

First a reform of the Senate and then the electoral law

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It is time to say how things really are. Those who think that today's biggest problem is the reform of the electoral system are wrong. Indeed, the present system needs to be modified, but not before having reformed the Senate of the republic. This is the first reform to be put into being. And the alibi that such a reform implies a modification of the constitution does not hold. It is on this reform that the wise men should say firmly something clear to the parties and to the public opinion. The change of the electoral law comes afterward, or it is to be undertaken together with the transformation of the Senate into a Chamber of the Regions or of the Autonomies. The new electoral system must be constructed as to function in a single House of the Parliament. The solution to the problem of the governability must start from here.

There are good reasons to intervene on the reform of the Senate. The electoral system is one of them, but not the only one. But let us start from here. We have already said and repeated it all over again: it is impossible to elect two chambers having the same powers with two different electoral systems and two different electoral bodies. In the past (namely, in the First Republic), such a system could function because both the two electoral systems were proportional and young people between the age of 18 and 24 years who voted at the Chamber of Deputies and not at the Senate did not have political preferences highly different from the other generations of electors. They used to vote almost like their fathers. Besides that, there were structured political parties that were able to steadily orient the votes. Therefore, the results of the two chambers were very similar, even though not completely identical.

Back then, the problem of a divided Parliament did not exist. Today, everything is different. In 1993, a majoritarian voting system has been introduced both at the Chamber of Deputies and at the Senate. Moreover, with the reorganization of the parties' system of the First Republic, the electoral

preferences have become more volatile. Old parties disappeared. The youngest electors do not vote any longer like the others. The political offer has become more erratic and significantly diversified in the two chambers. In such a context, the use of majoritarian voting rules has the tendency to amplify the differences of small votes, creating big differences in seats. In this way, the risk of having a Parliament with two different majorities becomes bigger and bigger or, like nowadays, with a majority in a chamber, but not in the other.

Data show it clearly: both those of the elections between 1994 and 2001—under the Matterella law—and those of the elections between 2006 and 2013, which took place with Roberto Calderoli's law, the so-called *Porcellum*. And so what are we waiting for before tackling this problem? Given the present political situation, there is no electoral system that is able to eliminate the risk that new elections did not lead us to the starting point. Talking about an electoral reform which could provoke illusory expectations of governability does not make sense if we do not even tackle the reform of the Senate. Probably only with a radically new political offer, the present electoral system or eventually another better structured system could produce a clear result in favor of a certain political faction in both chambers. But this is an enormous risk that is not worth taking.

The reasons to reform the Senate go beyond the sole reform of the electoral system.

But is it possible that Italy is the sole Western parliamentary democracy with a Parliament with two houses empowered with the same competences? Why don't France, Spain, the UK, and Germany have a perfect bicameralism and Italy has one? These, and others, are countries where the upper chamber does not give a vote of confidence to the government. It does something else. Not to mention those countries which do not have a second chamber, like Sweden, Portugal, and even Greece. What are the reasons to justify our expensive and risky diversity?

There are various models of imperfect bicameralism. Let us choose one. Here, the wise men's committee on the institutional reforms could provide a useful contribution. A proposal of this kind, which must not necessarily indicate a sole model, would serve to assign the parties their responsibilities. People tend to talk about a reduction in the parliamentarians' number and the simplification of the legislative procedures. Well, the reform of the Senate would also reach these aims. And then one will see which position those who continuously speak about changes, including the new senators of M5S, will take on such a subject.

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