

Government is stronger after the election day

After the narrow escape from last weekend's election day, the government is free to plan its next moves in view of an autumn that promises to be at least complex. On the agenda there are the implications of a possible resurgence also in Italy of the pandemic from Covid-19 (it is already raging in some European countries), as well as the crucial definition of the regulatory interventions aimed at convey the EU's fateful €209 billion in the exhausted socio-economic fabric of Italy. To the tiring and precarious agreement on the Recovery Fund we have promptly attributed real thaumaturgical powers, which are at risk of bitter disappointment if we'll end up interpreting the resources as an ordinary budget law (translated: as the usual coach to be stormed) and if we'll prove unable to shield it properly from sabotage attempts by the EU Northern 'frugal four' or by Eastern nationalists. Only time will tell if the M5S-PD ruling alliance will be up to the epochal challenge, perhaps thanks to the success in last Sunday and Monday vote. Overall, the 3-3 tie in the regional election (despite the eve's gloomy predictions for center-left candidates) and the concurrent crushing referendum victory that will cut by a third the number of Italian lawmakers strengthen the position of Prime Minister Conte, who gains precious time to govern with more trust without having exposed himself excessively during the election campaign. The vote has also sanctioned a rather blatant change in the balance of power between the two leading coalition parties, the M5S and PD, with implications yet to be measured in terms of political

action. The Democratic Party, or the real winner of the vote, asked for an immediate change of course, with the inclusion in the government agenda of its most pressing issues (ESM activation and security decrees reform) and public renunciation to any cabinet reshuffle. On the other hand, the triumphal celebrations by the M5S former political leader Di Maio for the referendum outcome were not enough to placate the internal rows for yet another disastrous result collected in the local vote. If it's true that the M5S confirmed itself as being not competitive in election based on alliances and single-round majority voting (a system that enhances the competition between top candidates and tends to crush the less known), on a structural level the 20-21 September vote set in motion the final showdown between supporters of a 5-Star evolution into a more "traditional" party (Di Maio line) and the praetorians of a Movement based instead on the Rousseau internet platform and the diktats of its founding populist ideology (Di Battista line). Finally, much has been said on the implications of the center-right's failure to deal a blow against the government and the existence of a leadership issue in the leading opposition party. Judgment should be suspended here – being aware that the re-election of all outgoing regional presidents was heavily affected by their role during the health emergency. In fact, a sort of 'Covid effect' has transformed the regional governors into the electors' main point of reference in the fight against the pandemic, guaranteeing their re-election even when it seemed largely unexpected.