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Summary CONFIDENTIAL//NOFORN **Browse by Handling** 

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weekend will fuse Berlusconi's personal political longer, post-fascist past, and deeper grassroots organization. This merger takes the core of the political alliance that Berlusconi used to win the 2008 parliamentary elections and sets it in concrete. PDL will be one of the biggest center-right parties in Europe. It is the confluence of many different center-right ideologies forming a party that will rival the size of the now-defunct Christian PINT EFIN BEXP OEXC EAID Berlusconi's outsized personality and power will continue to be the dominant force on the center right, but, beyond that, the party's formation leaves more questions than answers XF GW EINV TH TECH SENV Berlusconi. End Summary. SHUM KISSINGER, HENRY A

Party's Origins TGEN PK AR NI OSCI CI EEC 2. (SBU) In 1993, Berlusconi launched Forza Italia as a personal vehicle for his own entry into politics. Broadly speaking, FI has been Atlanticist in its foreign policy outlook, focused on law and order, and at least rhetorically liberal in its economic ideals. The party drew its strength from the charisma and wealth of Berlusconi, and built its political ranks from former Socialists and Christian Democrats, as well as Berlusconi's associates and employees in the business world. Throughout its history FI remained a top-down party in which Berlusconi determined the party's line, and in which there was only a minimal party structure to deal with substantive issues. Berlusconi did not tolerate separate ideological or personality-driven wings or

"corrente", and remained the absolute boss of the party. 3. (C) The other major piece is Alleanza Nazionale (AN) or National Alliance, a rightist party, with an ideology that includes a greater role for the state in the economy (reflecting its fascist, corporatist roots), stricter controls for illegal immigration, and more concentration on law and order. Historically, AN has been skeptical of the United States, but as the party evolved, it became more Atlanticist, and made a particular effort to overcome the stigma of its fascist past by cultivating a new friendship Benito Mussolini's fascism as the Italian Social Movement most extreme elements, who formed their own neofascist Chamber of Deputies Gianfranco Fini, MSI, which changed its name to AN in 1995, shed its anti-American and anti-Semitic government for the first time in 1994 with Berlusconi.

Berlusconi loyalists define the party's identity in only the vaguest of terms. For example, Forza Italia coordinator Denis

had "a large political class rich with personalities and prestige." 5. (C) Instead of following an ideological approach,

for other center right politicians to build any intellectual structures within the party. In fact, think tanks and research institutions are notably weak in the center right. Building a Party 6. (C) Merging the two cultures of a very structured bottom-up party like AN and a Berlusconi-dominated top-down party like FI will be a challenge. In fact, contacts within both blocs tell us that the FI and AN identities will remain for a minimum of five years, and probably much longer. The small research institutions that do exist on the center right are being launched or expanded to protect the different interests of these two blocs or groups within them. Alessandro Campi, scientific director of the AN foundation FareFuturo (Building the Future), said that the party needs to create a party culture if it is going to forge a strong identity and should invest in setting up more foundations and

society to build deeper ties with the electorate. Mario Ciampi, director of FareFuturo, told us that the foundation has plans to expand from its tiny office in Rome in order to have a nationwide reach to advance the core interests of AN even after the party disappears. Fini himself determines the direction of this institution. With the backing of senators Marcello Pera and Gaetano Quagliariello, small research institution Magna Carta seeks to promote classic liberal ideas within the new party. Leaders of both Magna Carta and FareFuturo view these ideological counterweights as indispensable to prevent all power being concentrated in the Prime Minister's office. 7. (C) Historically very ideological, AN leaders have told us that they have no intention of giving up their values or traditions in the new party. Youth Minister and leader of the AN youth movement Giorgia Meloni told us that AN would protect its identity, values, and base of power in the new party. Moreover, it would continue to run a youth movement distinct from that of Forza Italia. AN Lombardy Regional Commissioner Romano LaRussa outlined where AN differs from FI: a tougher line on immigration, a greater role for the

leading figures include Treasury Minister Giulio Tremonti and Lombardy Regional President Roberto Formigoni. 9. (C) AN's objective is to break out of the 70-30 percent

have less to fall back upon.

Party Leadership

Minister leaves the political scene, but party insiders warn us that there is no clear succession. Meanwhile, Fini continues to burnish his image, using his position as representative in Brussels to the center-right European People's Party after the European elections in June will further demonstrate his acceptability in European circles. Foreign Policy Outlook 10. (C) To an even greater extent than domestic policy,

America's strongest friend in continental Europe to the fall of 2008, when he criticized the United States in the context of strains with Russia over Georgia, missile defense, and

their boss. However, opinions range within the party from independence from Washington on foreign policy, and who look to former Prime Minister Craxi--including his boldness in standing up to Washington in the 1980s——as their ideological forefather. us that AN does not have big differences of opinion with FI on foreign policy, but it does have a clearer idea of its positions. A landmark part of AN's foreign policy is its unflinching support for Israel--a position that is largely a remnant of AN's efforts to move beyond its fascist past. policy through institutions such as NATO and the EU. Traditionally AN has been less enthusiastic about NATO than FI and also less interested in deploying troops abroad. AN leadership has determined a more Atlanticist foreign policy, and while the rank and file is not fully on board, particularly with the position toward Israel, the leadership has latitude in this arena because the electorate is more

senior statesman.

References to this document in other cables

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focused on domestic issues. Comment 12. (C) PDL formation crystallizes what had been an electoral alliance between AN and FI for 15 years. As a result, little will change from a policy perspective. Politically, it represents the final step toward respectability for AN, and it should give Berlusconi an even tighter coalition to command. Over the longer run, it is an open question whether another Italian politician will bring the same mix of political skill, charisma, and broad popularity as Berlusconi to keep the diverse elements that now compose PDL under one roof. We need to track whether PDL determines a more structured foreign policy than existed in Forza Italia, and look for opportunities to bolster the institutions and individuals pushing an Atlanticist line. Within PDL, Berlusconi will continue to dominate foreign policy, and his tendency to pursue a realist and ad hoc approach could lead to a greater distance from American positions unless he feels that he has a personal relationship with American leaders or

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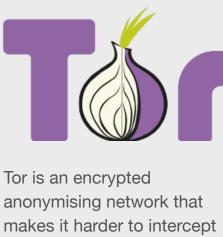
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vehicle--Forza Italia--with National Alliance, a party with a about its ideology, structure, and plans for succession after

will preside over the merger of Italy's two main center-right parties into a single entity, the People of Liberty (PDL) party. The inaugural party congress that will take place this Democratic party that dominated Italian politics for decades.

Content Raw content Metadata 1.4 (d). 1. (C) From 27 to 29 March, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi

Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL Handling Restrictions -- Not Assigned --Executive Order: -- Not Assigned --TAGS: IT - Italy I PGOV - Political Affairs--Government: Internal Governmental Affairs I PREL - Political Affairs--**External Political Relations** Enclosure: -- Not Assigned --Office Origin: -- N/A or BLANK --Office Action: -- N/A or BLANK --From: ITALY ROME To: Group Destinations European Political COLLECTIVE LITALY FLORENCE LITALY MILAN LITALY NAPLES | SECRETARY OF STATE

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BERLUSCONI'S CENTER-RIGHT SHOTGUN WEDDING

with Israel. AN was founded originally from the remnants of

splinter movements. Under the leadership of President of the rhetoric and ideology to become a mainstream party, entering Different from FI, AN is a bottom-up party, with party

determining party leadership and positions. Cast in the mold

(MSI). The party moved steadily to the center, abandoning its offices across the country that have a democratic process for of traditional Italian parties, AN and MSI before it offered more than just a political ideology, but also a cultural and social environment for its followers. AN's national organization and its strong team of local activists is one of

the major strengths it brings to the marriage. To pave the way for the formal merger, AN held its final party congress March 21-22 to dissolve the party and prepare for its relaunch as part of the PDL.

No Clear Ideology

4. (C) PDL founders have not sought to hide the party's lack

of an ideology. Instead, Berlusconi allies such as Minister of Public Administration Renato Brunetta have sought to use

this gap as a calling card, telling a center-right gathering that PDL is a pragmatic party that responds to the needs of the people, citing the government's efforts to modernize its energy infrastructure by building new nuclear power plants.

Verdini described the party's fundamental values as optimism and the regard for the alternation of power. Verdini continued saying that in a party as big as PDL it is natural to have multiple movements, including: lay, Catholics, Socialists, and liberals. Then he vaguely outlined several more party values: simplification, efficiency, modernity. ROME 00000356 002.2 OF 003 Sandro Bondi, Minister of Culture and the other FI

coordinator, described PDL as a broad party of moderates who

Christian Democratic party in its heyday in the 1950s when it

are not comfortable with the left. He compared PDL to the

Berlusconi has sought to respond to the interests of the

congress, Berlusconi said that the party will be open to all

people in an ad hoc manner. In discussing PDL's first

ideas. Perhaps the only recurring ideology from Berlusconi is his anti-communism, which he describes as having originated from his youth when there was a real fear that Italy could become a communist country. He now uses that ideology to attack the center left, most recently describing the main opposition party's leader as a "Catholic Communist." This general lack of ideology from Berlusconi and his expected continued dominance of the political scene leaves little room

more publishing houses to communicate its message. President of the PDL group in the Chamber of Deputies Fabrizio Cicchitto warned a center right gathering that PDL must have a stronger relationship with the institutions of civil

state in the economy, and a strong sense of nation. He said that AN would not give up these values, but instead would seek to remain a compact bloc in PDL that could attract more followers. Contacts in both FI and AN tell us privately that they want the party to move beyond its "charismatic" origins. In the post-Berlusconi environment, AN will be better positioned to advance its interests and politicians because it has more politicians with strong local reputations, it has a strong ideology and structure. Those with FI origins will

ROME 00000356 003.2 OF 003 power division based on the 2008 electoral results so that

one of its own will have the opportunity to lead the party.

8. (C) Berlusconi will seek to superimpose his top-down

structure onto PDL, and no one--including members of AN--are

questioning his role as party leader. Mario Sechi, journalist

Berlusconi will be the absolute leader, but he will have some

"crown princes." Among the powerful politicians who originate

Gasparri. From FI, there is less depth in the secondary ranks

for leading center-right newsweekly Panorama, told us that

Alemanno, and parliamentarians Italo Bocchino and Maurizio

from AN are Fini, Defense Minister LaRussa, Rome Mayor

as Berlusconi controls so much power himself, but other

The conventional wisdom is that Fini is positioned to replace Berlusconi as leader of the consolidated party when the Prime President of the Chamber of Deputies to showcase himself as a responsible, mainstream politician. His likely role as PDL's Berlusconi dominates his party's foreign policy, and he does not approach foreign policy with an overall strategy or an ideology. Instead, Berlusconi's decisions are driven by personal relationships and personal interests, and often appear to have been made with little institutional support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the party, or Parliament. While Berlusconi can be broadly described as Atlanticist, he is also fickle, and his foreign policy has

shifted notably from 2001 when he sought to portray Italy as

energy. Sechi--the center-right journalist--told a US Embassy

audience that from 2001 to 2008, Berlusconi's foreign policy

served as the only fulcrum of Italy's foreign policy, into a

complex, realist model in which the US is a heavyweight ally,

changed from a traditional, Cold War model in which the US

but no more than a privileged ally. Because of the prime

minister's very personal control of foreign policy, FI parliamentarians have been wary of appearing out of step with liberal Atlanticists to those who want Italy to exert greater 11. (C) Romano LaRussa (brother of the Defense Minister) told Romano LaRussa also stressed AN's focus on conducting foreign

that the United States is able to bolster his claim to be a

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Tails is a live operating system, that you can start on almost any computer from a DVD, USB stick, or SD card. It aims at preserving your privacy and