

Bologna Institute for Policy Research

Via B. Andreatta, 3 - Bologna (Italy)

+39 051 292 7811 www.bipr.eu

Date: 13 December 2018

Speakers: Riccardo Vinci, Arianna Evans and Greta Castelli

Chair: Justin Frosini, Adjunct Professor of Constitutional Law; Director of the Center for Constitutional Studies and Democratic Development, SAIS Bologna; Associate Professor of Comparative Public Law at the Luigi Bocconi University

Our Government:

Italy's Yellow-Green Coalition

Titled 'Our Government: Italy's Yellow-Green Coalition', tonight's *Contemporary History and Institutions of the Mediterranean* lecture features a panel of current students and an alumna of the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Bologna, Italy. Chaired by Professor Justin Frosini, Riccardo Vinci, Arianna Evans and Greta Castelli engage in a lively discussion regarding the fruition of this unlikely coalition and its implications for Italy's immigration and economic policies.

Riccardo Vinci begins the evening's discussion by posing the question: how did we get to this uncomfortable union of the Five Star Movement and the League? After providing some background regarding Italy's two 'Republics' – the period between the end of World War II and the 1990s, in which socialists, communists and Christian Democrats dominated the political landscape, and the 2000s, during which political personalities such as Silvio Berlusconi and Matteo Renzi reigned – Vinci introduces the appearance of contemporary political culture. In particular, he notes that the rise and fall of the Democratic Party's face and voice, Renzi, left a vacuum in the political system that was filled by the Five Star Movement and the League. Moreover, he notes that the birth of the Coalition and its surging popularity has led to the transformation of the Five Star Movement from a movement into a political party responsible for governing a country, and the transition of the League from a regional phenomenon into a national one under the leadership of its charismatic leader, Matteo Salvini.

Following Vinci, Ariana Evans looks at the Yellow-Green Coalition's impact on migration, first addressing why it is a major concern for Italy before turning to the government's underlying narrative. She explains that as a latecomer to immigration, Italy has struggled with its identity as a destination for immigrants rather than a provider of emigrants. This anxiety has been amplified by the arrival of non-European migrants beginning in 2013 and by the Coalition's 'othering' of these newcomers, as well as their reluctance to engage in the Dublin III regulation; in fact, the League has been absent at all 22 conferences that have sought to solve this issue regarding migrants and asylum seekers. Italy's stringent stance on immigration has also been encapsulated by the recent passing of a bill proposed by Matteo Salvini, which allows Italy to drastically reduce the number of residency permits provided to migrants and asylum seekers. According to Evans, it is not be farfetched to state that the Yellow-Green Coalition has taken over the national narrative of immigration by capitalizing upon the country's fears of the 'other'.

Greta Castelli expands upon Italy's rival concern – the economy. In Q3 of 2018, low productivity, high unemployment and a decrease in investment has led to a general slowdown of economic growth. In response to Italy's sluggish economic recovery, the Yellow-Green Coalition has put forth a three-part economic and financial proposal comprised of fiscal peace, basic universal income, and a new pension scheme. Within this proposition, the League has pressed forward its agenda of fiscal peace, which promises individuals with tax disputes the opportunity to rectify their position by owing a portion of their debt rather than in full, while the Five Star Movement has focused its energy upon the introduction of a minimum income of 780 EU. These two components, along with the suggestion of a new pension scheme in which citizens over 62 years of age and 38 years of contribution would be eligible for pensions, has raised the concerns of the European Union, leading to a Document rejection by the Commission. In fact, despite the Coalition's push, Italy continues to face

hardship with economic unrest and high interest rates, prompting the question of when structural deficiencies will be addressed and whether they will happen soon enough to ward off a third recession.

Taken together, Italy's current political situation is a reflection of its past hurdles and its current pre-occupations with migration and economics. By charting the development of the Yellow-Green Coalition and its parties, the country's preoccupation with immigration and the structural issues facing the economy, Riccardo Vinci, Arianna Evans and Greta Castelli shine a light on some of the major debates in Italy today, and consider what solutions are within reach, both in the short and long term.