), this particular period does not seem like a watershed but the natural consequence of a change in

climate that gradually became more visible in Italy in the first ten years of the new millennium, particularly after the outbreak of the economic crisis (Guarnieri and Newell 2005; Amyot and Verzichelli 2006; Lazar 2007, 85–108; Baldini and Cento Bull 2009). On this view, Berlusconi had "replaced the dream with fear" because the society he was addressing had already done so, and he was merely doing what he had always done, which was to adapt his policies to the country and to act as a mirror without the distortion of mediation, ideology, or pedagogy.

However, it has been argued here that the liberal policy aspects of Berlusconism, though mixed with a significant amount of populism, were not just an optional extra: they enabled it to speak to the head as well as the guts of the country, they were part of an ideology that was not simply deduced from opinion polls, and they were symbolized and condensed in the leader's personal narrative of proud entrepreneurship, individual autonomy, and progress—a narrative of hope not of fear (Ventura 2012, 102ff.). If this argument holds, then the 2005–6 period certainly was a watershed, because it was the time when the emulsion of populism and liberalism stopped working. In a quickly changing historical climate, the preconception of Berlusconism that had originated in the 1980s—namely, that Italian society was already liberal—became no longer tenable,[16] and its populism separated from its liberalism. It could be claimed that this was the moment when Berlusconism ended. Although it could be objected that this argument might appear to be disproved by Berlusconi's great electoral victory in 2008, it can be argued that, just as in 2006, people did not vote for Berlusconi in 2008 because of the dreams he was selling but because of the shortcomings of his opponents and his electorate's desire to send them back into opposition.[17]

2006–11: Berlusconi without Berlusconism

After 2006, alongside this liberalism–populism "divorce," the center-right's ideological mutation, which had already begun in the late 1990s and early 2000s, came increasingly to the fore. If the 1997 book *Lo Stato criminogeno* (*The Criminogenic State*) by Berlusconi's long-serving economic minister Giulio Tremonti, with its significant subtitle *A Liberal Manifesto*, had been the symbol of the "heroic" period of Berlusconism,

Tremonti's 2008 book *La paura e la speranza* (*Fear and Hope*), which was in favor of more government, was the symbol of this new era (Itanes 2008, 179–83; Ruzza and Fella 2009, 189ff.; Lazar 2009, 90ff.). Once again, changes at the top were matched by changes in the electoral base. The Berlusconi electorate made its first "right turn" in 2006. Although since 2001 the distance between center-right and center-left on the question of economic freedom had changed very little, it had widened considerably on ethical and social questions. Practicing Catholics, moreover, who had always been more inclined to vote for the center-right but in 2001 were more equally divided between center-right and center-left, in 2006 voted for Berlusconi in considerable numbers.[18] The Berlusconi electorate then made a second "right turn" in 2008. For the first time, the distance between the two electorates on the question of economic policy decreased, with the conservatives becoming more statist and the progressives less so, though the former were still quite clearly more favorable to the free market. However, on ethical and social questions the gap continued to widen, and in 2008 the votes of practicing Catholics moved further to the center-right.[19]

These changes seemed to point the way toward turning Berlusconism into a moderate, popular, pragmatic, and establishment political force and to bring the development processes that had been visible at the end of the 1990s to fruition. Once again, though, the centrality of Berlusconi's *persona* pushed everything in the opposite direction. Whereas until 2005–6 the movement and "immediatism" of Berlusconi had been innovative, it subsequently turned nihilistic. It impeded the formation of a classical conservative party and was unable to find a replacement in the present or to envisage anything other than Berlusconi's leadership, which was presumed to be eternal. The decision to merge the traditional parties of Berlusconi's coalition, *Forza Italia* and *Alleanza Nazionale*, into the newly founded *Popolo della Libertà* was a symptom of this. Theoretically, the PdL would have been the ideal way to institutionalize the political legacy of Berlusconism, make it part of the European conservative mainstream, and enable it to be independent of its creator. In practice, however, it went the other way. The PdL was once again the consequence of an autonomous political initiative on the part of Berlusconi, its creation being announced out of the blue on November 18, 2007, by Berlusconi from a car in a square—the

rivoluzione del predellino (soapbox revolution). Tactical considerations played an important role: this was Berlusconi's answer to Walter Veltroni's decision to unify the left into a single party (the *Partito Democratico*) and a way of dealing with the prolonged endgame of the Prodi government. In sum, the PdL had been the instrument of its leader right from the start: not only did it fail to institutionalize Berlusconism, but it contributed to its deinstitutionalization by wasting part of the political legacy of *Forza Italia* (Moroni 2008; Donovan 2008; Hine and Vampa 2011).

The internal splits that opened up one after the other on the center-right after 2005 can be best understood if the events of recent years are viewed from the perspective of the relationship between the leader and the structures of political mediation: the *nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum* (I can't live with you or without you) relationship. These splits involved Marco Follini and Pierferdinando Casini of the *Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro* (UDC)—a small center party that had evolved out of the dissolution of the Christian Democracy Party—which broke its alliance with Berlusconi on the eve of the 2008 election, and Gianfranco Fini of AN. Scholars such as Ruzza and Fella (2009, 3) have described these two internal splits within the center-right as an ideological split between free-market liberalism and statism and a geographical split between North and South. The two splits not only seem to be largely overlapping (the liberal North and the statist South) but also seem to produce two relatively simple opposing factions: *Forza Italia* and the *Lega* in the liberal North and AN and the UDC in the statist Center-South. Although this model is plausible (Colarizi and Gervasoni 2012, 161–62), it only tells part of the story. It identifies the factions correctly but at the same time overestimates some causes of the division while underestimating others.

From an ideological point of view, the Berlusconian coalition was more homogeneous that has been hitherto claimed with regard to its moderate economic liberalism and conservative values. Its electorate was also surprisingly homogeneous. Chapter 4 has shown how, on the subject of the death penalty, homosexual couples, abortion, and teaching religion in schools, the center-right voters had a clear, coherent orientation. This is also confirmed with regard to economic policy. In 1994, *Forza Italia* voters tended to be more favorable to the free market

than AN voters, but since 1996 their positions increasingly converged (Sani and Segatti 1997, 18). The data for the 2001–8 period show clearly that on questions such as tax reduction linked to a reduction in public services, greater privatization of the health service, and liberalization of the job market, center-right voters held similar views, whatever coalition party they voted for, and clearly different views from center-left voters (Itanes 2006a, 170, Table 10.2).

The geographic split was undoubtedly more influential than the ideological one, but it was less influential than it might seem to be. Italy's diversity is a structural problem that all Italian governments are faced with, and trying to keep both Northern and Southern Italy happy was not just a problem for Berlusconism. It is true that the traditionally progressive areas of the Center-North (Emilia Romagna, Marche, Toscana, and Umbria) are less politically incompatible with the South than the Lombardy-Veneto region, and none of the other government contenders included a regionalist party like the *Lega*. However, the electoral results clearly show that not only did Berlusconi's coalitions manage this question particularly well, but they generally did it better than the center-left. Moreover, the geographic split in the center-right coalition was not a split between *Forza Italia* and the others, because it split *Forza Italia* first and the PdL later—parties that were strong at a national level and with a clear tendency to become stronger in the South over time.[20] Scholars who emphasize geographical divisions inside Berlusconi's coalition, in sum, should first consider that the North–South split is an important question and an inevitable source of difficulty for any prospective coalition program and that the real question is not so much whether a coalition knows how to deal with the problem as whether it can deal with it better than its opponents. They should also consider that for Berlusconism geography was more of an internal problem than an external one—that is, a party question rather than a coalition one.

So in order to understand what it was that weakened the coalition by dividing the *Lega/Forza Italia* axis from the AN/UCD axis, we need to look again at the arguments of Chapters 1 and 2. The most significant aspect of the split was not so much ideological or geographical as historical and political. It separated the new parties that had been formed after or just before the collapse of the political system in the early 1990s from the heirs to the old parties that wanted to keep the republican tradition alive—even the postfascists who had battled against it for

decades. Electoral studies again show this clearly. Chapter 4 showed how AN voters had the same degree of politicization (interest in politics, knowledge of the institutions, proximity to a party) as left-wing voters, and a much greater one than FI voters. We can now complete that picture by adding that UDC voters were even more politicized than AN voters, and *Lega* voters were almost as nonpolitical as FI voters.[21]

These statistics were confirmed by events. The splits between the UDC and the center-right coalition in 2008 and between Berlusconi and former AN leader Gianfranco Fini inside the PdL from 2009 were not about policy but about political form. It was Berlusconi's continued leadership that had become intolerable (Hine and Vampa 2011). It frustrated the ambitions of potential successors and seemed able to endlessly replicate the mechanism of populist simplification that the leaders of the heirs to the old parties had only accepted in the first place because they had thought it was a necessary evil and would only be a transitory phenomenon. The North–South split had as much of an influence on the center-right because of these divisions about political form as it did for socioeconomic and ideological reasons—given that Berlusconism's hypopolitical rebellion was Lombard and, in this respect, the twin of the *Lega* rebellion.[22]

Berlusconism's inability to institutionalize itself in a way that could free it from its leader also explains why any question regarding Berlusconi's *persona* inevitably became a political question. It also accounts for the enormous pressure that Berlusconi came under, not unwillingly, year after year. Berlusconi's problems with the judiciary, however true or false the charges and whatever the intentions of the magistrates, could not help but have enormous political ramifications. This was simply because taking down the leader meant inflicting a mortal blow on his entire coalition and leaving millions of Italians without any representation, or unsatisfactorily represented, for presumably quite a long period of time.[23]

The lack of investment in political mediation structures (party organization, culture, political class) left Berlusconi overexposed. He was the foundation on which his coalition was built, an irreplaceable focal point for his allies and the main target for his adversaries. He was also the ultimate source of any initiative, continually having to make up for the weaknesses of a coalition that he nonetheless did not want to

see develop. He was ultimately responsible for everything in the eyes of the country, obliged to being permanently successful and to achieving immediate, tangible results (Cavallari 1997; Caniglia 2000, 149; Follini 2006; Campus 2010). These three elements (politics, Berlusconi's *persona*, and the judiciary) were at the heart of the sex scandals that exploded in 2009, at a time when Berlusconi seemed stronger than ever after winning the 2008 election (Gundle 2010; Campi and Varasano 2013). It showed how Berlusconi had been personally worn down by too much responsibility and overexposure to the public and how closely the political fortunes of the center-right were linked to Berlusconi's personal and legal affairs.

Over time, Berlusconi's leadership became increasingly self-sufficient and an end in itself. Berlusconism has been interpreted here in terms of its continuity/discontinuity with Italian history, arguing that its "asking the Platonic question" was the main element of continuity and its radically anticorrective and antipedagogical response the main element of discontinuity. By the end, the continuity had prevailed over the discontinuity, and Italy had claimed Berlusconism as its own. Occupation of power had prevailed over the political program: the rise of a new political elite and the protection of the irreplaceable leader from real or imaginary attacks had become more important than long-term and wide-ranging reform. And the result was that the populist leader found himself following in the despised footsteps of what the founder of the UQ movement had once called the UPPs, the professional politicians, by advocating his own irreplaceability and that of his clan. The symmetry and asymmetry of labels such as fascism/antifascism and Berlusconism/anti-Berlusconism have been discussed at length in previous chapters. It is now time to introduce a new category—the anti-Berlusconism of Berlusconi.

Epilogue

The Fly in the Bottle

In its 150-year search for "normality," Italy has used up most if not all the historical options available to it. Berlusconi's hypopolitical path—the sanctification of "society as it is" on the assumption that it was already liberal—did not work, because the assumption was a fiction. However, the failure of Berlusconism should not allow us to forget the failure of the historical options that had been tried before. If Berlusconi has been able to garner such widespread support, it has been because he appeared on the scene after various forms of hyperpolitics had failed. The unexpected results of the February 2013 elections demonstrate that Italians have perceived the fiasco of all the political programs that have been tried since 1994.

Berlusconi's fourth government fell in November 2011. Berlusconi had been politically weakened by sexual scandals and problems with the judiciary. The extensive parliamentary majority he had won in 2008 was in meltdown. The storm over Italy's sovereign debt was raging in the markets, and many in the EU and other European countries believed that Italy could only face it down with new, more credible political leadership. This would be the new government headed by professor of economics and former EU commissioner Mario Monti, made up mostly of technocrats, and supported in Parliament by both left and right. It lasted from November 2011 until April 2013. When Parliament was dissolved at the end of 2012, it was generally believed that the elections would be won hands down by the *Partito Democratico*, led by Pierluigi Bersani, which would spell the final political demise of Berlusconi. Given the Byzantine workings of the electoral system, analysts predicted that after the elections the PD would not be able to command an absolute majority in both chambers of Parliament and

would likely enter into a governing alliance with the new party founded by Mario Monti, *Scelta civica* (Civic Choice), which many believed or hoped would be the embryo of a new, responsible, nonpopulist, post-Berlusconian center-right.

Italian voters, however, thought otherwise. Bersani's PD did much worse than expected. This was partly due to an ineffective election campaign, but its failure was also rooted in the widespread perception that the party was still too encumbered by its postcommunist organizational apparatus and that it was not entirely free of blame for the overall bankruptcy of the Italian political system. Monti's list polled around 8 percent: not a bad result for a new party, but way too little if he was aiming to replace Berlusconi as the leader of the center-right and to create a governing majority with the PD. Berlusconi's party got around 22 percent of the vote and his coalition around 30 percent: a very long way from the 38 percent (party) and 47 percent (coalition) vote of 2008, but nonetheless an astounding result, given that 15 months previously all commentators had believed Berlusconi's political adventure to be over. With its 25 percent of the vote, the *Movimento Cinque Stelle* (Five Star Movement), founded and led by comedian Beppe Grillo, provided the most surprising result of a very surprising election.

Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement and Mario Monti's Civic Choice both represent an attempt to answer the Platonic question of who should govern Italy. Like Berlusconi twenty years earlier, they both promised to have nothing to do with professional politicians and to provide the country with a completely new elite that came straight from civil society. For the umpteenth time, the arguments were about the quality of the players rather than the rules of the game. Stuck in its Platonism like a fly in a bottle, Italy thus continues to wear out its political classes, electing and discarding them one after the other, voting for anyone new and remotely credible who can promise to satisfy its insatiable desire for normality. Although in some respects "Grillism" and "Montism" show some continuity with Berlusconism and have come about as a consequence of its failure, they are considerably different.[1] Berlusconism, though it was not averse to the populist aspiration to bring "the people" together into a single bloc that would be immune to left–right disputes, eventually took up a stable position on the right. Its voters were anti-antifascist, it had a hypopolitical, antistatist

program based on the independence of the individual, and one of its main aims was to build up a bipolar political structure. Berlusconi's idea of liberty was first and foremost Benjamin Constant's liberty of the moderns: freedom of the individual from the state.

At the time of this writing, one year after the 2013 elections, Italian analysts are still trying to decipher the Five Star Movement.[2] This is difficult, since it seems to contain a number of contradictory elements, and it will take time to see which of them if any will survive the impact of politics and history. Its parliamentary group, militants, and program seem to be left-wing radical—a postmodern mix of anticapitalism and environmentalism, with utopian and Manichean overtones. Its leader Beppe Grillo and his guru Gianroberto Casaleggio seem to share this radical left-wing perspective and to manage it somewhat recklessly. However, they have also added a number of elements that are traditionally considered right-wing. Their votes came from both left and right in three different waves: the "historical core" is left-wing; then a right-wing section joined in the second half of 2012; and finally, just before the 2013 elections, a third wave of left-wing supporters arrived on the scene. Yet rather than voting *for* Grillo, most of these electors were voting *against* the Democratic Party leader Pierluigi Bersani, former Prime Minister Mario Monti, and Berlusconi.

Although, as has already been suggested, both Berlusconism and the Five Star Movement are the embodiment of a rebellion by civil society against the failure of professional politics, they diverge in the way this rebellion is expressed. Berlusconism is solidly positioned on the right, whereas Grillism has a more transverse electorate and a more left-wing policy. Berlusconi's policies for Italy are based on the liberty of the moderns, the safeguarding of individual space, and the politics of skepticism, whereas Grillo proposes (so to speak) Constant's liberty of the ancients, based on grassroots participation, direct democracy, and a new version of the politics of faith. Berlusconism and Grillism thus have completely different views of the relationship between the state and society and of the way political institutions are supposed to work. Berlusconi calls on civil society to limit the sphere of political action and the state, whereas Grillo wants it to be militant and to take charge of politics and state power once more; he seems to think that once politics has been cleaned up and renewed by society, it will be

able to control society better and more. Berlusconism, which came to
the fore as a consequence of a blocked political system, had suggested
a possible solution to the Italian question through the creation of a
mature majoritarian democracy allowing opposite parties to alternate
in power. Grillism, which has come to the fore as a consequence of the
failed attempt to set up this mature majoritarian democracy, suggests
that the direct democracy of Web 2.0 should be used. Like Berlus-
conism, Grillism has linked its Platonic proposal for a new political
elite to a project for new political institutions. But it has gone beyond
Popper, beyond representative and competitive democracy, beyond
left and right, and is focusing on a model that political theorists have
dreamed about for at least three hundred years but that no one has
ever been able to put into practice. As has often happened in the past,
as a consequence of its inability to arrive at Western modernity, Italy is
aiming directly for the postmodern; instead of being the tortoise, it has
decided to try to become the hare. This is a risky operation, and it is one
in which Italy has not been successful in the past.

Montism is a classic example of the Italian corrective and pedagogi-
cal tradition. It is, perhaps, an even more pure example than the lead-
ing stereotype of that tradition, the *Risorgimento* liberal elite, for the
very simple reason that Monti's desire to Europeanize Italy through a
technocratic government has been supported by active intervention by
Europe in Italian public life. There are numerous examples of Monti's
pedagogical approach, and he explained it himself in November 2012:
"Pedagogy comes naturally to a professor, it's the only weapon I have . . .
I must explain to the Italians that if I am here, it is to make them do the
things that they do not want to do and that my predecessors claimed
could be avoided" (Monti 2012b). In January that year, he had already
indicated the model of modernity that his teaching was aiming at: "I
have always worked for Italy to be as much as possible like Germany"
(Monti 2012a).[3] Monti's appeal to civil society against professional
politicians was thus based on an argument that was diametrically
opposed to Berlusconi's—namely, that politicians had failed because
they had not been corrective enough and they needed to be replaced by
the mature, modern part of civil society that would take control of the
state and modernize the uncivil part. Like Grillo, Monti had come to
the fore at a time when the democratic system based on alternation

between right and left was clearly in deep trouble, and his solution was to put the institutions into the hands of technocratic administrators.[4] In doing this, he was stepping sharply away from Popperian emphasis on the rules of the game and moving into an entirely Platonic sphere. When asked by the director of the *Corriere della Sera* whether the constitution should be changed in order to reinforce the executive, his reply focused on the quality of the elite: "Ours is a parliamentary Republic. You can make parliament work better but it is above all its political makeup that needs to be changed through an election; that is, if we want parliament to have MP's with a culture of change and not of status quo, MP's with a culture of reform and not of clientelism."[5]

However, although Montism's pedagogical approach was the opposite of Berlusconism's, it occupied the same center-right political space thanks to its insistence on financial orthodoxy, its closeness to the European establishment, its good relations with the Catholic world, and the support it received from the European People's Party. The relationship between Monti and Berlusconi was a further example of what has been shown to be characteristic of the center-right since the late 1990s—a responsible, institutional center-right living in conflict alongside a populist, leader-centered center-right. This mixture of proximity and distance partly explains the shifting attitude of Berlusconi's PdL to the technocratic government and to Monti himself—one day claiming Monti's policies as its own and the next day rejecting them. Monti preferred to keep his distance. He did not want to align himself with the right but to try to transcend the cleavage between left and right. Not only did he reject any form of political agreement with Berlusconi, but he also showed that he did not want or know how to address the Berlusconi electorate. He only spoke to it at a very late stage in the electoral campaign and only after he had reconfirmed at an early stage the pedagogical approach to which the Berlusconi electorate was particularly allergic. As Debenedetti has claimed (2013, 100–101), Monti was largely unable to address the Berlusconi electorate because he did not understand it, and this in turn was because he shared the prejudices against it that were analyzed in Chapter 4. Data show that in the 2013 election, Monti's list took 1 percent of the vote away from Berlusconi's PdL. Given the circumstances, this was actually a very small percentage (Itanes 2013, 49, Table 3.2).

Analysis of the similarities and differences between Berlusconism and Grillism on the one hand and Berlusconism and Montism on the other also helps answer a further question posed by the 2013 election: how is it, after Berlusconi's disastrous fall from government at the end of 2011, that the PdL was still able to get more than 7 million votes and the right-wing coalition more than 10 million? We have already seen that a very small part of Berlusconi's 2008 vote went over to Monti's list, and we have also tried to explain why he did not get more. We have also argued that since the ideology of the Five Star Movement was left-leaning and distant from Berlusconism, the substantial portion of the 2008 PdL vote that went over to Grillo (4 percent) was largely a "counterdemocratic" protest. It can be deduced from this that many of the voters who stayed with Berlusconi did so because they had nowhere else to go. These were voters whose feelings of dissatisfaction or frustration that might have attracted them to the Five Star Movement were nonetheless weaker than their sense of belonging to the center-right, while their sense of irritation at Monti's pedagogy, as well as their sense of hostility to the fiscal pressure that it typified, was greater than their awareness of the failure of Berlusconism. They thus refused to choose the Five Star Movement or Monti's Civic Choice, and they had always strongly disliked the postcommunist *Partito Democratico*. If they did not want to abstain, which many did, they had no other choice than to vote for the PdL and its allies once again.[6]

Berlusconi's ability in both agenda setting and communication must obviously be taken into account as well. Discussion of policy issues in the 2013 election campaign was depressingly poor. Most of the campaign revolved around a single issue, property tax, and once again it was Berlusconi who strongly foregrounded it. Berlusconi's exceptional performance in the lion's den of anti-Berlusconian television, Michele Santoro's *Servizio Pubblico*, on January 10, 2013, showed his voters that he was very far from spent, in both personal and political terms. His performance, with its cabaret-style overtones, was also a further demonstration of what has been argued in Chapter 3: in the Berlusconian mind-set, politics is not a serious business and it should be taken lightly.

The 2013 electoral result gave Berlusconi an important political role in the new Parliament. His relevance was made even greater by the uncertain behavior of the *Partito Democratico*, which commanded

an absolute majority of seats in the Chamber of deputies and a relative majority in the Senate but had been traumatized by its failure to achieve the complete victory that had seemed to be within its grasp. Berlusconi thus became the main architect of political convergence between left and right, leading first to the reelection of President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano and then to the formation of a new government headed by Enrico Letta and supported in Parliament by the PD, the PdL, and Monti's *Scelta Civica*. Berlusconi had several reasons for behaving cautiously and responsibly. He had been defeated in the elections, even though he had stood his ground much better than anticipated, and he was eager to exploit his unexpected power. He could argue that the vote had created an ideal situation for the left to come out of its twenty-year obsession with anti-Berlusconism, for a wide agreement to be reached on institutional reforms, and for finally creating a mature majoritarian democracy in which competing groups could recognize each other's legitimacy. Last but certainly not least, Berlusconi thought that responsible behavior on his part, aimed at stabilizing and reforming Italian institutions, would be an important asset in the trials that he still had to face.

This "pacification" lasted a mere three months, however. On August 1, Italy's court of last resort, the *Corte di Cassazione*, confirmed Berlusconi's conviction for tax fraud, thereby opening up a four-month spell of political uncertainty between August and November 2013. The events of this period provide further evidence for three arguments that have been put forward in previous chapters. In the first place, they have made it clear once again that the Italian center-right is entirely dependent on Berlusconi and cannot do without him. His party and coalition have wholeheartedly backed his refusal to accept the verdict and endorsed his argument that it was politically biased, while members of his party have repeated time and again that their leader remains Berlusconi. This in turn clearly shows that Berlusconi's personal destiny has objective political relevance. Second, although opinion polls cannot be trusted entirely in such volatile and uncertain times, it is of some significance that they have shown that the *Corte di Cassazione* decision has not led to a loss of consensus for Berlusconi's party. At the time of this writing (February 2014), Berlusconi's party and coalition are credited, if anything, with a few points *more* than in the February 2013 election. This

further demonstrates that a substantial part of Italian public opinion either does not trust the judges, buying Berlusconi's argument that the court's decision was politically biased, or thinks that tax fraud is commonplace among Italian entrepreneurs and that Berlusconi was found out only because he was scrutinized with exceptional, politically driven care. Either way, these voters seem to be making a political interpretation of Berlusconi's judicial problems and are not letting them change their electoral behavior.

Events of the second half of 2013 lend further credibility to a third argument presented in previous chapters—that is, the copresence in Berlusconism of a populist antiestablishment and a mainstream conservative soul. As already noted, until August 1, 2013, Berlusconi played the part of a responsible statesman promoting political stability and a wide alliance aimed at far-reaching reforms. The court's decision put this strategy and Berlusconi himself under considerable pressure, not least because he apparently had not expected to be found guilty. From August until November, Berlusconi's politics traveled on a roller coaster, with the two souls of Berlusconism engaged in a bitter battle against each other. One part of Berlusconi's entourage thought that they should stay in the governing majority, both for the good of Italy and because the leader himself would have greater protection from his other judicial problems. Another part believed it was impossible to remain in a coalition with the *Partito Democratico*, which insisted that Berlusconi's conviction was an exclusively personal issue and wanted to accelerate his expulsion from the Senate.[7] This latter course of action would bring about the fall of the Letta government and was likely to open up a period of severe political and institutional instability. Berlusconi is said to have wavered for many weeks between these two options, in a state of genuine psychological uncertainty. In the end, the populist antiestablishment soul of both Berlusconi and Berlusconism had the upper hand. He not only withdrew his party from the governing majority but also decided at the same time to shut down the *Popolo della Libertà* and resurrect *Forza Italia* in order to revive the enthusiasm and radicalism of 1994 alongside aggressive anti-institutional discourse, which included the threat to have all his deputies and senators resign from Parliament.

Berlusconi's move into opposition, however, did not bring about the fall of the Letta government: a significant number of center-right parliamentarians did not agree with Berlusconi's decision and broke away to form the *Nuovo Centrodestra* (New Center-Right; NCD). At the end of Chapter 5, the secessions that took place in Berlusconi's camp over the years were analyzed, and it was argued that they were not due to disagreement over policy but to the "inevitability" of his leadership: the breakaway groups were unable to tolerate his leadership any longer, both as a consequence of their leaders' personal ambitions and because they wished for a more "normal" center-right, which was institutionally stable, not dependent on Berlusconi's populist initiatives, and on good terms with the Italian and European establishments. The secession that occurred in November 2013 resembled the previous ones in many ways. It was promoted by a would-be heir of Berlusconi, Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Angelino Alfano. The deputies and senators who went with him tended to have deeper roots in the pre-Berlusconian political cultures than the average Berlusconi parliamentarian, were more pro-European, and were closer to the establishment and the Italian Church. They also asked for a less leader-dependent center-right, with transparent and effective internal rules and primary elections for selecting the candidate prime minister. However, previous secessions had all happened on the periphery of Berlusconism: Follini and Casini were leaders of the post-DC centrist party allied with Berlusconi; Fini, while a member of Berlusconi's PdL, had joined it from the postfascist *Alleanza Nazionale*, of which he had been the leader. The November 2013 secession was different, because it came from within the very core of Berlusconism, and Berlusconi had himself designated Alfano as his heir, even though, in true Berlusconi fashion, he had also treated him quite badly. One of Berlusconi's strengths over the years had been his ability to gather and keep together all the center-right and right-wing forces. His loss of the peripheral strata of his coalition first and those closer to the core in November 2013 is a sign of a gradual but significant weakening of his leadership. Moreover, Alfano's secession can be interpreted, at least to a certain extent, as a divorce between the populist antiestablishment and the mainstream conservative souls of Berlusconism.

At the time of this writing, what will become of all this is still very unclear. Berlusconi is not a parliamentarian any more, his expulsion having been voted by the Senate on November 27, 2013. Although he hopes that the European Court of Human Rights will overturn the judgment of the *Corte di Cassazione*, he will most likely not be allowed to run for office in future elections. Moreover, his party, the resurrected *Forza Italia*, is not an indispensable part of the parliamentary majority any longer. Yet Berlusconi is still in full control of FI, which opinion polls credit with more than 20 percent of the vote, making it by far the strongest party in the center-right—Alfano's NCD is currently at around 5 percent. Berlusconi is also trying to renew *Forza Italia* by selecting younger and fresher party cadres and election candidates, and he is looking for an alternative "official" leader in case he is not allowed to stand for Parliament. In the last few months the media have been discussing the possibility of a "monarchic" succession of his daughter Marina—an option that by all accounts Berlusconi's entourage has examined very seriously and carefully. Marina herself seems very reluctant, however, and it is still uncertain whether she has genuine qualities of political leadership and how Berlusconi voters would react to such an event. Whether or not Berlusconi will leave the stage and how and when this will happen, how a post-Berlusconian center-right might look, how it might be constructed, and whether or not it can survive after its leader has gone remains unclear. The overall political situation, the ongoing debate on electoral and institutional reforms, the destabilizing impact that the new secretary general of the *Partito Democratico* (Matteo Renzi, elected in December 2013) has had both inside his party and on the relationship between PD and government, and last but not least Berlusconi's other legal problems make the fog even thicker. Previous chapters have shown that Berlusconism represented a wide electorate that had previously voted reluctantly for parties that it disagreed with and regarded as too left-wing, and it was argued that this has been good for the development of Italian democracy. Whether Berlusconi's legacy will be able to continue along this road remains to be seen.

As regards the more general legacy of Berlusconism for Italy, the question is even more complex. As stated in the Introduction, the aim of this book is not to evaluate Berlusconi's policies. However, two concluding observations can be made. A number of scholars have

criticized Berlusconism for legitimizing and encouraging the bad habits of Italians—the dark side of his antipedagogical approach. It is highly likely that the failure of Berlusconism's attempt to reconcile the legal and the real countries by turning hostility to the institutions into a political project has left the Italians even more skeptical and disappointed than before, and it has also confirmed their age-old conviction that in order to defend yourself from the state in Italy you need to go down the private route rather than the public one. To take a concrete example, antitax rhetoric, when allied to a genuine lowering of fiscal pressure, becomes a political program; without it, it becomes an excuse for tax evasion. However, the "bad influence of Berlusconism" argument should not be exaggerated. As the first two chapters have shown, mutual distrust in Italy between the real country and the legal country is a deep-rooted historical fact of which Berlusconi's political career is more a consequence than a cause. The pressure of corrective programs and their subsequent failures have also done much to increase the distrust. The harshness of Jacobinism and its inability to keep its promises may have encouraged Italian bad habits just as much as Berlusconian indulgence has.

The most negative consequence of Berlusconism and its failure has been that it wore out and discredited two options that could have brought, and might still bring, great benefit to Italy—majoritarian democracy on the one hand and the lessening of the corrective statist approach on the other. At the heart of Berlusconism, albeit in an impure form and surrounded by contradictions, there has been a correct intuition: that it had been a mistake to give up on political modernity and mature democracy in order to provide a "virtuous" elite with the power to modernize society, and that political modernity should be pursued even when this meant putting up with aspects of society that were not modern. Even though this intuition was not developed sufficiently, it remains valid. There is no doubt that Italian bipolarism has worked very badly in the last two decades, and it is equally true that thirty years of fruitless discussions about institutional change has meant that political appeals for reform have come to seem repetitive and lacking in credibility. But Italy has no alternative. It can only start again by rewriting the constitution and the electoral system so that they can produce a mature majoritarian democracy. Despite Monti's dreams

of technocratic administration of the institutions and Grillo's utopian direct democracy, political civilization does not seem to have really gotten past Karl Popper's insistence on good representative institutions allowing for the peaceful replacement of governing elites. At the same time, the Italian obsession with "normality" and its eternal hope that it will find the "right" political class that can work the magic of modernization seem more illogical than ever, given the country's complexity and the severe international restrictions on its national sovereignty.

In 1953, conservative journalist Leo Longanesi, a shrewd observer of Italianness, wrote, "Everything that seems to us to be false and temporary, all that aimless running backwards and forwards, all that chaos, all that doing and undoing, all those useless, ridiculous, pathetic contradictions that take place in Italy, maybe it is all indispensible; maybe we just cannot understand the secret meaning behind life in Italy" (Longanesi 2005, 11–12). This quotation is interpreted here as an appeal to the Italians not to resign themselves to a Mediterranean destiny but to accept who they are as a starting point for improvement. Italy needs coherent and functioning institutions that allow elites to be replaced when necessary, and Italians should not expect their elites to be able to turn them into something they are not. This is perhaps the only way for the Italian political fly to emerge from the Platonic bottle.

A Note on the Most Relevant Center-Right and Right-Wing Parties and Coalitions, 1994–2013

In Order of Appearance

Lega Nord: The Northern League was founded at the end of the 1980s as a federation of a number of regionalist political movements that were active in the North and Center-North. It never lost its autonomous identity but participated in elections as a partner in Berlusconi's coalitions from 1994 until 2013, except for 1996.

Forza Italia (FI): Berlusconi's first party was founded in January 1994, merged with *Alleanza nazionale* into the *Popolo della libertà* (PdL) in March 2009, and was resurrected in November 2013 after the PdL was closed down.

Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD): A party founded in January 1994 by former Christian Democrats, it took part in the Berlusconi alliance in 1994, 1996, and 2001—in the latter two cases jointly with another post-DC party, *Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (CDU). In 2002, the two parties merged into the *Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro* (UDC).

Alleanza Nazionale (AN): Founded as an electoral cartel in January 1994, AN became a party in January 1995. It was essentially a continuation of the postfascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) without its nostalgic wing, which founded the *Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore*. A few members also joined AN from other political traditions. AN was dissolved in March 2009 and merged with *Forza Italia* into the *Popolo della Libertà*. Its leader was Gianfranco Fini.

Polo delle Libertà e del Buon Governo: The center-right coalition led by Berlusconi in the 1994 elections was actually made up of two

coalitions: *Polo delle Libertà*, an alliance of *Forza Italia*, the CCD, and the *Lega Nord*, in the North and Center-North; and *Polo del Buon Governo*, an alliance of *Forza Italia*, the CCD, and *Alleanza Nazionale*, in the Center and South.

Polo per le Libertà: The center-right coalition led by Berlusconi in the 1996 election was made up of *Forza Italia*, *Alleanza Nazionale*, and the CCD-CDU. In that election the *Lega* ran alone. The main competitor of the *Polo per le Libertà* was the center-left coalition *l'Ulivo* (Olive Tree).

Casa delle Libertà (CdL): The center-right coalition led by Berlusconi in the 2001 and 2006 elections was created in 2000 as a renaming of the *Polo per le Libertà*, after the Northern League reentered the alliance. It was dissolved in November 2007 when Berlusconi announced the creation of the *Popolo della Libertà*. The CdL's main competitor was the center-left coalition *l'Ulivo* (Olive tree) in 2001 and an enlarged version of it named *l'Unione* in 2006.

Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro (UDC): A party founded in 2002 as a consequence of the merger of the CCD and the CDU, its first secretary general was Marco Follini, who quit the party in 2006, and its leader is currently Pierferdinando Casini. In the 2006 elections, it was part of the Berlusconi coalition CdL. At the end of 2007, when Berlusconi decided to create the *Popolo della Libertà*, the UDC abandoned the center-right coalition, and in 2008 it ran alone. In the 2013 election, it ran in alliance with Monti's *Scelta Civica* and Fini's *Futuro e Libertà*.

Popolo della Libertà (PdL): A party led by Berlusconi and founded in March 2009 from the merger of *Forza Italia*, *Alleanza Nazionale*, and a number of smaller political forces, its status as the single party of the center-right was announced on November 18, 2007, by Berlusconi from a car in piazza San Babila in Milan—the so called *rivoluzione del predellino* (soapbox revolution). The PdL was dissolved in November 2013 and was replaced by the resurrected *Forza Italia*.

Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia (FLI): A splinter group from the Popolo della Libertà, it started as a parliamentary group in July 2010, became a party in February 2011, and was dissolved in Novem-

ber 2013. Its leader was Gianfranco Fini. In 2013 it ran for election in alliance with Monti's *Scelta Civica* and Casini's UDC.

Nuovo centrodestra (NCD): A splinter group from the *Popolo della libertà*, it was founded in November 2013 as a consequence of its disagreement with Berlusconi's decision to move over to the opposition after he had been expelled from the Senate. It is led by Angelino Alfano.

Notes

Introduction

1. See Ruzza and Fella (2009, 232; "The right is obviously successful first and foremost because a large portion of its electorate approves of its policies"), and see in particular Schadee, Segatti, and Bellucci (2010, 357): "Often, in public discourse, the voting choices of the Italian electorate in this long political period are presented as a decision based on fascination with or repulsion for a leader who does not come from the typical political mold . . . What remains after the collapse of ideology and what keeps the various strands of Italian public opinion together is love or hate for the Magician. The data analyzed here, though limited, paint a very different picture, at least as far as the electorate is concerned. Deciding whom to vote for in 2006 was mostly based on highly structured political orientations. If the Italians look mad to some observers, it must be said that there is method in their madness." For a similar approach to the one adopted in this book, see Galli della Loggia (2010) and particularly Belardelli (2012). Others who insist on the need to explain Berlusconism politically include Lazar (2007 and 2009) and Musso (2008), who, in a rather contradictory fashion, also stresses the emotional, illusory, and theatrical aspects of Berlusconism. Ginsborg (2004, 102) also agrees: "His is a serious political project, drawing sustenance from some of the most profound changes in contemporary society as well as from the innovations of neoliberalism."

2. The expression *Tangentopoli* (often translated as "Bribesville") refers to the judicial investigations into the system of illegal financing of political parties that began in February 1992 and in less than two years brought about the dissolution of the five Italian governing parties—Christian Democracy, Socialist, Liberal, Republican, and Social Democratic—opening up a huge void in the center and center-right of the Italian political system.

3. Another example of this kind of approach is provided by Franco Cordero (2003, 190): Berlusconi's televisions rule "over its human livestock by controlling its spinal cord, hypothalamus and the small quantities of grey matter that remain . . . The technologies of codified stupidity have closed off any escape route."

4. These studies often overstate the role of the "guts" of the Berlusconi electorate (Severgnini 2011) and understate that of its "head," leading to conclusions such as "the foundation of Berlusconi's success is his ability to establish a direct emotional connection with the collective unconscious. Unlike other politicians he manages to bypass the mental filters used for the rational processing of reality and to appeal directly to our unconscious, to the 'child' that is in all of us" (Amadori 2002, 158).

5. See Susca (2004, 51; original italics): "The best way to understand the experiences of daily life is to get away from the academy and see things from the other side of the fence, that is, where a *Berlusconi* gets his consent from. One needs to start from *a hymn to ignorance*." However, even Susca, whose interpretation is not too distant from the one proposed here, focuses more on the forms of Berlusconi's politics; he regards his political substance as merely secondary, claiming that "Berlusconi's leadership is based not so much on rationality as on emotional symbolism" (59). Although Susca says he wants to understand the Berlusconian "barbarians" and in a way celebrate their modernity, he too ends up a victim of elitist prejudice, assuming that it is only the elites that use their heads, while the people—or barbarians—follow their "guts." Lynda Dematteo's work on the anthropology of the *Lega Nord* (2011) is of great interest in this respect. Although in this ethnographic study, which looks at the world from the point of view of the *Lega* voter, she illustrates important aspects of the *Lega* phenomenon, her Copernican tendencies have often prevailed; for example, she defines *Lega* militancy as being the consequence of "brainwashing by a 'mind-numbing machine'" (Dematteo 2011, 241). Stupidity, once more. One might ask what would have become of the great anthropologist Clifford Geertz if in his famous essay on cock-fighting in Bali (Geertz 1973), instead of trying to identify the logic and meaning behind this practice, he had concluded by saying that at the end of the day the people of Bali are just a bunch of idiots wasting time and money on a pastime that was clearly pointless. For a study of the *Lega* that takes its voters' motives more seriously, see Cento Bull and Gilbert (2001).

6. Berlusconi has been compared to Perot and Collor by Caniglia (2000), to De Gaulle and Reagan by Campus (2010), and to Sarkozy by Musso (2008) and Ventura (2012).

7. See, for example, among many others, Maffesoli (1992); Manin (1997); Schedler (1997); Canovan (1999); Calise (2000); Cantarano (2000); Pharr and Putnam (2000); Mény and Surel (2000); Hermet (2001); Taggart (2002); Taguieff (2002); Crouch (2004); Barisione (2006); Rosanvallon (2008); Fabbrini (2011); and Müller (2011).

Chapter 1

1. The word *people* is ambiguous and unsatisfactory. For the sake of brevity it is used here generically and in the widest possible sense to refer to whoever does not belong to the political elite. Quotation marks are being used to highlight this vagueness.

2. Expressions like "European modernity" and "Mediterranean lateness" are of course cultural constructs; as such they are ambiguous, complex, susceptible to different interpretations in accordance with the person making them, and prone to political exploitation. The expressions are being used here in a deliberately generic way in order to highlight their persistence, although in very different forms from time to time, over a long period of Italian history. For a critique of these constructs and the way they have been used, see Huysseune (2006).

3. The bibliography in this area is vast. On the need to force the country, see Romanelli (1988); Pombeni (1993); Galli della Loggia (1998 and 2010); De Rita (1998); Pezzino (2002); and Mozzarelli (2003 and 2005). Chiarini (1995, 25) uses a similar argument to the one in this book when he writes of a "Jacobin template" that was able to "stand the test of time and become a stable characteristic of the culture and political style of Italian party leadership." There is also a vast literature on Italian identity and "making the Italians." Here suffice it to mention the modern "classic" by Bollati (1983) and three more recent studies by Graziano (2010), Patriarca (2010), and Rossi (2012).

4. Oakeshott's dichotomy of politics of faith and politics of skepticism closely resembles the antiutopian position of the Catholic philosopher Augusto Del Noce, one of the most acute and profound observers of twentieth-century Italian culture and politics: "For me the possibility of evil is the same at any historical moment and can only be overcome at that particular point in time and space by the

individual. The State should provide the individual with the best possible conditions to perfect himself" (Del Noce 1994, 61). Del Noce is here strongly influenced by another Catholic philosopher, Antonio Rosmini (1797–1855), and his distinction between "the perfectionist view and the realistic view" of political life (224). Regarding Del Noce's antiutopianism, see Tassani (1976). For a more recent analysis using similar categories but from a very different perspective, see Maffesoli (1992).

5. Pombeni (1993, 87–95) has convincingly shown how and why in Italy the "politics of faith" has historically prevailed over the "politics of skepticism." He argues that in Italian history a political model of legitimization "based on the search for the 'common good' or 'social justice'" has prevailed over one aimed at "maximizing the formal contents of the decision and the political obligation, and looking for the 'perfect' regime in which politics is the terrain of the 'rules' and everything else is left to the 'private' sphere."

6. On this point, but from a slightly different perspective, see Galli della Loggia (1998, 135–37).

7. Banfield (1976; first English edition 1958) and Almond and Verba (1963) are pioneering studies by non-Italian scholars centered on cultural explanations. Maranini (1963, 34–36) and Sartori (1982, 25) are among the Italian scholars who have rejected that kind of explanation. See also how poorly received in Italy the books by Banfield and Almond and Verba were: for the reception of Banfield, see the introduction and essays republished in Banfield (1976); for the reception of Almond and Verba, see Sani (1989). It should also be added that Anglo-Saxon authors have sometimes overstepped the mark in emphasizing cultural causes: see Gilbert (2007). Altan (1986, 14–16) and Putnam (1993, 183–85) argue that the downplaying of cultural explanations by Italian scholars may be due to a psychological removal.

8. Romanelli's (1988) acute observations regarding the "impossible command" in the liberal era is being applied here to the entire postunification period.

9. Both Galli della Loggia and Ornaghi and Parsi have described how the paradoxical interaction between the Jacobin aspirations of the elite and the inability of that elite to keep its distance from society produced a perverse and confusing mix of politics and social interests. Ornaghi and Parsi (2001, 63ff.), referring to the republican era, use the expression "servant-mistress politics": "Mistress—in its aspirations, arrogant expectations and deeds—of almost everything

from business to infrastructure, from individual professional careers to boards of directors to cultural fashion . . . But also servant of everything and everyone: to prevent anyone from contesting its leadership, it would promise grants, sponsor individual and group ambitions and support interest groups" (70). Galli della Loggia (1998, 148–49) has shown clearly how "unintended consequences" have become "the key to explaining Italian modernity": "The political revolution aimed at unifying the country, whose original aim had been to build a State despite, and often against, society, when faced with the resistance of society, quickly stepped back, as in Russia with the NEP: it abandoned its original aim, gave up on the State and deprived Italian modernity of the organizational and authoritative power of the State, allowing it to be managed by society itself . . . But, paradoxically, since it had given up its original aim, the political sphere found itself forced to repeat and radicalize its initial proposal time and again, thus giving rise to political ideologies and cultures that were aimed at reinforcing the State, at times outright statist, however invariably State-centered . . . In theory. In practice, society was obliged to mold this 'statism without the State' to its own particular ends, shattering its unifying spirit and privatizing its effects. Politics, for its part, learned its lesson, schizophrenically separated its words from its deeds and put into its programs and discourses things which it never even tried to implement in the real world."

10. As already noted, according to Oakeshott (1996, 29) the lack of respect for rules, rights, and forms is one of the basic characteristics of the politics of faith. For an analysis of the imbalance between state power and individual guarantees, see Cassese (1998). For a long-term view of the relationship between the Italian "people" and the elite on the one hand and the law on the other, see Galli della Loggia (1998, 39–43)—a book that is recommended for its coverage of the whole question of the relationship between institutions, truth, clans, and politics discussed here. It should not be forgotten, however, that in the 150 years since unification, the improvement of rights and guarantees has been significant overall (see Rodotà 1995).

11. The sad story of Doctor F. J. continues as follows: "He rebelled. He declared himself an anarchist. He made Tolstoyan speeches to the poor. He was the scandal of the entire neighbourhood, loathed by the rich, despised by the poor, and secretly pitied by a few. His post as panel-doctor was finally taken away from him, and he literally died of hunger."

Chapter 2

1. See particularly Pombeni (1979 and 2007b) but also Baget Bozzo (1974, 241–46) and Del Noce (1994, 99). According to Del Noce, Dossetti thought that "the state needs to be conquered by Christian forces so that it can be used as an instrument of the *reformatio christiana*. We need to go beyond the traditional rule of law so as to make the structure of the state more unitary and efficient and enable it to act according to a pre-determined project aimed at terminating the supremacy of economic forces on political power." Elsewhere Del Noce (1995, 218) describes Dossetti as a "catholic Gobetti."

2. See Capperucci (2014). Ruggero Orfei's (1976, 182–83) definition of the most important conservative fraction of the DC, the "dorotei," is noteworthy in this respect: "If there was an ideology, there was also a safeguard for the interest opposite to that which had generated the ideology . . . The element of continuity in the apparent evolution and of immobility in the apparent dynamism are characteristic of doroteismo as a method and as a system."

3. Criticism of the excessive power of parties continued to circulate in the reform-minded left until the 1950s (Polese Remaggi 2011).

4. Some of the more recent studies include Tassani (1976); Riccardi (1983); Chiarini (1992, 1994, and 1995); Imbriani (1996); Ignazi (1998); Setta (2001); Parlato (2002 and 2012); Liucci (2002); D'Angelo (2002); Pertici (2003); Tarchi (2003); Sani (2004); Ungari (2004, 2007, and 2011); Gerbi and Liucci (2006 and 2009); Baldassini (2008); Grassi Orsini and Nicolosi (2008 and 2009); Orsina (2010 and 2014); Berti, Capozzi, and Craveri (2010); and Robbe (2012).

5. Baldassini (2008) makes this last point very strongly.

6. In fact, the situation is rather more complicated than how populists themselves see it, as will be seen later. For instance, Thomas Mann's (1983) *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*—which links politics to democracy, progress, and the legacy of the French revolution—puts antipolitics firmly on the right. However, it is true that an aversion to parties and politics does not run parallel to the separation between left and right; as has already been shown, the left can also be strongly antiparty.

7. On these first two points, see Del Noce (2001, 111–14).

8. ISTAT, Serie storiche, Table 7.2, years 1867–1965, accessed January 9, 2014, http://seriestoriche.istat.it.

9. See for example Chiarenza (2002) and Guazzaloca (2011) regarding the public broadcasting company; Barca (1997) on public

corporations; and Quagliariello (2005) and Orsina and Quagliariello (2005) on youth politics.

10. Barbara Spinelli (2009) has expressed a similar doubt when discussing the non-Berlusconian roots of Berlusconism, or Berlusconism's lack of a sense of the state. For the relationship between the 1968 movement and the historical weakness of the Italian state, see also Pezzino (2002, 152ff.).

11. This did not only happen in Italy; see for example Bourdon (2011).

12. On the revolutionary mentality of Pyatnizky, see his wife's extraordinary diary: Pyatnizkaya (2000).

Chapter 3

1. In this respect the work of Gianni Baget Bozzo, one of the main ideologues of Berlusconism, is of considerable interest. Baget Bozzo (2000a and 2000b) claims that "the Italians are virtuous people, both in a moral and a technical sense. Our morals and our customs are measured by abstract legalism. Italian 'getting by' (which really means getting oneself organized) may, like any natural or historical ability, turn into a vice, but in itself it is a natural virtue," and "since 1994 *Forza Italia* has been a constant challenge to the mindset of Italian political culture (newspapers, universities, political experts, think-tanks): it was not supposed to exist because it was unthinkable. The main problem that *Forza Italia* has encountered in Italian public opinion is that it was incomprehensible to Italian political culture, for which the only thing that could possibly exist is what the political culture itself was able to conceive of."

2. Alfio Mastropaolo (2000, 2001, and 2008) has commented a great deal on this; see also Lupo (2000) and, for a comparative study, Jobert and Kohler-Koch (2008).

3. The literature on Berlusconism, especially the more critical work, has stressed how little novelty it showed because of its links with Craxi and the PSI. Berlusconi's electors had a rather different view: see Segatti (1994, 159).

4. For an analysis of civil society in Berlinguer's PCI and its tricky cohabitation with the communist tradition, see Guiso (2012).

5. See also the 2004 *Carta dei Valori di Forza Italia* (Forza Italia 2004), especially the paragraph on pages 21–22 headed "*Oltre la vecchia ideologia anti-italiana*" ("Beyond the Old Anti-Italian Ideology"): "All of Italy's ills were blamed, as by Gobetti, on the conformist and

servile spirit of the Italians. As a result most of our cultural establishment, alone among western countries, has been and is proud to call itself 'anti-Italian.' And it is equally significant that different left-wing commentators have called Berlusconi an 'arch-Italian,' thinking that it might offend him." The document goes on to list "*distrust of the people*" as one of the consequences of this anti-Italian ideology: "Italian citizens were constantly being treated like stupid people who should be prevented from repeating the mistake of falling in love with a tyrant. Delegating to parties and party apparatus and control of civil society seemed like the only antidote to prevent this happening again" (italics in the original text). See also pages 43–45 on turning the most common clichés about Italian ideology upside down.

6. On the moral depression theme, see also the opening speech to the Senate, May 1994 (Berlusconi 2001, 33–34).

7. It should be noted that all Berlusconi's speeches published in the various books being cited here were made in Rome or north of Rome.

8. See also Berlusconi (2001, 25; speech at the Senate, May 1994): "Public power can be weakened in the same way in two opposite sets of circumstances: when it has too few modes of intervening or when it has too many instruments that are out of date or impossible to understand, and punitive for the general public. The latter is our current situation."

9. See also Berlusconi's letter presenting the government's plan for the 2001 legislature (Forza Italia 2001): "a country where everyone can think of the state and its institutions as their home and not an enemy in waiting."

10. In some ways, the most reliable guide to Berlusconism is still Vincenzo Cuoco (1999, 241): "How can you apply the law when the whole nation joins forces to hide the facts and save the guilty parties? . . . When punishment is not at the level that the people think it should be, excessive penalties make enforcement difficult and they should be lessened to make them more effective."

11. "We pay our taxes, we have paid them and we will continue to pay them . . . If we are here, it is because we are honest taxpayers and loyal citizens" (Berlusconi 2001, 267; speech in Milan, May 3, 1997). Five years later, he said "another major challenge facing us all is the underground economy. Civil society cannot tolerate businesses working illegally" (Berlusconi 2004, 250–51; speech at the meeting of the *Confindustria*, Parma, April 13, 2002). For an alternative version, however, see Severgnini (2011, 48).

12. See also page 234, when Berlusconi proposed reducing certain tax requirements for the entrepreneur thanks to a fiscal agreement so that the entrepreneur could "finally think about working, producing, creating new jobs with a state that finally trusts him!" The argument that responsibility for the poor relationship between the state and the citizen is the fault of the former and not the latter was set out by Giulio Tremonti (1997), Berlusconi's long-serving economic minister. Although the object of this study is the substance of Berlusconism and not its sources or ghost writers, the convergence with Tremonti is clear. The strong influence of classical liberalism, which was supported by intellectuals such as Giuliano Urbani and Antonio Martino, who were members of Berlusconi's inner circle in those years, is equally evident.

13. See also Berlusconi (2004, 43–44; speech at the meeting of *Comunione e Liberazione*, August 24, 2000) as well as Berlusconi (2010), from the very title of the book, *L'amore vince sempre sull'invidia e sull'odio* (*Love always wins out over envy and hatred*); and Forza Italia (2004): "Forza Italia believes in a civilization of love and creativity, not one of envy and hatred."

14. See Chiarini (2000); Parlato (2002); and Baldassini (2008, 246). *Mondo piccolo* is a series of short stories written by Giovannino Guareschi and published in several volumes from 1948 onward. The success of the books, and of the films based on them, was enormous. Set in a village in the Po Valley, the stories narrate the adventures of a Catholic priest, Don Camillo, and a communist mayor, Peppone, in the age of the Cold War. Although they are deadly ideological and political enemies, Don Camillo and Peppone are always ready to cooperate, however grudgingly, when the fundamental human values of their tiny rural community are at stake.

15. This was a constant accusation in Berlusconi's propaganda. However, something quite similar has recently been said by one of Berlusconi's "arch-enemies": see Carlo De Benedetti in Damilano (2012, 291).

16. The traditional Italian insensitivity to institutional matters is emphasized, among others, by Pasquino (1999), who discusses the unfortunate outcome of the 1997 bicameral commission on constitutional reform, and more generally by Capozzi (2008, 16–17).

17. See, for example, the messages received by Berlusconi after he was attacked in Milan in piazza Duomo (Berlusconi 2010). This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

18. "The relationship between politics and business degenerated because democratic parties had to face up to an anti-system party like the

PCI which could count on financial support from Moscow" (Berlusconi 2000, 81; speech on the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Rome, November 9, 1999). Ignazio Silone (Polese Remaggi 2011, 167–68) was convinced of the causal connection between the weight of communism and partyocracy, as was the major analyst of partyocracy, Giuseppe Maranini: "In order to face up to the tyranny of communist partyocracy, there was no better solution than going down the same road and countering communist partyocracy with anticommunist partyocracy, which shared its organizational methods and in some respects its language and even its programs" (quoted in Capozzi 2008, 283). For a similar view in more recent historiography, see for example Cafagna (1993, 70ff.) and Galli della Loggia (2010, 113ff.).

19. "*Communism is . . . the perfect summary and logical conclusion of all antifascist ideologies*: how can one believe that a country had put up with the kind of fascism that the antifascist ideologies describe without also believing that everything in the country should be destroyed and completely renewed, as communism advises?" (Noventa 1965, 106; italics in the original text). See also Pertici (2003, 291–92).

20. The concept was repeated in Berlusconi (2010, 251; opening speech at the founding congress of the *Popolo della Libertà*, Rome, March 27, 2009).

21. See also Forza Italia (2004, 6–7): "*The birth of* Forza Italia *marks the beginning of a democracy of alternation in power and of the Second Republic. A turning point in the history of Italy . . . Forza Italia* is thus the architect of a democracy of alternation in power and of a fully developed liberal state" (italics in the original text).

22. See also Baget Bozzo (2000c): "The center-right is defined that way because the left defines itself as the left, but in reality the twenty-first century party that *Forza Italia* wishes to be is not covered by this kind of semantics: left and right are spatial terms not conceptual ones. The language of left and right in its normal usage is a language which belongs to the left because it presupposes a social division and is directed at only one side of it. A party like *Forza Italia* is a political force aimed at all the citizens. In this way FI does not intend just to beat the left, but to go beyond it."

23. The term *emulsion* is a deliberate choice: it aims to suggest that liberalism and populism are distinct substances that have not dissolved into one another but have penetrated each other so as to become inseparable. On the interaction between populist and liberal elements in Berlusconism, see Moroni (2008, 161ff.). For Berlusconism

as a form of "popular liberalism" within a historical account of the problem of Italian middle-class political mobilization, see Quagliariello (2007).

24. There is a vast, stimulating, but also somewhat inconclusive literature on populism. Despite many attempts to explain it (e.g., "Vingtième Siècle" 1997; Canovan 1999; Mény and Surel 2000; Hermet 2001; Taggart 2002; Taguieff 2002; Tarchi 2003; Zanatta 2004; De Blasio, Hibberd, Higgins, and Sorice 2012), it remains an elusive phenomenon. Scholars agree that the theme of the "good people" as opposed to the "bad elite" is a key part of the definition, and the subsequent discussion is based on this common denominator. However, two things should be noted: first, that a number of different phenomena can arise from this notion, depending on how we define both the people and the elite; and second, that for many authors (e.g., Mèny and Surel 2001, 199–201; Taggart 2002, 153) the populist notion of the people means a monolithic, organic community with no internal divisions—a notion that is incompatible with Berlusconism's individualism. Regarding the latter, see Forza Italia (2004, 11–12): "Our vision of politics is a long way from populist versions of left or right which imagine they have to defend a presumed purity of the people by expelling its 'enemies' . . . We will always defend the autonomy and plurality of civil society against any pretense of 'moral representation' of the people by any kind of politician or institution." The main populist elements of Berlusconism are set out at the end of this chapter.

25. Marc Lazar (2007, 76–79; 2009, 97) has linked the increased patriotism in Italy over the last twenty years with Berlusconism. Campi and Varasano (2013, 92), in a discussion of *Forza Italia*, note that "in the history of the Italian Republic, no party—particularly the major ones—had ever made such a direct and explicit reference to national values and symbols."

26. Berlusconi's idea of civil society resembles in some respects that of the Scottish moralists, based on "moral affection" and "natural sympathy" (Seligman 1992, ch. 1). This is less implausible than it might sound, if one takes into account the important part played in the definition of Berlusconism by "classical liberal" intellectuals like Giuliano Urbani and Antonio Martino.

27. An emphasis on what human beings have in common rather than what divides them, so enabling them to interact profitably and peacefully, and hostility to the excesses of politics and ideology are all part of the liberal tradition (Jaume 1997, 14882–99; Schedler 1997, 5).

28. The debate about the true nature of the Northern League has been lively from the start and has produced a number of contrasting interpretations. The importance of territory, however, is recognized by all critics: see for example Cento Bull and Gilbert (2001); Tarchi (2003, 135ff.); Ruzza and Fella (2009, 63ff.); Biorcio (2010a); and Dematteo (2011).

29. On Berlusconism as a form of "skeptical" and radically anti-Jacobin liberalism in the Oakeshott sense, see Mathieu (1997).

30. On the "Milanese" Berlusconi, see Rampini (1994); more generally, see Chiarini (1995, 151–52) and Galli della Loggia (1998, 82): Milan "always seems to be attracted by the utopia of reducing political society to civil society." I would like to thank Mario Diani for drawing attention to the specific role of Brianza.

31. See again the work of Gianni Baget Bozzo. On the one hand, Baget Bozzo (2000a) claims strongly that "*Forza Italia* does not have an ideology, it sets out a political program based on civic common sense and translates citizens' expectations into political and institutional form." However, he stresses with equal force that FI is liberal, claiming that its liberal character is based on a desire for freedom coming from the people. See also Moroni (2008, 104ff.). Cavallari (1997) makes some sharp observations regarding the difficulty in politicizing the rise of individualism since the end of the 1970s in a liberal direction.

32. This does not mean that you cannot interpret this third tentacle in a liberal sense: it could, for example, be argued that the "party of society" is not monopolistic but a light, nonbureaucratic political force, close to its electorate, open to new ideas and against the crystallization of ideologies and power. This interpretation can be found in Forza Italia (2004, 11–12) in the paragraph headed "*Partito della società*." The absolute incompatibility between populism and liberal constitutionalism is shown in Riker (1982); Mény and Surel (2000, 279–84); and Taggart (2002, 190–91). Many critics have claimed that Berlusconism is a threat to liberal democracy and a modern form of authoritarianism: see for example Bufacchi and Burgess (2001); Colombo and Padellaro (2002); Santomassimo (2003); Ginsborg (2004); Tranfaglia (2004); Gibelli (2010); and Ginsborg and Asquer (2011).

33. As Lord Acton has noted, "Time is needed to overcome friction and to establish a delicate balance. Therefore it is wanted for liberty, not for absolutism. It is the natural cry of Liberalism" (quoted in Watson 1994, 56).

Chapter 4

1. For a summary of the 2001 and 2006 elections see Itanes (2006a, 98, Table 6.2). This same picture emerges from all voting research. The voting behavior of private sector employees is less clear-cut and changes from one election to the next.

2. The previously quoted research on the 2001 election describes the left-wing Olive Tree coalition voters as "*slightly* more interested, *a little less* uninformed, having *a little* faith in politics and its ability to influence it," compared to the Berlusconi-led coalition (*Casa delle Libertà*). To take a further example, though noting that CdL supporters read on average 1 book a year while Olive Tree voters read 1.7, research considers "the idea of an intellectual half of Italy up against a TV-addicted other half" to be barely plausible (Caciagli and Corbetta 2002, 440 [my italics]; Legnante 2002, 249). But see also Sani (2007) and Legnante and Baldassarri (2010).

3. This is shown in the 2001 election. Among voters who were very or quite interested in politics, the CdL got only slightly fewer votes than the Olive Tree coalition (44.5 percent versus 49.4 percent; this data refers to results in single-member constituencies for the Chamber of Deputies). The difference is much more in favor of the Berlusconi coalition for voters who had "little or no interest in politics" (56.3 percent CdL versus 37.1 percent Olive Tree). The same applies for "knowledge of the political and institutional world": people who were very knowledgeable voted 44.6 percent CdL versus 49.3 percent Olive Tree—a difference of less than 5 percent. People with "average knowledge" voted 52.2 percent CdL versus 40.9 percent Olive Tree, and those who were "completely ignorant" voted 58.4 percent CdL versus 35.4 percent Olive Tree—a big difference of 23 percent. These results are based on Tables 2 and 8 in Pasquino (2002, 60ff.). For the results of the 2008 election, which are quite similar, see Table 11.1 in Itanes (2008, 152).

4. This hypothesis would seem to be reinforced by the fact that between 1985 and 2004 the percentage of the Italian electorate that was indifferent to politics decreased, while the percentage that was hostile increased considerably (Biorcio 2007, 196–97, Table 7.5).

5. This study compared two indicators of alienation from public life—awareness of one's own personal political skills ("internal effectiveness") and the perception of how politics and the institutions respond to citizens ("external effectiveness"). The aim of this comparison was to distinguish four different categories of voter: those

who feel effective in both dimensions, those who feel ineffective in both dimensions, and the two mixed types (internally effective / externally ineffective and internally ineffective / externally effective). Supporters of the Northern League and *Forza Italia* were overrepresented (+3 percent and +5 percent) in the internal effective / external ineffective category (the "hostile voters"), which amounted to 19 percent of the electorate. The "alienated" category of voter was ineffective in both dimensions and will be discussed later.

6. Although among "alienated voters" there were a considerable number of people who did not consider themselves as belonging to either the left or the right and did not vote in elections, they were still more right-wing (39.6 percent) than left-wing (23.5 percent) and tended not to vote for the left (9 percent less than in the electorate at large).

7. There were 5.5 percent more of the "alienated voters" who switched from the center-right to the center-left and 2 percent more who switched from voting for Berlusconi to abstaining than in the electorate at large (Cavazza, Corbetta, and Roccato 2006).

8. This is confirmed in full by De Sio (2007, 150): "In 2001 80% of the educated and politically aware interviewees feel close to a political party." For De Sio, too, this is a "quite unexpected" result (153). See also Barisione, Catellani, and De Sio (2010).

9. Ricolfi (1995) analyzed the 1994 electorate in similar terms—that is, as a "loose" electorate voting for the right up against a "militant" one choosing the left, though other electoral studies, with some exceptions (Natale 1997; Caniglia 2000, 170–77), did not follow up this argument.

10. UQ was strong and *Forza Italia* weak in the provinces of Foggia, Bari, Campobasso, Avellino, Matera, Reggio Calabria, Catanzaro, and northern Sardinia. At national level, UQ got an average of 5.7 percent of the vote, but it got between 7 and 8.5 percent in Caserta, Trapani, Messina, and Catania and more than 10 percent in Naples, Salerno, Cagliari, Palermo, Ragusa, and Caltanissetta and 14.7 percent in Syracuse. All these provinces became a "blue area" fifty years later. In only two provinces that eventually became a "blue area" was the UQ rather weak—Agrigento, where UQ did not get more than the national average, and Latina, where the result was even worse. For the "blue areas," see Diamanti (2009, 110, Fig. 4.9). Diamanti's maps can be superficially compared with the Wikipedia map on the UQ vote in 1946: http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:FUQ_1946 _giusto.PNG. Official electoral data are on the website of the Italian

Ministry of Interior: http://elezionistorico.interno.it (accessed January 21, 2014).

11. 36 percent of CdL voters and 45 percent of FI voters, as against 14.6 percent of left-wing voters. Data from the 2001 election results showed that the Berlusconi leadership's effect on the results was independent of other variables such as being self-employed or agreeing with the CdL program. For the 2006 results, see Itanes (2006a, 189); for the 2001 "B effect," see Sani (2002, 275ff., particularly 294, Table 9). In 2008, on the other hand, the percentage of *Partito Democratico* voters saying they were voting for the leader was the same as that of the PdL and much higher than in the 2006 election (Itanes 2008, 147–48).

12. The correlation between time spent watching television and voting preference was only significant among those who watched television more than four hours a day—but this is little more than 10 percent of the electorate (see also Itanes 2001, 118, Table 7.4; Caciagli 2002).

13. There is a considerable literature on this question. See, for example, Pilati (1997); Legnante (2002, 256, Fig. 8); Sani and Segatti (2002); Abruzzese and Susca (2004); Legnante and Sani (2007); Legnante (2007); Itanes (2008, 38–39, Fig. 2.2); Legnante and Baldassarri (2010); and Mancini (2011).

14. This phrase (literally translated as "getting the Italians down from the trees") is attributed to Ettore Bernabei (Bourdon 2011, 321), director general of the RAI from 1961 to 1974, who is also thought to have said, "The 20 million TV viewers are dickheads. Our duty is to educate them" (Grasso 1992, 301). On the RAI's more general pedagogical intentions, see Susca (2004); on commercial television's deliberate dissociation from the RAI model, see Pilati (1997, 120) and the evidence of Carlo Freccero—one of Berlusconi's top television company managers in the 1980s—in Damilano (2012, 164–67).

15. To be more precise, to the question "during the electoral campaign was there a topic or a fact which caused you to decide how to vote?" 18.5 percent of Olive Tree voters versus 28.8 percent of CdL voters said "yes" (Legnante 2002, 241, Table 1). When asked whether the vote in the single-member constituencies depended on "the leader," "the program," "the coalition," "the party," or "the candidate," "the program" was chosen by 27 percent of CdL voters and 28.2 percent of FI voters versus 19.2 percent of Olive Tree voters; "the leader" was chosen by 28.2 percent of CdL voters and 36.4 percent FI versus 13.5 percent of Olive Tree voters. Olive Tree voters, on the other hand, voted more for "the coalition" and "the party" (32.6 percent for

"the coalition" and 28.2 percent for "the party"; Maraffi 2002, 305, Table 2). In 2006 the program was a "motivating" factor for far fewer Berlusconi voters; this statistic will be analyzed further in Chapter 5.

16. The "Contract with the Italians" was perhaps Berlusconi's most significant innovation in Italian political communication. On May 8, 2001, just five days before the elections, during *Porta a Porta*, Italy's most relevant talk show, Berlusconi signed a paper formatted as a legal contract and listing five very specific policy initiatives. Berlusconi also pledged to step down in the following elections if he had not fulfilled at least four of his five promises. The contract seems to have had a specific effect: 30.4 percent of *Forza Italia* voters who said they only decided their vote the week before the election said it was based on the program, as opposed to 24.5 percent of those who said they had made up their minds a few weeks before the vote and 27.4 percent of those who had decided a long time before that. However, only 15 percent of FI voters decided their vote a week before the election. And the program was important for all Berlusconi voters, whether they decided their vote three days or three months before the election and whatever their level of education or interest in politics. To be more precise, about a third of FI voters who were "very" or "quite" interested in politics tended to attribute importance to the program as against a quarter of those who had little or no interest (my elaboration on the data of the Itanes 2001 panel).

17. This argument, plausible but difficult to prove empirically, is supported by a number of researchers; see for example Bellucci (1997, 271–72); Cavallari (1997); and Caniglia (2000, 153), who coined the expression "program-person."

18. 57 percent of right-wing voters were afraid of communism.

19. 43.2 percent of AN voters said they were "very" or "quite" interested in politics as against 46.3 percent of DS voters and 23.5 percent of FI voters; 77.3 percent of AN and DS voters said they were "close" to a party as against 57.7 percent of FI; 74.4 percent of AN voters knew who elected the President of the Republic according to the constitution, as against 70.6 percent of DS and 57.4 percent of FI. These are just a few examples of the parameters found in Itanes (2001), but the others all paint a similar picture. The higher rate of politicization of the AN electorate is also confirmed by males being overrepresented within it, whereas in the FI electorate females are overrepresented (Caciagli 2002, 117–18). As regards the AN electorate being more lukewarm toward Catholicism, compared to FI, 35.6 percent of AN voters thought that only the Catholic religion should be taught in

school and 18 percent that no religion should be taught, whereas for FI the percentages were 44.7 percent and 9.4 percent, respectively; 49.9 percent of FI voters "very much" or "partially" agreed that abortion should be made more difficult as against 41.8 percent of AN voters (my elaboration on the data of the Itanes 2001 panel).

20. See also Maraffi (2002, 305–6, Table 2): 36.4 percent of FI voters as opposed to 10.3 percent of AN voted for the leader.

21. In 2001, for example, about 60 percent of CdL voters agreed with the first two of these statements and more than 40 percent with the third, as against 33, 24, and 17 percent of Olive Tree voters (Corbetta 2002, 482). Table 4.13 in Diamanti (2009, 213) examines the impact of liberal ideology in the "blue areas": the Southern area seems to be less free-market oriented than the Northern (though not with regard to the simultaneous reduction in taxes and public services). However, in the South, there is also a clear division between left- and right-wing voters in terms of ideology with regard to the state–market relationship. On the 2001 elections, see also Bellucci and Petrarca (2007, 227–28) and Legnante and Sani (2002, 51ff.); on the 1996 elections, see Natale (1997, 230–32); on the 2006 elections, see Itanes (2006a, 166ff.).

22. 70 percent of self-employed workers who agreed with the program of liberalizing the labor market (as well as more than 30 percent of the self-employed who did not agree with it) voted for the CdL in 2001, as did 64 percent of those who agreed with a reduction in both taxes and public services (and 47 percent of those who did not agree with it). The independent impact of liberal ideology is visible in the other socioprofessional categories as well (Itanes 2001, 69, Table 4.6). For a more general analysis of how the political dimension has had more influence on the vote than the socioeconomic one over the last twenty years, see Sani and Segatti (2002).

23. The "liberal" label was used by just under 30 percent of left-wing voters and more than 30 percent of center voters. It was thus a label used by all orientations but more strongly on the right than on the left or in the center. When asked to choose a single definition of themselves, it should be noted that the 11.5 percent figure for those who chose "liberal" was second only to the "moderate" label (12.7 percent) and way above the "Christian Democratic" label (3.2 percent).

24. As an American official stationed in Italy after the war wrote, "The Italians can tell you the names of the ministers in the government but not the names of the favourite products of the celebrities of their country. In addition, the walls of Italian cities are plastered more

with political slogans than with commercial ones. According to the opinion of this officer there is little hope that the Italians will achieve a state of prosperity and internal calm until they start to be more interested in the respective merits of different types of cornflakes and cigarettes rather than the relative abilities of their political leaders" (quoted in Vinen 2000, 370).

25. For an analysis of Berlusconism as a link between the twentieth century and the post-twentieth century, though based on form rather than contents, see Abruzzese and Susca (2004).

Chapter 5

1. Berlusconi's governments produced a considerable amount of legislation: 1,028 laws, 524 legislative decrees, 525 decree-laws, and 1,730 prime minister's decrees (Sole-24 Ore 2011, 38–39). Although, as stated, this policymaking has been criticized by most commentators, reliable assessment will require more time and careful study.

2. In Italy the entrepreneurial elite has always been reluctant to take on a political role and become responsible for the problems of the state: see Galli della Loggia (1998, 79–82). This is clearly shown by the contrasting fortunes of the Italian liberal party in the 1950s and 1960s, under Giovanni Malagodi's leadership: see Orsina (2010). According to Oakeshott (1996, 73), however, the nonpolitical nature of the entrepreneurial class is not just Italian but universal, and not unreasonably so.

3. French think tanks also played an important role in the neoliberal shift in Chirac's Gaullism in the 1980s: see Bonfreschi (2012). On the fragile cultural background of the Italian right and awareness of this fragility, see Movarelli (2013).

4. The phenomenon of anti-Berlusconism, which really deserves a book of its own, has been viewed here only as the other side of the Berlusconism coin. See also Orsina (2006b); Belardelli (2012); and Campi and Varasano (2013). An anthology of criticisms of Berlusconi can be found in D'Alessandro (2005).

5. See Volcansek (1998) and more recently Campi and Varasano (2013) for a historical overview of this political/judicial overlap.

6. The percentage of FI "expert" parliamentarians rose from 7.7 percent to 13 percent, as against 62.1 percent for AN and 54.8 percent for the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra*.

7. On these early years of *Forza Italia*—the debate about party organi-
    zation, internal arguments, tension between charismatic leadership
    and the need to institutionalize the party—see McCarthy (1995b and
    1997); Maraffi (1996); Poli (1997); Poli and Tarchi (1999); Poli
    (2001); and Marino (2012).

8. On the role of Giuliano Urbani in the creation of *Forza Italia*, see
    Campi and Varasano (2013). Perhaps the first critique of the ide-
    ological transformation of FI was Franco Rizzo's 2001 book titled
    From Einaudi to Gedda: The Liberal Meteor of Forza Italia. On the
    question of liberal or social issues in Forza Italia programs from 1994
    to 2006, see Ruzza and Fella (2009, 132, Fig. 5.3), which seems to
    confirm the downward trend of economic liberalism. See also the
    2001 "Contract with the Italians," in which only one of the five points
    (tax-cutting) was fully in line with a free-market ideology, and the
    2001 electoral program (Forza Italia 2001), which was written in
    the liberal conservative tradition and included issues such as family,
    solidarity, law and order, but also natural rights, reduction of the
    state, elimination of bureaucracy, market values, and subsidiarity.

9. See, for example, Berlusconi (2006, 123–30; speech commemorating
    Bettino Craxi, Rome, January 22, 2002). See also Forza Italia (2004).
    It is also significant that the closing ceremony of the first FI congress
    took place on April 18, 1998, exactly fifty years after the 1948 elec-
    tions, and that FI wanted a parliamentary commission to investigate
    the judicial events of the early 1990s, which had destroyed traditional
    political parties.

10. For the ideological development of FI, see also Ruzza and Fella
    (2009, 128ff.). The founding and development of *Magna Carta*, one
    of the most important right-wing cultural foundations (see Mova-
    relli 2013), also testifies to the cultural climate of the period.

11. This paradox is certainly not a new one. Theoretically it has long
    been known that a free market is not a "natural state" but an artificial
    construction that can only be achieved by a painful process of politi-
    cal and social transformation. In the 1940s, Karl Polanyi claimed that
    laissez faire had been programmed, while state intervention in the
    economy had not been (Polanyi 1944, but see also Gray 2009).

12. The *Yearbooks on Italian Politics* produced by the Istituto Cattaneo
    testify to this: Bellucci and Bull (2002); Blondel and Segatti (2003);
    Della Sala and Fabbrini (2004); Guarnieri and Newell (2005); Amyot
    and Verzichelli (2006). See also Lazar (2007) and Roncarolo (2007).

13. 28 percent of FI voters and 23 percent of AN voters compared to
    16 percent DS voters (Maraffi 2002, 305, Table 2).

14. 11.1 percent of FI voters and 12.1 percent of AN voters said they voted for the program as against 18 percent of Olive Tree voters (Itanes 2006a, 200, Table 12.1).

15. See Pasquino (2002) and Cartocci (2002) for the 2001 situation; Segatti and Vezzoni (2007, 98–99) for a comparison between 2001 and 2004; and Itanes (2008, 119–20) for the 2008 situation.

16. In the summer of 2006 on August 14, Ernesto Galli della Loggia wrote an editorial for the *Corriere della Sera* entitled "Società civile. Fine di un mito" ("Civil Society: The End of a Myth"). Although it addressed political contingencies, the article was also emblematic of the change in historical climate.

17. For a comparison between the 2006 and 2008 electoral campaigns, see Itanes (2008, 43–44 and 214); Legnante (2010); and Legnante and Baldassarri (2010). That 2008 elections were more a defeat for the left than a victory for Berlusconi is testified to by the fact that abstention was strongly asymmetrical, damaging the left way more than the right: see Itanes (2008, 48–56) and D'Alimonte and De Sio (2010). For the 2008 election, Lazar (2009, 39) uses Pagnoncelli's formula for the 2006 election: fear replacing a dream. For a comparison of Berlusconi's 2013 election results with those of 2006 and 2008, see the Epilogue.

18. See Itanes (2006a, 111) for the Catholic vote and pages 166 and 170 (tables 10.1 and 10.2) for the distance between center-right and center-left on various issues. In 2006, center-right voters thought they were less favorable to the free market than the coalition they were voting for on taxation and much less so on the privatization of health care. One should also note the difference between right-wing political parties and electorate on foreign policy (176, Fig. 10.2). After 9/11, Berlusconi established a foreign policy and failed to establish an economic one, but he had been voted into office for his economic policy much more than for his foreign policy.

19. See Itanes (2008, 90–91 and 124ff.) for the Catholic vote and pages 114–19 and 179ff. for the distance between the two areas on various ideological questions. It should be noted that if we look at the electorate overall, the largest decrease in economic liberalism in Italy was between 2001 and 2006 (185, Fig. 13.1), and that the correlation between the opinions of the electorate on economic freedom and their voting habits decreased between 2001 and 2006 and even more so between 2006 and 2008. To sum up, people were voting less on the basis of their view of the economy and more on the basis of their view of moral and social issues (192, Fig. 13.2).

20. Diamanti (2009, 144ff.) highlights the national character of Berlusconism and as a consequence the geographical internal splits. For the influence of the Southern vote on *Forza Italia*, and its even greater influence on the PdL, see Chiaramonte (2002); Itanes (2008, 97–108); Diamanti (2009, 197ff.); and D'Alimonte and De Sio (2010). For the Southern vote in general, see Raniolo (2010).

21. According to the 2001 Itanes panel, 43.2 percent of the AN electorate was very or quite interested in politics as against 46.3 percent of DS and 23.5 percent of FI; 77.3 percent of AN and DS felt close to a party as against 57.7 percent of FI; and 74.4 percent of AN and 70.6 percent of DS knew how the President of the Republic was elected in Italy as against 57.4 percent of FI. The CCD/CDU data are 48.8, 67.4, and 79.1 percent, respectively; for the *Lega* they are 26, 57.4, and 70.4 percent.

22. For an analysis that is also an eye-witness report, see Follini (2006).

23. Up to now it has been claimed that Berlusconi, like Chronos, ate his own political children because he wanted to stay in power and that the subsequent inevitability of his leadership made any judicial intervention against him a highly political question. However, this reasoning can also be turned completely on its head. It can be argued that Berlusconi's need to defend himself from the initiatives of the judiciary, which had objective political relevance, forced him to stay in power, thereby making his leadership inevitable. Berlusconi's time in politics has become like a life-or-death game of thrones, in which defeat does not entail merely loss of political power but a spell in prison or voluntary exile. This is another terrible sign of the lack of political modernization in Italy. In the West, games of thrones are the product of literary fantasy. It is only in Italy that they exist for real, not only for Berlusconi but for Craxi before him.

Epilogue

1. See Ilvo Diamanti's (2012) sharp observations on this.

2. For early impressions of the Five Star Movement, see Biorcio and Natale (2013); Bordignon and Ceccarini (2013); and Corbetta and Gualmini (2013).

3. This interview was published in "Die Welt" under the heading *Warum Italien mehr wie Deutschland sein sollte* (Why Italy should be more like Germany). For Monti's pedagogism, see also Marco Valerio Lo Prete (2013b). The desire to educate the Italians was even

more clearly shown by one of Monti's most important ministers Elsa Fornero, who declared "Italy is full of contradictions, sunny for 9 months of the year and with a guaranteed minimum income people would relax, sit down and eat pasta with tomato sauce" (quoted in Sole-24 Ore 2012).

4. See Marco Valerio Lo Prete's sharp analyses of Monti's elitism in "Il Foglio" in January and February 2013. For an overview, see Lo Prete (2013a). See also Debenedetti 2013.

5. "Corriere della Sera," 20 January 2013.

6. See Itanes (2013, 49–50) for the impact of abstention, above all on the right; pages 76–77 on the right-wing orientation of voters who kept voting for Berlusconi; pages 93–105 on the electoral impact of the assessment of Monti's government in comparison with Berlusconi's; and pages 107–19 on Grillo's electorate, especially Tables 8.1 and 8.2 (111–12) on its left/right orientation and lack of confidence in public institutions. See also De Sio, Emanuele, Maggini, and Paparo (2013).

7. Both the judicial decision itself and a law against corruption made it impossible for Berlusconi to remain a senator. However, his expulsion was not automatic but had to be enforced by a vote in the Senate.

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Index