

Tensions in the M5S and ruling coalition repercussions

After weeks of controversy and constant crossfire, the unresolved struggle in the Chamber of Deputies between 5Stars factions demonstrates the confusion that is gripping the M5S. The latest fiasco for the election of the party whip in Montecitorio highlights the absence of any internal cohesion within a party at risk of crumbling. Crushed by its own contradictions and the many trade-offs generated by the art of government, as well as by the collapse in electors' approval rating. Despite the prayers of party leader Luigi Di Maio and the withdrawal of current deputy whip Francesco Silvestri on the occasion of the last vote on Wednesday, more than two months of attempts have not yet allowed the M5S to elect its party whip in the Chamber of Deputies. Neither former undersecretary Davide Crippa nor his challenger Riccardo Ricciardi have in fact reached the fateful threshold of 50 percent plus one of MPs to be elected, as prescribed by the complex 5Stars internal regulation. In addition, the vote left behind 17 blank and 15 spoilt ballot papers, a true gauntlet to the calls for unity launched repeatedly by Di Maio himself. The head of the Foreign Affairs Ministry has long since ended up in the maelstrom of controversy for his inability to relaunch the 5Stars after the electoral disaster at the European vote in May and for the consequences of the challenging ruling co-habitation with the League (yesterday) and PD (now). Nowadays the absence of true alternatives to the leadership of former deputy premier directs the anger of M5S malcontents towards a request for a collegiate

management of the party, a solution interpreted as a necessary return to basics but that scares for its possible consequences on the 5stars' residual decision-making capacity. The vibe is palpable also in Di Maio's harsh invitation to internal insurgents to leave the M5S after several rumors that came out in the last few days about the dissatisfaction of parliamentary groups or the proliferation of 5Stars centers of power hostile to the Di Maio-Casaleggio leading axis. As well as in the decision to mobilize his loyalists (Castelli, Patuanelli, D'Uva and Silvestri) to reassure M5S constituents and especially the allies about the absence of frictions or even fatal divisions. More than internal tensions – produced by perhaps natural dynamics into an articulated and multiform subject such as the M5S – what makes us reflect is in fact how they will affect the gears or the ruling coalition supporting premier Conte's second administration. In the Senate, for example, the government depends on a handful of majority votes: after the expulsion of Senator Fattori, who has already joined the Independent group, and the abandonment of Senator Grossi, the 5Stars fell to 104 elected – sharpening the executive's dependence on the votes of former M5S and above all the 17 senators of Renzi's group. Beyond verbal threats and abacus counts, a series of unresolved knots remain on the table. Starting from the alliances in view of the next regional elections, with the M5S still divided between those who wants to compete in Emilia-Romagna and the party general staff that favors instead the hypothesis of desistance.