

The M5S-PD government has no alternatives

In the week in which the adoption of the 'Re-launch Decree' signals the first attempt to restart Italy from the socio-economic ruins of Covid-19, the time is right to line up the reasons why – for now – there are no alternatives to the M5S-PD government. Waiting of course to be proved wrong by next week's no-confidence vote against Justice Minister Bonafede, or the parliament's pronouncement about on the ESM bailout fund. Never as in this phase the Conte administration seems held prisoner by its own contradictions, while the M5S and PD are forced into an unnatural and fratricidal embrace that highlights their inability to give birth to a political alliance worthy of the name – not even in the darkest hours of lockdown. Except for being the sum of their intrinsic weaknesses the very decisive reason for Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's stay in power. The premier is perceived as an equilibrist, refractory to net decisions (after all, how could he?), whose leadership is inversely proportional to the number of alternative candidates. Today, for the 5-Stars, firing "the people's lawyer" is simply unthinkable, as well as calling into question the alliance with the Democratic Party, unless they want to accelerate the progressive disintegration of their large parliamentary group and sliding into a state of relative political irrelevance in the event of early elections. The imperative is to stay in government, whatever the costs and despite the many identity battles sacrificed on the altar of power since 2018 (yesterday the TAV high-speed train, today migrant's rights, tomorrow ESM approval). The loss of vitality of the M5S is also reflected by the choice of leaders: first a com-

bative frontman like Grillo, then an improvised leader such as Di Maio and now a simple ferrymen like Crimi. On the other hand, the Democratic Party is simply too weak in Parliament to impose a reshuffle, even to an ally in manifest internal difficulty. After being thrown into government by the exasperated tactical manoeuvrings of former premier Renzi, the party seems nowadays an oligarchy of party leaders looking for an identity. Whose popular approval ends up being a simple function of the misery of the current Italian political offer. Besides the PD, Italia Viva party moves quickly, to acquire negotiating weight with the allies and aware that its eventual exit from the government would jeopardize the stability of the ruling coalition. As well as that in the event of early elections, it risks failing to re-enter Parliament. It is likely that premier Conte has long sensed Renzi's bluff. Also Berlusconi's Forza Italia has everything to fear from a return to polls, not to mention the fact that it has the same numbers of senators as the League: this means that it would be able to help premier Conte in the event of a government crisis – with all that follows in terms of rewards. Salvini and Meloni do not appear to be able to move the balance of power in Parliament, also because they are supported by important ratings among electors which confirm their wait-and-see strategy. Finally comes Mario Draghi, the former ECB president, who has been summoned in several occasions to lead Italy out of the coronavirus storm. Still, the former central banker is in no way convinced to come to terms with the current Parliament – where populist forces remains powerful.