

After Napolitano: The calculation of the votes

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Pierluigi Bersani, Mario Monti, and Nichi Vendola do not have the votes to form a government together. But they have the numbers to elect the president of the republic. This is one of the outcomes of the last elections. In a globally confused and unstable scenario, such an outcome is one of the few elements of certainty.

The president of the republic is elected by the Parliament in joint session of both houses. Three regional delegates for each region (elected by the regional council so as to guarantee representation for all localities and minorities) take part in the election. Aosta Valley only has one delegate. For the first three ballots, the law requires the majority of two-thirds of the assembly. After the third vote, the absolute majority suffices. These are the rules established by the constitution in Article 83.

Let us go now from the rules to the numbers. At the Chamber of Deputies, the coalition that has won the majority bonus, PD-SEL, has 345 parliamentarians. Its senators are 121. The total is 466 votes in the assembly that will elect the new president. To these votes, one should add the 49 deputies of the parties linked to Monti and the 22 senators of his civic list. The resulting total is 537. The regional delegates are 58 in total. They have not been elected yet. But knowing the political color of the majorities in the councils and taking into account the rules in the constitution that set the representation of minorities, one may rightly conclude that among the 58 delegates, 30 will belong to the center-left, 26 to the center-right, 1 to M5S, and 1 to Aosta Valley. Provided these calculations, the total of votes available to the Bersani-Monti-Vendola coalition to elect the president is 568. Without considering the senators with life tenure, the electoral body is composed of 1,003 big electors. Finally, the votes of PD, SEL, and Monti's list represent 56.6% of the assembly. Therefore, after the third ballot, these votes suffice.

The reason for all this is to be found in the elec-

toral system. At the Chamber of Deputies, there is not a proportional system. With 29.5% of the votes, the Bersani coalition has obtained 54.8% of the seats. At the Senate, it has gone differently. In this House of the Parliament, the leader of PD has taken 31.6% of the votes and 38.4% of the seats. But the bonus at the Chamber of Deputies, together with the 30 regional delegates, has been enough to create the conditions to determine a reasonably reliable majority for the election of the new president.

We wish that such a majority did not have to be used and that the substitute of Napolitano could be elected with a broad consensus, going far beyond the numbers that we have indicated. In such a difficult phase for the country, it would be good for the parties to give proof of their capacity to cooperate on the choice of an institutional figure that, given the present difficult circumstances, will be necessarily called to play an extremely delicate and decisive role for the coming months, maybe years. One should not underestimate, though, the fact that if a broad consensus was not to be found (with the consequence of the impossibility to put together a "supermajority"), a majority still exists. This "majority" should serve to overcome any dangerous impasse that would end up destabilizing even more the already-uncertain political framework.

References

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Table 1. The numbers for the elections of the President of the Republic

	Chamber of Deputies	Senate	Regional Delegates	Total N	Total %
PD+SEL+Monti	394	143	30	567	56.6
PdL	125	117	26	268	26.7
M5S	109	54	1	164	16.3
Others	2	1*	1	4	0.4
Total	630	315	58	1,003	100

* Senators for life are not included.