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The era of Silvio Berlusconi is over. Italy will never again be represented on the world stage by an ageing businessman with a turbulent private life, a criminal record and pariah status among other European leaders. Power has passed into the hands of a kinetic young man with a pudding-bowl haircut, Matteo Renzi, whose self-proclaimed mission is to *rottamare* (junk) the old guard in Italian politics and to revive the country's institutions and economy.

Global markets have applauded Rome's change of tack. Italian government debt has become appetising again: helped by European Central Bank president Mario Draghi's promise to 'do whatever it takes' to prevent another sovereign-debt crisis in the eurozone,¹ the spread between German treasury bonds and their Italian equivalents has shrunk to 1.5 percentage points, enabling Italy to service its giant national debt more easily. The Italian stock market has also been on a roll: investors who bought blue-chip Italian companies at the end of last year have seen their portfolios increase by as much as one-third in 2014.

It is clear that Italian voters like Renzi. In May's European parliamentary elections, the Partito Democratico (PD), which Renzi leads, took 41% of the vote. One has to go back to the heyday of Christian Democracy (DC) in the 1950s to find a political party that commanded so large a segment of the electoral market. The PD's electoral success has earned Renzi kudos

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in Berlin and Brussels. Unlike French President François Hollande, whose Socialist Party was humiliated by the triumph of the Front National, or British Prime Minister David Cameron, whose coalition was thrashed by the United Kingdom Independence Party, Renzi took on anti-EU populists and won hands down. Comedian Beppe Grillo's 'Five Stars' movement (M5S) stalled at 21%, less than it gained in the landmark general election of February 2013. Berlusconi's Forza Italia recorded its worst share of the vote since the party was founded in 1994. Flushed with victory, Renzi claims that the time is ripe for a *governo del fare* (can-do government) able to implement sweeping reforms to the country's constitution, restructure its economy, and negotiate greater 'flexibility' in the austerity policies dear to Berlin and the European Commission. Italy took over the presidency of the EU in the second semester of 2014.

Yet a dose of healthy scepticism about Renzi's chances is in order. Like US President Barack Obama, Renzi has risen from relative obscurity to the top of national politics primarily because his undeniable rhetorical gifts have diffused fresh hope, first among the activists of his centre-left party and then more widely among voters disillusioned with the record of their rulers. But hope quickly turns sour when policy choices require painful change. Renzi might well prove to be an authentic leader capable of convincing Italians to accept unpopular choices. Certainly, beneath his undeniable charisma and external bonhomie lies a pronounced streak of ruthlessness. But he might also be no more than an 'institutional meteor' – the Italian label for politicians who briefly loom large in the public eye but then flare out upon contact with the unyielding atmosphere of Roman politics.

A sorry history

To understand Italy's present politics, one has to go back at least 40 years. In the mid-1970s, it briefly looked as though the Communist Party (PCI), led by Enrico Berlinguer, would overtake the DC to become the vital centre of the Italian political system. There were a number of reasons for the PCI's growth in support. Berlinguer was a moderate who was willing to support NATO. The DC, which had shown courageous leadership in the immediate post-war period, had degenerated by the mid-1970s into an agglomeration

of warring factions unable to cope with the challenges thrown up by the country's passage to modernity. Many voters were willing to give the PCI a chance, rather than vote for the DC's venal style of government. Others, however, were still prepared to hold their noses against the stench of the DC's corruption and place a cross next to the same old names. Consequently, the DC won the 1976 elections with 38% of the vote, 4% more than the PCI. A government of 'national solidarity' was formed by DC boss Giulio Andreotti, with the PCI providing parliamentary support, but no ministers. (Washington was adamant that the PCI should not be trusted with executive power.) This so-called 'historic compromise' is relevant to contemporary Italian politics because it enabled the DC to defeat Red Brigade terrorism and survive the economic crisis of the 1970s without implementing major structural reforms to the country's economy and institutions, reforms that, even then, were badly needed. Italy continues to pay the price for this missed opportunity.

The PCI terminated the government of national solidarity in 1979. Its place as the DC's indispensable ally was taken by the Socialist Party (PSI), whose leader, Bettino Craxi, supported the siting of cruise missiles on Italian soil and became premier in June 1983. The DC and the PSI had the numbers to push through a platform of reforms. Instead, although Craxi talked the talk of a reformer, promising 'great reform' to the Italian state, he never walked the walk. The DC had no interest in changing a system that suited it, and both the PSI and Craxi personally soon learned to relish the perks of power.

What would a 'great reform' have looked like? Firstly, it would have meant constitutional changes to strengthen the powers of the government in Italy's bicameral parliamentary system. Secondly, it would have meant an electoral law that allowed voters to choose the government at the ballot box. Post-war Italy had a highly proportional electoral law that guaranteed a fragmented party system in which no one party could emerge triumphant. Voters cast their ballots and then the politicians haggled over the composition of the government and over which party (and which faction within the parties) would control the various *dicasteri*, or offices of state. Thirdly, a great reform would have attacked the worst abuses of patronage politics. In the 1980s, Italy's political parties held the country in an asphyxiating grip.

Their tentacles reached throughout the economy and society, with top jobs in state-owned companies, banks and cultural foundations being awarded only to individuals with political connections. RAI, the national broadcasting service, was a case in point: its three channels were explicitly shared out between the DC, the PSI and the PCI, and its news services broadcast overt propaganda on behalf of their political masters. RAI 2's promotion of a cult of personality around Craxi was reminiscent of the Eastern bloc, not of a modern, pluralist democracy.

Rather than embrace a reformist agenda, the PSI and the DC wasted the 1980s fighting an internecine war for greater power and patronage. Craxi's

Berlusconi epitomised the epoch

government (1983–87) was held hostage by the DC, and although the premier acquired a spurious reputation among sycophantic journalists for being a *decisionista*, he achieved little of substance. Successor governments headed by Giovanni Goria and Ciriaco De Mita, the DC's party secretary, were both sabotaged by Craxi's minions in parliament. A ceasefire

was declared only in February 1989, when DC barons led by Andreotti ditched De Mita and came to terms with the PSI boss.

What does all this have to do with Renzi and the challenges he faces today? The relevance of this history lies in the economic legacy bequeathed by the political parties' struggle for popularity and power. The single largest factor conditioning Italian politics today – the debt trap into which the country has fallen – was created when Renzi was still a schoolboy. At a time when Margaret Thatcher was imposing supply-side reforms on Britain, Ruud Lubbers was squeezing public spending until the pips squeaked in the Netherlands, and even François Mitterrand's goal of constructing socialism in France had given way to Bundesbank-imposed austerity, Italy was engaging in a binge of unproductive public spending. In borrowing terms, the 1980s were like war years – a decade in which the Italian state paid out 10% or more of GDP every year above what it raised in taxes. Much of this vast increase in expenditure (overall, the national debt rose from under 60% of GDP in 1980 to 121% in 1994²) was siphoned off by corruption, used to finance generous pensions (it was possible, in some cases, to retire after only

15 years' work, and pensions were based upon final salary, not contributions paid), or frittered away on the cost overruns of prestige projects.

This suicidal debt increase occurred despite the fact that taxes also increased sharply during the 1980s as a share of GDP, reaching 40% of national income by the early 1990s, a hitherto unheard-of figure. Taxes were raised disproportionately from the salary- and wage-earning classes, whose income could be taxed at source, leading to widespread tax evasion among entrepreneurs and professionals. In the dying days of the DC–PSI regime, the Italian state presided over an unjust redistribution of wealth from the middle class to those with good political connections, or to those who were living directly off politics. The 1980s became renowned as a decade of excess, producing millionaires whose antics rivalled those of Russian oligarchs and Chinese property dealers today. Besides Craxi himself, Silvio Berlusconi, with his media empire and jet-set lifestyle, was the man who best epitomised the entire epoch. (Craxi was, in fact, Berlusconi's political protector and sponsor.³)

Such a state of affairs could not go on, especially when the end of the Cold War robbed Rome's politicians of their anti-communist rationale. Between 1990 and 1994, Italy experienced the worst crisis of any contemporary democracy since the collapse of France's Fourth Republic in 1958. The DC and the PSI were swept away in 1992–93 by corruption investigations in Milan, Venice and other cities, and by a crackdown on relationships between politicians and the mafia in the country's south. Thousands of politicians were investigated (over 2,500 by the Milanese prosecutors alone⁴) and most were either sentenced or took a plea bargain.

The turmoil in the political sphere spilled over into the markets: during the September 1992 crisis in the European Monetary System, only a savage austerity package, featuring tax raises and a levy on bank accounts, saved Italy's creditworthiness. The lira plunged against the German mark and Italy's formidable exporters were able to capitalise for the remainder of the decade on the advantage given to them by a devalued currency (Italy ran substantial trade surpluses in the mid-1990s). The memory of rapid economic growth brought about by the 1992 devaluation lives on; the fact that it suddenly made Italians poor relatives of the Germans is remembered less well.

What is not sufficiently appreciated outside Italy, however, is that the economic consequences of the end of the so-called 'First Republic' were enormous for the majority of Italian voters. When eurozone politicians preach the need for fiscal rigour to the Italians, they are ignoring – wilfully or otherwise – the fact that most Italian citizens feel that they have been enduring austerity since summer 1992. Since then, the Italian state, in order to keep the financial markets quiet, has been underinvesting in national infrastructure (and thus deflating the economy) and taxing too many of its citizens too highly. While Italians pay, as a percentage of national income, no more tax than most EU citizens, their hospitals, welfare provision, universities, roads and railways are for the most part worse, sometimes much worse, than in the rich countries of northern Europe. Those countries have invested their wealth wisely; Italy, when it was wealthy, squandered a patrimony. But it is no consolation to Signor Rossi (the archetypal middle-class Italian), when he contemplates his diminished pay check and considers his daughter's limited prospects for a fulfilling career, to know that Italy's northern European critics are correct in asserting that increased public spending is not the answer to Italy's problems.

Tarnished saviours

Voters naturally rebelled against the costs imposed by the party system's implosion and the moral squalor revealed by the judicial investigations in the 1990s. New forces, such as the Lega Nord, a populist party demanding autonomy from Rome for the then-vibrant economies of northern Italy, surged in the polls. As in the 1970s, the Communists – the PCI had split in 1991, with its progressive wing forming the Partito Democratico della Sinistra (PDS) and its diehards launching Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) – began to creep upwards in the polls, as Italians who had once been wary of the left concluded that they were the least awful alternative. It was to avoid a victory at the polls for the radical left that Berlusconi decided to *scendere in campo* (take to the field) as a political player, launching a new party, Forza Italia, in January 1994. In the short term, his gamble paid off: by April 1994, Berlusconi was premier, heading a coalition that included the Lega and also Alleanza Nazionale, effectively rebranded neo-fascists. Although his first

government only lasted for a few months, it was one of the most remarkable electoral performances in post-war European history.

In the 1994 election campaign, Berlusconi depicted himself as a man of destiny who would save Italy from the ineptitude of squabbling politicians, a narrative that would remain unchanged for the next 20 years. The entire Italian right-wing – a motley crew of so-called liberals, reactionary Christian Democrats, former and actual fascists, the Lega Nord, and southern Italian notables with unfortunate acquaintances – was able to build an uneasy unity by backing Berlusconi's claim to be the *salvatore della patria*. Without him, they could never have assembled a winning coalition and obtained the fruits of government. For his more idolatrous followers (among them a group of female politicians in their forties, known collectively as the 'Amazons'), Berlusconi, like Mussolini, is always right, perhaps especially when he is obviously wrong. A saviour's judgment cannot be called into question.

At the same time that Berlusconi was presenting himself as a *toccasana* (remedy) for national renewal following the collapse of the early 1990s, a second remedy was being offered by the centre-left, by Catholic centrists and by influential professori with a pulpit in the national newspapers. That remedy was Europe. For many educated Italians, the Process (capital letters are obligatory) of European Integration is aimed at nothing less than the historical achievement of a federal United States of Europe, which will bring social justice to all Europeans. For men like Romano Prodi (premier in 1996–98 and then president of the European Commission, 1999–2004), Mario Monti (technocratic premier from November 2011 to April 2013 and former EU commissioner for the single market), Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (president of Italy in 1999–2006 and before that treasury minister under Prodi in 1996–98 and prime minister in 1993–94), Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa (Prodi's economy minister during his second premiership in 2006–08 and a member of the executive committee of the ECB before that), and current head of state Giorgio Napolitano, it is a matter of national pride that Italy be at the forefront of this process. As the speeches and books of these men make clear, building Europe means being on the side of human progress.⁵

Membership of the euro was expected to bring immediate, concrete economic benefits too. The neo-liberal character of the Maastricht Treaty

was perceived as a *vincolo esterno* (outside constraint) that would compel Rome to follow budgetary discipline, implement necessary supply-side reforms and, in general, 'Europeanise' the state. Between 1996 and 1998, Prodi and Ciampi worked like Trojans to get Italy's accounts in order. A special tax was imposed on higher earners, and state-owned industries were privatised. These efforts paid off, and Italy was accepted into the euro-club in 1998. Prodi's parliamentary majority celebrated by sacking him a few months later.

Unfortunately for the improperly named Second Republic (that is, the period since the democratic collapse of the early 1990s), both putative saviours have been tarnished – Berlusconi irredeemably so. Although he was premier longer than any other statesman in the history of post-war Italy, serving as premier for five years between June 2001 and May 2006 and for over three years between May 2008 and November 2011, Berlusconi's accomplishments were negligible. Taxes went remorselessly up, not down, and public expenditure increased by unconscionable amounts; the national debt, despite the eurozone's low interest rates, inched upwards; the state bureaucracy remained elephantine; Italian schools and universities slid down the world's league tables; tax evasion was condoned by various amnesties; and an attempt at constitutional reform in 2006 was shot down by the Italian public in a referendum. National income – despite Berlusconi's empty boasts that Italy was 'the richest country in Europe'⁶ – stagnated while he was in power. Despite the substantial majorities Berlusconi's coalitions enjoyed in parliament, his governments always seemed to be hanging by a thread. Far from being a chief executive making tough decisions in an efficient way, Berlusconi often had to act as mediator-in-chief between belligerents within his own coalition. Above all, hundreds of days were wasted on Berlusconi's own private affairs; on laws that succeeded in keeping him out of jail; and in frenzied speculation about his complicated sex life.

In 2011, Berlusconi's personal appetites, political failures and judicial woes finally caught up with him. His private life became embarrassingly public when he was accused of having sought to cover up the presence at a sex party at his country estate of a seventeen-year-old Moroccan immigrant nicknamed 'Ruby the Heartstealer' (a charge of which the Court of Appeal

found him innocent in July 2014). Swamped with personal and political problems, Berlusconi's government lost the plot. Foreign owners of Italian debt began dumping bonds, the spread with German bonds widened dramatically, and a Greek-style crash loomed. Under pressure from horrified EU leaders, President Giorgio Napolitano told Berlusconi it was time to go.⁷ The would-be saviour was condemned to four years' imprisonment for embezzlement in July 2013 and is currently facing additional criminal charges of a serious nature, including the accusation that he bribed an opposition senator with €3 million to bring down the government of Romano Prodi in 2006. Although his hardcore supporters continue to insist that he alone can revive Italy, railing against the 'judicial terrorism' of which they believe he has been a victim, Berlusconi will never be premier again. (Forza Italia remains a political force of some weight, and is giving conditional parliamentary support to the Renzi administration.) The enchantment that led millions of middle-class Italians to support his premiership has been broken.

The tarnishing of the European project has been less lurid. It is now widely asserted that the EU's commitment to fiscal rigour has been the primary cause of Italy's economic stagnation, and that only exit from the single currency can save the Italian economy from more decades of slow or non-existent growth. More than 50% of Italians think EU membership is a bad thing, an unprecedented number.⁸ The truth is that, unlike in Britain, Italians have never had a grown-up conversation about the merits of euro membership. The country joined the single currency as a leap of faith, without serious discussion of its merits and demerits.

In hindsight, it is clear that euro membership saved Italy from a brutal millennium devaluation. Eurozone convergence towards German bond yields made it easier for Italy to finance its public debt and put off shock therapy. On the other hand, the fact that the *vincolo esterno* turned out to be less of a corset than a pair of elasto-pants allowed Italy's politicians to live in a fools' paradise. The post-euro decade should have been Italy's chance to sweat off its excesses in the gym; instead, it will be remembered as a period in which the political class sat on the sidelines and gossiped idly

*Politicians
lived in a fools'
paradise*

about Berlusconi's crimes and misdemeanours while others pounded the treadmills. The debt disaster of the 1980s was compounded by a culpable failure to take hard decisions in the 2000s.

Yet Italy's political elites have been adroit in shifting the blame for stagnation on to Brussels. 'If only we had been allowed to breach Brussels' restrictions on deficit spending,' they protest, 'we would have been able to revive economic activity'. Such anti-EU propaganda, which also plays on latent anti-German sentiment, has been a mainstay of the Lega Nord's political discourse since the late 1990s, and has permeated Berlusconi's populist newspapers, *il Giornale* and *Libero*, for nearly as long. A less populist, more radical-chic version of the same blame game can also be found on the left. Italy's trade unions, along with many of its progressive politicians, are viscerally opposed to labour-market reforms, privatisation and reduced public spending, even though they are nominally enthusiasts for European integration. They square the circle by arguing that 'Europe' has become a neo-liberal perversion of its original goal: a *socialist*, or at any rate a socially progressive, United States of Europe.

A prodigal son

Italy's present plight, therefore, is the product of two generations of inadequate (when not actually criminal) political leadership. Ordinary Italians, who pay their taxes and work in schools, factories, farms and hospitals, are not to blame. One of the reasons why Renzi rose to power so quickly, in a country where under-50s had previously played only marginal political roles, is that there has been a nationwide revolt of the guiltless, who have become aware since 2008 that they and their children may have to pay – possibly for decades to come – for their rulers' ineptitude.

Grillo's M5S represents the Jacobin strain of this revolt: its adherents regard all politicians as vermin and are almost hysterically determined that their own elected representatives remain untainted by the venality and corruption of the *palazzo*. Renzi-ism takes a softer, though similar, line. Its supporters believe that politics is not necessarily evil, but has for too long been in the hands of a 'caste' of people who have made a good living from it and who have lost any desire to bring about real changes in peoples' lives.

The contempt of the PD's younger activists for the mediocrity of the generation of centre-left leaders who let Berlusconi prevail and who colluded in the economic disaster of the last 30 years is palpable.

Renzi has harnessed this contempt and made it the driving force of his rise to the top. First, he decried the 60-somethings that had led the centre-left since the early 1990s (a *lèse-majesté* that infuriated them); he then deposed Pier Luigi Bersani, the PD's likeable but serially unsuccessful leader; and finally, in February 2014, after he had been elected leader of the PD in a nationwide primary, Renzi stabbed his able predecessor as premier, Enrico Letta, in the front, accusing him of not pushing the reform agenda hard enough. Throughout this Machiavellian rise to the top, which has left a residue of resentment among the PD's old guard and the party apparatchiks that Renzi has eclipsed, the Florentine former boy scout has wielded his dagger with all the certainty of one who knows he has right on his side.

The fact that Renzi-ism is essentially an act of generational rebellion is an important one that Italy's EU partners would do well to grasp. The Germans, Finns and Dutch delight in depicting the Italians (not to mention the peoples of the other Mediterranean member states) as wastrels who need to get a grip and live within their means. Italians, especially young adults and the early middle-aged, regard themselves as the unlucky heirs of a gang of spendthrifts who must now reverse the state of chronic decline bequeathed to them. The Renzi generation thinks that Italy should be treated as a prodigal son, one who will, once he has eaten his fill of the fatted calf (that is, been given a degree of 'flexibility' within the EU's rigid fiscal pact), return to the family farm and work for its prosperity alongside his more prudent brothers and sisters. In their own imagination at least, the *Renziani* are bringing closure to Italy's 40 years of crisis.

Will they succeed? The first six months of the *governo del fare* has been a procession of missed targets. A set-piece reform of the constitution, designed to eliminate perfect bicameralism and replace the Senate with a chamber of representatives from the regions and major cities, was undermined by Renzi's internal opponents within the PD; by the principled opposition of eminent jurists for whom the Italian Constitution, forged in 1947 by the Christian Democrats and the Communists as a symbol of the values of a

post-fascist nation, is the 'most noble in the world' (*la costituzione più bella del mondo*); and by a cross-party cohort of senators who wish to keep their seats at all costs. A complementary reform of the electoral law has run into a similar wall of opposition. On the constitutional reform, however, Renzi has shown his mettle. Perhaps sensing that his opponents within his own party would kill his programme as a whole if he showed weakness on the constitutional question, Renzi has brooked no compromises as the reform has made its way through parliament.

On the economic side, despite a helpful tax cut for lower-income earners, consumption remains depressed, the national debt (now at €2.17 trillion, or 135% of projected 2014 GDP⁹) continues to expand, and incipient deflation is making both problems worse. Italy remains one spike in bond yields away from a catastrophe of Greek dimensions.

Italy's neighbours need to think very hard about how they intend to treat Rome in the next few months. If the countries of northern Europe continue to press the case for rigour in an insensitive way, they will run the risk of diverting the generational rebellion in Italy against the institutions of the EU itself. There is still a powerful current of pro-EU feeling in Italy: Renzi and his youthful team of ministers were schooled on textbooks that presented the EU as the culmination of Western civilisation.¹⁰ But their sense of victimhood is more visceral, and could easily be directed at Europe. Since Renzi took over the presidency of the EU he has peppered his speeches with populist-sounding attacks on the 'Europe of bureaucrats'.¹¹ There may be more of this rhetoric to come if Brussels' monetarist ideology strangles the *governo del fare's* plans in the cradle.

Renzi is ultimately a product of Italy's decline. Had Italy been more successful in the last 40 years, Renzi would now be deputy mayor of Florence, presiding over civil weddings and the committee on parking permits. But Italy has not been successful. For two generations, its leadership has mortgaged the country to the hilt, evaded its responsibility to future generations, and cultivated a political culture that for moral squalor has few, if any, equals among developed nations. Renzi had the political nous to ride the wave of rebellion that this state of affairs has belatedly generated, drawing on his considerable charisma (and ruthlessness) to make himself the figure-

head of a generation. What is not clear, however, is whether he will amount to anything more than an able opportunist with an intuitive grasp of his peer-group's grievances. One hopes that he will. Italy's political class has steered *il bel paese* to a point where either renewal will take hold, or decline will quicken. Given Italy's economic weight in Europe, and its history of chronic political instability, it is in nobody's interest that its decline should become a rout.

Notes

- 1 Mario Draghi, 'Speech by Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank at the Global Investment Conference in London', 26 July 2012, <http://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2012/html/sp120726.en.html>.
- 2 Maura Francese e Angelo Pace, *Il debito pubblico italiano dall'Unità a oggi. Una ricostruzione della serie storica* (Rome: Banca d'Italia, 2008), p. 28.
- 3 Easily the best book on Craxi is Simona Colarizi and Marco Gervasoni, *La Cruna dell'ago: Craxi, il partito socialista e la crisi della repubblica* (Rome: Laterza, 2006).
- 4 See Gianni Barbacetto, Peter Gomez and Marco Travaglio, *Mani pulite: La vera storia* (Milan: Mondadori, 2012).
- 5 See, for example, Padoa-Schioppa, *L'Europa: Forza Gentile* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001); and Romano Prodi, *Europe As I See It* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000). President Napolitano's collected speeches on the EU are available at <http://www.quirinale.it/elementi/Continua.aspx?tipo=Discorso&key=2821>.
- 6 'Berlusconi: Siamo il Paese più ricco d'Europa', *La Stampa*, 20 June 2010, <http://www.lastampa.it/2010/06/20/italia/politica/berlusconi-siamo-il-paese-pi-ricco-deuropa-ZTVomyiWg4z4hvxxy2jgoM/pagina.html>.
- 7 For background on the 2011 crisis see Alan Friedman, *Ammazziamo il gatopardo* (Rome: Rizzoli, 2014).
- 8 'European Union on the Rocks', Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, 29 May 2012, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/05/29/chapter-2-views-of-european-unity>.
- 9 International Monetary Fund, 'World Economic Outlook (April 2014)', Table A8, p. 192.
- 10 It is interesting to read Renzi's comments on European integration in his statement of his new government's programme (see 'Comunicazioni del Presidente del Consiglio dei Ministri Matteo Renzi', 24 February 2014, http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Dossier/legge_provincia/RENZI_senato_20140224.pdf). On the one hand, he argues that Europeanism brings out 'that which is the best of Italy', but also that Italy needs to overcome its 'cultural cringe' in the face of the European 'stepmother'.

¹¹ See, for example, 'Renzi: "L'Ue non può essere la patria di burocrazia e banche, sia la casa dei cittadini"', *Il Libro Dei Fatti*, 5 July 2014, http://www.adnkronos.com/fatti/politica/2014/07/05/renzi-non-puo-essere-patria-burocrazia-banche-sia-casa-dei-cittadini_Y6F9DATUDtsjet3iwZ5xgO.html.