Political system of Italy

Italy has been a parliamentary republic since June 2nd 1946, when the monarchy was abolished. The Italian parliament is a bicameral legislature that consists of the Senate (Senato della Repubblica - currently 315 members) and the House of Representatives (Camera dei deputati - with 630 elected representatives)\*\*.

Executive power is exercised by the Council of Ministers, which is headed by the Prime Minister. Head of State is the President of the Republic.

\*\* recently proposed reductions . . . Senate to 200 and Camera to 400

 1945 - 1991/1994

Since WWII - no party strong enough to govern alone . . . parties thus formed political alliances and coalition governments.

Between 1945 and 1994, Italian politics was dominated by two major parties: the Christian Democrats (DC), the main party of government, and the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the main opposition party.

 1991 - 1994

Early 1990s . . .the political situation was radically transformed by two major shocks: the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the wide-reaching Tangentopoli corruption scandal from 1992 to 1994. The former caused the dissolution and split of the Communist party and splintering of the opposition, while the latter led to the collapse of nearly every established political party in Italy, including the Christian Democrats.

 1994 - 1996

Anti-establishment sentiment resulted in a 1993 referendum enabling the reform of the electoral system. This opened the door for media magnate Silvio Berlusconi to enter politics with his conservative Forza Italia party. Berlusconi won the 1994 general election, forming the short-lived Berlusconi I Cabinet. (He resigned in December and was succeeded by Lamberto Dini who formed a caretaker government of technocrats 1995 - 1996).

Berlusconi went on to become one of Italy's most important political figures over the next two decades, serving as Prime Minister again from 2001 to 2006 and 2008 to 2011.. . . . he’s still today a force to be reckoned with on the Italian stage.

 1996 - 2008

4. Between 1996 and 2008, Italian political parties were organized into two big coalitions,

 the centre-right which included Lega Nord . The LN was established as a federation of six regional parties from northern and north-central Italy in 1991. The party's founder was Umberto Bossi. The LN at times,advocated the secession of the North, which the party referred to as “Padania”. The party always opposed illegal immigration.

 and the centre-left.

The latter (center-left) governed from 1996 to 2001 and again between 2006 and 2008, while the center-right governed between 2001 and 2006.

In 2008 the Center Left fractured as the newly founded Democratic Party broke the alliance with its left-wing partners, notably including the Communist Refoundation Party.

The centre-right meanwhile, composed of Forza Italia and National Alliance, continued the alliance with Lega Nord and won the 2008 general election.

 2008 - 2013

From 2008 to 2011 Silvio Berlusconi’s Center-Right coalition (Forza Italia, National Alliance and Northern League) governed . . . followed by a “technocratic” government headed by Mario Monti til the general election in 2013. Fratelli d’Italia founded in this period - 2012

The 2013 election fragmented the party system, with four new groupings emerging:

the centre-left, principally the Democratic Party

the traditional centre-right alliance between Forza Italia and Lega Nord.

Beppe Grillo's anti-establishment, populist Five Star Movement. Founded in October 2009 by Beppe Grillo, a comedian and blogger, M5S is led by current President Giuseppe Conte, Prime Minister of Italy from 2018 until 2021.

a new centrist coalition around Mario Monti's Civic Choice.

 2013 - 2018

Essentially a succession brief coalition governments :

Center-left government led by the Democratic party (2013 - 2014)

Grand Alliance coalition led by Matteo Renzi (2014 - 2015)

Caretaker government led by Paolo Gentiloni (2015 - 2018)

 2018 - 2021

In the 2018 general election, three groupings predominated and held most of the seats in the two houses of the Italian Parliament:

a centre-right coalition, composed of Lega (Matteo Salvini), Forza Italia (Berlusconi), Frattelli Italia (Giorgia Meloni), and minor allies

the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S);

a centre-left coalition, composed of the Democratic Party and minor allies.

 Two M5S “Conte” governments

First Giuseppe Conte government . . . often described as populist, held office until September 2019. The cabinet was formed by a coalition between the Five Star Movement and the League, but it also contained some independents proposed by each party (including Conte, the Prime Minister).

Second Conte government . . . . in August 2019, the League withdrew from the government and Conte resigned. A coalition of M5S, the centre-left Democratic Party and Matteo Renzi’s moderate left, Italia Viva, formed the new government, with Conte remaining as PM. This made Conte the first Italian Prime Minister to lead two separate governments made up of right-wing and left-wing coalition partners. During Conte’s second government, the Covid-19 pandemic erupted with Italy being the first European government to be ravaged by the scourge. Conte version 2.0 collapsed in 2021 when Renzi and Italia Viva withdrew their support.

 National Unity Government

February 2021 - July 2022 (July 20th)

Mario Draghi, the widely respected former governor of the European Central Bank (ECB), was quickly called in to establish a ‘national unity’ government, which was supported by all major parties with seats in key ministries – with the exception of Fratelli d’Italia and of the small left party Sinistra Italiana.

Draghi delivered on several fronts, including putting together a reform plan (NRRP) (pnrr) to get more than 191.5 billion euros ($19.52 billion) from the EU.

The prime minister also revived Covid-19 vaccination efforts and contributed to an economic rebound.

The collapse of his government started with the Five Star Movement (M5S), a left-leaning and populist party, boycotting a vote on a package aimed at helping Italians deal with the surging cost of living. The package included a controversial waste incinerator for Rome, which M5S vehemently rallied against.

The fall of the government on July 20 caused a shock in the country for three main reasons:

first, Draghi, enjoys an unparalleled reputation in Italy as a competent and authoritative public servant

second is Draghi’s firm Euro-Atlantic leadership has made Italy a relevant player in the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

the third reason is that precisely that combination of Euro-Atlantic reliability and personal authority has made Draghi the guarantor of the many benefits that Italy derives from its cooperation with the European Union. The Draghi government’s program coincided with the reforms of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NPPR) which will allow Italy to receive a total of around 200 billion euros (11% of its GDP) from the European Union by 2026.

2nd document to post

(DG Communication’s Public Opinion Monitoring Unit - 6 Oct. 2022) . .. poll based on interviewing 800 persons.

DG COMM’s Public Opinion Monitoring Unit has assembled a range of recent surveys and polls from across the EU giving insight into how citizens see Russia’s war against Ukraine as well as its ripple effects. These polls were published from 27 September until 5 October 2022. Key findings are based on one multi-countries survey as well as on surveys conducted in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia. Polls from Ukraine and Russia are also presented.

The EU and NATO are considered important for national security: A recent poll carried out across ten member states and their transatlantic partners, found that on average 81% of the EU citizens surveyed believe the EU is important for the national security of their country.

Europeans remain tough on Russia: Respondents to a multi-country survey strongly back action to hold Russia accountable through the prosecution of war crimes as well as economic sanctions. . . . . . . Italians too are largely supporting sanctions imposed on Russia, with 66% of respondents saying they are in favour, according to this survey.

Support for Ukraine is mostly stable: A multi-country survey found clear support for Ukraine becoming a member of the EU (63%) and of NATO (58%) among respondents.

Climate change, war between countries, and Russia are seen as top security challenges: Despite differences between individual countries, a multi-country survey found these three issues to be the most important challenges. In Italy and France, the most pressing issue is climate change, while in Portugal and Spain, the concerns about Russia and the risk of war are prioritized by 33% of Portuguese respondents and 30% of Spanish ones. In general, respondents in countries nearer Ukraine are more concerned about the security challenge from Russia and interstate war.

 MULTI-COUNTRY SURVEYS

Reactions to the War in Ukraine

A survey commissioned by the German Marshall Fund show very clear support for Ukraine becoming a member of the EU (63%) and of NATO (58%). Respondents also strongly back action to hold Russia accountable through the prosecution of war crimes as well as economic sanctions.

Supporters of far-right parties across Europe are less in favour of punishing Russia than those of centrist parties. Only 51% of Lega and Fratelli d’Italia supporters in Italy are for imposing sanctions compared to 82% of supporters of the centre-left Democratic Party. In Germany, only 36% of Alternative for Germany supporters favour sanctions while there is strong support for sanctions among supporters of the centrist parties and even among those of The Left (73%).

DG Communication’s Public Opinion Monitoring Unit informs about relevant public opinion insights and analysis focussing on multi-country surveys as well as on survey conducted in individual Member States. We welcome all comments and input to our work.

If you want to know more about what the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit can do for you in this time of crisis, please contact:

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