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Fathers of the Lega Nord?

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Abstract

This thesis argues for the need to reexamine and reconceptualise the roots of the Italian Lega Nord (Northern League). While existing literature on the Lega tends to assume that the origins of this movement lie in the 1980s, I challenge this consensus, arguing that leghismo not only has roots in the transition of the First to Second Italian Republic in the 1980s and 1990s but also in another period of crisis and transition in the 1940s and 1950s. These earlier decades saw the emergence of “Movements for Regional Autonomy” (MRAs) in Piedmont (The MARP) and Lombardy (The MAB), which were in many ways significant antecedents of 1980s leghismo.

By tracing the history of these earlier movements, my study provides an insight into an until now, under-researched period of local regionalist activism in Lombardy and Piedmont. However, the thesis is not of a purely historical nature, but also engages with political and sociological theories and frameworks in order to understand the significance of the MRAs in relation to the more recent history of the Lega.

Through comparison and contrast of these two waves of North Italian regionalist activism, the study reveals both continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs and the Lega in terms of the movements’ message, imagery, propaganda and overall objectives. These findings allow for a nuanced analysis of the longer-term roots of the regionalist discourse which the Lega was able to successfully exploit in the 1980s and 1990s.
Table of Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 8
1. Rethinking the roots of leghismo ........................................................................... 8
2. Research Questions ............................................................................................ 12
3. Methodology ...................................................................................................... 13
4. Breakdown of research methodology ................................................................ 21
5. Chapter outline and summary of research findings ............................................. 23

Chapter I: Literature Review .................................................................................... 28
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 28
2. The Lega and the MRAs .................................................................................... 30
3. Abeyance, Populism and Nativism .................................................................... 42

Chapter II: Regionalism, Federalism and Secessionism. From Unification to the
Italian Republic(s) .................................................................................................... 61
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 61
2. Regionalist and federalist narratives from 1848 to 1948 .................................... 68
3. Two waves of North Italian Regionalism ............................................................ 90
4. New Right or radical right? .............................................................................. 109
5. Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 113

Chapter III: North Italian Regionalist Activism in Abeyance .................................. 117
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 117
2. Abeyance and Abeyance Structures: A theoretical framework ....................... 120
3. Case Studies ...................................................................................................... 129
4. Regionalist Repertoires .................................................................................... 144
5. Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 149

Chapter IV: Federalism, Regionalism and the Nation-state ...................................... 152
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 152
2. Regionalism and Federalism: Ideologies of unity or disunity? ......................... 158
3. Case Study One: Myths and Narratives of the Risorgimento ......................... 171
4. Case Study Two: European Integration and European Federalism ............... 185
5. Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 197

Chapter V: Populist Regionalism ............................................................................. 200
1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 200
2. Populist Regionalism: A theoretical framework .............................................. 209
3. Two waves of Populism ................................................................................... 214
4. Case Study One: Reclaiming regional sovereignty from the partitocrazia ...... 219
5. Case Study Two: Nativism as regionalism and xenophobia ......................... 236
6. Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 252

Conclusion ................................................................................................................. 255

Appendix ..................................................................................................................... 272
1. Chapter II - FIGS 1-3 ........................................................................................ 272
2. Chapter III - FIGS 1-10 ...................................................................................... 274
3. Chapter IV - FIGS 1-16 ...................................................................................... 282
4. Chapter V - FIGS 1-8 ......................................................................................... 289
5. Election results and genealogy of Piedmontese and Lombard regionalism ...... 294

Bibliography ................................................................................................................. 298
**Abbreviations and Acronyms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ANRI</td>
<td>The Autonomie Regionali Nord Italia (The North Italian Regional Autonomies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ARI</td>
<td>The Associazione Regionale Italiana (The Italian Regional Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ARSI</td>
<td>The Autonomie Regionali Sud Italia (The South Italian Regional Autonomies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CLN</td>
<td>The Comitato per Liberazione Nazionale (The Committee for National Liberation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The DC</td>
<td>The Democrazia Cristiana (The Christian Democratic Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EMU</td>
<td>The Economic and Monetary Union</td>
</tr>
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<td>The MAB</td>
<td>The Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco (Movement for Bergamascan Autonomy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The MAL</td>
<td>The Movimento per le Autonomie Locali (Movement for Local Autonomies)</td>
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<td>The MAR</td>
<td>The Movimento Autonomie Regionali/The Movimento Azione e Rinnovamento (The Movement for Regional Autonomies/The Movement for Action and Renewal)</td>
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<td>The MARP</td>
<td>The Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese (Movement for Piedmontese Regional Autonomy)</td>
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<td>The M.A.R.P.</td>
<td>The Movimento Autonomista Rinascita Piemontese (The Autonomist Movement of Piedmontese Rebirth)</td>
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<td>The MARPadania</td>
<td>The Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Padano (The Movement for Padanian Regional Autonomy)</td>
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<td>The MARV</td>
<td>The Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Veneto (The Movement for Venetian Regional Autonomy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The MRAs</td>
<td>The Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale (The Movements for Regional Autonomy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The MSI</td>
<td>The Movimento Sociale Italiano (The Italian Social Movement)</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>The M.S.V.N</td>
<td>The Milizia Volontaria per la Sicurezza Nazionale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PLI</td>
<td>The Partito Liberale Italiano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The PNF</td>
<td>The Partito Nazionale Fascista</td>
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<td>The PNM</td>
<td>The Partito Nazionale Monarchico</td>
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<tr>
<td>The PSDI</td>
<td>The Partito Social Democratico Italiano</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRR</td>
<td>Populist Radical Right</td>
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<tr>
<td>The PVN</td>
<td>The Partito Volontà Nazionale</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SCOPA</td>
<td>The Servire Coscientemente Ogni Pubblica Amministrazione</td>
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<tr>
<td>The UAI</td>
<td>The Unione Autonomisti d’Italia</td>
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<tr>
<td>The UDCA</td>
<td>The Union de Défense des Commercants et Artisans</td>
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<td>The UQ</td>
<td>The Fronte dell’Uomo Qualunque</td>
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Introduction

1. Rethinking the roots of leghismo

During the 1980s a series of ‘Northern Leagues’, (leghe regionali - regionalist organisations) emerged in Lombardy, Piedmont and the Veneto. These movements campaigned for greater regional autonomy for their respective regions from what they portrayed in their political propaganda as a corrupt and inefficient central Roman government biased toward the south of the peninsula. They built up electoral support throughout the 1980s, won seats in parliament in 1987 and made gains in the 1989 European elections. In 1991, these regionalist leagues from Lombardy, Veneto, Liguria, Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and Piedmont were brought together under the single title of Lega Nord (The Northern League – hereafter referred to as the Lega) and the leadership of Umberto Bossi.

The Lega’s real breakthrough came after a series of seismic political developments including the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which marked an end to the political dominance of Christian Democracy, and the emergence of the Tangentopoli Scandals in 1992, which revealed widespread systemic corruption that cut across the political class. These crises, plus a reform in the electoral system swept away the traditional parties of the First Italian Republic which had been established after the fall of fascism. Instead, the Lega, under Umberto Bossi, campaigning on a populist and regionalist platform, pitted the hard-working ‘people’ of the North against the ‘elites’ in Rome and rode the crest of the wave of this political crisis to form part of the first government of the so-called Second Italian Republic in 1994. Since then, the Lega has become the oldest party of the Italian Republic. It has served in three governments between 2001 and 2011 and most recently, to the time of writing, formed a populist governing coalition with the Five Star movement in 2018 headed by Matteo Salvini.

The Lega is one of the most studied Italian political movements and has been the subject of a variety of definitions and theoretical approaches in an attempt to understand its populist and regionalist political programme, which has fluctuated between federalism, separatism and devolution. As the following chapter will explore in more detail, the Lega has been at the centre of various studies not only due to its time in government but also in opposition. Various scholars have been keen to apply their own label to define exactly what this organisation is and how it has evolved since its formation. As is explored in greater detail in the following chapter, leghismo has been defined as a populist movement, a party with anti-fascist sympathies, a far-right and radical right party with fascist sympathies, a sub-cultural movement, a neo-liberal
party, a nationalist party and in its most recent incarnation as a party fighting for Italian national sovereignty against the perceived tyranny of the EU.

Scholars of the Lega will doubtless recognise the name of Roberto Calderoli, the outspoken and controversial former Lega senator from Bergamo who, rising through the ranks from the communal council, ended up serving as a government minister in two Berlusconi-led administrations between 2001-2006 and 2008-2011. However, Roberto was not the first in his family to stake his claim in regionalist politics. In the year of the senator’s birth, 1956, his Grandfather, Guido Calderoli, had begun to encourage a regionalist discourse in north Italy, gaining a seat on the regional council of Bergamo as part of his own autonomist movement, il Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco (MAB) which would later be rebranded as il Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Lombardo (MARL), a serious fore-runner to the Lega Lombarda-Lega Nord.¹ In 1958, Guido Calderoli, wrote the following message for his own movement, MAB, in which he demanded regional autonomy for Lombardy: ‘With our electoral list, we can shout: Lombardy for the Lombards!’² The most obvious comparison for any scholar of North Italian regionalism is to put this message alongside that of the Lega Autonomista Lombarda in the early 1980s, which barely 30 years later was formed on the principle of obtaining ‘integral political, administrative and cultural autonomy of Lombardy.’³

With this historical connection in mind, when Umberto Bossi, stated at the Lega’s annual rally at Pontida in 1994 that the ‘Father of the Lega Nord’ was a certain regionalist movement from the 1950s, one would have thought that naturally, he would be talking about Guido Calderoli’s movement, the MAB.⁴ However, Bossi was actually referring to another regionalist movement from the 1950s, not from Lombardy, but Piedmont, il Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese (the MARP). This would not be the last time that Bossi, would attempt to provide historical legitimacy to his party by making reference to these Movements for Regional Autonomy (MRAs). The Lega leader would again cite both the MAB and the MARP in his account of the Lega between 1979 and 1989. Bossi’s comments were couched in his typically crude style and, therefore, lacked nuance; as will become clear throughout this thesis there were many differences between the MARP, the MAB and the Lega. Nevertheless, his claim highlighted an important gap in the literature on the Lega which has

received little attention over the past three decades, namely the historical precedent to *leghismo* in Lombardy and Piedmont, represented by the 1950s’ MRAs.

While certainly not subscribing to Bossi’s views of the MARP (or indeed the MAB) as the ‘Fathers of the Lega Nord’, this thesis argues that the significance of Italy’s post-war regionalist movement has been under-estimated. I contend that this is symptomatic of the insistence on viewing the Lega, which emerged in the 1980s, as a uniquely ‘new’ political actor rather than the second wave of North Italian regionalism in the history of the Italian Republic. Any comprehensive attempt to look at the phenomenon of *leghismo* from a historical perspective has found little favour over the past three decades. The majority of studies have instead tended to overlook the more historic movements such as the MARP and the MAB. This tendency to ignore previous movements can, perhaps, best be summed up by Biorcio’s and Vitale’s assertion that ‘the issues of regional autonomy and federalism have never had great political relevance in Italy, at least until the eighties.’

This thesis presents a challenge to this view and argues that the regionalist leagues which emerged in north Italy in the 1980s and from 1992 until 2017, acting under the umbrella term, Lega Nord, have clear precedents in the MARP and the MAB.

The relevance of the year 2017 lies in the fact that the Lega’s leader at the time of writing, Matteo Salvini, removed the iconic words ‘Nord’ and ‘Padania’ (the latter of which had since 1995 represented the Lega’s imaginary northern state) from his party’s symbols. This represented a watershed moment for North Italian regionalism; the Lega, which has traditionally defended northern interests, has now become a movement defending Italian national sovereignty. Salvini’s leadership, therefore, ends the second of two waves of North Italian regionalist activism central to this study. While this paper does not systematically engage with this rebranded ‘post-regionalist’ Lega due to the disappearance of the common denominator of regionalism, Salvini’s populism and nativism do have significant roots in the regionalist discourse of the two waves of activism which preceded him.

The two waves of regionalist activism represented by the MRAs and the Lega shared a common demand for greater regional autonomy, and also cross-overs in anti-southern, anti-bureaucratic, anti-centralist and anti-Roman discourse. However, many elements and issues raised by the Bergamascan and Piedmontese autonomists regarding the importance of Italian

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unity would have been anathema to Lega ideology, let alone the fact that *leghismo* emerged after the 1970s regional reforms and, therefore, stood for a very different type of regional autonomy to that for which the MARP and the MAB had campaigned.

This thesis, through a comparative analysis of elements of political discourse of the MRAs and the Lega, aims to bring to light a nuanced view of the MARP’s and the MAB’s role as a precursor to *leghismo* which takes into account both continuities and discontinuities between the two waves of activism.

I argue for the need to reconceptualise the historical and ideological roots of the Lega. In the light of theories of populism and abeyance, I critically analyse the role of 1950s’ ‘Movements for Regional Autonomy’ (MRAs) in Piedmont and Lombardy as significant antecedents of 1980s-1990s *leghismo*. With this in mind, my main contention is that *leghismo* should be considered as a second wave or ‘cycle of mobilization’ of North Italian regionalist activism which emerged after the first cycle represented by the MRAs had ‘emerged’ ‘coalesced’, ‘bureaucratised’ and eventually been (partially) ‘co-opted’ by a larger group.7 The Lega’s exponents were able to draw upon narratives relating to regionalism, federalism, populism and nativism which had been developed and used during the first wave of activism represented by the MRAs. I maintain, therefore, that the Lega Nord not only recycled the pre-existing regionalist discourse in North Italy but also revolutionised and reformulated these narratives. As Tarrow has argued

it is within these larger cycles that new forms of contention combine with old ones, the expressive encounters the instrumental, traditional social actors adopt tactics from new arrivals, and newly invented forms of collective action … are tempered into the permanent tools of a society’s repertoire of contention.8

In doing so, the second wave of activism presented a series of challenges to the Italian nation-state that would have been invidious to the beliefs and aims of their 1950s’ antecedents.

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This thesis, therefore, not only contributes to the existing extensive literature on the Lega Nord, but also seeks to widen the field by bringing to the fore two movements which have been largely overlooked in the history of North Italian regional autonomy.

2. Research questions

Central to this thesis is the contention that there have been two separate waves of North Italian regionalist activism in Lombardy and Piedmont in two distinct periods of Italian history. Therefore, the overarching research question of this thesis is the following:

What are the continuities and discontinuities between these two waves of North Italian activism? I have broken this question into three sub-questions which will be addressed in the three analytical chapters of this thesis.

The first of these secondary questions makes use of a sociological theory of ‘abeyance’ which will be more clearly defined in chapters one and three. I ask to what extent and how did abeyance contribute to the decline of the MRAs and the survival of activist networks, which would ensure the reproduction of regionalist repertoires by the leagues in the 1980s? The aim here is to examine the extent to which the regionalist leagues in Lombardy and Piedmont which emerged in the 1980s can be considered successors to the MAB and the MARP. Addressing this question also accounts for an apparent two-decade gap between the two waves of activism.

The second sub-question takes as its premise an examination of the political philosophies/ideologies of regionalism and federalism which are defined in greater detail in both chapters two and four. It poses the following question: how did two separate periods of crisis and transition affect North Italian regionalism, transforming it from a force of unity to one of fragmentation? This question takes as its premise that the MRAs and the Lega were, first and foremost, regionalist movements. This allows for an examination of the continuities and discontinuities between the movements’ conceptualisation of regionalism and federalism and how these narratives related to the concept of the nation-state.

The final sub-question involves the application of the theories of populism and nativism, examined in greater detail in chapters one and five. The question is, to what extent and how do the theories of populism and nativism explain continuities and discontinuities between the political message of the MRAs and the Lega? This allows for an examination of how the Lega’s populist and nativist discourse holds significant roots in an MRA discourse of anti-elitism, nativism and returning sovereignty to the ‘people.’ At the same time, by
identifying the movements as two distinct waves of populism in the 1950s and the 1990s, it reveals significant discontinuities.

3. Methodology

In terms of the principal objective of the research, i.e. bringing to light the continuities and discontinuities between the political discourse of two waves of activism, I employed a methodology of comparative analysis of materials used by both the MRAs and the Lega. The materials, many of which formed part of regionalist repertoires of each wave of activism (examined in more detail in chapter three) were both textual and visual in nature, and materials detailed in full in the table below. The following paragraphs focus on the sources of these materials before examining the specific textual and visual analysis employed throughout the thesis.

Before engaging with the primary objective of understanding the continuities and discontinuities between the two waves of activism, a secondary objective of the methodology employed was to understand the exact history and nature of the movements which constituted the first wave of activism. While the MARP and the MAB were bound by common themes of regionalism, federalism, populism and nativism, they were two separate organisations, and therefore establishing the history of each movement involved consulting different types of primary materials.

My thesis draws heavily on my archival research in order to reconstruct the history of both the MARP and the MAB. Both chapters two and three, weave together information from a variety of archival documents in order to illustrate a rich tapestry of regionalist activism in 1950s’ Piedmont and Lombardy. Chapter three adopts a historical-sociological approach in order to analyse the MARP and the MAB as social movements and directly compare their process of decline and absorption. Taking the two movements as comparative case studies also highlights the key regionalist repertoires which would provide the basis for and influence the second wave of regionalism. A genealogy chart attached as an appendix to this thesis further illustrates the process of decline and absorption while highlighting the links between the two waves of activism from 1946 when the first nuclei of the MRAs emerged, until 1991 which marked the merging of the regional leagues into the Lega Nord. This chart traces links between members and organisations and is used as part of the analysis of the history of the movements in both chapters two and three.
Regarding the primary source material used, in terms of the MARP, there is a significant quantity of information available in the national archives in Turin including police reports, official statutes of the movement, and electoral propaganda. It should be said that the nature of these documents – police reports, character profiles - often reveal more on the personality and character of the key protagonists rather than the movement’s ideas. Further to this, there was a battle over the memory of the movement due to various internal splits; indeed, the only ‘official’ history of the movement, written by one of its key exponents, ignores the original founder and statute due to these fractious early years which would haunt the movement throughout its existence.

The subject of the case studies employed in chapters four and five of the thesis reflect key themes of political discourse of the MRAs and the Lega which allow for a more nuanced analysis of both continuities and discontinuities between both waves of activism. These themes relate predominantly to regionalism, federalism, populism and nativism. The materials analysed in these comparative case studies consist of the regionalist repertoires used by both waves of activism and are sourced from both primary and secondary materials. In particular both movements made use of imagery, posters and slogans on the one hand and on the other hand poetry and other forms of writings such as essays. In this second example, the format of the regionalist newspaper played a particularly important role.

Unlike documents I have uncovered for the MARP, in terms of the MAB there are no existing police records or significant character profiles of the movement available for consultation in the National Archives in Lombardy. In order to follow the development of the MAB’s ideas from 1947 until 1956, I have made use of a variety of publications including pamphlets and collections of essays relating to the regional statutes in the Constitution and the movement's federalist ideal. These are available for consultation in the ISREC archive in Bergamo.

Documents on MARP available at Archivio di Stato di Torino. 
Categoria.A3A. 
Fasc. Autonomia Piemontese Movimento Villarboito. 

10 The following books written by MAB’s theorists/activists are available at Istituto Bergamasco per la storia della Resistenza e dell’età contemporanea (ISREC):

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9 Documents on MARP available at Archivio di Stato di Torino.
One of the most useful documents in reconstructing the MAB’s history is the Breve Storia del MAB written by Anselmo Freddi, one of the organisation’s founding members, in 1963, barely three years after the movement had ceased to exist. Although Freddi’s document helps develop the timeline of the movement, he often skips over important dates, which may be related to memory or a desire to revise his or other members’ roles in the movement.\(^{11}\) On this note, it is worth bearing in mind that Freddi was one of four members who would make an agreement with the Christian Democrats (DC) in 1960, forcing a split in the movement. The fact that there is no counter-narrative to that of Freddi, i.e. from a member who continued the fight for regional autonomy in Bergamo during the 1960s, means that we are left with a one-sided perspective of how the movement developed. His interest in writing this history is also tied up with wanting to protect his own legacy and defend his decision to sign an agreement with the DC. Freddi’s document is nevertheless immensely useful and helps develop the timeline of the movement. By using this book in combination with documents held in an archive in Biblioteca Angelo Mai, which were collected by another founding member, Aldo Rizzi, as well as electoral results and propaganda documents held at the Archivio Storico di Comune di Bergamo, I have re-constructed a history of the movement between 1947 and 1960.\(^{12}\)

In addition to establishing the history of the MARP, the national archives also contained electoral leaflets, posters and visual images which allowed for an analysis of the type of regionalism and federalism promoted by each movement. Due to the fact that a principal form of communication for both waves of activism was the party newspaper, I decided that this would provide a significant tool of textual analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between the political message of each wave of activism. In addition to articles, within these party newspapers there were also essays, poems, songs and letters.

While the documents available in the National Archives were useful in tracing a history of the movement in the 1950s, the MARP’s newspaper Piemonte Nuovo, which had been published on a fortnightly basis between 1956 and 1961, was more valuable in understanding and analysing the political message of the MARP and can be consulted at Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino.\(^{13}\)

\(^{11}\) A. Freddi, Breve storia del MAB, Bergamo, Movimento Autonomista Bergamaschi, 1963, Available in Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
\(^{12}\) Archivio Storico Comune di Bergamo (ACBq), Classe a. Categoria 6 (Governo), Fasc. 1 e 2. Anni 1954-1964 MAB propaganda, correspondence between activists and newspaper articles from l’Eco di Bergamo available from 'Fasc. MAB – Autonomisti', In Archivio Aldo Rizzi, Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
Analysis of *Piemonte Nuovo* revealed a series of visual images which opened up the possibility of visual analysis. These documents, when used in combination with the Bergamascan movement’s essays, speeches and pamphlets uncovered in the Istituto Bergamasco per la storia della Resistenza, and the posters, cartoons, poems, statutes and correspondence in Biblioteca Angelo Mai provided a selection of material to compare to the regionalist repertoires produced by the Lega.

In terms of *leghismo*, there is a vast array of literature available on the early years of this political phenomenon. I have therefore made use of the wide-range of secondary literature available on the Lega and in particular the personal accounts of leading figures such as Umberto Bossi and Roberto Gremmo.

With regards to primary materials, I made use of the newspapers available for both the early Lombard and Piedmontese leagues (*Lombardia Autonomista, Piemont Autonomista*), the federalist form of the Lega (*Lega Nord-Italian Federale*) at the central library in Rome and the secessionist/devolutionist form of the Lega (*La Padania*) at Biblioteca Sormanin Milan.14 The different publications of the different phases of the movement as this reflected the different type of regionalism and federalism offered by the second wave of activism. In addition, I have used an archive of propaganda posters on the Lega Nord website. With reference to Piedmontese *leghismo*, on which there has tended to be little academic focus over the past three decades, leading Piedmontese autonomist, Roberto Gremmo was of particular assistance in sending me early issues of newspapers related to his movements, *Arnassita Piemonteisa*, *Union Piemonteisa* and *Lega Alpina* as well as a copy of his book, *Contro Roma*.

The varying range of documents available in each archive, listed in greater detail in the table below, meant that while in some cases a full analysis of the available documents was possible, in others it was not and, therefore a sample was taken. This was particularly true in the case of party newspapers and therefore I took a random sample of 50 documents or issues for each archive. I then began a thematic analysis on the continuities and discontinuities in discourse by performing both textual and visual analysis of the sources in order to identify language and visual markers which related to the key themes of regionalism, federalism, populism and nativism.

Given the scope of this thesis to bring to light the continuities and discontinuities between the political discourse of two waves of regionalist activism, the research method

14 Archives for *Piemont Autonomista* and *Lombardia Autonomista* available at Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma.
Archive for *La Padania* available at Biblioteca Comunale Centrale di Milano (Biblioteca Sormanin).
employed was one of critical discourse analysis (CDA), and more precisely that which has been articulated by Norman Fairclough and fellow scholars who have referred to themselves as ‘the CDA group.’ CDA refers to

the general label for a special approach to the study of text and talk, emerging from critical linguistics, critical semiotics and in general from a socio-politically conscious and oppositional way of investigating language, discourse and communication.

This approach to discourse analysis sees ‘language as social practice’, and considers the ‘context of language use’ to be crucial.

Fairclough focuses on the role of ‘the three aspects of meaning, Action, Representation and Identification, and how these are realised in the various features of texts (their vocabulary, their grammar, and so forth). To this extent, CDA contributes to explaining how the texts and images used in this thesis helped ‘identify’ the movements as regionalist and federalist campaigners, how the language they used can be ‘represented’ as regionalist, populist and nativist, and, finally in terms of ‘action’, how the various texts and images interacted with social events surrounding them.

CDA, as a methodological approach, becomes particularly helpful in this thesis for four key reasons. First, CDA identifies that ‘discursive practices – through which texts are produced (created) and consumed (received and interpreted) – are viewed as an important form of social practice which contributes to the constitution of the social world, including social identities and social relations.’ Indeed, this is reinforced by Fairclough and Wodak who note that ‘discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned.’ To this effect, both waves of activism produced their texts to be consumed as a form of social practice which contributed to the constitution of social identities and social relations.

19 Ibid.
A second factor is the focus on ideological effects within CDA in which ‘it is claimed that discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups – for example, between social classes, women and men, ethnic minorities and the majority.’\textsuperscript{23} CDA, takes an approach to discourse analysis ‘which focuses on the discursive conditions, components and consequences of power abuse by dominant (elite) groups and institutions.’\textsuperscript{24} In this respect, CDA aims to ‘de-mystify ideologies and power through the systematic and retroductable investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual).’\textsuperscript{25} Indeed, one of the key purposes of the production of texts and images by the two waves of regionalist activism was this ideological impact of portraying themselves as victims of unequal power relations, yet at the same time, their use of language also had an ideological impact of contributing to discrimination against ethnic minorities through a nativist discourse. Further to this, a CDA inspired reading of documents produced by state functionaries from the national archives enables a more critical analysis of how language was used to suppress a regionalist ideology which was considered to be subversive.

Third, CDA argues that ‘text analysis alone is not sufficient for discourse analysis, as it does not shed light on the links between texts and societal and cultural processes and structures.’\textsuperscript{26} CDA is therefore ‘not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach.’\textsuperscript{27} The ‘interdisciplinary perspective’ therefore, aligns with this thesis which involves history, sociology and political studies and ‘combines textual and social analysis.’\textsuperscript{28}

Finally, within CDA there is a tendency to analyse pictures as if they were linguistic texts.\textsuperscript{29} When added to the ‘commonly accepted’ notion that ‘the analysis of text containing visual images must take account of the special characteristics of visual semiotics and the relationship between language and images,’ CDA allows for an examination of both textual and visual sources and where they overlap.\textsuperscript{30} Therefore, as ‘discourse encompasses not only

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p.63.
\textsuperscript{25} Meyer and Wodak, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology’, p.3.
\textsuperscript{26} Jorgensen and Phillips, \textit{Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method}, p.66.
\textsuperscript{28} Jorgensen and Phillips, \textit{Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method}, p.66.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p.61.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p.61.
written and spoken language but also visual images’ and this thesis relies on both textual and visual analysis, such an approach is particularly helpful.31

Referring more specifically to the images analysed in this thesis, the most relevant method was that of semiotics, ‘which draws inspiration from Saussure’s … theory of language.’32 In terms of semiotics, ‘metaphorically, visual systems are languages’ and therefore ‘the goal is to look at images … and from these deduce the langue, the grammar of the image system.’33 The task of semiotics is ‘to uncover signs and figure out how they work … to discover the relationship among signs and how they create meaning in the whole system.’34 This becomes particularly relevant for this thesis which analyses how a series of images in the form of posters, leaflets and postcards formed a central plank of the regionalist repertoires produced by two waves of activism and functioned as a form of communication.

A particular point with regards to semiotics and how it applies to the visual systems analysed in this thesis is that ‘signs do not stand alone’ but instead that ‘meaning comes from binary opposites, and clear meanings come from sharp contrasts.’35 A large number of the images produced by both waves of north Italian regionalist activism depended strongly on this use of binary opposites. Image of the ‘preying, exploitative wolf of the centralist state’ versus the ‘exploited victim of the north’ or the ‘productive northern hen’ versus ‘Roma Ladrona (Rome the thief) are but two examples of a range of images analysed in this thesis which made use of binary opposites.’ A semiotic reading of the images produced by both the MRAs and the Lega, is therefore an indispensable element of the comparative analysis employed throughout this thesis.

Having gathered the majority of data from archival sources, a series of interviews were planned, the results of which, while not forming the core resource for my research, were instead to be used as a way of supporting or contradicting ideas and assumptions that I had gathered through my archival research.36 My original intention was to conduct interviews with six surviving individuals who had been members of or who had links to the MRAs I carried out the planning and preparation schedule phase of this process for all six individuals.37 However, a series of constraints relating to their professional, family and health issues meant

31 Ibid., p.61.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
that I was only able to carry out the data recording, interviews and analysis stage with three of these subjects.

The interviews were qualitative in nature in that they were ‘topical interviews … concerned with the facts and sequence of an event’ focusing on ‘a specific subject’ and targeting ‘individuals associated with the subject.’

The interviews used were semi-structured and fall into what Haigh has described as the ‘general interview guide approach’ which ‘ensures that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee … but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee.’

The way the interviews were conducted therefore ‘afforded an opportunity to explore issues not previously considered’ or indeed ones that ‘emerged spontaneously during the interview.’

With all of the interviews, there are issues of memory and accuracy to be taken into account as becomes evident, for example, when establishing the origins of each movement and the roles played by certain individuals.

Two of these interviews were with two relatives of former members of the MARP and the MAB, Michele Rosboch and Giuseppe Sala, whose answers have helped provide fresh perspectives on certain hypotheses. Rosboch is the grandson of his namesake, who was one of the MARP’s founding members and served as a communal councillor for two mandates in Turin. Meanwhile, Sala is the son-in-law of Gianfranco Gonella, a founding member of the MAB and also communal councillor who would later defect to the Christian Democrats. These interviews were important due to the fact that there are no surviving members of the MARP or the MAB to corroborate certain information. The third interview was carried out with Roberto Gremmo, former leader of the Piedmontese autonomist movements, Arnassità Piemonteisa, Union Piemonteisa, and Lega Alpina. Gremmo had also been a friend and close collaborator with a former member of the MARP, Antonio Brodrero, a figure who, by participating in Gremmo’s movements, bridged the gap between the first and second wave of activism. It should be noted, however, that due to the fact that Gremmo was interviewed via email the scope for freedom and adaptability was far more limited than the face to face interviews with Rosboch and Sala.

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39 Ibid., p.112-113.
40 Ibid., p.117.
## 4. Breakdown of research methodology

### First Wave of Activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Archive/Folder</th>
<th>Document types</th>
<th>Years/Issues</th>
<th>Period of Consultation</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## Second wave of Activism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Archive</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Years/Issues</th>
<th>Period of Consultation</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
5. Chapter Outline and Summary of Research Findings (Continuities and Discontinuities)

Chapter one provides an overview of the secondary literature on both the MRAs and the Lega. It establishes, in particular, how and to what extent analyses of the Lega have involved a historical approach while also highlighting a tendency of scholars to apply a reductive analysis when examining the MRAs. This literature review also introduces the two theories which form the basis of two of the analytical chapters, abeyance and populism. In terms of abeyance, it examines how this theory, in spite of being applied in the analysis of numerous social movements and political phenomena has, until now, not been used in any analysis of the Lega. Regarding populism, on the other hand, the chapter highlights how this theory has indeed been applied to the Lega to compare it to historic populist movements, and to explain its regionalist ideology. In doing so, the chapter highlights the need to introduce a new framework of populist regionalism in order to analyse both the regionalist and right-wing elements of the Lega which hold roots in its precursors’ political discourse.

Chapter two, is a predominantly descriptive rather than analytical chapter and establishes how regionalism has emerged at various points of crisis and transition in the Italian state. It formulates an argument that the demands for regional reform of the Italian state have come to the fore at times of institutional crisis and transition. The chapter will also provide a brief history of the two waves of regionalist activism central to this thesis, thus providing the context for an examination of the MRAs and the Lega in the following chapters.

Chapter three, responds to my first research sub-question: to what extent and how did abeyance contribute to the decline of the MRAs and the survival of activist networks which would ensure the reproduction of regionalist repertories by the Leagues in the 1980s? In the light of the theory of abeyance, this chapter accounts for the decline of the MARP and the MAB and examines some of the regionalist repertoires which would be reframed and recycled by leghismo in the 1980s and 1990s. The chapter also continues to trace the genealogy, started in chapter two, which links the MRAs and the Lega Nord and argues that this genealogy cannot be explained through a combination of discourse analysis or comparisons of imagery and propaganda alone, but also requires a closer study of links between family, friends and rivals. As noted above, these links are illustrated more explicitly in a genealogy chart in the appendix which will be referred to at relevant points throughout the chapter.
In chapter four, I turn my attention to the federalist and regionalist message of the two waves of regionalist activism in order to answer the second research sub-question of whether North Italian regionalism should be seen as a force of unity or fragmentation. The chapter analyses how federalism and regionalism played a central role in the identity of both the MRAs and the Lega as a core ideology. I use this analysis to highlight the persistent message of unity and primacy of the nation-state present in the MRAs’ political message and contrast this with the message of disunity and fragmentation promoted by the Lega. The chapter focuses on two case studies relating to representations of the Risorgimento and Europe in the political discourse of each wave of activism.

Chapter five introduces a new populist regionalist framework to answer the question: to what extent and how do the theories of populism and nativism explain continuities and discontinuities between the political message of the MRAs and the Lega? Through an analysis of MRA and Lega rhetoric on issues such as migration and the partitocrazia, the chapter reveals how both movements can be described as populist regionalist movements, in that they were regionalist, populist and nativist. This chapter and framework will analyse how a populist and nativist form of regionalism can develop into a populist and nativist form of radical right ideology and analyses how a historical approach towards North Italian regionalism allows us to trace this development.

The concluding section of the thesis returns to the original research question in order to shed light on the key continuities and discontinuities between the two waves of North Italian regionalism. These conclusions will allow for a greater understanding of the significance of the longer-term roots of the Lega Nord while also opening up avenues for future research.
### Breakdown of Continuities and Discontinuities

#### Theme: Regionalism and Federalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuities</th>
<th>Discontinuities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Promotion of regionalism and federalism as core ideologies to solve Italy’s problems.</td>
<td>MRAs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regionalism presented as:</td>
<td>• Regionalism as a form of unity: completion of Italian unity possible only through the full application of regional statutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) A ‘Second Risorgimento’.</td>
<td>• Risorgimento presented as a moment of glory for the Italian state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii) Conducive to European federalism.</td>
<td>• ‘MARPadania’: a patriotic electoral pact which did not directly challenge the Italian nation-state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Regionalist repertoires (Posters, Poetry, Essays).</td>
<td><strong>Lega (Pre-Padania - 1980-1995):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notions of Padania.</td>
<td>• The region took on a national identity of its own – emphasis on disunity and fragmentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Risorgimento presented as a moment of tragedy for Italian regions, or ‘lost nations.’</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Lega (Post-Padania 1995-2013):</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Padania challenged the Italian nation-state – emphasis on disunity and fragmentation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Euro-sceptic turn after 1998 which would have been anathema to the MRAs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Continuities:</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Populism</strong>&lt;br&gt;(As a thin-centred ideology)</td>
<td><strong>Populist regionalism (Regionalism, populism, nativism)</strong>&lt;br&gt;1) Pits the region and its homogeneous people against a political elite or regime, which is depriving or attempting to deprive it of its regional sovereignty.&lt;br&gt;2) Portrays the region as a hard-working, virtuous island of prosperity, which is exploited by the political elites giving preference to an internal or external “other” (See below : ‘nativism’).&lt;br&gt;3) Proposes its form of regionalism as a way of guaranteeing popular sovereignty.&lt;br&gt;4) Proposes to stop the invasion of ‘others’ (See below ‘nativism’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lega - 1990s Populism:</strong>&lt;br&gt;</td>
<td><strong>Lega - 1990s Populism:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Collapse of post-war settlement in Europe.&lt;br&gt;- Reaction against heavily bureaucratised welfare state.&lt;br&gt;- Reconstruction of politics around issues of taxation, immigration and nationalism or regionalism.&lt;br&gt;- Rejection of post-war consensus.&lt;br&gt;- Political system as both corrupt and criminal – partitocrazia conflated with the Mafia.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Continuities:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nativism</td>
<td><strong>Anti-southernism:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Exclusionary and</td>
<td>• Southerners viewed as a threat to jobs, housing, culture,</td>
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<tr>
<td>xenophobic form of</td>
<td>identity and as colonizing the North.</td>
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<td>regionalism)</td>
<td>• Southern migration linked to .</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a) Casa per il Mezzogiorno.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Rising crime rates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stopping the invasion:</td>
<td>• Preventing an ‘invasion’ portrayed in philanthropic terms as beneficial</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for both natives and non-natives alike</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Southerners excluded from Northern heartland but not from Italian</td>
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<td>state itself.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) MRAs: ‘Aiutare sì, mantenere no!’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(‘Let us help them, but not through handouts!’)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lega: ‘Aiutiamoli a casa loro!’</td>
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Chapter I
Literature Review

1. Introduction

This opening chapter analyses a cross-section of literature which has informed the arguments developed in my thesis. From the results of this analysis I contend that in the existing literature there is a lack of a nuanced approach on the Lega as to whether Movements for Regional Autonomy (MRAs) in Piedmont and Lombardy can be seen as precursors to leghismo. The review therefore proposes a new cross-disciplinary approach to help develop existing studies on both the MRAs and the Lega.

Bearing in mind the immediacy of the political challenges to the Italian state to which the Lega contributed in the 1980s and 1990s, it has been natural to treat leghismo as a political rather than a historical subject and, therefore, to look to the immediate decade prior to the first successes of the regionalist leagues in Piedmont, Lombardy and the Veneto. Indeed, histories of the movement have tended to start no earlier than 1979.41 It appears that the chaotic circumstances in which the Lega Nord rose to prominence, amid corruption scandals, the disappearance of the Christian Democrat-Communist polarisation in Italian politics and the Lega’s ability to exploit this crisis, led to an equally chaotic way of defining what the movement was and who/what it represented. Cento Bull and Gilbert observed in their book, after studying the various categorisations of the movement, that readers would be ‘fighting a sense of confusion’ and asking ‘what is the Lega?’42

On the one hand, the taxonomy of the Lega Nord since the 1980s has helped our understanding of a constantly changing and evolving political organisation.43 The initial interpretation of the Lega Nord as a protest movement was discredited as its durability saw it ride the crest of the anti-system wave and increase its vote share into the Second Italian

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42 Cento Bull and Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics, p.59.
Republic.\footnote{D.Sassoon, ‘Tangentopoli or the democratization of corruption: considerations on the end of Italy’s First Republic’, Journal of Modern Italian Studies, vol.1, no.1, 1995, pp.124-143.} Many scholars came to see the Lega as a regionalist populist movement or a subcultural party.\footnote{R.Biorcio, ‘La Lega Come attore politico: Dal Federalismo al populismo regionalista’, in R.Mannheimer (ed.), La Lega Lombarda, Milan, Feltrinell, 1991.} As the party’s policies shifted to the right, it became the focus of studies which defined it as a far-right party.\footnote{V.Moioli, Il tardo delle leghe, Milan, Associazione culturale Antonio Gramsci, Edizioni Comedit2000, 1991.} Moioli also examined the various characteristics of the Lega in order to understand who exactly voted for the movement.\footnote{Diamanti, La Lega: Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico. Idem, Il male del Nord: Lega, localismo, secession.} Diamanti’s analysis of the Lega as a political entrepreneur allowed for an analysis of the movement’s development into four different stages in which it changed its political appeal in line with the changing socio-economic realities of the regions in which it was operating.\footnote{Cento Bull and Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian politics, p.65.} Meanwhile, Cento Bull & Gilbert noted the importance of distinguishing ‘between two levels of analysis: structure and agency’ and argued that ‘structural factors, the party’s programme and its evolving world view, and the nature of its electorate’ all needed to be taken into consideration when analysing the Lega.\footnote{Ibid., p.63.}

On the other hand, each individual study of the movement has tended to guard its categorisation too jealously.\footnote{Ibid., pp.63-64.} This approach of categorisation was given the name of ‘essentialism’ by Tambini and ‘reductionism’ by Ilvo Diamanti, while Cento Bull & Gilbert stated that no categorisation has thus far ‘provide(d) a full explanation of the rise of the Lega Nord in particular and the increasing importance of the politics of regional identity in general.’\footnote{Ibid., p.65.} In short, these studies demonstrated how defining the Lega as one thing and one thing only left little room for multiple interpretations of a constantly evolving organisation. Therefore, while the aforementioned studies have contributed greatly to our understanding of why the Lega enjoyed the success it did in the 1980s and 1990s, none of these interpretations take into account the longer-term history which preceded the emergence of the Lega, a history which included the MRAs in Piedmont and Lombardy in the 1950s. This chapter, therefore, through a review of the related literature introduces the research questions, methodology and chapter outline at the centre of this historical approach to an analysis of leghismo.
Following this introduction, the chapter is formed of two sections. The first section provides a review of existing literature on the Lega Nord and MRAs relevant to this study. I first examine how history has been treated in studying the rise of the Lega, analysing how many studies have either not been aware of or have paid little attention to the MRAs, considering them superfluous to our understanding of the various leagues which emerged in the 1980s. I then examine how existing studies on the MARP and the MAB have been too reductive in their approach, either paying too little attention to the movements or, conversely, paying too much attention to only one element of the movements’ programme, in particular anti-southern discourse. The second section then focuses on the theories of abeyance, populism and nativism which will be used in the analysis of these movements in two of the central chapters of this thesis.

2. The Lega and the MRAs

i. The Lega - Historical contexts but no historical precursors

Historical approaches toward *leghismo* exist but are often shaped by theoretical frameworks which limit the ability to examine preceding movements such as the MRAs.

In terms of the contemporary history of the Lega i.e. that of the previous three decades, it is important to note from the outset that the recent transformation of the Lega from a regionalist to a nationalist party inspired Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone to take a historical approach in their comparison between Salvini’s ‘nativist nationalist’ Lega and Bossi’s ‘regionalist populist Lega’. To some extent, this analysis shares a common goal of this thesis in that it is concerned with discussing ‘the party’s development, by assessing the changes that have affected it with a specific focus on ideology and the way the party communicates’, albeit within a different time frame. Despite its usefulness in a more contemporary analysis of the Lega under Salvini, such a comparison only goes back as far as 1991 and does not take into account how the party can be considered as a second wave of regionalist activism in relation to the previous MRAs in Piedmont and Lombardy.

52 A.Giovannini, A.Seddoni, D.Albertazzi, ‘No regionalism please, we are Leghisti! The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini’, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 2018, vol.28, no.5, pp.645-671, (p.646).
53 Ibid.
Biorcio and Vitale also provide a brief historical overview leading up to the 1980s but only use it in order to support their argument that the preceding decades did not present any instances of significant regionalism. The authors note that ‘from the Second World War until the end of the Cold War, the local sub-cultures have been integrated by the most important political cultures on a national scale’ and that ‘the distribution of economic resources between the different territorial areas did not cause noteworthy protests in the regions of northern Italy until the eighties.’

Regarding this socio-economic factor, Cento Bull and Gilbert, in their introductory chapter to their *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics* provide a brief history of the socio-economic conditions from the 1960s until the 1980s. This history is used in order to explain the unique development of the economy in the North-East where the Lega would flourish ‘at the end of the 1980s’ where ‘the flexible new economy represented by the small-firm model of development needed a state that was as flexible as they were.’

While the above examples frame the Lega in the context of the particular socio-economic context of small family businesses in the North-East, Giovanni De Luna’s historical analysis of the movement was instead rooted in an evaluation of the various attempts (and failures) of the Italian state to ‘make Italians’. According to De Luna, the various ‘svolte’ or turning points in Italian history (the Risorgimento, the Fascist Ventennio, the Resistance, the advent of the First Italian Republic, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Tangentopoli) each represented failures to ‘make Italians’ through different means and ideologies. Just as fascism had attempted to replace the failed liberal project, the Cold War political subcultures of Christian Democracy (DC) and the Communist Party (PCI) were a new approach to create the nation. In this sense, De Luna puts the Lega in historical context by seeing it as the latest symbol of a failure of the state to ‘make Italians’. De Luna, however, highlights the uniqueness of the Lega phenomenon in that it emerged outside the context of a war, ruin and national mourning which has usually marked the transition between one nation-making project to another.

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56 Ibid., pp.63-64.
In some studies of the Lega, a history of the Italian state, its regions and cities has been present but not explicitly connected with leghismo. The emergence of the Lega and their presence in academic debate in the early to mid-1990s played a key role in inspiring Levy’s edited work entitled *Italian Regionalism* in 1996; three of the four chapters in the second section of this publication are written exclusively on the Lega. The fact that these final three chapters follow five chapters which looked at the history and construction of regional identity in Italy is highly relevant and shows a desire to place the phenomenon of leghismo in historical context. However, no attempt is made to place the MARP or the MAB within this detailed historical context, with the period of the 1950s itself being overlooked.\(^{58}\)

Other studies, whilst delving more deeply into previous instances of regionalist revolt, do so only on a superficial level. Tambini, for example, cites some examples of regionalist revolt in the Italian peninsula but dismisses them as irrelevant as ‘they never threatened the territorial unity of Italy.’\(^{59}\) Such a claim was also present in Biorcio’s and Vitale’s study on the Lega.\(^{60}\) These assertions depend partially on assessing the Lega’s political project *Padania* as one that exists, as a project and as a recognisable pronoun in at least some of the ways that Italy existed in the mid-19th Century when it was dismissed by Metternich as a ‘mere geographical expression.’\(^{61}\)

Tambini’s assumption that the Lega and Padania represented more of a threat to the Italian peninsula than previous acts of regionalism, might be viewed as exaggerated when observing a poll ‘carried out in January 1998 on behalf of the magazine *liMes*, [which] found that 68.9% of interviewed Northerners regarded secession as “unacceptable or disastrous.”\(^{62}\) Additionally, whether or not instances of regionalism have been a ‘true threat’ to Italian unity, they still make up the wider history of the debates surrounding regionalism and federalism in Italy and should thus not be ignored. Tambini’s study, however, tends to be more interested in looking at how the Lega used history for its own political means and describes the movement’s attitude towards history as a ‘wardrobe to be plundered for whatever symbols split Italy in the


\(^{60}\) Biorcio and Vitale, *Culture, Values and Social Basis of Northern Italian Centrifugal Regionalism*, p.172.


convenient way and achieved the appropriate resonance with the public."63 In this sense, Tambini’s approach towards examining the Lega and history has much in common with both Michele Huysseune and Daniele Albertazzi who have both looked at how the Lega has exploited and abused history to justify its political claims.64 Albertazzi exposes the inaccuracies of the Lega’s account of the history of peoples such as the Celts and the Longobards and the events leading to the formation of the Lega Lombarda in the Middle Ages … with the aim of assessing how the party has ‘used’ the past.65

Huysseune’s work has also looked at how Lega ideologues attempted to ‘establish the specificity of its history, culture, folklore and dialect.’66 Indeed, Huysseune highlights how ‘the origins of Padania’s ethnic identity is identified with the pre-Roman Celtic presence in these regions. This discursive framework assimilates contemporary Padanian with ancient Celtic virtues.’67 It should be noted, however, that the appropriation of historic myths and symbols such as the Lega Lombarda and Alberto Da Giussano actually arrived before Bossi and is linked strongly to the MAB and its eventual successor, the Unione Autonomisti d’Italia (UA), one of the Lega Lombarda’s precursors in Lombardy. These two movements represented a continuity in discourse between the Lega and its precursors in their willingness to exploit historical myths for political purposes.

In terms of explaining such continuities, Linda Basile highlights the Padania discourse as a key example of how Bossi’s Lega ‘reframed’ long-standing themes and arguments surrounding regional autonomy and ‘articulate them in terms of a new and politically more contentious Northern question.’68 This is particularly important when considering the connections between the ideas of the Movements for Regional Autonomy and the Lega. Basile builds upon research by Giordano and argues that

Albertazzi, ‘Back to our roots or self-confessed manipulation? The uses of the past in the Lega Nord’s positing of Padania’, p.22.
67Ibid., p.67.
Bossi’s movement brought to the Italian political debate at least three dominant themes: hostility against the ‘wasteful’ Southern Italy; harsh critique of the inefficiency of the central State, epitomised in the slogan ‘robber Rome (Roma ladrona)’; and claims of autonomy for the historical geographical entity named ‘Padania.’

However, the first two arguments had actually been raised by the MARP and the MAB in the 1950s and the concept of a unified North under a Padanian title was also raised during an electoral pact in the late 1950s and continued to be developed into the 1960s. Regarding the Padania project and the Lega’s pursuit of secessionism in the 1990s, studies have tended to draw a distinct line between the Lega and the pre-existence of more historic ethno-regionalist political movements. Brierly and Giacometti’s essay on the Lega appears at first to promise a historical analysis of the party when it states

The Leagues phenomenon, and the more general growth of ethnic and national movements, is neither new, nor conjectural, nor uniquely Italian. The phenomenon has been developing in many countries since the 1960s.

Having established this context, however, the authors instead of developing it, draw a line between two independent waves of activism by stating that

in considering the complex panorama of autonomist movements in Italy, two distinct groups can be identified, on the one hand, the historic groups, which have existed for some time, and on the other, the new groups, and more precisely those which after 1989 constituted the Northern League.

The ‘historic groups’ which Brierly and Giacometti highlighted were not the MRAs, but instead ethno-regionalist groups such as the Sardinian Action Party, the Union Valdotaine,

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71 Ibid.
and the South Tyrol People’s party. The authors were drawing upon research carried out by
Melucci and Diani which had focused on the growth of ‘ethno-nationalist’ mobilization during
the 1960s. Such a distinction between two periods of regionalist activism was also made by
Nicola Di Sotto, who stated that

the ethno-regionalist parties characterise themselves as having strong links first
of all with the community of reference. Instead … the Northern League’s
cultural roots are politically constructed in the absence of a historical-cultural
reality.73

Such a distinction, however, overlooks the fact that the Lega had direct links with Bruno
Salvadori’s Union Valdotaine and thus cannot be considered as a completely distinct entity
from the more historic ethno-regionalist movements.

In 2002, Cachafeiro took a different approach which allowed an analysis of how the
Lega had borrowed from the ethnist discourses of the ethno-regionalist movements and
benefitted from the institutionalisation of ethnicity in the Constitution.74 Cachafeiro argued that
the rise to power of the Lega Nord ‘has its roots in the many leagues and movements which
started claiming recognition by and independence from the Italian state in the 1970s.’75
Looking back to 1948, Cachafeiro claimed that the ethnism which was institutionalised in the
Constitution through the recognition of protection of ethnic groups was later manipulated by
the regionalist leagues in their attempt to sell their project.76 Cachafeiro’s work in particular
challenged Biorcio and Vitale’s assertion that ‘the institution of the “regions with ordinary
statute” in 1970 did not promote regionalist trends’ and instead argued that the 1970s were a
turning point when organisations such as Roberto Gremmo’s Union Piemonteisa saw an
opportunity to argue for special statute status.77 More recently, Garau has drawn upon
Cachafeiro’s work and noted that ethnism, which the Lega Nord drew upon was ‘born already

72 A.Melucci and M.Diani, Nazioni senza Stato: I movimenti etnico-nazionali in Occidente, Milan, Feltrinelli,
1992, p.45.
73 N.Di Sotto, Tra Protesta e governo: successi, trasformazioni e crisi della Lega Nord, Naples, Editoriale
scientifica, 2014, p.27.
74 M.Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the
75 Ibid., p.47, cited in E.Garau, The Politics of national identity in Italy: Immigration and Italianità, London,
Routledge, 2015, pp.107-108.
76 Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern
question, p.49.
77 Biorcio and Vitale, ‘Culture, Values and Social Basis of Northern Italian Centrifugal Regionalism: A
Contextual Political Analysis of the Lega Nord’, p.173.
as a movement in the 1950s. Cachafeiro’s focus on *ethnism* leads her to exclude the analysis of the Movements for Regional Autonomy in any significant detail due to the fact that ‘the Northern ordinary regions of Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto did not exhibit *ethnic* potential.’ One of the oversights of focusing too much on the ethnic claims made by the leagues is that one of the biggest ethno-regionalist parties, the SVP, had actually formed an alliance with the aforementioned UAI; this blurred the lines between the ethno-regionalist movements and MRAs in their attempts to gain political consensus.

One of the most comprehensive historical approaches towards the Lega Nord was provided by Gold in *The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy*. Before beginning his analysis of the rise of the Lega in chapter five of his eight-chapter book, Gold dedicates the four preceding chapters to studying the history of regionalist fractures in the Italian state. Gold’s book puts particular emphasis on the North-South divide in Italy and how this contributed to the rise of *leghismo*. He argues that

the regionalist cleavage between the North and South, which has produced the Lega, is itself a product of three inter-related factors: the crisis of the centralized state structure, recent economic changes in the North, and the patronage politics of the post-war political parties.80

Gold states that ‘the Lega represents in many ways a long tradition of movements that have attempted to devolve power from the central state in Italy.’81 The issue is, however, that few, including Gold himself, have actually fully identified what these movements were, let alone examined which of them have been significant in terms of providing a precedent for *leghismo* with reference to in terms of discourse, personnel and ideas. It is here that an examination of the MRAs in Piedmont and Lombardy is particularly useful and the following paragraphs are, therefore, dedicated to a close study of the literature available on these movements.

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79 Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern question, p.52.(author’s italics)
81 Ibid., p.8.
ii. Movements for Regional Autonomy – Beyond a reductive analysis

This thesis specifically examines in detail two organisations, the MARP and the MAB which emerged in Piedmont and Lombardy respectively in the 1950s. Nevertheless, other movements for regional autonomy have also featured as part of wider studies on leghismo. For example, Massimo Greco and Alberto Bollis in their study of the Lega in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, dedicated a section of their book to the Movimento Popolare Friulano (MPF). The authors’ observations on the links between the movement which emerged in the 1960s and the later formation of leghismo are useful when bearing in mind continuities and discontinuities between movements for regional autonomy and the leagues. In many ways, the authors’ decision to do so mirrors the reasons behind this study in that they ‘felt it necessary to dedicate a specific chapter to the connections between the Lega and its antecedents in order to verify the continuity of their political programmes.’82

Despite the MPF effectively losing its raison d'être following the awarding of a special statute to Friuli Venezia Giulia in 1963, a new movement, Movimento Friuli (MF) emerged in 1966. As for links between the early Friulian movements for regional autonomy and leghismo

Marco De Agostini (historic leader of MF) maintains that the Lega Nord Friulana had inherited some exponents, but not the autonomist ideal … abandoning the strong concept of autonomy and preferring to impose the leghista battle on the themes of the economy.83

A further league which does not form part of this study, but which has led authors to make inquiries into its antecedents is the Liga Veneta. Allum’s and Diamanti’s chapter The Autonomous Leagues in the Veneto attempts to trace the genealogy of the Venetian leagues, identifying one of the Liga Veneta’s founding members, Achille Tramarin as a former member of the Movimento Autonomo Regione Veneto (MARV) which emerged in 1960.84 The MARV is also mentioned in Francesco Jori’s Dalla Liga alla Lega in which the author provides only slightly more information on this movement, stating that it was, an initiative of one Elio Franzin

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83 Ibid., p.91.
and lasted ‘only for a brief period.’ Any comparison of the MARV with the Liga Veneta has been extremely difficult due to the lack of archival documents on the historic movement, hence the absence of the Liga and the MARV from my thesis.

Although there does not exist, up until this point, a detailed study on the MARP, there are several studies which dedicate some paragraphs to the movement. Passalacqua briefly mentions the MARP in the opening chapter on his history of the Lega, stating that the movement resulted in a ‘fiasco’ and ‘disbanded immediately.’ Gold, in one of the early chapters of his book also states ‘the MARP ran a campaign to limit the number of southern immigrants into the city in the 1958 local elections.’ Neither of these studies, however, note that this organisation actually had its first electoral success at the local elections of 1956, whereas the 1958 elections were, in fact, national at which the MARP and the MAB presented joint lists of candidates under the title of MARPadania. Such inaccuracy is also present in Cachafeiro’s study which states that MARP ‘was born in 1952 … elected some local councillors in the city of Torino in the 1953 elections … and died in 1956’. This confusion over dates does little to help us understand a movement which actually had its greatest success in 1956 after having been formed in 1955.

As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the existence of the MARP and the MAB has in the past been seized upon by Bossi and Lega ideologues. Gilberto Oneto and Beppe Burzio, writing for Quaderni Padani (Padanian Notebooks), have used the movements as a type of historical legitimisation for the Lega in separate publications. Bossi himself has made reference to both MRAs in his account of the Lega between 1979 and 1989, citing them as movements which had campaigned for ‘freedom for the North against Roman oppression.’ Lega ideologues and activists have taken advantage, in particular, of an information vacuum left by scholars on the Piedmontese leagues. One of the clearest examples of this is that one of the only detailed histories available on the genealogy of the Piedmontese Leagues was

87 Gold, The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy, p.41.  
88 Ibid., p.41.  
89 Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern question, p.52.  
http://www.laliberacompagnia.org/_files/up/pdf/up_32.pdf, and  
published by Quaderni Padani. Entitled ‘L’autonomismo Piemontese’, it cited the MARP as a significant precursor to the Lega.\(^{92}\) This represents one of the key pitfalls for the historian who, in trying to provide a balanced analysis is sometimes dealing with the same materials as used by those who have a clearly partisan political motive. Scholars were perhaps wary of falling in line with the leghista approach of trying to appropriate the past for the movements’ own political means.

A further problem with the treatment of the MARP and the MAB, however, is that they have been the subject of a reductive analysis, which views the movements as predominantly anti-southern and anti-immigration revolts reacting against the migratory flows from the south to the north of the peninsula during the 1950s. One of the earliest literary references to the MARP by Francesco Compagna in 1959 was as the political manifestation of the ‘great polemic between regions of the North against those of the South because the Northern regions saw people arriving from the South every day.’\(^{93}\) References to the MARP made by Gold, Capusotti and Toso have all tended to follow this early analysis.\(^{94}\) While anti-southernism certainly formed a key part of the nativist message of the MARP and the MAB, focusing solely on this aspect of the movements’ political discourse overlooks their wider raison d’être, which was to activate the regional statutes written in the constitution.

One of the most detailed studies of an MRA to this date was carried out by Boulliaud and DeMatteo who published a chapter which studied the MAB within the context of a Bergamascan autonomist tradition from 1945 until 2000.\(^{95}\) The authors argued that

Umberto Bossi’s Lega Lombarda, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, was nothing more than the latest manifestation of an autonomist current rooted in the Catholic subculture in Bergamo.\(^{96}\)


\(^{94}\) Gold, The Lega Nord and Contemporary Politics in Italy, p.41.


According to these authors, the autonomist stance in the post-war period found representation through the strong Catholic subculture in Lombardy and Veneto, which manifested itself through loyalty to the DC. Once these ties began to break in the 1980s, the autonomist current which had existed in the decades following the end of the Second World War could finally find a voice in leghismo.97

This analysis, though detailed and well-researched, is problematic as the authors insist that leghismo was ‘an old political programme, new only in appearance’, therefore, focusing too much on the continuities between the autonomism of the 1950s and leghismo of the 1980s – in particular again in terms of anti-southernism – and neglecting the broader ideas of the post-war Bergamascan autonomists which prove to be inconvenient for their thesis.

DeMatteo’s later book, L’idiota in politica, Antropologia della Lega Nord, provides a more detailed anthropological study into the electoral appeal of the Lega, and draws upon interviews with surviving members of the MAB, identifying this movement as the direct predecessor to the Lega Lombarda. On reading both this book and the aforementioned chapter on the MAB, it is evident that DeMatteo deals with much of the same source materials as the author of this thesis and highlights, for example, that Guido Calderoli and Ugo Gavazzeni ‘entered directly into electoral competition when they understood that the regional statutes of the constitution would never have been put into practice’ and that

they presented themselves at the administrative elections of 1956, at the national elections of 1958 under the symbol of MARP (Movimento Autonomisa Regionale Padana), then again at the national elections of 1967 supported by the Südtiroler Volkspartei.98

As in her previous work, DeMatteo thus provides a concise and useful electoral history of the Bergamascan autonomists in the 1950s and 1960s without, however, fully examining the significance of these results or the subtle variations involved in the different campaigns. In

97 Ibid.
particular, there is no mention of the significance of the term ‘Padania’ which would develop further in the 1970s and act as a precursor for the Lega’s Padania project.

DeMatteo is not alone in highlighting the existence of the MAB and the previous activism of Guido Calderoli. The former MAB councillor is mentioned in Stella’s account of the Lega’s key exponents of the 1980s and 1990s. Calderoli also appears in Chiarini’s chapter on anti-politics and the Northern question which forms part of Colarizi’s study of the 1980s in a historical context. However, once again, none of these studies provides a detailed analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs and the Lega.

More recently, I developed Boulliaud and DeMatteo’s historical approach in order to provide ‘a more balanced analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between the MAB and the Lega’, by focusing on four variables common to both waves of activism. First anti-fascism; second … an alternative to the DC; third, the federalist, republican and (north) European identity of each movement; and finally, the extent to which each wave of activism focused on the notion of the ‘Invasion of the North by the Other.’

In this article, I argued that rather than drawing a line to distinguish between the Movements for Regional Autonomy and leghismo or attempting to demonstrate unbroken continuity between the two periods of activism a new and more nuanced approach was needed to explore the connections between the MAB and the Lega. The following section will provide an overview of the two theoretical frameworks underpinning and enabling such an approach.

3. **Abeyance, Populism and Nativism**

i. **Abeyance theory within historical sociology**

Chapter three of this thesis establishes a more detailed theoretical framework of abeyance. The following paragraphs are dedicated to introducing how this concept has been used in existing literature, how it compares to other sociological theories, and how this relates to understanding the connections between two waves of regionalist activism.

Amongst the first to coin the term abeyance in a sociological context was Ephraim Mizruchi who claimed that ‘when people are only marginally integrated into society… they are…more likely to participate in diverse behaviours judged by their contemporaries as deviant, including moral and political protest.’ Abeyance, according to Mizruchi, was a process via which certain organisations and institutions ‘absorb’ and ‘control’ members of ‘dissident groups’ or social movements which threaten the status quo.

In terms of the MRAs, these were movements whose political protest manifested itself in a campaign for the activation of the region; the decline of these movements was strongly connected to the fact that they were absorbed by larger political organisations which ‘contributed to the abeyance process’ and ‘simultaneously control[led], intentionally or unintentionally’ former members of the MRAs. Abeyance, therefore, describes a process by which movements such as the MRAs decline and are absorbed, and controlled for a certain period of time. Importantly, however, this process does not mean that the ideas which had been promoted by social movements disappear. Taylor highlights how abeyance, as well as contributing to absorption and decline, subsequently ‘depicts a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in non-receptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilisation to another.’

Therefore, in relation to the historical approach taken in this thesis ‘abeyance also fits with a historical sociology that strives to identify and explain not just passing phenomena but also longer-term patterns of social interactions.’

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103 Ibid.


105 Veugelers, ‘Dissenting families and social movement abeyance: the transmission of neo-fascist frames in post-war Italy’, p.244.
Abeyance forms part of a wider literature on historical sociology which engages with cycles of mobilisation of social movements. Space does not permit a full analysis of the literature surrounding this field of historical sociology; however, the decision to adopt and adapt frameworks related to abeyance is here explained with reference to other available sociological theories including ‘cycles of contention’, ‘collective action frames’ and ‘path dependence’. As was highlighted in the introduction to this thesis, the examination of two different waves of activism relates to theories surrounding ‘cycles of mobilisation’. In particular, Tarrow’s theory of a ‘cycle of contention’ helps explain these cycles by making reference to a phase of heightened conflict across the social system with rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilised to less mobilised sectors … the creation of new or transformed collective action frames, a combination of organised and unorganised participation.\(^{106}\)

Of particular relevance here is the notion that ‘cycles often produce new or transformed symbols, frames of meaning and ideologies to justify and dignify collective action’ and that ‘these enter the culture in more diffuse and less militant form, where they can serve as sources for the symbols of future movements.’\(^{107}\) The reference to frames of meaning and ‘collective action frames’ explains the ways in which members of a movement negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change.\(^{108}\)

The ways in which cycles of mobilisation frame their ideas is related to political opportunity in the sense that ‘if movement activists interpret political space in ways that emphasize opportunity rather than constraint, they may stimulate actions that change

\(^{107}\) Ibid., p.204.  
opportunity, making their opportunity frame a self-fulfilling prophecy."⁰¹⁰⁹ Therefore, ‘the framing of political opportunity is … [a] central component of collective action frames.’⁰¹⁰ In terms of framing a particular issue, Diani has explained that

in a given political period, some frames are less effective than others, although they appear just as plausible at first glance. At the same time, it enables us to capture the differences between opportunity structures at different points in time, and their effects on the likelihood of different mobilizing messages.⁰¹¹

By looking how ‘movements often benefit from opportunities created by predecessors or other contemporary movements’ the notion of framing also relates to that of path dependence.⁰¹² At the heart of this theory is the notion that ‘preceding steps in a particular direction induce further movement in the same direction.’⁰¹³ Path dependence also refers to the idea of ‘increasing returns’ in which ‘the probability of further steps along the same path increases with each move down that path … because the relative benefits of the current activity compared with other possible options increase over time.’⁰¹⁴ At a basic level, therefore, this theory states that ‘what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time.’⁰¹⁵

Mahoney, explaining how path dependence occurs, identifies two types of sequences; ‘self-reinforcing’, which is characterised by the formation and long-term reproduction of a given institutional pattern and ‘reactive’ in which ‘each step in the chain is “dependent” on prior steps and a reaction to temporally antecedent events.’⁰¹⁶ Path dependence could, therefore, be seen as relevant to this thesis in examining ‘the effectiveness and adaptability of

⁰¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.252.
a repertoire of methods in the past to new situations and environments’ and analysing whether this ‘engenders or decreases the return of both old and new social movements.’

Nevertheless, there are some limitations presented by these theories when examining two waves of north Italian regionalist activism. First, with regards to Tarrow’s notion of a cycle of contention, it is highly debatable whether the first wave of activism of the MRAs can be defined as ‘a phase of heightened conflict across the social system with rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilised to less mobilised sectors.’ Even the second wave of activism, which managed to mobilise relatively large sectors of northern regions, should not be interpreted as a period in which mass protests cut across north Italian society.

The second point relates to the overlap between structure and agency which is essential in explaining the continuities and discontinuities between the two waves of activism in this thesis. In terms of framing, Snow and Benford, argue that ‘movements that emerge later in the cycle will typically find their framing efforts constrained by the previously elaborated master frame.’ However, this was not the case for the Lega and, therefore, does not allow for an examination of how the second wave of activism actually experienced fewer constraints than the MRAs. This was in part due to the element of agency in the form of more effective leadership, but also in part due to structural factors which led to the shifting of the ‘master frame’ of political opportunity within regional and national politics. Indeed, the idea that ‘success will be easier for those movements whose frames are most consistent with the "master frame" that shapes the whole protest cycle’ does not fit with the many structure and agency discontinuities operating to the advantage of the second wave of north Italian regionalism. Similarly, an issue in relation to path dependency, which does not allow for a full analysis of both structural and agency factors behind the two waves of activism is the idea that ‘once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice.’ As will become evident in the thesis, the entrenched...

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120 Diani, ‘Linking Mobilization frames and political opportunities: Insights from Regional Populism in Italy’, p.1055.
centralism of the Italian state, which was one its key institutional arrangements from unification, was strongly affected not only by structural changes to the constitution, but also agency in the form of new autonomist movements in the 1980s and 1990s.

It is my contention that abeyance holds the potential to overcome these aforementioned limitations. While this thesis analyses the decline and absorption of previous waves of activism and how preceding ideas were reframed by a second wave of activism, it also examines how certain narratives, symbols and repertoires survived two decades of relative political hostility towards regionalist ideology. Abeyance helps demonstrate not only how the gap of two decades was overcome by a second wave of activism, and how continuity was possible, but also how and why there were discontinuities and the relevance of these disruptions. In other words, abeyance theory allows scholars to show and demonstrate how and through what agency a certain repertoire of actions, images, frames managed to survive and be transmitted to future generations, not simply argue that certain frames owe much to previous waves of mobilisation or that there is a strong element of path dependency.

Abeyance theory is, therefore, vital in moving away from a ‘narrow emphasis on emergence and success’ in studying political movements. Instead it encourages a focus on ‘how movement potentials survive between peaks of mobilization.’ 122 Instead of focusing on the moments when protest movements are at their most visible, it is equally important to ‘recognise the continuity between visible challenges.’ 123 Indeed, it sustains the idea that ‘social movements persist over long periods in various stages of mobilization, decline, or abeyance. During abeyance, movements sustain themselves but are less visible in interaction with authorities.’ 124

Chapter three examines in greater detail the framework of abeyance which has been adapted and adopted in order to carry out this task. However, the utility of abeyance theory in relation to this thesis is also evident from referring to the existing literature on this theory.

In existing literature, abeyance theory has been used to study social and political movements in a variety of contexts. In her study on the women’s movement in the USA, Taylor built on Mizruchi’s theory of abeyance to highlight the ‘organisational and ideological bridges

124 Ibid.
between earlier activism and the development of other movements of the 1960s’.\textsuperscript{125} Taylor argues that

the women’s movement, like other movements that blossomed in the 1960s, can also be viewed as a resurgent challenge with roots in an earlier cycle of feminist activism that presumably ended when suffrage was won.\textsuperscript{126}

With reference to the US women’s movement Taylor claims that ‘the break between the sixties movements and earlier waves of political activism was not as sharp as previously assumed’ and in doing so has emphasised the importance in noting “‘carry-overs” and “carry-ons” between movements.’\textsuperscript{127} In a later study, which built upon Taylor’s work, Meyer and Sawyers, again with reference to the women’s movement in the USA, stated

Social movements seem to mobilise in cyclic patterns defined by visible collective action in sustained challenge to the state but even when movements are less visible they may survive, preserving intrinsic values and identity in other forms.\textsuperscript{128}

Meyer and Sawyers also state that ‘taking a less explicitly political stance might serve movement needs well in a hostile political environment – activists can maintain themselves and their organizations while waiting for better times.’\textsuperscript{129}

An important contribution to research on abeyance was made by Veugelers in his study on neo-fascism. Veugelers used abeyance theory to ‘document the preservation of a neo-fascist mobilisation potential after 1945 through the parent-child transmission of frames’, arguing that ‘research on abeyance should include the family among institutions that uphold continuity between waves of contention.’\textsuperscript{130} Family is, therefore, an important example of an ‘abeyance structure’ i.e. means via which ideas and repertoires are transmitted between one generation of activism and the next. Abeyance structures were also analysed by Press in his study on ‘two

\textsuperscript{125} Taylor ‘Social movement continuity; The women’s movement in abeyance’, p.762.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Sawyers and Meyer. ‘Missed Opportunities: Social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy’, p.187.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{130} Veugelers, ‘Dissenting families and social movement abeyance: the transmission of neo-fascist frames in post-war Italy’, p.241.
periods of nonviolent resistance in Liberia.\textsuperscript{131} Press observes that activists were ‘linked through professional ties or friendships, or both.’\textsuperscript{132} He also noted that ‘a variety of tactics, individuals, small groups and, on occasion mass participation’ played a key role in transmitting repertoires of resistance.\textsuperscript{133} Therefore ‘in a period of abeyance, waiting for safer times, activists and others determined to push for democracy and human rights, managed to engage in some nonviolent resistance.’\textsuperscript{134} As Press notes, in Liberia

the various strands often operated separately and in abeyance, though at times they came together quickly for a public demonstration. Usually the resistance took place at a much reduced level than under a more tolerant regime as people waited for the day when more open and organised non-violent resistance would be possible.\textsuperscript{135}

More recently, abeyance theory has been applied to the study of the Arab Spring. Referencing the Tunisian revolution, Choukri Hmed posits the question of

what structures and networks – underground, sleeper, or hidden to varying degrees – did they make use of, which practical and discursive modes of protest were invented or reused, what kind of resources were drawn on to enable…a mobilising force?\textsuperscript{136}

Abeyance has, therefore, been applied to a variety of social movements and political organisations from the women’s movement, to neo-fascism, Liberian resistance and the Tunisian Revolution. However, until now, this theory has not been applied to explain the connections between two waves of North Italian regionalist activism. Chapter three of this thesis addresses this gap in the literature by applying abeyance theory to the study of the MRAs and the Lega.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p.173.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., p.152.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p.172.
As will become evident in this chapter, although the MRAs were active at a time when there was a hostile political environment towards regionalism, ‘a hostile political environment does not automatically translate into movement retreat.’\textsuperscript{137} Indeed, the ideas raised by these movements are often waiting for a period of resurgence. Of particular interest is the issue of links which can cross generations and, in terms of this thesis, not only the activism of the MRAs which preceded that of the Lega, but also the period between the activism of the MRAs and leghismo i.e. between the mid-1960s and late 1970s which acted as the period of abeyance. While abeyance theory can help us understand the links between these two waves of activism in terms of imagery, regionalist repertoires and links between friends and family, it does not allow for a full analysis of their political discourse. For this, it is necessary to engage with the theories of populism and nativism and examine how these theories interacted with regionalism.

\textbf{ii. Populism, Nativism and Regionalism}

While chapter five of the thesis provides a more comprehensive overview of the various debates surrounding the taxonomy of populism and nativism, the following sub-section is limited to establishing how populist theory has been applied to the Lega. I also highlight how nativism and regionalism should be used in combination with populism in a cross-analysis of the MRAs and the Lega.

From the outset, however, it is necessary to provide a brief definition of populism for the purposes of clarity. To this end, I support the view that ‘populism entails the presence of an antagonistic relation between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite.’\textsuperscript{138} I also maintain that populism should be viewed as a thin-centred ideology. Populism, in this sense, ‘unlike “thick-centred” or “full” ideologies (e.g. fascism, liberalism, socialism) … has a restricted morphology, which necessarily appears attached to – and sometimes is even assimilated into other ideologies.’\textsuperscript{139}

In terms of populism and the Lega, one of the most influential terms applied to the movement has been that of ‘regionalist populist’. This term was first coined by Biorcio who argued that ‘the political model’ offered by the Lega Lombarda ‘appeared as an original combination of regionalism and populism.’\textsuperscript{140} Just how original this combination was will be

\textsuperscript{137} Sawyers and Meyer, ‘Missed Opportunities: Social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy’, p.188.
\textsuperscript{140} Biorcio, ‘La Lega Come attore politico: Dal Federalismo al populismo regionalista’, p.72.
challenged in chapter five of this thesis by looking at the MRAs’ populist and regionalist discourse. However, the combination of regionalism and populism, according to Biorcio, consisted of ‘the exaltation of values such as “industriousness” and “entrepreneurship” … contrasting them with the “lack of state apparatus” which “attributed to the Lega a general sense of revolt of civil society against the political class.”’  

A dichotomy between Rome and Lombardy (and later the entire North) was, therefore, key in the Lega’s populism:

The polarisation between Lombardy and Rome symbolizes, in an efficient way, the existing tensions between civil society and the party system and provides citizens with a collective and concrete point of reference…a vote for the Lega assumes the character of popular revolt against the partitocrazia.  

Building on Biorcio’s definition, Albertazzi and McDonnell have also made a significant contribution to the literature on the Lega as ‘regionalist populist’. These authors have stated that they agree with those who view populism as a ‘thin-centred ideology’…that is found alongside ‘thick’ ideologies of Left and Right or with other thin ones (like nationalism, for example). Hence a party, may be ‘right-wing populist’, ‘regionalist populist’, ‘left wing populist’, and so on. But, ideologically, it is never simply ‘populist’.  

McDonnell has claimed that the Lega is regionalist populist due to the fact that the movement arose in a specific political and socio-economic environment and its elaboration of themes is still developed, first and foremost with reference to the territorial context of its heartland. The party frames the problems of the north as a centre-periphery question within a ‘people’ v ‘the elite’ populist discourse.

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141 Ibid.
142 Ibid.
Albertazzi has also noted that the Lega’s ‘regionalist populist’ character is evident in the fact that

the conceptual framework offered by this party always posits ‘the problems of the north’ as having originated almost exclusively from its lack of autonomy…. [presenting] advanced and hard-working regions oppressed by a corrupt political class and inefficient bureaucracy, both of which are in the hands of ‘southerners’.  

A further proponent of the regionalist populist label is Woods, whose analysis of the Lega concentrates on its ‘focus on northern Italians and the positive economic and cultural elements that make them different from other people’. Woods also highlights the fact that ‘northern regional identity is defined in oppositional terms…the real interest of the people is undermined and corrupted by outside political elites and parties who do not share their values’ and that the Lega engages in a ‘negative production of others’ i.e. ‘corrupt politicians in Rome, the mafia globalisation and immigrants. 

Regarding regionalist populism, two issues need to be addressed in terms of this thesis; first the previous existence of the combination of regionalism and populism in the 1950s and second, the debate surrounding whether to define the Lega’s populist discourse as radical right rather than regionalist.

No existing study identifies the combination of regionalism and populism as a phenomenon with roots in the 1950s; instead, studies on the Lega have tended to compare it with another 1950s populist movement, Uomo Qualunque (UQ). Biorcio argues that the Lega represented a re-emergence of Qualunquismo due to its protest against the partitocrazia which exploited tensions between the parties and the ‘common people’. This comparison forms the central thesis of Sarubbi’s La Lega Qualunque where the author argues that Umberto Bossi’s populism was the natural heir to that of Guglielmo Giannini’s. Costabile also carried out a similar project, which focused more on the contextual discontinuities present in the two waves.

of populism represented by *Qualunquismo* and *Leghismo*. While Sarubbi’s and Costabile’s studies, which compare the Lega with UQ, have influenced this thesis with their methodological approach of comparative analysis, it should be noted that UQ lacked a vital element of regionalism and federalism which is key in a comparison of the ideologies of the MRAs and the Lega Nord. As Sarubbi himself notes, not only were the Lega’s and the UQ’s electoral strongholds in complete opposition but also, in contrast to the Lega’s federalist programme, UQ ‘was against the introduction of the regions: worried that they would damage the unity of the country.’ This thesis, instead, argues that regionalism and populism formed a key part of the MRAs political message in the 1950s. This will illuminate how the MRAs acted as important precursors to the Lega’s populist discourse which defined the North in oppositional terms against the elites of Rome, against the South, southern immigration and in its anti-party discourse.

Literature on 1950s’ European populism can be expanded by comparing the MARP and the MAB to its contemporary movements. It has been noted that ‘populism was almost totally absent from European politics during the first decades of the post-World War II era’ during which the MRAs were active. Although Finchelstein’s research argues that post-war populism was an ideological heir to fascism, his analysis does not extend to post-war European movements such as *Qualunquismo* and *Poujadisme*. Marco Tarchi has argued that Uomo Qualunque should be seen as both an heir to fascism and proto-populist movement which acted as a direct precursor of French Poujadisme, presenting itself as the voice of the common people who had been excluded from power, irritated against greedy and corrupt politicians and indifferent towards ideologies in which there was only the ambitions of domination of the elite.

I propose extending Tarchi’s analysis by arguing that *Qualunquismo* acted as a precursor not only for *Poujadisme* but also the MRAs. The post-war autonomists in Piedmont and Lombardy had notably similar characteristics to the populism of both UQ and *Poujadisme*

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in their demands for lower taxes, protecting the little man against big government and, in particular, their anti-party message, which will be explored in chapter five.

Regarding the debate surrounding how to define Lega’s populism, as Cento Bull highlights an ‘interesting dilemma’ surrounding the Lega’s populism is whether the Lega should ‘be considered as belonging to the European New Right or whether it has ‘made use of populism in an opportunistic manner’\textsuperscript{154}

The taxonomical difficulties within the study of right-wing party families has been well-established. Mudde in his research on the Populist Radical Right, has referred to ‘terminological chaos’ which ‘is not the result of fundamental differences of opinion over the correct definition; rather, it is largely the consequence of a lack of clear definitions.’\textsuperscript{155} He notes that ‘it is not exceptional to see one author use three or more different terms to describe the same party or group of parties in one article, if not on a single page.’\textsuperscript{156} Such an assertion is also supported by Fella and Ruzza who state that ‘in approaching the Italian right’ various labels such as ‘far right’, ‘extreme right’, ‘radical right’, but also, ‘new right’, have all been adopted.\textsuperscript{157}

Throughout this thesis, I adopt the specific term ‘radical right’ when referring to the Lega in the period following 1995. This is not only to avoid terminological confusion, but also for reasons of accuracy. In short, I believe that the Lega, since the mid-1990s, can be seen to embody most of the characteristics of this particular party family. However, I also make reference to the ‘New Right’ due to the fact that the Lega was also compared distinctly to this ideology in its early stages.

One of the key debates surrounding the evolution of the Lega stems from the fact that the party ‘can be described as regionalist populist, although it can also be grouped within the broader family of radical right-wing populist parties.’\textsuperscript{158} Indeed, in an attempt to differentiate the Lega from other regionalist parties, Mudde drew a distinction between regionalism and ethno-nationalism by stating that regionalism is best limited to groups that call for more autonomy of a region within a larger state structure. So defined, there is also a clear distinction


\textsuperscript{155} Mudde, \textit{Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe}, p.12.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{157} Fella and Ruzza, \textit{Reinventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’}, p.45.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid. p.44.
between nationalists (including populist radical rightists) and regionalists: first, regionalists accept a multinational state, and, second, their call for autonomy is not necessarily culturally defined.¹⁵⁹

Mudde, therefore, ‘exclude[d] regionalism from the core feature of’ the radical right ‘party family’ arguing that ‘regionalism should not be used for parties that strive for separatism to fulfil their nationalist aspirations of a mono-cultural nation-state.’¹⁶⁰ However, Mudde’s exclusion of regionalism from the core feature of radical right parties does not fully account for a party such as the Lega which has fluctuated between calls for federalism, nationalist separatism, and devolution, while developing a radical right ideology.

A polemic between McDonnell and Zaslove over whether to define the Lega as regionalist populist or radical right populist provides a useful insight into this debate concerning the Lega’s regionalist and radical right identity. Zaslove used his definition of the Lega as a ‘radical right populist’ to challenge McDonnell’s regionalist populist label. In doing so Zaslove ‘did not preclude that the Lega is also a regionally-based party’.¹⁶¹ Instead, he shifted the emphasis and categorized the Lega alongside the ‘regionally based’ far-right Belgian movement Vlaams Blok. Zaslove argued that what made these movements ‘so interesting is that unlike other regional parties’ they

have an anti-immigrant platform … oppose the European Union, possess a populist political economy that explicitly opposes globalization and are structured round a charismatic and populist leader. For this reason these two regional parties should also be considered as radical right parties.¹⁶²

Thus, in his book, Zaslove drew on this aspect of the Lega to categorise the Lega alongside other ‘radical right’ parties which had begun to emerge in the early 1970s.¹⁶³ He argued that ‘placing regionalist political parties such as the Lega within the radical right

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¹⁵⁹ Mudde, _Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe_, p.29.
¹⁶² Ibid., p.67.
¹⁶³ Zaslove, _The Re-invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism and the Italian Lega Nord_, p.5.
populist camp highlights the diverse ideological strains of regionalist political parties.\textsuperscript{164} Zaslove highlighted that

it is not possible, and not necessary, to distinguish between the Lega as a regionalist and a radical right populist party; in other words, it [was] a regionalist party with a radical right ideology. Regional sovereignty, federalism and devolution have been a constant theme throughout the party’s evolution.\textsuperscript{165}

McDonnell insisted on the regionalist populist definition and argued that ‘the ‘radical right’ label, acted as a ‘straitjacket’ in academic debate, stating that

the Lega’s longevity derives precisely from its combination of regionalism and populism which, respectively, give the party a unique identity in the northern electoral market and the flexibility to adapt quickly to changing opportunity structures.\textsuperscript{166}

Therefore, McDonnell argued that the ‘radical right’ label risked ‘diminishing’ the crucial territorial aspect of the Lega and its history as a movement constantly committed to some form of northern autonomy (whether federalism, independence or since 2000, ‘la devolution’), seen as an essential part of the solution to the problems of northern Italy.\textsuperscript{167}

I highlight this debate between McDonnell and Zaslove, as it raises an important question of whether either of these definitions can fully encapsulate a party whose messages of regionalism and right-wing nativism were actually not mutually exclusive, but inter-dependent. An interesting development regarding this debate occurred in 2015 when Albertazzi and McDonnell stated that their definition of populism was actually more useful when applied to examples of ‘right-wing’ populism.\textsuperscript{168} In this publication populism was defined as

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., p.45.
\item\textsuperscript{165} A.Zaslove, The Reinvention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism and the Lega Nord Montreal/Kingston, McGill-Queens Press, 2011, p.74
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
a thin-centred ideology which pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous ‘others’ who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice.\textsuperscript{169}

In doing so, they argued this was more suitable to right-wing populism due to the due to the fact that

for right-wing populists, ‘the people’ are said not only to be oppressed by the elites, but also to be under threat from the presence of ‘others’ within society who do not share the identity and/or values of ‘the people’ (and are alleged to be favoured by the elites and against the people).\textsuperscript{170}

The fact that Albertazzi and McDonnell analyse the Lega in this publication using this definition, therefore, indicates that the party had indeed shifted to the right. This definition of the Lega as right wing was confirmed by Albertazzi who stated in 2016, that ‘the Lega has been one of Europe’s most successful right-wing populist parties to date.’\textsuperscript{171}

Such assertions have also been supported by Passarelli and Tuorto, Mudde and Cento Bull and Gilbert.\textsuperscript{172} In chapter five of the thesis, I argue that the Lega’s regionalist and radical right agenda were by no means mutually exclusive. It is for this reason that I introduce a ‘populist regionalist’ framework which, while very similar to Albertazzi and McDonnell’s 2015 definition, consists of regionalism, populism and nativism and allows for a more nuanced analysis of where regionalism and right-wing nativism overlapped.

A broad definition of Nativism holds that nations ‘should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group’ and that “‘non-native elements (persons and ideas)” are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state.”\textsuperscript{173} Viewing the Lega exclusively

\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. Author’s italics
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
as a member of the radical right family has provoked much academic debate due partly to the fact that

while nativism has been present throughout its existence, the party has often been torn between regionalism and nationalism. … the LN might not (always) be a perfect example of the populist radical right, but it is too similar to be excluded from the party family.¹⁷⁴

More recently, Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone drew upon Mudde’s definition of the Populist Radical Right to argue that under Salvini ‘as the regionalist cause was dropped and replaced by an ‘empty nationalist’ and nativist one … the party can be included in the populist radical right party family.’¹⁷⁵

However, this thesis argues that rather than seeing nativism – which forms a key part of radical right discourse - as something separate from regionalism, we can understand better the Lega’s nativist discourse by viewing nativism as an important part of the regionalism of both the MRAs and the Lega. The MRAs, while not belonging to the radical-right, encouraged a message that can be described as ‘proto-nativist’ in that it fomented hostility against Southern Italians. This would later be reformulated and recycled by the Lega. Viewing the Lega’s nativism in this longer-term perspective allows for a greater understanding of the roots of the Lega’s anti-southern and anti-immigrant message which has played a key role in its regionalist identity and has more recently been central in its transformation into a party of the radical right.

iii. Populism and Abeyance – An interdisciplinary approach

Having established how populism and abeyance relate to the analysis carried out in this thesis, the following paragraphs examine how and to what extent these two different conceptual frameworks, which have their own intellectual traditions, hold the potential to complement each other.

Before focusing on the specific link between populism and abeyance, it is worth outlining in broader terms how research on populism relates to research on social movements. These two fields of research have

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.56
¹⁷⁵ Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone, ‘No regionalism please, we are Leghisti! The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini’, p.662.
tended to follow separate paths, with neither paying much heed to intellectual developments on the other path. Neither scholarly tradition has devoted much energy to a search for common spawning grounds or points of intersection between the two phenomena.176

This is due to the fact that on the one hand, ‘there is an inherent tension between populism and social movements, as they generally entail quite different forms of collective action and popular subjectivity.’177 Indeed, Roberts states that

Whereas social movements emerge from autonomous forms of collective action undertaken by self-constituted civic groups or networks, populism typically involves an appropriation of popular subjectivity by dominant personalities who control the channels, rhythms, and organizational forms of social mobilization.178

A further limitation may be the fact that while research on social movements focuses on groups representing ‘the interests of a particular social strata’ and which have sought to ‘negotiate narrow policy concessions from the state’, populist movements ‘claim to represent a social whole’ and ‘they seek a wholesale reform of the political regime to restore the sovereignty of the people.’ 179

However, despite these general divergences in two scholarly traditions, it should also be noted that ‘studying social movements under the framework of populism opens up the prospect of productive cross-fertilisation between political scientists and social movement theorists.’180 Indeed, such an inter-disciplinary approach can benefit both fields as populist and social movements ‘both tend to be rooted in representational failures that trigger non-institutionalised patterns of popular subjectivity.’181 Furthermore, populism, like many social movements has been shown to be a latent phenomenon, as highlighted by Clarke et al who,

177 Ibid.
178 Ibid., pp.682-683.
180 Ibid., p.306.
focusing on a particular element of populism i.e. anti-politics, have taken ‘a longer view on the development of anti-politics than is found in most previous analysis’ by exploring ‘the rise of anti-politics across eight decades.’\textsuperscript{182} When looking at the case of Britain, for example, they claim that ‘anti-political sentiment has probably never been absent among citizens but has become more widely held and intensely felt over time.\textsuperscript{183} Fielding has also noted how ‘populism is not a recent phenomenon provoked by social changed but something deriving from endemic tensions at the heart of representative democracy.’\textsuperscript{184} Aslanidis has also noted how populist identities remain latent, “in abeyance”, awaiting political reactivation, bound to inspire and inspire again, sparing activists the need to reinvent the wheel. Fertile political opportunities such as an economic crisis, a sudden disaster, or a high-profile case of corruption.\textsuperscript{185}

Such arguments are not entirely new and scholars have for some time argued that populism appears to be a recurrent but also somewhat intermittent phenomenon through political history.\textsuperscript{186} This has been explained with reference to political opportunity structures, political crises and system breakdown, and the unrepresentativeness of democratic institutions.

However, what is often overlooked is the issue of how and by what form of agency populist frames, styles, discourses are preserved and transmitted during times when populism becomes invisible and has apparently disappeared from the public sphere. It is here that abeyance seems especially relevant with regards to a type of politics whose main trait (unlike left and right, socialist and liberal) has been to develop in fits and starts, with apparently discontinuous and disconnected waves of mobilisation and success.

While abeyance can be and has been applied to different types of social and political movements, the inter-disciplinary potential of populism and abeyance allows for a more


\textsuperscript{183} Ibid., p.2.


\textsuperscript{185} Aslanidis, ‘Populism and Social Movements’ p.313.


diachronic approach to populist movements and instances of populist activism. The 1950s wave of populist regionalism did not succeed in its aims and yet its populist narratives re-emerged in a second wave of activism. This relates to Aslanidis’ observation that ‘failed attempts at reaping immediate political benefits do not necessarily signal the political irrelevance of grassroots populist episodes. Once it establishes itself, the sheen of ‘the people’ will rarely dull.\(^\text{187}\) If we consider that populism remains latent even during periods in which it is less evident in political discourse, the application of abeyance theory allows scholars to examine how populist narratives survive one period of ‘abeyance’ to later form another wave of populist activism.

This chapter has, through a survey of the literature available on both the Lega and the MRAs, highlighted the need for a new cross-disciplinary approach to the study of the origins and nature of leghismo. The following chapter begins to address this gap in the literature by providing a history of both waves of north Italian regionalist activism in the context of a broader history of the Italian state. By concentrating specifically on how various instances of regionalism and federalism have coincided with periods of crisis, change and transition, the twin phenomena of the MRAs and leghismo are viewed as products of two crises of the post-war Italian state.

\(^\text{187}\) Aslanidis, ‘Populism and Social Movements’, p.313.
Chapter II
Regionalism, Federalism and Secessionism. From Unification to the Italian Republic(s).

1. Introduction

Centre-periphery relations in Italy have long been the focus of scholarly debate and discussion.\(^{188}\) There is, however, a lack of literature which contextualises the rise of two specific waves of North Italian regionalist activism in Piedmont and Lombardy in the 1950s and later in the 1980s/1990s in the longer history of Italian regionalism. This chapter addresses this gap and provides historical context for the remainder of the thesis. It also gives a history of the two waves of activism at the centre of this study, constituted by the Movements for Regional Autonomy and the Lega. Finally, it establishes how and why the Lega became a party of the Radical Right from 1995 onwards whilst maintaining a regionalist identity. Before outlining the content, it is worth providing a clear definition of terminology used throughout; namely, ‘region’, ‘regionalism’, ‘regionalisation/decentralisation’, ‘federalism’, ‘radical right’ and ‘New Right’.

The ‘region’ has been defined as ‘territorial space’ which acquires meaning through ‘functional, political and social factors.’\(^{189}\) Keating identifies three types of region. First, ‘historic nationalities’; second, ‘regions defined primarily by their institutions which have used these to build around them a political space as an effective system of action; third, administrative regions which have not succeeded in forging a common sense of identity.\(^{190}\) This chapter looks primarily at various campaigns for the institution, and later, reform of the region as ‘a unit of government of administration’. In this process, such campaigns made reference to five factors which Keating notes as essential in identifying a region; i.e. ‘culture, identity, institutions, a distinctive civil society, and a sense of economic regionalism.’\(^{191}\)

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\(^{190}\) Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe*, p.110.


Regionalism refers to ‘bottom up’ political demands from a regional group. It denotes ‘the aspirations and activism of the concerned inhabitants of a region and can be applied to the pursuit of the specific interests of such a unit.’

Regionalisation or decentralisation on the other hand is ‘a state policy, a top-down phenomenon’ which plays a fundamental role in the establishment of regional administrations. It consists of ‘the pursuit of “top-down” remedies (especially economic ones) to regional problems and imbalances.’

Federalism ‘refers to both an arrangement of political institutions in which power is shared between a central government and regional governments, or a philosophy of government which holds that such federal structures are a desirable governmental form.’ Federalism is contrasted with a ‘unitary system’ of government in which ‘all major decisions are made by the central government’ and may result from ‘pressures for autonomy’ based on ‘nationality, language, ethnicity, religion, economy, or other variables.’

While I use the specific term ‘radical right’ when referring to the Lega in the period following 1995, reference is also made to the ‘New Right’ due to the fact that the Lega has also been compared distinctly to this ideology in its early stages.

Radical right parties ‘respect democracy and constitutional order’ yet they ‘often express hostility towards the fundamental values of liberal democracies (pluralism, for example)’ and ‘contain authoritarian and extremist elements.’ The ‘core concept’ associated with radical right-wing parties is the ‘nation.’ Radical right ideology consists of ‘nativism’, a combination of ‘nationalism and xenophobia’ … ‘which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.’

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197 Ibid.
elements are ‘welfare chauvinism’ and ‘authoritarianism’ or ‘the belief in a strictly ordered society in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely.’ Globalization is viewed by radical right parties as ‘a threat to be countered with strong national preference.’ Most radical right parties oppose the European Union on similar grounds that it threatens both identity and economic well-being of the people they claim to represent. Radical right ideology claims ‘all cultures, European and non-European have the right to protect their cultural identity’; a so-called ‘right to difference’ which serves as justification for nation-states to control immigration, limiting new arrivals to not only those who are willing and able to work, but also to those who are willing and able to assimilate into local culture.

Linked to this is what Zaslove refers to as ‘authentic civil society’, or a firm defence of ‘conservative social values, defending the traditional Christian family, local morality, community, and traditions.’ This often involves defining Europe in Christian terms against outside forces such as Islam. Indeed, ‘one of the biggest single groups of “foreigners” singled out by populist radical right groups are Muslims.’ Immigration and related ‘fears of cultural conflict figure heavily in the populist radical right agenda’ particularly ‘following the September terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.’

The New Right shares the radical right’s strong stance against immigration, its anti-globalization discourse and cultural exclusionism. However, it was not a ‘party family’, like the radical right, but ‘an intellectual proto-fascist movement in France … which shifted from … nationalism to ethno-regionalism’ and was used as ‘an ideological tool for redefining the parameters of inclusion to the community.’ In this framework, ‘an ethno-regional identity … produces two interrelated processes. It serves as the basis for a new type of exclusionism

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201 Ibid., pp.20-23.
205 Ibid., p.105.
207 Ibid., pp.17-20.
without relying upon old style racist nationalism’. Instead, the New Right envisioned a Europe of macro-regions which


In this chapter and throughout the thesis I adopt the term Radical Right as it is more comprehensively defined and also, more clearly applied to political movements/parties, including the Lega from 1995 onwards.

Turning to the specific content of this chapter, since the Risorgimento, debates surrounding regional autonomy in Italy have continuously emerged at ‘times of crisis in the relationship between political forces and reorganisation of institutions.’\footnote{E.Rottelli, L’avvento della Regione in Italia dalla caduta del regime fascista alla costituzione repubblicana (1943-1947), Milan, Giuffre, 1967, p.18.} Crisis can refer to ‘a permanent or conditional category pointing to a critical situation which may constantly recur or else to situations in which decisions have momentous consequences.’\footnote{R.Koselleck and M.Richter, ‘Crisis’, in Journal of the History of Ideas, vol.67, no.2, April 2006, pp.357-400, (p.371) – my Italics} However, crisis can also be used ‘to indicate a historically immanent transitional phase. When this transition will occur and whether it leads to a worse or better condition depends on the specific diagnosis offered.’\footnote{Ibid.} Crisis should, therefore, not be associated with the solely ‘negative connotation of “downfall” and “decline”’ due to the fact that ‘a crisis can evoke not only the pessimistic sense of threat to the old order but also the optimistic scenario of a chance for renewal.’\footnote{Ibid.} This issue of ‘renewal’ is highly relevant as movements throughout Italian history have seized regime change as windows of opportunity to pursue regional autonomy.

I argue that political crisis can be linked to regime change which in turn can lead to a political breakthrough for movements which had until this point remained at the margins. The success or failure of such movements to exploit the crisis of regime change in the Italian state
has depended largely on the capacity of the state to close down such demands and maintain the tradition of centralism.

This chapter, divided into two sections, examines moments of crisis and the regionalist narratives which emerged from them. The first section traces the period from 1848 to 1948. The First War of Independence in 1848 was an attempt to unify a fragmented Italian peninsula which had previously been constituted by the kingdoms of Piedmont-Sardinia, Lombardy-Venetia, and the Two-Sicilies, the duchies of Parma, Modena and Tuscany and the Papal States of Rome, Romagna, Umbria and the Marches. In the wake of insurrections across the peninsula in 1848, which resulted in a variety of constitutional governments and republics, the hope of federalist Risorgimento patriots was to unify these provisional governments in a federal system. Federalism, in this period, was a form of ‘achieving national unity’ throughout a peninsula where there existed ‘strong ethnic, linguistic, social and cultural differences’. It was ‘a transitory system, an instrument to bring about the harmonization and real unification of a State’s regional components.’

By examining the failure of federalist thought during the years of the Risorgimento, (the Resurgence – the Italian movement of unification) this chapter establishes the reasons behind the implementation of a centralist administration following the unification of Italy in 1861. Due to modern Italy ‘developing from a particularly centralised state tradition’, ‘regionalism’ was considered ‘a dirty word synonymous with separatism’ in the years following the Risorgimento. Indeed, it is important to note that in Italy there are ‘at least two levels of local identity: the region and the town’ and that in terms of municipal pride ‘municipalism’ or ‘campanalismo’ - literally, attachment to one’s local bell-tower (campanile) denotes ‘love of one’s native place, but with overtones of narrow mindedness.’ Opponents of decentralisation often accused regionalist proposals as examples of municipalism/camanalismo or as a ‘danger to Italian unity.’ I then examine some regionalist narratives which have significance in the context of this thesis; the dual issues of the north-south divide and of anti-southernism were in many ways exacerbated by the process of unification.

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Dissatisfaction with the way unification had been carried out, narratives of anti-southernism and demands for federalism and even secession were present in two of the regions which form the central part of this thesis: Piedmont and Lombardy. Two events in the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century in both Turin and Milan form part of a wider examination of regionalist narratives which persisted in the post-Risorgimento Liberal era. These narratives, whilst failing to make any significant breakthrough, remained present in the political and cultural debate in the early 1900s during the Liberal regime. While the aftermath of the First World War led to a re-emergence of demands for an effective decentralisation of powers in an attempt to tackle the political crisis of the post-war period, the overall failure of the Liberal era to provide any effective measure of decentralisation made it easier for Mussolini to consolidate his control over Italy following the March on Rome in 1924.

Fascism’s relationship with regionalism was complex. Although fascism ‘put an end to the debate on regional autonomies by reinforcing centralism and authoritarian tones’, at the same time it promoted some narratives on localism and ‘municipalism’; fascism separated political regionalism from cultural regionalism, banning the former and encouraging the latter.\textsuperscript{219} This is important in understanding how regionalism re-emerged as a key issue during the resistance forming a key element of the anti-fascist resistance between 1943 and 1945.

1948 marked the signing of the post-war Italian constitution which contained statutes committed to the implementation of regional government and should have marked an epochal change in Italy’s long tradition of centralism as a unified state. This first section concludes by establishing why, despite the granting of regional statutes in the constitution, regional government was not fully instituted in the post-war and post-fascist Italian state.

Section two focuses on the emergence of the Movements for Regional Autonomy (MRAs) in the 1950s and the Lega in the 1980s/1990s (a more detailed comparative analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between these movements is reserved for the following three chapters). The history of the first and second waves of North Italian regionalism examined in this chapter can be followed using the genealogy chart in the appendix of this thesis. I contend that the MRAs were a product of the transition between fascism and the Republic and the failure to implement any form of regional government in post-war Italy. The raison d’être of these movements was the activation of the regional statutes in the Constitution. Such an assertion is important as it locates the populist, anti-southern and anti-centralist discourse of the movements, examined in greater detail in the following chapters, as part of a

\textsuperscript{219} Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.85.
core ideology of regionalism/federalism. Following the decline of these movements in the early 1960s, in fact, it took barely two decades for a second wave of north Italian regionalism to emerge in the late 1970s in the form of leghismo.

While space does not permit an extensive examination of the rise of the Lega, it is necessary to explore both the ‘structural and agency factors’ behind the movement’s success and, in particular, establish how distinct regional leagues (leghe regionali) became one ‘Northern League’ (Lega Nord).220 While numerous studies on the Lega have divided the party’s history into several different time periods, I follow an approach which supports the importance of ‘[distinguishing] between two phases of development in the party’s history.’221 During the first phase of development from the late 1970s until the mid-1990s, the Lega was proposing ‘federalism as the remedy’ to the ‘huge public deficit’ which lay at the centre of ‘Italy’s socio-economic problems’.222 During this first period, the Lega was a populist regionalist movement influenced by New Right thinking, but more concerned with the break-up the post-war consensus in Italian politics.

As federalist proposals transformed into demands for secessionism and notions of a separate northern state of ‘Padania’ became more pronounced, the Lega shifted towards the radical right. After 1996, therefore, the Lega is best defined as populist radical right regionalist. I will return to these terms and explain them in more detail in chapter five.

These two stages of the Lega and the previous period of the MRAs are connected by federalism and regionalism. Matteo Salvini, however, has abandoned the Lega’s regionalist roots in favour of campaigning for Italian national sovereignty, thus representing marked discontinuity. This explains why Salvini’s ‘post-regionalist’ third wave of activism is not dealt with systematically throughout this thesis.

221 Cento Bull, ‘The Fluctuating fortunes of the Lega’, p.211.
222 Ibid.
2. Regionalist and federalist narratives from 1848 to 1948

This first section provides an overview of the history of the Italian nation-state preceding the emergence of the Movements for Regional Autonomy. It establishes how unification led to the imposition of a rigidly centralised administrative system which would remain in place until the fall of fascism, thus creating the conditions for a debate on regional autonomy and the emergence of Movements for Regional Autonomy (MRAs). At the same time, it traces anti-southern narratives and raises debates on decentralisation and federalism which would later be employed by both the MRAs and the Lega.

i. Italian unification and the decline of Federalism

The importance of regional and municipal identity in Italy lies in the fact that ‘in the first half of the nineteenth century, Italy was fragmented into a series of states with administrative subdivisions that suited the needs of each pre-unification state.’\textsuperscript{223} Nevertheless, ‘strictly speaking, one cannot speak of a federal political movement at the time of unification.’\textsuperscript{224} This was partly because two of the Risorgimento’s leading figures, Giuseppe Mazzini and Count Camillo Benso of Cavour were both ‘anti-federalist’ in spite of being ‘in favour of some devolution of power.’\textsuperscript{225} Mazzini, for instance, believed that ‘a centralised state was necessary precisely so as to minimise the weakness that local feelings would cause.’\textsuperscript{226}

Mazzini and Cavour were, however, diametrically opposed on almost every other idea of how to unite Italy. During the Risorgimento, Italian patriots can be broadly defined as belonging to two camps: Democrats (Republicans) and Moderates. Democrats such as Mazzini ‘favoured a revolutionary-insurrectionary path to liberation from foreign rule and the unification of the peninsula into a republican state.’ However, Moderates, such as Cavour, Prime Minister of Piedmont and later first Prime Minister of unified Italy ‘viewed popular insurrection as anathema … [and] … gradually came to see the creation of a (northern) monarchical State through the leadership of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia as the best way forward.’\textsuperscript{227}

\textsuperscript{223} Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.83.
\textsuperscript{224} Cento Bull, ‘Regionalism in Italy’, p.147.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid.
There were still, however, some Democrat patriots who ‘sought a federal state as the outcome of the unification process.’228 Two Lombard political thinkers, Giuseppe Ferrari and Carlo Cattaneo envisioned a ‘Swiss-like confederation of the different regions in Italy.’229 These individuals ‘rejected the possibility or desirability of … becoming a centralised nation’ claiming that ‘a federal system [would] enable [Italy] to reach the very highest of goals.’230 Cattaneo, prior to 1848 claimed that he would have been content ‘for Lombardy to be an autonomous state inside a federal Austrian Empire’ as he ‘distrusted Piedmont as an aristocratic authoritarian, priest-ridden state which lagged behind Lombardy in culture, tolerance, and economic growth.’231 Cattaneo and Ferrari, stated that ‘Italy would only ever be strong if the historical reality of regional differences was recognised in a federal structure.’232 Federalism was also promoted by Piedmontese philosopher and politician Vicenzo Gioberti who

had a clear vision of the fact that an Italian people did not exist and needed to be created taking into account existing divisions in government, laws, institutions, popular folklore, customs, sentiments and habits.233

Gioberti’s key political idea was that ‘Italy should become a confederation of states, supported by the Piedmontese army and presided over by the pope.’234 This project was originally proposed at a time when the Vatican was occupied by Gregory XVI, who had refused to introduce even mild reforms.235 However, later with the advent of the more liberal Pius IX in 1846 there seemed to be hope of a pontiff who was more sympathetic to the idea of some form of Italian unity.236

The federalist ideas of Cattaneo, Ferrari and Gioberti appeared to have their chance during 1848 when ‘revolutionary waves rippled up the [Italian] peninsula’ from Sicily to Milan where an insurrection which became known as the Cinque Giornate di Milano (five-day uprising of Milan) was staged by republican-democratic groups against Lombardy’s Habsburg

228 Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p. 83.
231 Ibid., p. 92.
232 Ibid., p. 137.
233 Centro Bull, ‘Regionalism in Italy’, p. 147.
235 Mack Smith, The Making of Italy 1796-1866, pp. 73-74.
236 Duggan, A concise History of Italy, p. 113.
rulers. This insurrection also ‘immediately brought the spotlight to bear on King Carlo Alberto’ of Piedmont-Sardinia’ who declared war on Austria and began to march on Milan.\footnote{Duggan, The Force of Destiny, A history of Italy since 1876, pp.170-171.}

However, the insurrection was plagued with divisions and mistrust: ‘the republican groups’ were ‘sharply divided between Unitarians (like Mazzini) and Federalists (like Cattaneo and Ferrari).’\footnote{L.Riall Garibaldi: Invention of a hero. New Haven and London. Yale University Press. 2007. P.70} Furthermore, Cattaneo and Ferrari ‘told Mazzini that they feared Piedmontese ambitions in Lombardy more than Austrian rule.’\footnote{Ibid.} Although Mazzini dismissed such fears as ‘municipalist’, Cattaneo and Ferrari were proved right as ‘it soon became apparent that King Carlo Alberto’s ambitions in Lombardy were more dynastic than nationalist.’\footnote{Ibid., p.71.} Indeed, the Piedmontese king was ‘more interested in securing the annexation of Lombardy and the Veneto than pursuing a war of national liberation.’\footnote{Duggan, The Force of Destiny, A history of Italy since 1876, pp.170-171.} As for Gioberti’s proposals, Pope Pius IX ‘turned against Liberalism and the cause for National Unification after the April 1848 revolutions.’\footnote{Cento Bull, ‘Regionalism in Italy’, p.147.} Having originally backed Carlo Alberto, the Pope ‘pulled out at the end of April, refusing to countenance war against Austria, another Catholic state.’\footnote{Riall Garibaldi: Invention of a hero, p.71.} Therefore, whereas initially the idea of a federalist state found support among democrats and moderates…the failure of the attempt in 1848 to organise a federal army composed of soldiers from all the Italian states and the democratic and sometimes even socialist character of many federalist projects, eventually led the moderates to reject federalism.\footnote{Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.83.}

Amongst these moderates was Count Cavour whose Piedmont, ‘was the only state in Italy that was to preserve any form of constitutional government after 1849.’\footnote{Duggan, The Force of Destiny, A history of Italy since 1876, pp.170-171.} For this reason and also due to the fact that ‘hundreds of exiles from all over the country found a home here in the 1850s’, Piedmont was ‘able to present itself, both at home and abroad, as the logical standard bearer for the national question.’\footnote{Ibid.} However, unlike ‘the federal model that Germany was to follow in her unification … based on the strength of Prussia … Piedmont…had
considerably less influence on the Italian peninsula than Prussia on the German Reich.\textsuperscript{247} Indeed, ‘Piedmont was not an obvious [national] leader … this small kingdom straddling the alps was the least Italian region in the peninsula.’\textsuperscript{248}

Cavour, nevertheless, secured the guarantee of military support in a future war against Austria from Napoleon III’s France following negotiations and a secret treaty known as the \textit{Plombières Agreement} (named after the village in which the conference between the two leaders was held) in 1858, during which he had

suggested the creation of four Italian states (Upper Italy, Rome and its immediate surroundings, Tuscany and the Papal states/The ‘Neapolitan frontier) which would form a confederation on the pattern of the German Bund.\textsuperscript{249}

Cavour managed to engineer a conflict with Austria to begin the Second War of Independence; however, it was Piedmont which had been the key aggressor, and the subsequent annexation of Lombardy was secured much more as a result of French rather than Piedmontese sacrifice.\textsuperscript{250} During this war ‘provisional governments which had been set up … proceeded to elect representative assemblies … which demanded annexation to Piedmont.’\textsuperscript{251} However, unification would not have been achieved

without Garibaldi’s famous ‘Expedition of the Thousand’ to Sicily, from where he promoted a bottom-up insurrection against Bourbon rule, which led him to enter Naples as victor only to then hand over control to the Piedmontese King.\textsuperscript{252}

By 1861, therefore, a new Kingdom of Italy had been established (Venice was annexed in 1866, during the Third War of Independence, and Rome in 1871).\textsuperscript{253} Nevertheless, the hurried and somewhat fortuitous nature of unification led to a process of ‘Piedmontisation’ - the transfer of ‘Piedmont’s administrative and political structures, almost in entirety to the rest of Italy’ in order to maintain a fragile unity.\textsuperscript{254} Piedmontisation was ‘carried out with so little

\textsuperscript{247} Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.74
\textsuperscript{248} Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny. A history of Italy since 1876}, p.183.
\textsuperscript{249} Mack Smith, \textit{The Making of Italy 1796-1866}, pp.248-256
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., p.240.
\textsuperscript{251} Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny. A history of Italy since 1876}, p.204.
\textsuperscript{252} Ibid., p.206.
\textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
consultation and such haste and insensitivity that many local sensibilities and interests were left badly damaged.  

Consequently, Cavour was originally convinced that ‘some measure of devolution ought to be granted’ and ‘a scheme of regional devolution, the Farini-Minghetti bill’ was ‘prepared in 1861 and approved unanimously by the Cabinet.’

Though ‘not necessarily an attempt to introduce a full-fledged federalism’ Minghetti’s plan ‘would have diffused the powers of the state in an additional layer of government.’ In the end, however, Minghetti’s bill was withdrawn and replaced in 1865 with ‘Law N.2248 which introduced a rigid prefectorial system along Napoleonic lines.’ Essentially, this formed ‘a rigidly centralized state in which electoral suffrage was reserved to around 3.9% of the inhabitants.’

Duggan summarises this system in the following way:

> Centralisation was its essence. The state was split into provinces, each of which was governed by a government appointed prefect … the hold of the central authorities was further reinforced by the discretionary powers given to the prefect to oversee, and if need be, veto, municipal decisions.

> Although Cavour ‘continued to deplore centralisation as illiberal, expensive and inefficient’ he was tormented by ‘the danger that Italy might fall apart if a uniform administrative system was not quickly imposed on the whole kingdom.’ He had, therefore, ‘changed his mind on decentralisation shortly before his death in June 1861.’

Perhaps the most decisive factor in Cavour’s volte-face regarding regional autonomy was the deteriorating situation in the south of the peninsula.

ii. The North – South divide and the ‘Southern Question’

Four years prior to the First War of Independence, Piedmontese Moderate Cesare Balbo had written that Italy ‘is naturally and almost irremediably divided into two distinct parts: northern Italy, i.e., the Po river valley as far as the Apennines, and the Southern part beyond

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255 Ibid., p.232.
256 Ibid.
258 Ibid., p.143.
259 Duggan, A Concise History of Italy, p.141.
261 Cento Bull, ‘Regionalism in Italy’, p.141.
Such a view was extremely common amongst Italy’s forefathers and, far from being remedied by the process of unification, the Risorgimento in many ways exacerbated the North-South divide. The following paragraphs examine how pre-existing stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno were disseminated as part of an orientalist nation-building project following ‘the great brigandage’.

Moe notes that ‘the vision of southern Italy as a liminal zone between Europe and Africa forms part of the consolidation of a Euro-centric world view between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.’ 263 Indeed, Montesquieu identified features that ‘distinguish northerners from southerners, emphasising in particular the contrast between industriousness and laziness, love of freedom and an inclination towards servitude, whilst in 1806, Creuzé de Lesser wrote ‘Europe ends at Naples and ends badly. Calabria, Sicily and all the rest belong to Africa.’ 264 Key to this view was a relatively tight conceptual correspondence between an area variously referred to as il Mezzogiorno, il meridione, l’Italia meridionale, le provincie meridionali, il sud d’Italia as well as Napoli, and the territory lying within the confines of the former Kingdom of the Two Siciles. 265

The Mezzogiorno was seen as different in that ‘it was often thought to possess qualities associated with the whole of Italy but to a greater degree.’ 266 In terms of Piedmontese state-makers’ attitudes towards the South, it is indicative that for ‘Massimo D’Azeglio, the elder statesman of Italy … the annexation of Naples was … like sharing a bed with someone who had smallpox. The manifold signs of opposition in Naples were obvious proof that something had gone wrong.’ 267 The opposition which this quote refers to was the outbreak of wide-spread social unrest, ‘specially referred to as a war against Brigands’, in the South after Unification. 268 This unrest, ‘which affected southern Italy between 1861 and 1865, was rife among the poorer parts of southern Italy.’ 269

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263 Ibid., 50.
264 Ibid., p.52.
266 Moe, The view from Vesuvius. Italian culture and the southern question, p.40.
267 Ibid., p.37.
269 Ibid., p.139.
Backed by exiled pro-Bourbon groups, the ‘brigands’ expressed ‘dissatisfaction with the new state after unification only strengthened the phenomenon. 270 In reality the term ‘great brigandage’ was a way of ‘degrading in status’ what ‘was an expression of widespread social unrest which had its roots in the desperate conditions of the peasantry.’ 271 The repressive nature of this campaign had the effect of exacerbating the division between the North and South of the peninsula. Mack Smith has claimed that ‘this protracted military campaign helped to divide the two halves of the country.’ 272 Later in the 1890s, separatist fervor was evident during a revolt known as the ‘Fasci Siciliani’ which ‘demanded ‘the right of regional autonomy for the island.’ 273 Duggan notes that ‘in Sicily, there was much talk of separatism’ and ‘there had been talk of land being divided up, of the invasion of Piedmont, of Sicilian autonomy becoming the protector of the island.’ 274 Eventually, Prime Minister Francesco Crispi declared a state of siege an

forty thousand solders were eventually dispatched to Sicily. Military tribunals were instituted … public meetings were banned, press censorship was introduced, weapons were confiscated, and suspicious persons were barred from entering the island. 275

These rebellions in the South acted as a ‘central moment for reinforcing and disseminating the aforementioned ‘sterotypes and prejudices’ of the Mezzogiorno and fostered a process of ‘othering’ of the South of Italy against the North. 276 Following the formation of the Italian state after the Risorgimento, an orientalist discourse focused on the ‘otherness’ of the Mezzogiorno, depicting the South as backward, African, lazy and dependent and at best cunning, at worst criminal whilst portraying the North as progressive, European, hard-working and civilized. 277 This stereotypical polarity was exploited by a ‘narrow elite of northerners’ that ‘dominated government in the first decades of unity’ in an orientalist attempt to ‘make

270 Ibid.
272 Mack Smith, Cavour, p.371.
275 Ibid., p.643.
277 Moe, The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question, p.50.
Capusotti ‘Nordisti contro Sudisti Internal Migration and Racism in Turin, Europe: 1950s and 1960s’, p.122
Italians’ against the image of an Other.\textsuperscript{278} Dickie has argued that ‘to define Italy as civilized, one has to have a sense, albeit perhaps implicit, of where civilization fades at its boundaries into the barbarous.’\textsuperscript{279} The view of the South as Other, was heavily influenced during the mid-1870s, by the ‘writings of two Italian political thinkers, Pasquale Villari and Leopoldo Franchetti’ who alongside Franchetti’s collaborater, Sidney Sonnino, ‘articulated for the first time the regional specificity of the social, political and economic conditions of the Mezzogiorno.’\textsuperscript{280} These writings announced the existence of a ‘Southern Question’ (\textit{Questione Meridionale}) and, at the same time, ‘inaugurated the rich tradition of inquiry and debate subsequently known as Meridionalism (\textit{Meridionalismo}).’\textsuperscript{281} Significantly, these writers portrayed ‘the South as a threat to the political and moral integrity of the nation.’\textsuperscript{282}

Many Northern politicians depended heavily on the aforementioned descriptions of the South in forming their views. As Mack Smith observed,

> the ministers who ruled Italy after 1860 were mainly northerners and those who came from the South had mostly spent long years in exile which left them out of touch with their home provinces. Cavour never travelled further south than Florence.\textsuperscript{283}

Duggan reinforces this view, noting that

> very few Piedmontese had first-hand knowledge of central or southern Italy, and refugees like the Sicilian Giuseppe La Farina were able to spread sometimes deliberately inflated accounts of the political, economic or moral conditions of their native provinces.\textsuperscript{284}

Many ministers, therefore, ‘expected to find a potentially rich area which needed only the benefits of an honest administration to become prosperous.’\textsuperscript{285} In reality, however, they encountered ‘90 per cent illiteracy, a thoroughly feudal countryside, an unintelligible language, and ways of behavior associated with the Neapolitan Camorra and the mafia of western and

\textsuperscript{278} Duggan, \textit{A Concise History of Italy}, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.141.
\textsuperscript{279} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{280} Moe, \textit{The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question}, p.224.
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{284} Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny, A history of Italy since 1876}, p.183.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid., 365.
central Sicily.\textsuperscript{286} The effect of this ignorance was disastrous for the southern economy as the centralised system led to further polarisation between North and South. Many protests against the central state were due to economic pressures faced by the South as Piedmont transferred resources from South to North to pay for its heavy war debts.\textsuperscript{287} As acknowledged by Gold existing regional divisions between the North and South are not simply a consequence of cultural difference but rather the result of actions by national political elites from the Risorgimento till today.\textsuperscript{288}

In terms of the immediate effects of unification, this process resulted in greater benefits for the North than for the South. First, the Kingdom’s monetary, credit, fiscal and commercial policies benefited primarily the interests of industrialists who were located mainly in the North.\textsuperscript{289}

A key issue for southern industry was that ‘southern textile manufacturers had benefited from 100 per cent protection under the Bourbons.’\textsuperscript{290} Therefore, when ‘by 1860, the Piedmontese rulers had reduced tariffs to 10 percent’ southern industrialists were put at a severe disadvantage and ‘due to competition to the North’ many were ‘driven out of business.’\textsuperscript{291} Despite this obvious disadvantage for the South from the process of unification, the emergence of the aforementioned ‘southern question’ and orientalist narratives encouraged an image of a ‘deadweight south’ which would once again come to the fore in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century in Milan.

\textit{iii. Regionalism in the Liberal period – La Permanente and Lo Stato di Milano}

Between 1860 and the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, there were ‘a number of requests for autonomy and regional decentralisation.’\textsuperscript{292} The scope of these requests was to ‘liberalise’, ‘rationalise’ ‘moralise’ and achieve ‘greater powers at a local level.’\textsuperscript{293} Decentralisation was often proposed by opposition groups in parliament ‘but tended to be dropped when one entered

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{287} Gold, \textit{The Lega Nord and Contemporary politics in Italy}, p.24.
\item\textsuperscript{288} Ibid., p.10.
\item\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., pp.22-23.
\item\textsuperscript{290} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{292} R.Ruffilli, ‘Il Regionalismo Italiano’ in, M.La Rosa, R.Ruffilli and M.Gori (eds.), \textit{Decentramento e riforma dello stato, il caso Italiano}, Rome, Città nuova editrice, 1980, pp.150-170 (p.159)
\item\textsuperscript{293} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
government for fear of weakening the hold of the state.' 294 One suggestion was ‘the demand for the formal recognition of executive power to regional governors. 295 This would have involved the institution of

nine regions corresponding – loosely - with the pre-unitary states: Lombardy, Piedmont, Emilia, Liguria, Toscana, Umbria, Marche, Napoli, Sicilia, Sardegna: to which Rome and Venice would be added after their liberation. 296

In 1870, Stefano Jacini published a close investigation into the state of Italy and concluded there was a

‘paese legale and paese reale’ (legal country versus real country) … in the paese legale there were less than half a million male adults that had the right to vote. The rest of the country was the paese reale which had no sense of being represented by the ‘legal country’. 297

While Jacini ‘thought centralism had been necessary immediately after unification’, it ‘had led to excessive pressure by local interest groups on the government and the national parliament.’ 298 The solution he proposed was to extend suffrage and strengthen local autonomy by introducing regions. 299

Two organised and vociferous expressions of regional fervour in unified Italy took place in the two regions of interest to this thesis, Piedmont and Lombardy. In 1864 the September Convention marked the transfer of the capital from Turin to Florence. This news was met with ‘bloody riots and clashes with the police and army in the streets of Turin. 300 Political expression of this opposition to the transfer of the capital was provided by a parliamentary group called L'associazione Liberale della Permanente, (hereafter referred to as The Permanente) which formed part of ‘the first important political realignment after 1860…split along regional lines’ with the other principal group made up by the Lombard-Tuscan Consorteria. 301 This group, therefore, watched ‘jealously over Piedmontese interests, in ‘permanent’ opposition to any government which attempted to transfer the capital to

294 Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, pp.75-76.
295 Lyttelton, ‘Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City’, p.38.
298 Ibid.
299 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
anywhere but Rome.\textsuperscript{302} The Permanente also ‘disliked the submersion of the old (Piedmontese) Kingdom into the new (Italian) state.’\textsuperscript{303} After the September Convention, ‘Piemontesismo … from being the catalyst of national unity and political centralization … became the banner of local autonomy and the paladin of regional, economic and political interests.’\textsuperscript{304}

Therefore, groups such as The Permanente ‘now reversed their policy and campaigned vehemently for the cause of local autonomy and freedoms.’\textsuperscript{305} This was also due, in part to a ‘growing impression amongst the Torinesi that they were neither understood nor welcomed by the rest of the country … in spite of all the sacrifices of the successive military campaigns.’\textsuperscript{306} In July 1868, a Permanente exponent wrote that

excessive centralism does not guarantee a long-lasting freedom … the Permanente are unanimous in their belief that an administrative system of government should be applied to Italy which, while leaving intact necessary political unity, allows it to obtain the highest possible administrative decentralisation.\textsuperscript{307}

The Permanente framed decentralisation in the Piedmontese tradition of liberalism, claiming that ‘the programme of the Permanente comes from a logical and liberal principal of minimal central government interference in local affairs.’\textsuperscript{308} Although at this time ‘region’ and above all ‘regionalism’ were considered ‘dirty words’ by all liberal MPs, this didn’t stop the Permanente from speaking of the establishment of regions, cantons or even federalism.\textsuperscript{309} For instance, one of their articles read

regions would be both either big or small…and just as Switzerland has administrative districts of 10,000 inhabitants and others of 300,000, we will have regions of three or four million inhabitants near to around 500,000.\textsuperscript{310}

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\textsuperscript{302} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{303} Lyttelton, ‘Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City’, p.46.
\textsuperscript{306} Ibid., p.44.
\textsuperscript{307} ‘Il Decentramento’, In \textit{Gazzetta del Popolo}, 4\textsuperscript{th} July, 1868.
\textsuperscript{308} ‘La Permanente ed il Corriere Mercantile’, in \textit{Gazzetta Piemontese}, Saturday 21\textsuperscript{st} March, 1868.
\textsuperscript{309} Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.75.
\textsuperscript{310} ‘La Permanente ed il Corriere Mercantile’ in \textit{Gazzetta Piemontese}, Saturday 21\textsuperscript{st} March, 1868.
\end{flushright}
Decentralisation, according to the Permanente, would help Italy become like ‘Switzerland, Austria, Prussia, Belgium, the United States’, states which had, through federalism, ‘found, economic prosperity, political stability and a safeguard of freedoms.’ It would instead prevent Italy from becoming like ‘Spain and France’, centralised states which had ‘experienced nothing but disorder and revolutions.’ Decentralisation would reduce the size of a bureaucracy which was ‘devouring the public balance in favour of private interests’ and would also cure ‘the plague of absenteeism.’

Opponents of the Permanente linked Piedmontese arguments for decentralisation to Piedmont’s history as a dynastic state with imperialist ambitions. These opponents, predominantly from Tuscany and Lombardy, accused the Permanente of wishing to form regional cantons to place ‘Liguria once more under the dependence of Piedmont’ and also of planning for the ‘Italian peninsula to be annexed to France’ thus reversing unification.

Another important autonomist challenge to the administrative framework which emerged at the end of the 19th century in Lombardy was an event which came to be known as Lo Stato di Milano. This saw the coming together of ‘Left, Right, industrialists and workers’ in opposition to Prime Minister Francesco Crispi’s ‘fiscalism and bureaucratic centralism, militarism and colonialism.’

Whereas The Permanente had demanded that the capital be transferred only to Rome, Fonzi has argued that ‘the Milanese had never given any real credit to the idea of Rome. This is due to the enduring idea in Lombardy of Milan as the moral capital and ‘most honest, hardworking and civil regions of Italy. There was also a conviction on the part of the Milanese that they had paid for a large part of the costs of Italian unification.

A series of scandals in Rome ‘had generated what would be a long-lived stereotype that while Rome was the political capital, Milan was the “moral capital” of the nation, a symbol of efficiency as opposed to Roman inefficiency. This reassertion of Milanese identity took place ‘just at the time when the South, in the form of Crispi, for the first time became dominant

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311 Ibid.
315 F.Fonzi, Crispi e lo stato di Milano, Milan, Giuffre, 1965, p.XXII.
316 Ibid., p.XIX
317 Ibid.
318 Ibid., p.XVII.
in national politics. Crispi’s Sicilian origins, therefore, sparked a fear that ‘a change in the direction of the country’s politics would no longer respond to Lombard interests or aspirations.

The various opposition groups to Crispi in Lombardy ‘could draw, particularly in Milan itself, on a growing autonomist current, a resurgence of the old civic patriotism that had inspired Cattaneo’s federalist vision of Italy.’ The ‘recent achievements of engineers and industrialists such as Giovan Battista Pirelli, Giulio Prinetti, and Giuseppe Colombo fuelled this patriotism.’ The issue for these opposition groups was that

Lombardy’s continued progress now seemed threatened by the deadweight of the ‘medieval south’ and by a bureaucratic and (after the banking scandals) corrupt central government intent on high military spending and unrealistic dreams of national glory.

Between 1894 and 1896, Milanese opposition to Crispi took on an increasingly autonomist tone as ‘calls for federalism and even for outright secession became insistent.’ In 1895, the republican and democratic left ‘launched the slogan ‘the State of Milan’ (Lo Stato di Milano) as a ‘way of a claim to greater decentralisation.’ However, this left-wing seizure of the anti-Crispi movement would prove to be its downfall as the more moderate wing ‘feared the republicans’ federalism might be a ploy to change the system of constitutional monarchy’. This was ‘a prospect they could not accept, and one that led them to brand Milan’s democratic movement as anti-Unitarian.’

Although the events of Lo Stato di Milano were relatively short-lived, as with The Permanente it demonstrated that provincial, regional and municipal loyalties remained strong. According to Duggan, Crispi took the threat of Lombard secessionism extremely seriously and regarded Lo Stato di Milano as an example of ‘fundamental ambivalence towards Italian

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319 Lyttelton, ‘Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City’, pp.48-49.
320 Fonzi, Crispi e lo stato di Milano, p.XVII.
322 Ibid., p.649.
323 Ibid.
326 Ibid.
327 Ibid.
unity’. He viewed Lombardy’s municipalism as the ‘dark side of Italian regionalism’, impeding the formation of the Italian state. In 1888, Crispi introduced a law which ‘established elected mayors with more powers over local government (and the institution of an administrative Provincial assembly)’. Nevertheless, boroughs continued to have very limited financial control, and the state-appointed prefect was given the role of chair in a reformed provincial council. Centralism therefore continued to be the key raison d’être of the Italian state as it entered the 20th century.

iv. From Liberalism to Fascism – Cultural and Political Regionalism

Having examined some regionalist and autonomist narratives in the post-Risorgimento period, the following section focuses on the impact of the transition between the Liberal and Fascist state on Italian regionalism. In the era preceding fascism, the so-called ‘Giolitti era’ of the early 1900s (named after the long Premiership of Giovanni Giolitti), ‘there was a revival of interest in the regional question’ due to two factors. First, the aforementioned ‘gap in development between the north and the south –the questione meridionale – had become a national issue.’ This meant that there was an increased ‘interest in regionalism and decentralisation’ from ‘a myriad of disparate groups which included southern intellectuals, exponents of the extreme left and Catholic conservatives.’ Second, ‘intellectuals began to throw themselves into the local dimension of the political and cultural debate.’ Therefore, regional culture ‘was often the subject of many national and local journals devoted to cultural and political affairs.’ However, ‘while there were often criticisms of the centralist state’ such attitudes ‘did not take on a critical tone towards the nation.’ As a result

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329 Fonzi, Crispi e lo stato di Milano, p.4
331 Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, pp.75-76.
332 Ibid., p.80.
333 Ibid.
334 Ibid.
335 Ibid.
336 Ibid.
while the first 15 years of the century represented the first laboratory for the formation of political and cultural regionalism…the political agenda of regionalism [was] simply that of achieving decentralisation.  

Prior to Italy’s entry into World War One, a 1915 law had ‘maintained state control and with it the centralism’ established by the laws of 1865 and 1888.  

However, the Great War ‘had two apparently opposite effects on the regional question.’ On the one hand, ‘the experience of trench warfare and propaganda’ involved ‘the nation-building effects of people who spoke different dialects and had different local traditions and cultures coming together.’  

On the other hand, there was a ‘new wave of regionalist enthusiasm [which] once again coincided with regime crisis, as the Liberal state struggled to handle the aftermath of the war.’ During this post-war crisis when the political system was unable to satisfy social demands or handle the political conflict, the idea that local autonomy could offer a solution to national problems found new supporters.  

The end of 1918 saw the formation of a Catholic Party, the Partito Popolare Italiano (PPI) by Don Luigi Sturzo which ‘inserted administrative decentralisation amongst its first policies.’ The PPI channeled a Catholic demand for regional autonomy and, viewed ‘local society’ and ‘the local borough rather than any larger regional unit as the natural form of organisation.’ The PPI’s regionalism reflected the desire ‘to extend political participation to the agricultural class, of which this party was the spokesperson, and the southern population.’ In the early 1920s Il Partito dei Contadini (the Party of Italian Peasants) ‘opposed to the prospect of a unification of small-holdings into a larger united area of a

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337 Ibid.
338 Rotelli, La non riforma. Le autonomie nell’età dei partiti, p.8.
339 Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.84.
340 Ibid.
341 Ibid., p.85.
342 Ibid., p.84.
343 Ruffilli, La Questione Regionale dall’unificazione alla dittatura 1862-1942, p.275.
344 Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.78.
corporate character’ and is described by Castronovo as having ‘confused autonomist aspirations.’

Although Il Partito dei Contadini elected four deputies in the 1924 elections, by this point Mussolini had seized the reins of power in Italy. Prior to the March on Rome in 1922 and the beginning of Mussolini’s twenty year rule as prime minister, dictator and ‘Duce’ of Italy, the initial meeting of fascists in San Sepolcro in 1919 ‘insisted on the necessity of a “regional college” within a proportional electoral system.’ Mussolini at the end of 1919 had taken ‘a position in favour of regional decentralisation’ in order to pander to ‘the more syndicalist elements within the fascist movement.’ When Mussolini was appointed as prime minister, many within his movement made an ‘immediate request for both legislative and administrative decentralisation’ to symbolise a ‘transition from the liberal-democratic regime to fascism.’

However, Mussolini ‘put an end to the debate on local autonomies by reinforcing centralism in authoritarian tones.’ This was true at least from an administrative point of view, as fascism certainly oversaw greater centralisation and in particular the law of 1934 reunified and consolidated all of the modifications of the communal and provincial bodies … This was, largely … the development of pre-existing measures, representing a clear continuity between Liberalism and Fascism.

Greater centralisation was a logical necessity of the fascist ‘corporatist state’, ‘which tried to dominate all aspects of life and leave as few independent organisations as possible.’ Therefore, from such a perspective, it has often been concluded that ‘with Fascism, regionalism was suppressed’ and it was not until after the fall of Mussolini that ‘Italian politics revived its regionalist tendencies.’

However, the popular idea of an ‘anti-thesis between fascism and the region’ is ‘founded on the consideration of the centralist reforms carried out by the regime which

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347 Ruffilli, La Questione Regionale dall’unificazione alla dittatura 1862-1942, p.262.
348 Ibid., p.262.
349 Ibid., p.353.
352 Gold, The Lega Nord and Contemporary politics in Italy, p.32.
annulled any form of local autonomy.’\textsuperscript{354} Such an analysis ‘proves insufficient in understanding the complexity of the regional question … in the process of construction of identity.’\textsuperscript{355} Instead, ‘the regime separated political regionalism from cultural regionalism.’\textsuperscript{356} Making this distinction meant that through ‘cultural regionalism’, the region continued to act as an ‘ideological point of reference for fascist intellectual groups.’\textsuperscript{357} In short, fascism ‘used local culture to bolster patriotic feeling’\textsuperscript{358} In 1934, Professor Emilio Brodero, chairman of the \textit{comitato nazionale Italiano per le tradizioni popolari}, insisted that a distinction must be made between the political and spiritual values of regionalism. The first had to disappear to eliminate the threat to unity of the nation. The second would be cultivated to demonstrate its contributions to the greatness and unity of the country.\textsuperscript{359}

There were also calls from party figures in the PNF encouraging a level of decentralisation and a re-iteration of a ‘desire for a particular form of regional autonomy … between 1930 and 1932.’\textsuperscript{360} Farinacci, a prominent member of the PNF, in 1931, stated that cultural expressions which showed a variety of cultures different to Rome were not in contrast with the spiritual unity of Italians, but constituted an integral part of national spirit and to destroy this local character would be to mutilate the nation.\textsuperscript{361}

In her study of Fascist Venice, Ferris notes that Fascism had to cohabit with local traditions in order to convey its message to Venetians and

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., p.29.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{358} Cavazza, ‘Regionalism in Italy: A critique’, p.85.
\textsuperscript{360} Ruffilli, \textit{La Questione Regionale dall’unificazione alla dittatura 1862-1942}, p.411.
\textsuperscript{361} Ibid., p.412.
the fact that the regime had to employ rituals and luoghi comuni that belonged to alternative – at times supportive but at times rival sources, left it unable to control how their messages would be received by the population.  

One particular example is the annual festa notturna in Venice in 1935 during which ‘the majority of boats which entered – and won – were decorated along “typically Venetian” themes, evoking scenes of everyday Venetian life and luoghi communi.’ A boat entered with the name ‘Fascist Italy conquers the world’ lost out to the ‘Sozia del ventisinque’ which had a ‘less political design’ in the boat decorating competition that year.

Similarly, when Mussolini visited Trieste in 1938, ‘the cult of Mussolini … could only work effectively if constantly tailored to local needs and circumstances in some way receptive to local expectations.’ Indeed, ‘the peculiarities of Trieste and its region’ revealed themselves in ways which were contradictory to the regime’s nation building policies. Many of the acclamations for the Duce ‘were made in Triestine dialect’ and the fact that this was noted by the regime ‘as an example of ‘good campanilismo’ shows that even such a strong regionally based practice such as dialect which was in general frowned upon by the regime was actually encouraged in certain regional contexts. These are examples of localism ‘which fascism was unable to fully control.’

The persistence of regional identity during the fascist period, according to Corner, had an adverse effect on the regime’s attempt to impose its totalitarian project. To this effect,

the much-proclaimed fascist ‘national re-birth’ of Italy faltered at the medieval gates of a hundred towns and cities as local traditions – and local interests – met up with the novelty, but also the threat, of the national movement.

Therefore, ‘despite considerable efforts at mediation between the national and the local’ there was a failure ‘to penetrate many local situations in an efficient, attractive, and above all

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363 Ibid., p.83.
364 Ibid., p.84.
366 Ibid.
367 Ibid., p.126.
368 Simeone, ‘Fascists and Folklorists in Italy’, p.547.
“nationalising” way. Following Italy’s disastrous entry into World War Two, many anti-fascist groups became the standard bearers of a vision of post-war Italy which would hold regional autonomy amongst its founding principles.

v. The Resistance and regional autonomy

Due to the fact that fascism had attempted to impose administrative centralisation, it was natural that many anti-fascist organisations presented themselves as promoters of regional autonomy. Mussolini’s dismissal as Prime Minister by the King in 1943 meant that from 1943 until 1945 there were three Italies: one in the South, occupied by the Allies, a Central Italy, under control of the Germans until summer of 1944 and North Italy, which, until April 1945, was the theatre of conflict between Resistance fighters on one side and Germany and fascists of the Republic of Salò/Italian Social Republic … in these three parts of Italy, three different political experiences took place.

It is important to note that the nature of many Committees for National Liberation (CLNs) and Partisan Republics led to an association between democracy and regional autonomy. One of the reasons why the idea of regional government was associated with the birth of a post-war Italian republic was that, during the intensification of the fight against the Republic of Salò … CLNs ‘saw themselves as bodies of government in occupied Italy’. The importance of regionalism in notions of a post fascist state was reinforced by the fact that the last incarnation of the fascist regime under Mussolini in the Republic of Salò was extremely centralist, where extreme power was afforded to the prefect – thus cementing the fascist image of this administrative figure.

370 Ibid., p.12.
372 Ibid., pp.3-84.
373 Ibid., p.19.
A CLN was present in ‘most cities, towns, villages and factories…and within each one there were generally two separate bodies – one party political, the other military’.\textsuperscript{375} It is significant that ‘from the first moments of their existence, the CLNs of the big cities of the North…defined themselves…as ‘regional’ CLNs.'\textsuperscript{376} Throughout the North of the peninsula, ‘the CLNs emerged precisely as local governments…and each committee had its own territory.'\textsuperscript{377} From this developed ‘the concept that these regional CLNs constituted the new government of the country’ and the prospect that there could be ‘a direct relationship between the regional CLN of the resistance and the Constitutional Region of tomorrow.'\textsuperscript{378} The CLNs, emphasised their ‘regional nature … in order to place themselves in better favour with the allies and place their region in a stronger position in any post-fascist reconstruction of the state.'\textsuperscript{379}

The CLN of Valle D’Aosta was one of the many regional governing bodies set up as part of the resistance. It was led briefly by Emile Chanoux who had been involved in the signing of a significant document which envisioned a post-war Italy based on regional autonomy. On December 19th 1943, barely three months following Mussolini’s dismissal

the first group of partisans from the Valle Valdesi and Valle D’Aosta arrived in Chivasso to discuss the reclaiming of their autonomy … it is not by chance that the meeting ended with an autonomist vision for all of Italy.\textsuperscript{380}

These partisans, who held strong links to the resistance movement Giustizia e Libertà (Justice and Freedom), met to draft a document entitled \textit{Dichiarazione dei rappresentanti delle popolazioni alpine} (the Declaration of Chivasso or popularly known as ‘Carta di Chivasso’) which argued for an ‘Italy organized in a federal system which would respect the autonomies of the various territories.'\textsuperscript{381} Later, Chanoux wrote a more lengthy commentary on the declaration entitled ‘\textit{Federalismo ed autonomie}.'\textsuperscript{382} The Carta di Chivasso would later become a key reference point for many members of the Lega – particularly those from Piedmont.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{376} Rotelli, \textit{L’avvento della Regione in Italia dalla caduta del regime fascista alla costituzione repubblicana (1943-1947)}, p.15.
\item \textsuperscript{377} Ibid., p.19.
\item \textsuperscript{378} Ibid., pp.19-20.
\item \textsuperscript{379} Ibid., p.16.
\item \textsuperscript{380} Ibid., p.15.
\item \textsuperscript{381} Ibid.
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Chanoux went on to become the head of the CLN of the Valle D’Aosta, but was captured by the SS in 1944 and died in prison.

Further to the regional nature of the CLNs was the establishment of ‘partisan Republics’ which often saw power and authority operating in many areas of the north on a very localised and provincial basis. Rotelli has observed that the principal distinction between these republics from the Nazi-fascist regime, was

the democratic and autonomist model for the future framework of the Italian state. These values, which were undoubtedly present in the Republics of Ossola and Carnia, were also adopted and emphasised by their contemporaries.383

The Partisan Republic of Ossola is of particular importance in terms of associating Italy with an autonomist and federalist identity due to the fact that its economic minister was Piero Malvestiti, one of the founders in 1928 of the anti-fascist Movimento Guelfo D’Azione.384 Malvestiti also helped draw up the 12 points of the ‘Programme of Milan’, another key example of autonomist thought which emerged from the resistance. In particular, point three of the programme argued for ‘strengthening of the communes’ and ‘regional administrative autonomy.’ Linked to this, point 5 of the programme argued for an abolition of the ‘corporativist bureaucracy’ which had been at the centre of the fascist system.385 Indeed, ‘the faith in the model of the communes … holds roots in the politics of Don Luigi Sturzo’ and the Popular Party.386 These autonomist principles would later act, in part, as inspiration for the Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco (the MAB).

The legacy of the resistance in terms of the emergence of post-war regionalist movements should also not be under-estimated; regionalist parties such as Union Valdotaine were ‘rooted in resistance anti-fascist autonomist movements’ and ‘initially focused on a single basic goal: to negotiate a Statute of Autonomy for the Aosta Valley within the central government.’387 The founders of the Sud-Tiroler Volkspartei (SVP) had also ‘been active in

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the anti-Nazi resistance. The emergence of the Associazione Studi Autonomistici Regionali (ASAR) was a further legacy of the anti-fascist resistance’s emphasis on regional autonomy. Barrattar observes that post war demands for autonomy should be considered as closely linked to drawing a line under the ‘tragic experience of Fascism and the annexation to Germany and the Third Reich’.

With the unitary Italian system making it easier for Fascism to consolidate its power, decentralisation was viewed as a bulwark against a return to dictatorship. The US State Department pushed for decentralisation, arguing that ‘excessive centralisation…had helped spawn fascism in the first place.’ The majority of anti-fascist parties also initially accepted the need, albeit to varying degrees, of a form of regional government. Prominent Liberal politician and future president of the Republic, Luigi Einaudi’s equivocation of centralism with fascism is highly significant in this respect. In particular, ‘with his article via il prefetto, Einaudi advocated the abolishment of the prefect and the self-administration of regions and communes.

However, with the advent of the Republic the two largest parties opposed decentralisation. While ‘the Communists feared that strong regions would weaken state unity, the Christian Democrats were afraid the communists would win elections in some regions.’ Therefore, ‘the constitution of 1948 established the ideological premises, but not the institutional conditions, for the termination of a centralist tradition that had lasted for almost a century.’ Title V of the Republican Constitution ‘provided for the establishment of 20 regions’ but also distinguished between ‘ordinary’ and ‘special regions.’ While five special regions, namely Sicily, Sardinia, Valle d’Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige (and Friuli-Venezia-Giulia in 1963), largely due to their peripheral position, were to enjoy ‘special Statute status’, fifteen so-called ordinary regions had to wait until 1970 to see any provisions implemented.

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390 West Bull, ‘Regionalism in Italy’, p.143.
393 Ibid., p.125.
396 Ibid.
Amongst these regions were Piedmont and Lombardy, which form the key focus of the following section.

3. Two waves of North Italian regionalism

Having established some key regionalist and autonomist repertoires in Italy between 1848 and 1948, the following section examines two waves of regionalist activism in Lombardy and Piedmont. In particular, it focuses on how the periods of crisis and transition following the fall of fascism led to the emergence of Movements for Regional Autonomy (MRAs) before tracing the rise of *leghismo*.

i. The MARP and The MAB

While the MARP and the MAB are discussed in greater detail in later chapters, this section establishes a brief history which should be seen in three stages. The first stage, 1946-1955, saw the emergence of two nuclei which would form the backbone of both the MRAs and following their official constitution in 1955. The second stage, 1955-1958, were years of fleeting success with the MRAs making inroads at a local level. The third stage, 1958-1964, represented years of decline. The following paragraphs deal with the first two stages of the MARP and the MAB and the post-1958 period is dealt with more comprehensively in the following chapter.

1946-1955 – Theory and activism

The MARP’s and the MAB’s origins lie in two organisations which emerged in the two years following the end of World War Two. As noted in the genealogy chart these organisations mark the beginning of the first wave of North Italian regionalism. In 1946, in Turin, the Associazione Regionale Italiana (ARI) and in 1947 in Bergamo the Movimento per le Autonomie Locali (MAL) were formed with the objective of ensuring regional statutes be included in the Republican Constitution. Despite campaigning to implement this key demand of the Resistance, neither organisation appears to have been directly affiliated to any partisan brigades.

The ARI was founded by a group of ‘business consultants and men of industry’ amongst whom were Italo Mario Sacco and Michele Rosboch, who would both go on to become
members of the MARP.\textsuperscript{398} Between 1946 and 1948, the ARI provided financial and organizational support to candidates from various political parties who declared themselves in favour of regional autonomy. Amongst the objectives of the ARI was the ‘constitution of a Union of Piedmontese provinces’ and the establishment of ‘an elected regional council’ in Piedmont.\textsuperscript{399} Following the inclusion of regional statutes in the Constitution in January 1948 the ARI disbanded.\textsuperscript{400}

Meanwhile, in Bergamo in 1947, a meeting was arranged by lawyer and member of the Republican Party Giulio Bergmann; it attracted a number of middle-class Bergamascan professionals including teachers, dentists, doctors, accountants, and lawyers.\textsuperscript{401} Amongst the founding members of this movement was local dentist Dr Guido Calderoli, the grandfather of Lega senator, Roberto Calderoli. Three months later, 11 members formed a group called the Movimento per le Autonomie Locali (the MAL). The MAL intended ‘to dedicate itself to the democratic principles of Local Autonomy … independent of any political party’ and unlike the ARI did not disband following the signing of the constitution.\textsuperscript{402} Indeed, one of its founding members, Anselmo Freddi, wrote that, following 1948, ‘it became the duty of the MAL to ensure that the regional statutes written into the Constitution were activated.’\textsuperscript{403}

In 1955, seven years following the signing of the Republican Constitution, the regional statutes still lay dormant, with the exception of the special statutes. It was in this year, that the MARP and the MAB signed their own respective statutes and marked an evolution of the ARI and the MAL into these two respective MRAs.\textsuperscript{404}

The MARP was originally a separate organisation to the ARI, having been constituted in 1955 following a speech given by Christian Democrat Mayor, Amedeo Peyron at the inauguration of the Salone della Tecnica in Turin. Peyron spoke of a growing dissatisfaction in Piedmont amongst the small business class and middle classes and, turning to Bernardo

\textsuperscript{398} MARP, L’autonomia regionale, perché la si volle perché la si vuole, pp.3-25.
\textsuperscript{399} Ibid., pp.24-25.
\textsuperscript{402} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{403} A.Freddi, Breve storia del MAB, Bergamo, Stampa Fratelli Carrarra, 1963, p.5.
Mattarella, the government representative of his same party for the opening of the Salone, he criticized the central government for the apparent lack of interest shown in Turin. This speech inspired the creation of numerous unions of small businessmen and professionals to protect Turinese business interests. One of these unions, il Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese (the MARP) was formed by Colonel Achille Barricco (an ex-air force officer) and established headquarters in via Bava 5 and later via Garibaldi 38 in Turin. Other founding members included Franco Bruno, a former member of the Republican Party, Dr Germano Benzi, the owner of a small tube factory, and president of the Associazione Piccola Industria, Mario Vezzani, owner of a small business and Enrico Villarboito, who had formed a failed political movement, prior to joining the MARP.

Villarboito devised the MARP’s first statute and appointed himself President in an attempt to usurp Barricco and remould the movement in his image. He included articles which stated that he would remain in this position until the attainment of regional autonomy and that he reserved the right to nominate and also revoke provincial members. This led to Villarboito being ousted from the MARP some 6 months prior to the its first success in the 1956 elections with the justification that he was ‘an unsettled and rowdy element of the movement who fails to win any public trust.’

Central to this expulsion of Villarboito were members of the ARI. While Barrico remained as President, ARI members such as Michele Rosboch and Timoteo Nobile formulated a new statute with the help of Franco Bruno. It is no coincidence that three of the four councilors elected from the MARP list were former members of the ARI; as one of the earliest histories of the MARP notes, it

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410 ‘L’autonomia regionale nella provincia di Bergamo, i soprendenti risultati delle elezioni’, Piemonte Nuovo.
would without doubt have remained one of the many fleeting movements of this period if it had not been for the entry of the most noted and respected members of Turinese society, some of whom came from the ARI.\footnote{Notes by Turin Police Commissioner entitled “Le origini del MARP e gli uomini che lo rappresentano”’, in Fasc.\textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.2, Archivio di Stato. Cat.A3A. Torino, 24th January 1958.}

The ARI’s Carlo Palenzona also financed the fortnightly publication of a newspaper, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, which published updates on and propaganda related to the campaign for regional autonomy. Although the MARP could count only around 2,000 registered members by the end of 1956, this official figure does not account for sympathisers amongst business owners who provided financial support.\footnote{Notes by Turin Police Commissioner entitled “MARP”, in Fasc.\textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.2, Archivio di Stato. Cat.A3A, 30th October 1956.}

The ARI and the MARP sowed the seeds for future activism in two inter-linked ways. First, they allowed for the development of regionalist activism through a fleeting but significant success in 1956 and the following year. Second, this set a precedent for future successes and activism from which rump movements would be able to draw ideas and inspiration. Under Villarboito the MARP would in all likelihood have failed to win any seats in 1956 and may well have faded into obscurity.

Nevertheless, Villarboito was an extremely significant figure in regionalist politics for several reasons. First, his populist and authoritarian style both with the MARP and his later movements set a trend for later regionalist organisations which would also adopt a strong executive style of leadership.\footnote{Statuto del MARP’ – Villarboito statute – Movimento Autonomia Regionale Piemontese in Fasc.\textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.2, 25th July 1955.} Second, the genealogy chart shows, Villarboito would later form a direct link between the first and second waves of activism through his friendship with Roberto Gremmo, with whom he would collaborate in regionalist organisations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These connections will be further explored in chapter three.\footnote{R.Gremmo, \textit{Contro Roma. Storia, idee e programmi delle Leghe autonomiste del Nord}, Milan, Stem Editorale Spa, 1992, p.5.} Finally, Villarboito was a tireless activist between 1956 to 1958 and founded two further regionalist movements after the MARP with the intention of stirring up an autonomist vote in Piedmont, details of which are explored in greater detail below.\footnote{‘Gipo Farassino fonda la Lega Nord. Va con Gremmo Il fondatore del MARP’\textit{La Stampa}, 27th November 1989.}

\footnote{Letter to the Turin Police Commissioner entitled “Movimento Autonomia Regionale Piemontese – MARP’” in Fasc.\textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese} vol.2 Archivio di Stato, Torino, Cat.A3A, 25th July 1955.}
As noted above, the MAL did not disband following the signing of the constitution and it also had no ‘Villarboito moment’ in its formative years. Calderoli, and other leaders of the MAL such as teachers, Anselmo Freddi and Aldo Rizzi and civil servant Gianfranco Gonella, wrote and designed a significant range of pamphlets, essays, speeches, and posters which promoted regional autonomy, Europeanism and federalism. The ideas in these documents provided the basis for future waves of activism. Such ideas re-emerged, being reframed in the 1960s and 1970s during the period of abeyance and later recycled by leghismo.

During the early 1950s, the MAL spoke in piazzas in Trieste and then Friuli and this activism sparked a desire to stand in the upcoming administrative elections of 1956 in Bergamo. The leading members of the MAL, in 1955, therefore decided to transform their campaign into votes instead of simply putting pen to paper. The MAL ‘renamed themselves as the Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco (the MAB) with headquarters in Via Verdi 17, Bergamo and presented a list of candidates, amongst whom was Guido Calderoli, in the administrative elections to the communal and provincial councils. The first edition of the MAB’s Piemonte Nuovo, released one month prior to these elections, contained a guest column written by Calderoli, thus indicating early collaboration between the two MRAs. This collaboration would continue over the decade, with Franco Bruno of the MAB also campaigning in Bergamo.

1955-1958 - Success and signs of decline

In 1956, the MAB’s members complained that the ‘question (of regional autonomy) had been [sic] deliberately kicked into the long grass. The MAB similarly protested that ‘the Lombard region which was approved eight years ago … until now has not been implemented. Both the MRAs used a populist discourse, explored in greater detail in

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418 Ibid., 238.
chapter five, which led to positive electoral results barely a year after their formation. On 28th June 1956, the MARP received 31,370 votes (5.79%) in Turin resulting in the election of four councillors, out of a total of 80, of whom two were to become assessors.\textsuperscript{423} The MARP, representing the entirety of Piedmont, not just Turin, also won seats in Pinerolo, with 3,400 votes in in the communal council (10%) and 3,471 in the provincial council (9.38%). Three MARP councillors were elected to Pinerolo’s commune.\textsuperscript{424} In 1957 in Vercelli, the MARP’s Dr Andrea Busto gained a provincial council seat with 10,569 votes out of 240,406 votes cast (4.3%). Dr Paolo Barelli, Carlo Piazzano and Dr Hertz de Benedetti with 2,283 votes out of 29,718 (7.6%) also became communal councillors.\textsuperscript{425} In 1957 a MARP mayor Ferrero Emilio, took charge of the commune of Prali, a small mountain town which borders France. \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} reported:

we have our first MARPista mayor! In a small mountain commune the voice of the people will be heard and will speak for the Region, justice for all and for a forgotten Piedmont.\textsuperscript{426}

These results were portrayed by the MARP as evidence that a ‘large part of the Italian electorate had lost all trust in political parties’ programmes."\textsuperscript{427} \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} also reported that the MAB received 1,248 votes out of the 63,173 votes (1.98%) in the comune and 1,381 votes (2.23%) of the 61,926 votes cast in the province with Guido Calderoli and Ugo Gavazzeni becoming communal and provincial councillors respectively.\textsuperscript{428} The full results of the MARP and the MAB from their formation until the early 1960s can be viewed in more detail in the election results attached in the appendix of this thesis.

While, on the surface, the MAB’s result appears relatively minor, it was actually a significant breakthrough considering Bergamo was a province with a particularly strong Catholic subculture. \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} subsequently cited the Lombard autonomists as an

\textsuperscript{424} ‘MARP – La Prima affermazione’, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 15\textsuperscript{th} September 1956.
\textsuperscript{425} ‘Magnifica affermazione del MARP nelle recenti elezioni amministrative Vercellesi’, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} 17\textsuperscript{th} November 1957.
\textsuperscript{426} ‘Ferreo Emilio, Capo del Comune di Praly - Il Primo Sindaco Marpista – La nomina ha suscitato in tutta la zona di Pinerolo il più vivo gradimento’, in \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 1\textsuperscript{st} September 1957.
\textsuperscript{427} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{428} ‘L’autonomia regionale nella provincia di Bergamo, I soprendenti risultati delle elezioni’ \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 15\textsuperscript{th} September, 1956.
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example of regionalist fervor across the north of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{429} Although he stepped down from his post to be substituted by fellow MAB member, Gianfranco Gonella, Calderoli continued to play an active role in the movement, attempting to form the Movimento Autonomist\-a Regionale Lombardo (the MARL), and extend the autonomist movement to Milan.\textsuperscript{430} He also tried to form \textit{Federazione Autonomie Regionali Italiane} with Silvio Milazzo, President of the Region in Sicily who had gained support through his intransigent opposition to Roman centralism and the use of populist slogans such as ‘Sicily for the Sicilians’, thus mirroring Calderoli’s use of ‘Lombardy for the Lombards!’\textsuperscript{431}

The MARP, in the meantime, was challenged by Villarboito’s new movements. The first of these, the Movimento Autonomie Regionali (the MAR) mirrored both the MARP’s anti-party, regionalist ideology and propaganda which it conveyed through its party newspaper entitled \textit{Le Nostre Tasche}. So similar were its methods and name that the MARP released a notice in its newspaper \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, to distance itself from the movement.\textsuperscript{432} (FIG 1) The MAR, unlike the MARP, proposed a national alliance for regionalist movements and was made up of two distinct organisms … one in North Italy and the other in South Italy with the respective denominations of ANRI (Autonomie Regionali Nord Italia) and ARSI (Autonomie Regionali Sud Italia).\textsuperscript{433}

The MARP’s and the MAR’s policies also differed on immigration with the latter stating that it did not wish to ‘slam the door in the face of less fortunate regions.’\textsuperscript{434} The release of articles which referred to southerners as ‘brothers’ and the release of electoral pamphlets with an office contact address in Puglia, further demonstrates its openness to southern regions.

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\textsuperscript{429} ‘L’autonomia regionale nella provincia di Bergamo, I soprendenti risultati delle elezioni’ \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 15\textsuperscript{th} September, 1956.

\textsuperscript{430} ‘Statuto del MARP’ in Fasc. \textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.2, 25\textsuperscript{th} July 1955.

\textsuperscript{431} ‘Statuto del MARL’, in Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.


\textsuperscript{434} ‘Il MARP non ha rapporti con altri gruppi autonomisti’ \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 30th September 1956.

\textsuperscript{435} ‘Organico guida dei movimento per le autonomie regionali’ in Fasc. \textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese vol.2}, Archivio di Stato di Torino., Cat.A3A, 5\textsuperscript{th} June 1956.


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Villarboito’s new movement also demanded the abolishment of the ‘special statute’ regions he believed to be a detriment to national unity.435 In 1957, the MAR changed its name to Movimento Azione e Rinnovamento and with this name change came also a change in party direction as ‘regionalism passed substantially into second place’ as it was thought to be ‘completely insufficient to keep alive a movement with a national character’.436 The new charter of the movement stated that ‘regionalism should be understood not in separatist or parochial terms, but in terms of decentralisation’ thus emphasising a focus on administrative reform.437 Many of these debates, including the idea to open sections in the North, Centre and South of Italy, would later re-emerge in debates surrounding the future direction of the Lega in the early 1990s.

In 1958, Villarboito teamed up with TV personality Gianluigi Marianini, who formed an organisation called the SCOPA (Servire Coscientemente Ogni Pubblica Amministrazione – To serve consciously every public administration). While acting as an acronym for a very cumbersome title, the SCOPA, meaning ‘broom’ in Italian, gave the impression that this party would ‘sweep up’ politics in Piedmont.438 The SCOPA presented a simple programme based around three promises: first, to activate regional autonomy; second, to lower taxes for Piedmontese citizens; and third, a promise to re-open the brothels in Turin which had been outlawed nationally in February 1958.439 The real significance of this movement, however, was that it presented a direct alternative to a 1958 alliance between the MARP and the MAB entitled the MARPadania.

The attempt by the MARP and the MAB to create the MARPadania saw not only a precedent for Alleanza Nord in 1989 but also the use of the term, Padania, which would later be developed and recycled.440 However, the MARPadania alliance in 1958 represented the first

436 Il MAR cambia nome e si presenta alle elezioni’, Gazzetta del Popolo, 23rd July 1957.
438 ‘Notes by the Turin Police Commissioner (untitled)’, in Fasc. Autonomia Piemontese Movimento Villarboito, Archivio di Stato, Torino, Cat A3A, 18th April, 1958. Roberto Gremmo, interviewed by George Newth via email, Feb.2016. This idea of sweeping or cleaning up politics would also become a key part of the Lega Nord’s message in the 1980s.
significant sign of decline for the first wave of regionalism in North Italy and thus contributed to the eventual absorption and institutionalisation of the MRAs.

The MARP symbol, now representing an alliance of autonomists in provinces across Piedmont, Lombardy, and the Veneto, failed to return a single parliamentary candidate. In Turin the vote was more than halved to 13,721 (2.23%) and the combined Piedmontese vote from Turin-Novara-Vercelli of 36,169 (2.15%) barely matched the Turin based MARP vote in the administrative elections of 1956. The Bergamascan delegation received a reduced vote share in the Bergamo-Brescia electoral college with 772 votes (1.11%) of the 69,303 cast for the Chamber of Deputies and 764 votes (1.23%) out of 62,145 for the Senate. The damaging nature of this alliance is referred to by MABista, Anselmo Freddi in his memoirs; he states that welcoming ‘new members into the directive, [caused]…a fracture so large and so sharp, that an extremely negative result was experienced in the electoral campaign.’

This should be interpreted as a reference to several difficulties caused by the 1958 elections. First, was the presence of Villarboito’s SCOPA which caused a split in the autonomist vote. Although the SCOPA managed to take nearly 7,000 votes, across the Turin-Novara-Vercelli section, this still would not have brought the MARPAdania list a threshold high enough to send deputies to Rome.

Nevertheless, Villarboito’s insistence that he alone was the founder and leader of the MARP, and his imaginative propaganda campaign of distributing fake cheques throughout Turin to indicate that the city’s citizens were paying too much tax, damaged the momentum of the MARP’s campaign. Villarboito stated that the MARP was betraying its roots in Turin by transferring its inter-regional seat to Milan and claimed that his ‘many friends both inside and outside of the movement all complain that the MARP neither holds regular assemblies, nor consults the grassroots before making decisions.’

441 ‘Voti e seggi alla Camera per Torino-Novara-Vercelli’ La Stampa Tuesday 28th May, 1958.
444 Anselmo Freddi, Breve storia del MAB, p.21.
446 ‘Il MARP degli anni’ 50 il padre della Lega’ La Stampa, Tuesday 12th April 1994.
448 ‘Le rivelazioni di Villarboito sul MARP e la risposta dei dirigenti autonomisti’ La Stampa, 16th February 1958.
Fractures also emerged due to disagreements over whether to pursue a more local or more national agenda. The decision to form the MARPadania appears to have been engineered by Germano Benzi, a rising star in the movement, but was opposed by MARP councillor Michele Rosboch, who argued that the MARP would hold more influence on a local council than with a deputy in parliament. Franco Bruno, another MARP councillor was also dissatisfied with the prospect of being a parliamentary candidate for Cuneo rather than Turin. In the context of such reports, Roberto Gremmo’s claim that the MARP’s decline began when they attempted to compete at a national level can be viewed as largely accurate. The elections of 1958 highlighted a factionalism which would come to the fore in the 1960s, thus accelerating the process of decline and absorption of the MRAs. Indeed, the MARPadania alliance led to the split in both the MARP and the MAB between those who chose to join mainstream political parties and those who were determined to continue the campaign for regional autonomy. These factional divisions, illustrated in the genealogy chart, are explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

In 1970, the MRAs’ primary objective was realised when for the first time in the history of Italy as a unified state, a form of administrative decentralisation was implemented by the central government ‘when the pro-regionalist Left began to make significant electoral gains, putting pressure on the DC to decentralise power to the regions.’ However, this was far from the federalist ideals of Cattaneo, Ferrari, and Gioberti; nor did this legislation result in the freedoms that the MRAs had envisaged. Italian regional devolution was ‘for many a disappointment, both for the unconscionably long time it took to establish, and for the limits on regional autonomy when it was established’. In particular, fiscal issues were not addressed by the 1970s reforms as ‘Article 119 of the constitution, which outlines the financial status of the regions’ states that regional fiscal autonomy is ‘within the forms and limits laid down by the laws of the Republic…for the development of southern and insular Italy…any form of decentralisation has to be done within the context of maintaining national equality.’ This regionalism was ‘not federalism’ as there were ‘virtually no areas of “exclusive” legislative power and financial autonomy [was] extremely modest.’ One of the results of this

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450 Gold, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary politics in Italy*, p.49.
452 Gold, *The Lega Nord and Contemporary politics in Italy*, p.52.
incomplete decentralisation, is a seemingly contradictory ‘administrative record of the regions (since 1970)’. While

on the one hand, regions were able to develop their own cultural policies and bring the populace in on them; on the other hand … regional government failed to erase the north-south gap, with northern regions continuing to be more efficient. 454

From the late 1970s, regionalist leagues in northern Italy began to demand more regional autonomy than that afforded by the regional reforms.

ii. From the Leghe to the Lega

The following section outlines two key stages of the Lega’s development between 1978 and 2013, tracing its transformation from a populist regionalist party which attacked the centralist state to a populist radical right regionalist party. While an analytical framework of populist regionalism will be established in chapter five, the following paragraphs are limited to outlining a brief history of the Lega.

1978-1995 - The transition to the Second Italian Republic

The regionalist leagues emerged in what has been labelled variously as the ‘deep north’, the ‘zona pedemontana’ or ‘Third Italy’ i.e. the ‘North East in Pordenone, Belluno, Treviso and Vicenza, the northern areas of Lombardy (Brianzia, Bergamo and Sondrio)’ and in the North West ‘some Piedmontese provinces (Cueno and Asti).’455 ‘Third Italy’, in particular, emphasizes how this North Eastern economy was based predominantly on small, family owned businesses and was thus different to ‘the industrial triangle in the North West’ and ‘the marginal and dependent South.’456

During the 1980s, as a ‘burgeoning state deficit’ resulted in ‘fiscal pressure’ being exerted on ‘both ordinary citizens and business people’ in this ‘Third Italy’, there were

increasing demands for ‘neo-liberal and autonomist’ policies. The DC (Christian Democrats), which had played a role in every government since the foundation of the Republic proved to be an ‘increasingly inadequate instrument’ for responding to these demands and became the principal target of ‘anti-state and anti-centrist sentiments of early Lega voters.’ The Lega would exploit the vacuum left by the DC in former ‘white zones’ in the zona pedemontana and turn them into ‘green zones’ (the colour adopted by leghismo). Bergamo was one particular former DC province, and the site of the MAB, which became a stronghold of Umberto Bossi’s Lega Lombarda from 1987 onwards.

As is evident in the genealogy chart, in the early 1980s, the Lega Lombarda, ‘was just one of several movements striving to represent localist sentiment in northern Italy’ and was not even among the original leagues. Leading Piedmontese autonomist, Roberto Gremmo states that the famous ‘leghe’…were born in Spring 1978…Bossi and all the others arrived later… everything was born in Val D’Aosta … to win a seat in the European Parliament, Bruno Salvadori (leader of Union Valdotaine) called together everybody who was ‘Against Rome’ and formed his own electoral list.

Amongst the movements represented in this list were Gremmo’s Movimento Autonomista Rinascita Piemontese – which, not by chance, imitated the acronym M.A.R.P, and Franco Rocchetta’s Liga Veneta, dubbed as ‘the mother of all the leagues.” In 1983, ‘the Liga obtained 4.2% of votes at regional level’ which guaranteed the election of a deputy and a senator.” This period saw leghismo conflating anti-state and anti-southern sentiment, in

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465. Diamanti, La Lega. Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico, p.44.
466. Ibid.


Bossi’s organisational skills, his ability to form alliances and his tireless work ethic meant that during ‘the second half of the 1980s, the various regional leagues became progressively connected to the actions of’ the Lega Lombarda.\footnote{Diamanti, *Mappe dell’Italia politica. Bianco, rosso, verde, azzurro...e tricolore*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003, p.70.} In the 1987 elections Bossi’s league

obtained 186,000 votes in the elections to the Chamber of Deputies, and nearly 140,000 votes in elections to the Senate. Three per cent of the Lombard electorate overall … enough to send Giuseppe Leoni … to the Chamber of Deputies, and to send Bossi to the Senate.\footnote{Cento Bull and Gilbert, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics*, p.13.}
Bossi subsequently formed Alleanza Nord, ‘a confederation between Lega Lombarda and other five allies’ including Franco Rocchetta’s Liga Veneta and Gipo Farassino’s Piemont Autonomista. This reflected a change in strategy away from ethno-regionalism and towards socio-economic regionalism in which ‘the broad cultural similarity of the different northern regions and the inability of any single region to stand on its own as an independent nation’ would be emphasised.\footnote{Passalacqua, Il Vento della Padania: Storia della Lega Nord 1984-2009, p.23.} Alleanza Nord elected two deputies at the 1989 European elections.\footnote{Cento Bull and Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics, p.22.} A congress of these leagues in February 1991 saw ‘the integration…into a unitary federation and single League: the Lega Nord’ and Bossi was confirmed as its Federal Secretary.\footnote{Passalacqua, Il Vento della Padania: Storia della Lega Nord 1984-2009, p.23.}

At the first Lega Nord congress, Bossi put forward the plan of ‘three macro-regions’ of North, Centre and South.\footnote{Diamanti, La Lega. Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico, p.73.} In doing so, he argued that solutions to the ‘pension, health and labour systems…tax evasion and organized crime … would only be possible through a federalist reform of the state.’\footnote{Passalacqua, Il Vento della Padania: Storia della Lega Nord 1984-2009, p.23.} By promoting ‘fiscal federalism’, i.e. ‘the demand that locally raised taxes should not be appropriated by national government’, Bossi addressed ‘the northern electorates anxieties and fears following the process of globalisation and the strict fiscal criteria set out by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.’\footnote{Cento Bull, ‘The Fluctuating fortunes of the Lega Nord’, p.206.}

Leghismo’s real breakthrough came after a series of ground-breaking political developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 opened ‘the electoral market’ until then blocked ‘by a tacit agreement between the DC and their allies to permanently exclude the second largest party, the PCI (Italian Communist Party) from government’, thus leaving many DC voters ‘free to vote for other parties.’\footnote{C.Ruzza and S.Fella. Re-inventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’, London and New York, Routledge, pp.85-86.}

The Lega’s accusations of corruption against the parties of the First Italian Republic were vindicated by the Tangentopoli scandals of 1992 and with electoral reform in 1993 shifting the system from a proportional to a largely majoritarian system ‘a real electoral earthquake’ ensued in which ‘all the old parties’ which had emerged in 1948, ‘were either wiped out or emerged as much weakened.’\footnote{A.Cento Bull, ‘The Lega Nord and fiscal federalism: functional or postfunctional?’, Modern Italy, vol.16, no.4, pp.437-447, (p.445).}

\footnote{G.Passarelli and D.Tuorto, Lega & Padania, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, p.31.}

\footnote{D.Sassoon, “Tangentopoli or the democratization of corruption: considerations on the end of Italy’s First Republic” in Journal of Modern Italian Studies. Vol 1. No.1. pp.124-143 (p.128).}
While *Leghismo* ‘did not produce the crisis of the party system of the First Republic’, it ‘certainly “amplified” it and penetrated into the cracks of a system which was by then in decline.’\(^{481}\)

In the 1992 elections, the Lega increased its vote share from 1.3% to 8.6%, gaining 55 seats in the chamber of deputies and 25 seats in the senate.\(^{482}\) However, the fall of the First Italian Republic proved to be a double-edged sword for the Lega as it began to lose votes to Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia which resulted in Bossi entering into a Centre-Right coalition with Forza Italia and the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale.\(^{483}\) Though ideologically opposed to both of these parties, this decision was ‘depicted as a deliberate strategy to obtain the federal reforms at the root of its programme.’\(^{484}\)

While the 1994 elections resulted in the Lega’s accession to government, the party ‘lost their primacy in the Northern regions to Forza Italia.’\(^{485}\) Additionally, the Lega made scant progress on federal reform. Gianfranco Miglio, the ideologue behind the Lega’s federalist proposals and ‘a convinced federalist - left the Lega in protest at not being appointed as Minister of Institutional Reforms.’\(^{486}\) Also, Bossi’s close collaborator, Roberto Maroni, as Minister of the Interior, failed to reform ‘the Napoleonic system of centrally-appointed prefects’.\(^{487}\) Furthermore, ‘the Lega’s calls for devolution and federalisation…were quickly sidelined into the Commission on Constitutional Reform.’\(^{488}\) An extremely turbulent and short-lived administration with Berlusconi, characterised by almost constant clashes between the Lega and its coalition partners, was brought to a conclusion at the end of December, following a vote of no confidence in Berlusconi and the Lega’s desertion of the government.\(^{489}\) A change of strategy followed which would see the abandonment of federalism for secessionism.

\(^{483}\) Diamanti, *Mappe dell’Italia politica, Bianco, rosso, verde, azzurro ... e tricolore*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2003, p.73.
\(^{485}\) Ibid.
\(^{486}\) Ibid.
\(^{488}\) Ibid., pp.69-70.
\(^{489}\) Ibid., p.69.
iv. From Secessionism to Post-Regionalism

From 1995, the Lega began to advocate fully for the independence of ‘Padania’ (its imagined north Italian nation). The secessionist stance, largely a result of both left and right stealing the Lega’s substantive policies relating to federalism and privatization, was also ‘predicated on the hope/expectation that Italy would fail to meet the entry criteria for the European Monetary Union.’\(^490\) Padania was not merely ‘the North which produces’ but ‘a nation…a territory which becomes myth…even if it does not have defined borders or historical foundation.’\(^491\) The Lega ‘exploited all the usual paraphernalia of nationalism by manipulating myths, exhuming heroes and exploiting the power of persuasion of the media.’\(^492\) Lega ideologues such as Gilberto Oneto ‘included descriptions of Padanian territory and culture and attempts to define a Padanian language and/or to encourage studies of Northern dialects.’\(^493\)

The Lega would even stage a declaration of independence with all the pomp, ceremony and ritualistic folklore in 1996.

The Lega’s secessionist stance initially appeared to be successful when it gained 10.1% of the votes at the 1996 general election. However, ‘the party … had no influence in determining the composition of the new government’ and things went from bad to worse when it suffered heavy losses ‘in the European elections of June 1999.’\(^494\) These losses and ‘a government crisis in December 1999’ which revealed ‘the fragility of the centre-left coalition government’ led to Bossi to conclude that a new coalition with Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale was the best way to revive his party’s fortunes.\(^495\)

Though ‘centre-right’ in name, this resurrected coalition between the Lega, FI and the AN, adopted radical right features, representing ‘a skilful re-interpretation of the new societal climate’ and making use of an ideology based on self-reliance and entrepreneurship, as well as law and order and family

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See Also:


Albertazzi and McDonnell,’The Lega Nord in the second Berlusconi government: In a league of its own’ p.955.

\(^{495}\) Cento Bull and Gilbert, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics*, p.132.
values.\textsuperscript{496} Indeed, this period saw a definitive shift of the Lega becoming firmly anchored in the right; something which is explored in greater detail below.

The Lega received a meagre 3.9\% in the 2001 elections, losing heavily in its Northern heartlands.\textsuperscript{497} Nevertheless, between 2001 and 2011, the Lega ‘succeeded in presenting itself simultaneously as both “the opposition within government” and a driving force behind high-profile areas of government policy’ in three Berlusconi-led governments.\textsuperscript{498} Meanwhile, Padania ‘lived on even if secessionism was not on the cards and the name of the party remained “Lega Nord per l’indipendenza della Padania.”’\textsuperscript{499}

The Lega prioritised ‘immigration and federalism’ and practised ‘simulative politics’ i.e. a politics that simulated ‘being able to both devise and implement policies which reconcile irreconcilable…social and economic trends on the one hand, and emotional anxieties and fears of the other’.\textsuperscript{500} In terms of immigration, the Lega’s hardline policies, ‘besides conveying the message that immigration is a temporary phenomenon’ reassured ‘voters that they [could]…enjoy the (cheap) services of much needed workers, without having to extend welfare provisions and rights.’\textsuperscript{501} Regarding federalism, the Lega reassured its northern voters that ‘they would not be required to bear the burden of fiscal tightening, since the public deficit had been caused by the ‘centralist state’ and the ‘profligate South.’\textsuperscript{502}

The Lega substituted secessionism with calls for ‘devolution’ and ‘the election of a Parliament of the North.’\textsuperscript{503} However, these devolution proposals were overshadowed by the Centre-Left’s administrative reforms which had been approved subject to a referendum on 7\textsuperscript{th} October 2001.\textsuperscript{504} This Centre-Left reform should be briefly examined.

\textsuperscript{496} Fella and Ruzza, \textit{Reinventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’}, p.50.
\textsuperscript{497} Cento Bull, ‘The Fluctuating fortunes of the Lega Nord’, p.207.
\textsuperscript{498} Albertazzi and McDonnell, ‘The Lega Nord in the second Berlusconi government: In a league of its own’ p.953.
\textsuperscript{499} A.Cento Bull, ‘Collective identities: From the Politics of Inclusion to the Politics of Ethnicity and Difference’, p.50.
\textsuperscript{502} Cento Bull, ‘The Lega Nord and fiscal federalism: functional or postfunctional?’, p.441.
\textsuperscript{504} Cento Bull, ‘The Lega Nord and fiscal federalism: functional or postfunctional?’, p.445.
\textsuperscript{505} Ibid., p.135.
The *Ulivo* coalition which governed Italy between 1996 and 2001 and was led by Romano Prodi, Massimo D’Alema and finally Franco Rutelli, embarked on a series of constitutional reforms (the so-called Bassanini reforms) including a reform of Title V of the Constitution (encompassing ‘the regions, the communes and the provinces’). This, along with a constitutional law in 1999 which also strengthened the role of regional governments, amounted to an overhaul of local government.\(^{505}\)

Such ‘piecemeal change to the Constitution’, however, led to a need for ‘a more thorough revision of Title V’. What was proposed was a form of decentralisation rather than ‘dual or so-called competitive federalism.’\(^{506}\) The *Ulivo*’s reform consisted of reorganizing the state and administrative machine so as to give new authority to the central government and efficacy to local administration, by pursuing greater integration between the different levels of government.\(^{507}\)

The reform was eventually approved by referendum with ‘64.2 per cent in favour to 35.8 per cent against.’\(^{508}\) The Lega’s re-entry into a coalition with FI and AN was based partly on an agreement to reject any Centre-Left constitutional regional reforms. As Minister of Reforms, Bossi presented his own reform bill to Parliament in 2005.\(^{509}\) This was more radical and promoted ‘greater differentiation and also competition, whereby different regions can establish their own procedures … and even proceed at their own pace along the road to greater political autonomy.’\(^{510}\) Additionally, the term ‘devolution’ differentiated the Lega from all of its political competitors, due to the fact that ‘federalism had ‘become the flagship of all mainstream parties.’ \(^{511}\) The devolution proposals, promoted by the Lega as a first step towards greater federalization of the Italian state, would have equipped the regions with exclusive legislative competence on matters of public health, local policing, education and welfare.\(^{512}\)

\(^{505}\) Cento Bull. ‘Towards a federal state? Competing Proposals for Constitutional Revision’ p.190
\(^{507}\) Ibid.
\(^{508}\) Ibid.
\(^{509}\) Ibid., p.185
\(^{509}\) Ibid., p.198.
\(^{510}\) Ibid., pp.189-190.
\(^{511}\) Ibid., p.193.
Devolution was, however, a result of a compromise with the predominantly centralist FI and AN. To ensure that the Lega had not been given ‘carte blanche’ to break-up the state’ the Lega’s coalition partners ‘reiterated the role of Rome as the sole capital of Italy’ and emphasised a ‘premierato forte’ (strong premiership) as a safe-guard against potential centrifugal consequences.513

Bossi’s reform did not pass the test of a referendum required by the Constitution, and this was followed by the Centre-Right’s failure at the polls in 2006.514 Two years later in 2008 the Lega obtained 8.3% of the national vote and with 60 deputies and 26 senators, become Italy’s third largest party.515 The Lega reignited demands for ‘fiscal federalism’ and introduced a framework law in May 2009 to this effect.516 However, ‘long delays in introducing fiscal federalism’ did not sit well with the Lega’s northern constituency and it was punished at the polls in 2011.517

Following the fall of the fourth Berlusconi administration, Bossi reverted to campaigning for an independent Padania. However, he had little opportunity to re-establish secessionism as in January 2012 the party was rocked by ‘a financial scandal involving payments from party funds to Bossi’s children and even corrupt deals with the Calabrian Mafia.’518 Following Bossi’s resignation, former Lega minister, Roberto Maroni ‘publicly declared that he would clean up the Lega’ and upon being elected party secretary conducted ‘a balancing act between strengthening the Lega’s northern identity and federalist mission whilst stopping short of secessionism.’519 With a policy of ‘North First’ or a ‘macro-federation of the North’ the Lega won ‘the three main northern regions’ (Lombardy, Piedmont and Veneto) in the regional elections of 2013.520

When Maroni became governor of Lombardy in 2013 he was succeeded as Lega Secretary by Matteo Salvini who won 82% of the vote and relegated Umberto Bossi, to a marginal position with only 18%.521 Salvini’s leadership appeared at first to mark a return of the Lega’s hard-line independence stance as he declared the need to battle for Padanian

513 Ibid.
515 Ibid., p.50.
517 Ibid.
519 Ibid.
520 Ibid.
521 Idem., p.212.
independence, capitalising on a wave of anti-EU sentiment ahead of the 2014 elections to the European Parliament by linking ‘independence to a battle against the Euro which he dubbed “a crime against humanity.”’

Despite this initial secessionist stance, ‘the request for greater northern autonomy (which was once the key issue defining the Lega’s agenda) has vanished from Salvini’s communication.’ Under Salvini, the campaign for regional autonomy has been replaced by an ‘empty nationalist and nativist’ identity. While Salvini included a reference to ‘autonomy and responsibility’ in the 2018 elections as lip-service to the party’s traditional cause of federalism, he also removed the words ‘Nord’ and ‘Padania’ from the party symbol thus marking an abandonment of leghismo’s original raison d’être and a shift to ‘post-regionalism’. Salvini’s Lega received over 17% of the vote, the best result for the party since its formation in 1991. At the time of writing, the Lega is a governing partner in a coalition with the 5 Star Movement (with Salvini as Interior Minister) and is polling at around 30%. Salvin is pursuing a radical right agenda which has been firmly rooted in Lega ideology since 1995.

4. New Right or radical right?

This thesis focuses not just on the Lega’s origins but also its nature. Therefore, while the following chapters of the thesis clarify in greater detail my position regarding how the Lega should be interpreted in light of existing approaches and interpretations, this final sub-section briefly addresses an important element of the Lega’s identity vis-à-vis the Right. Returning to the definitions of New Right and radical right established at the beginning of the chapter, these paragraphs clarify my stance regarding the Lega’s relationship with these two concepts. As will come to light both in the following paragraphs and later in chapter five, I demonstrate that while the Lega shared some elements in common with the New Right in the early 1990s, it should not be categorized as a right-wing party until the mid-1990 when the best description for the Lega is radical right rather than New Right.

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522 ‘Lega: Salvini, non ci fermiamo fino all’indipendenza’ 15th December. Available at:

523 A.Giovannini, A.Seddone, D.Albertazzi, ‘No regionalism please, we are Leghisti! The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini’, Regional and Federal Studies, Published online 3rd September 2018 pp.1-27, (p.2).
524 Ibid., p.18.
525 Ultimi sondaggi politici elettorali. L’elettorato di centrodestra crede in Salvini’ in TPI News. Available at:
In its early period, it has been argued that the Lega and the New Right were ‘different, but complementary faces of … sophisticated right-wing ethno-regionalist ideology’.

This was due to the Lega’s promotion of ‘an economic Third Way, based in ethno-regionalism … the “ethnicization” of the market, conceived to protect it from liberalism, the welfare state and immigration.’

Spektorowski argued that Gianfranco Miglio, whose proposals heavily influenced the Lega in its early stage was ‘similar to others in the New Right’ in that he believed that ‘a new Europe should be divided into macro-regions, which could establish the basis for a new type of federal Europe.’

It has been argued that in the 1980s and 1990s the Lega was part of the Radical Right due to Bossi’s stance against a ‘multi-racial and multi-ethnic’ society, his ‘opposition to the social integration of marginalized groups, and … appeal to xenophobia, if not overt racism.’ I believe instead that the Lega ‘should not be reduced to any label such as New Right or radical right’ in its early stages.

The Lega was originally ‘not anti-communist, not militarist’ and endorsed ‘liberal internationalist theories of European co-operation and federal ideals of self-determination.’

Furthermore, even if the Lega was influenced by New Right ideology, this was ‘effectively subordinated to the overriding aim of dismantling the country’s prevalent form of state in order to impose novel (unquestionably North-centric) solutions and policies.’

In its early stages, in contrast to New Right arguments, ‘the EU and globalization were allies’ of the Lega and Bossi believed ‘that the Northeast as a region was already competing successfully in the global economy.’

Leghismo, therefore, represented a ‘complex interrelation of neo-liberalism, federalism and ethnicity.’

Ethnicity, rather than being a way of constructing cultural barriers against foreign migration was a tool to contrast the ‘socio-economic model of development typical of the Northeast’ to ‘the South and even to other northern areas.’

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527 Ibid., p.68.
528 Ibid.
532 Cento Bull and Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics, p.127.
used ethno-regionalism to ‘break down the prevailing political and social consensus and attacking partyocracy, consociationalism and state welfarism.\textsuperscript{536}

The Lega, in 1994, helped form the ‘most right-wing government in Italian post-war history’ in which the neo-fascist right (the AN) came ‘back into the mainstream political fold’ in a Republic which had been founded explicitly on anti-fascist principles.\textsuperscript{537} The Lega’s subsequent shift to the radical right was due to two inter-linked factors. First, the changing political opportunity structures following 1994 led to a secessionist strategy. Second, the Lega’s adoption of secessionism led to an ideology which aimed to protect the borders of Padania and a politics of identity against globalization and the EU.\textsuperscript{538} The Lega, therefore, updated its proclaimed role as defender of the territory due to an increased ‘awareness of the acceleration of processes of economic globalisation and the increasing presence of immigrants.’\textsuperscript{539} The surprising success in 1996 after campaigning on a secessionist platform cemented Bossi’s decision to radicalise the Lega.\textsuperscript{540}

The nationalist and nativist discourse adopted by the Lega was not in line with New Right ethno-regionalism and was certainly not ‘a mere return to origins.’\textsuperscript{541} Padania, unlike socio-economic regionalism, was ‘no longer the means through which the party was to attack and dismantle the centralist state, but a nation under threat from internal and external Others.’\textsuperscript{542} While the Lega was ‘highly critical of the Italian state’, its use of its nation to seek ‘the preservation of Padanian culture and identity from the powerful global forces arrayed against it – Fortress Padania’ aligned the party with the radical right.\textsuperscript{543} The Lega, while operating within liberal democratic structures, expressed hostility towards pluralism, multiculturalism and religious diversity. The release of a document entitled Padania, identità e società multi-razziale was ‘full of invidious statistics about the percentage of crimes committed in Padania by different ethnic minorities’ and condemned the ‘hypocritical distinction between legal and illegal immigration.’\textsuperscript{544} The document closed with a ‘five point plan to defend our

\textsuperscript{536}Cento Bull, ‘Breaking up the post-war consensus: the ideology of the Lega Nord in the early 1990s’, p.113.
\textsuperscript{537}Ibid., p.146.
\textsuperscript{539}J.Foot, Italy’s Divided Memory, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, p.70.
\textsuperscript{540}Zaslove, The Re-invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism and the Lega Nord, p.69.
\textsuperscript{541}Fella and Ruzza, Reinventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’, p.82.
\textsuperscript{543}Fella and Ruzza, Reinventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’, p.82.
\textsuperscript{544}Ibid. 211.
\textsuperscript{545}Zaslove, The Re-invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism and the Lega Nord, p.90.
\textsuperscript{546}Ibid., p.132.
\textsuperscript{547}Cento Bull and Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics, p.128.
people’ including ‘opposition to any attempt to teach multiculturalism and tolerance in schools’ and ‘preparing for the polite return of non-Community foreigners to their homes.’ Bossi’s movement ‘advocated privileged treatment of Northerners ahead of immigrants and defined others as outsiders when it comes to housing, state jobs and health service.’ The Lega, therefore argued that ‘immigration needed to be linked to productivity and labour demand, while social services needed to be attached to social and economic contributions.’

The Lega promoted the right of Europeans to protect their own identity by emphasising a ‘broader European Christian identity that needs to be protected’ seen ‘not just in the Lega’s anti-immigration position but also in the campaign to prevent Turkish accession to the EU.’ This was especially true after September 11th 2001, when one of the key themes in the Lega’s public discourse subsequently became ‘the equation of terrorism, Islamism and immigration.’

The EU, once favoured by the Lega, was now portrayed as the ‘vehicle’ of this immigration and multi-culturalism. Following its expulsion from the European Free Alliance (EFA), the Lega became a member of Europe of Freedom and Democracy group (EFD) which contained other radical right parties. Europe was increasingly portrayed in populist terms as an elite club distant from the people. Opposition to the EU was linked to a more general anti-globalisation stance and was an example of how by placing the Other at the centre of their ideological perspective and rhetoric, regional parties create a mind-set that fears that local identities they supposedly represent and embody are under constant assault by global developments.

545 Ibid., p.129.
548 Ibid.
550 Fella and Ruzza, Reinventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’, p.84.
551 Ibid., p.83.
552 Ibid., p.82.
The Lega’s radicalisation in the mid-1990s also involved an increase in ‘its emphasis on conservative social values and … “authentic civil society.”’ This ‘focus on family values, social conservatism, and Christianity are part and parcel of its evolution into’ a party of the radical right.\textsuperscript{553} Authoritarian proposals included those ‘in 2004 for a “ministry of crime” and for rewards for apprehending criminals to be instituted.’\textsuperscript{554} The 2008 ‘Security Package’ introduced by Maroni, (explored in greater detail in chapter five), was further evidence of authoritarianism in which infringements of law were to be punished severely.\textsuperscript{555}

5. Conclusion

This chapter began with the claim that in Italy, critical combinations of regime change and crisis have led to the emergence of regionalist and federalist movements. I also contended that the failure or success of these movements corresponded directly with the respective ability or inability of a regime to shut down these political demands. The following paragraphs, therefore, reassert these claims in light of the historical context established above.

The First War of Italian Independence in 1848 represented a regime crisis for the myriad of kingdoms, duchies and states across the Italian peninsula. During this period, the federalist philosophies of Cattaneo, Ferrari and Gioberti acted as inspiration for some Risorgimento patriots. However, such ideas remained at the margins largely due to the fact that there was no ‘federalist movement’ to speak of during this period and due to the subsequent divisions in the Republican movement on how to capitalise on the insurrections such as those in Milan. The dynastic ambitions of Piedmont-Sardinia during this war should also be considered as vital in keeping federalist ideas at bay as King Carlo Alberto had no interest in allowing a Republican federalist movement to usurp his own power.

Italian unification was, therefore, in large part, the result of a top-down process led by the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. In spite of there being ‘strong pressures for both political unity (in the form of national government) and political autonomy (in the form of regional governments with regional powers)’, federalism and regionalism were abandoned and a fragile unity was held together by a rigidly centralist system.\textsuperscript{556} Regionalism re-emerged due to dissatisfaction with Piedmontisation and also due to sympathies for the old Bourbon Kingdom

\textsuperscript{553} Zaslove, \textit{The Reinvention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism and the Lega Nord}, p.91.
\textsuperscript{554} Fella and Ruzza, \textit{Reinventing the Italian Right. Territorial politics, populism and ‘post-fascism’}, p.78.
\textsuperscript{555} Albertazzi and McDonnell, ‘The Lega Nord back in government’, p.1326.
\textsuperscript{556} Burris, ‘Federalism’, p.876.
of the Two Sicilies. The rebellions in the South which took place both between 1860 and 1865, known as ‘brigandage’ and later in the 1890s during the premiership of Francesco Crispi with the ‘fasci siciliani’ were driven in large part by social and economic dissatisfaction with the new state and fuelled demands for regional autonomy and secession. These rebellions reinforced long-existing stereotypes of the South as the Other, contributing to the emergence of the ‘Southern Question’. Due to fears that such demands represented a threat to unity, such movements failed to force any regime change as they were closed off by the Liberal regime via means of suppression and centralisation.

Post-unification regionalist demands also emerged in former Northern states which felt victimised and frustrated by the cost of unification and a perceived southerisation of politics. The epochal change of the shift of the Italian capital from Turin to Florence was sanctioned by a government which did not contain a single Piedmontese member.\footnote{C.Seton Watson, \textit{Italy From Liberalism to Fascism}, London, Methuen, 1967, p.14.} For the group of politicians known as The Permanente, this was certainly experienced as a form of regime change. A combination of a strong attachment to the pre-unification Kingdom of Piedmont and Sardinia and an impression that the former dynastic state had paid too high a price for unification led to moderate proposals of decentralisation from The Permanente. These were, however, bound to remain at the margins due to the hostile political environment towards regionalism and also the fact that this group did not represent a unified ‘periphery in revolt against the centre’ but instead ‘expressed the interests of national capitals and the claims of regional groups to a special place in national politics.’\footnote{Lyttelton, ‘Shifting Identities: Nation, Region and City’, p.47.} Lo Stato di Milano was a reaction against Crispi, whose southern origins added to a narrative of an inefficient, fiscally irresponsible and militaristic politician who, as representative of the Legal Capital, was a burden on the Moral Capital. The threats of regionalism and secessionism represented by Lo Stato di Milano were not shut down by the Liberal regime itself, but floundered due to divisions in the autonomist movement caused by the radicalisation of such demands as the movement was taken over by the republican left.

As the Liberal regime struggled to tackle the political, economic and social crisis following the end of the First World war, regionalism found political representation in new parties such as the Popular Party and the Partito dei Contadini which made a commitment to regional reform written into their programmes. Even the early fascist movement appeared to be sympathetic to decentralisation. However, with the advent of the corporatist state, the
outlawing of political opposition and the consolidation of a centralist framework inherited from the Liberal period, avenues for political regionalism were denied under the fascist regime for purposes of political control. Nevertheless, the fact that cultural regionalism was encouraged as a way of forming national identity shows how fascism was unable to fully suppress Italian regional identity.

The fall of fascism precipitated the most significant moment of regime crisis and transition for the Italian state since unification. Regionalism had been anathema to the fascist corporate state and so the anti-fascist resistance made a commitment to regional government being at the basis of the future post-fascist Italian state. Decentralisation was seen as vital in preventing any return to a dictatorship. The CLNs, and partisan republics relied heavily on regionalist identity in positioning themselves as direct opponents of the failed fascist regime and an Italian rebirth. The years of transition following regime change saw the emergence of the ARI in Piedmont and the MAL in Bergamo which campaigned for the inclusion of regional statutes in the new Republican constitution.

1955 saw the re-emergence of the ARI and MAL activists in the new guises of the MARP and the MAB. Despite their different origins, the key objective of both of these movements was the activation of the articles in the constitution which would implement regional government in Italy. The MRAs exploited the lack of regional government to gain success at a local level in 1956 and, in their campaigns, circulated electoral material which would form the framework for a later wave of regionalist activism. The failure to make a significant breakthrough was due largely to the fact that the 1948 elections saw the establishment of the Christian Democratic regime, which would in various forms remain in place until the early 1990s. The DC excluded demands for decentralisation for fear of the Communist Party achieving power in the regions.

A further reason why the MRAs remained at the margins of Italian politics was an inability to deal with factional splits which would play a role in their downfall, explored in the following chapter. The MRAs’ prediction that regional autonomy would bring about sweeping changes in Italy’s institutional framework was at best overly-optimistic, at worst naive; barely a decade following the decline of the MRAs the institution of the regions in 1970 was widely regarded as inadequate in devolving powers to newly formed local governments especially in the failure to allow for fiscal autonomy.

The persistent lack of autonomy after the 1970 regional reforms played a key role in the emergence of a second wave of regionalist activism. The Lega’s ability to make a
breakthrough on a regionalist and federalist platform where the MRAs had remained at the margins can be explained through both structural and agency factors. In terms of structural factors, the crisis of the Italian party system caused by the twin factors of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Tangentopoli scandals saw a breakthrough of the Lega’s demands as it marked the end of a party or coalition being able to achieve overall control and shut out regionalist demands. Regarding agency, Umberto Bossi’s leadership and his ability to unite the various regionalist leagues into a Northern League represented the real point of departure for this wave of regionalism. Under the leadership of Bossi in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the leagues became increasingly organised into a single federation of the Lega Nord which led a ‘headlong attack’ against the centralist state. The 1994 elections marked transition to the so-called Second Italian Republic following the Tangentopoli crisis and subsequent electoral reform. The extent of the Lega’s success is demonstrated by the contribution it made to regime change; the Lega’s protests against the ‘regime of the parties’ or ‘Partyocracy’ now seemed vindicated and the parties which had dominated the Italian Republic from 1948 onwards, in particular the DC, were consigned to history. This was in large part due to the challenge posed by a regionalist movement to the post-war regime.

From the mid 1990s, nationalist rhetoric, an intensification of nativism and anti-immigration, a growing opposition to the EU and globalisation, an increasing emphasis on the perceived Christian roots of Europe and a focus on authoritarianism emerged as a result of the adoption of secessionism. While secessionism was abandoned in 1999, the Lega maintained its identity as a radical right party; Padania provided the basis for both nativism, and also for demands for devolution and later federalism, both of which remained as a central plank of Lega policy during its time in the centre-right coalition. Salvini’s leadership, however, marks for the first time in the movement’s history a definitive break from the Lega’s regionalist and federalist policies.

In conjunction with the genealogy chart in the appendix to this thesis, this chapter has established the history of the MRAs and the Lega as part of a wider history of Italian regionalism. The next chapter tackles the question of how the decline of the first wave of North Italian regionalist activism led to the emergence of the second, thus revealing key links between the MRAs and the Lega.

Chapter III
North Italian Regionalist Activism in Abeyance

1. Introduction

On 19th January 1958, Verona played host to a conference of Northern autonomist movements from Lombardy Piedmont, Trento, the Veneto and Liguria. Together, these groups planned to form an alliance called Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Padano (Movement for Padanian Regional Autonomy) with ‘Padania’ representing northern Italy across which these groups wished to campaign for greater regional autonomy for the North. This event had been organised by the two most significant of these groups, Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese (the MARP) and Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco (the MAB). Despite this significant event in North Italian regionalist politics, in the early 1960s these two movements went into decline and seemingly disappeared from the political map, and since then have never been widely considered as an important part of the wider history of north Italian regionalism.

This is curious when we consider that the regionalist leagues which began to emerge in the North of Italy in the 1980s mirrored the Movements for Regional Autonomy (MRAs) in several ways. First, these organisations used much of the same imagery and discourse of the MRAs; second, in some cases, there were inter-generational links between the membership of the leagues and the MRAs; third, the regionalist leagues would also eventually form a similar – but more successful – alliance known as Alleanza Nord, which would go on to constitute the first congress of the federal Northern League (Lega Nord). At this congress, held at Pieve Emanuel in 1991, the Lega Nord was constituted by bringing together sections from Lombardy, Veneto, Liguria, Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna, and once again Piedmont. Finally, in terms of a ‘Padanian’ identity, on 15th September 1996 in Venice, the Lega Nord held a declaration of the, albeit unofficial, ‘independence’ of their north Italian Padania.

While they are divided by a period spanning more than two decades, it is a mistake to consider these two waves of activism as independent from one another. The emergence of the


560 'Il MARP diventa Padano per presentarsi alle elezioni’, La Stampa, 24th February 1958.

leagues, the constitution of the Lega Nord and the declaration of the Independence of Padania represented the revival of a previous upsurge of activism during the 1950s - reframed to suit the political context of the 1980s and 1990s. However, the twenty-year gap in between these two upsurges in activism had vitally acted as a period of ‘abeyance’, allowing for a continuity of discourse, imagery and a reframing of regionalist arguments.

I argue, therefore, that many of the ideas previously held by the MRAs were able to find a new home in leghismo due to the fact that, as stated by Taylor ‘abeyance depicts a holding process by which movements sustain themselves in non-receptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilisation to another.’562 In addition to this ‘abeyance provides for movement continuity and may sow the seeds of future mobilization.’563 In short, it is not possible to fully understand the rise of leghismo by focusing solely on the 1980s and 1990s alone, we must look further back to understand its origins.

While neither of the authors cited above are scholars of the Lega, it is my contention that understanding of the history of the Lega can be greatly enhanced through attention to abeyance theory. This is due to the fact that it ‘fits with a sociological history that strives to identify and explain not just passing phenomena but also longer-term patterns of social interaction.’564 Indeed, the problem with treating MARPismo/MABismo and leghismo as separate phenomena is that

if movements are comprised exclusively of sporadic moments of dramatic challenge, challengers themselves are invested with little agency, and left with little to do in the long periods between episodes of widespread collective action.565

As will be examined in greater detail below, following the decline of the MARP and the MAB in the 1960s various ‘challengers’ found ways to sustain North Italian regionalism in the two decades between its first and second wave. Taylor, in her studies on the women’s movement in the USA, has criticised her contemporaries for supporting an ‘immaculate

565 Sawyers and Meyer, ‘Missed Opportunities: Social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy’, p.188.
conception view’ of social movement origins and for assuming that these new movements seemingly ‘emerged out of nowhere.’ According to Taylor,

the overemphasis on new elements has blinded students to the carry-overs and carry-ons between movements and therefore what scholars have taken for ‘births’ were in fact breakthroughs or turning points in movement mobilisation.

In this chapter, I adopt Taylor’s critique and argue that looking back to the 1950s MRAs and the following period of abeyance, means avoiding an ‘immaculate conception’ view of the 1980s origins of leghismo. Indeed, as Taylor notes

being mindful of the period of abeyance between waves [of activism] offers a corrective to selectivity and a safeguard against the failure to appreciate that instances of political contention are not independent events.

This chapter, divided into three sections, will therefore analyse how the decline of one period of activism in the 1960s, rather than spelling the end to North Italian regionalism, formed part of a longer process of abeyance. During this process, there was a continuity of regionalist discourse through a transmission of north Italian regionalist frames prior to the emergence of the regionalist leagues in the 1980s.

The first section will make use both of Ephraim Mizruchi’s abeyance theory and also Verta Taylor’s expansion of this theory and her examination of ‘abeyance structures’. These approaches help explain social movement decline whilst also accounting for continuity in discourse prior to a future wave of activism. The second section tests the theory analysed in section one with two separate case studies of the decline of the MARP and the MAB, examining also the continuity of their ideas in the following two decades. These case studies continue and complement the history of the MRAs which began in the previous chapter, focusing instead on the decline of the movements and their absorption into two larger political organisations. The

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566 Taylor, ‘Social movement continuity; The women’s movement in abeyance’, p.763.
567 Ibid.
third section analyses the repertoires of discourse and imagery at the centre of this continuity between the two upsurges of activism in Piedmont and Lombardy. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the significance of abeyance for the second wave of activism at the start of the 1980s, considering how the context of a changing social, political and economic climate in Italy would contribute to a reframing of the north Italian regionalist message.

2. Abeyance and Abeyance Structures: A theoretical framework

i. Movement decline and absorption

In order to analyse the relevance of abeyance for the dual phenomena of MARPismo/MABismo and leghismo it is necessary to establish first and foremost the nature of and variables involved in this process. Abeyance is a process which, according to Ephraim Mizruchi, the sociologist who coined the term enhances stability or change in society by integrating and placing marginal groups under the surveillance and control of functionaries in both institutionalised organisations and by control of peers in less formally organised groups…the process may be viewed as a buffer against diverse forms of deviance, including social protest.569

What is of particular interest to this study is, therefore, an attempt by institutions to absorb any social movement which poses a threat to the stability of society. Indeed, according to Mizruchi’s abeyance theory, ‘dissident marginal people’ need to be ‘controlled’ in order to ‘temporarily retain potential challengers to the status quo’, highlighting that ‘absorption and social control go hand in hand.’570 Mizruchi elaborated his theory through five separate case studies which focused on ‘Western monasticism, the medieval Beguinages for unattached women, bohemianism, compulsory apprenticeship and schooling and the American WPA writers’ and artists’ projects of the 1930s.’571 As stated by Turk in his review of Mizruchi’s work, each of these case studies ‘is found to have fitted uniquely the abeyance needs of a

570 Ibid., p.2.
particular social structure under greater or lesser pressure to change. Additionally, ‘each is shown to have had a more or less limited capacity to provide places for the surplus people eligible for absorption.’\(^{573}\)

This chapter will expand on the previous application of this theoretical framework by using a new case study of the MRAs in the 1960s, following a split which led to the seeming disappearance of the MARP and the MAB as they were underwent a process of absorption into the larger institutionalised organisations of the PSDI (Italian Social Democratic Party) and the DC (Christian Democrats) respectively in the early 1960s.

However, whilst I am using sociological theory to both complement the historical methodology behind and provide a theoretical framework for the content of this chapter, it should be noted from the outset that too rigid an application of Mizruchi’s abeyance theory would prove more of a hindrance than a help in understanding the absorption of the MARP and MAB by the PSDI and the DC. For example, Mizruchi’s model of abeyance organisations as merely ‘temporary institutional inventions’, whose sole purpose was that of absorbing dissident and marginal members of society cannot be applied to the PSDI and the DC which were political parties pursuing programmes with a myriad of objectives aside from forging agreements with dissidents.\(^{574}\) At the same time, however, the DC and the PSDI, through making electoral agreements and pacts with the MRAs, allowed the passage of members into their organisations and, therefore, did indeed contribute to social control by co-opting former dissident members to norms and behaviours regulated by their parties. These parties in turn acted as ‘holding’ organisations and contributed to the process of abeyance, absorption and institutionalization. As Mizruchi argues ‘these processes typically, although not always, occur without the awareness of those who participate in them or those who derive losses or benefits from them.’\(^{575}\)

The usefulness of Mizruchi’s abeyance theory in terms of this study is, therefore, in helping us understand the process of absorption and institutionalisation of members and ideas of the MARP and the MAB through the offering of ‘status vacancies’ i.e. the positions available in organisations in the PSDI and DC respectively in order to control potentially dissident members of society.\(^{576}\) It is no coincidence that the MRAs were absorbed after a disastrous election campaign in 1958 after which the movements began to decline; due to the fact that at

\(^{572}\) Ibid.

\(^{573}\) Ibid.


\(^{575}\) Ibid.

\(^{576}\) Ibid.
this point, there would potentially emerge a surplus marginal population inclined towards
dissident behaviour, the parties, the PSDI and the DC could offer more ‘status vacancies’ to
the former regionalist activists.

For the process of abeyance to work effectively, Mizruchi identified a number of
variables which ‘describe the relative capacity of an organisation, at a point in time and under
specified conditions, to absorb or expel people as external societal conditions change’. The
variables relevant specifically to this study are ‘inclusiveness’, ‘division of labour’,
‘stratification’ and ‘institutionalisation’. Each of these variables which form part of the
framework for the latter case studies deserve greater explanation.

The idea of ‘Inclusiveness’ refers to the willingness of organisations ‘to accept almost
anybody, regardless of the diverse social criteria.’\textsuperscript{577} This entails the larger organisation
therefore, being prepared to absorb the entirety of the membership of the dissident organisation
in order to control it and retain any potential challenges. For example, the DC and PSDI in
absorbing personnel, needed to show themselves willing to accept all members of the MRAs
whether they were leading members of the organising committee or grassroot cardholding
members.

Just as organisations must be willing to accept almost anybody, it is important for these
organisations to ensure that those who are absorbed are not expected to take on any significant
or important or senior roles, thus limiting the scope for advancement in the organisation and to
curb the spread of potentially dissident ideas. This relates to ‘division of labour’, which refers
to the ‘level of specialization of tasks within the organisation.’\textsuperscript{578} While a member of the
MARP or the MAB who joined the PSDI or DC might be expected to carry out the role of
communal councillor, they may not be expected to devise policy and there would be ‘low
expectations regarding the development of special skills’ to perform more important tasks.\textsuperscript{579}

According to Mizruchi, members who are to be absorbed should be expected to carry
out tasks which do not require any specialist knowledge of the organisation or in the words of
Mizruchi which ‘require skills that can be learned by the lowest common denominator’. This
is, according to Mizruchi due to the fact that

\textsuperscript{577} Ibid., p.26.
\textsuperscript{578} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{579} Mizruchi, \textit{Regulating Society: Marginality and social control in historical perspective}, p.124.
the motivation to become a permanent member of the organisation is less likely to emerge and the member who is being held in abeyance must not identify his or her future with that of the organisation; it must be sought in other contexts.\(^{580}\)

Mizruchi cited this variable as essential in the smooth-running of society and the transition of surplus populations from one holding group to the next. However, in terms of this study, what is important is the fact that this variable complements ‘inclusiveness’ in that in order to be willing to include almost anyone who appeals for either permanent or temporary membership, one must overlook the question of what special talents or capacities people have.\(^{581}\)

Organisations which are absorbing members often attract subversive elements of a dissident organisation, but at the same time ‘stratify’ their involvement so that any potential dissident views do not reach the upper echelons of this organisation. The variables of ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘division of labour’ are closely tied with that of ‘stratification’ which Mizruchi defines as limiting the ‘opportunities to succeed within the organisation and to receive rewards from it.’\(^{582}\) If a new member were to show themselves as fully committed they may be rewarded with progression through the organisation. To ensure a passive membership of the organisation in which the dissident and marginal members are kept from rising in the ranks and potentially spreading more dissident ideas, there should be limited upward mobility in the organisation to discourage permanent membership. Indeed, Mizruchi argues that for abeyance to work effectively, a member who is absorbed in an organisation should see themselves as a ‘sojourner’ and must be ‘kept from entering the ranks of the permanent members.’\(^{583}\) Stratification might involve a new member only being given a non-deciding vote on a party committee or not being put forward as a candidate in an electoral list. In this study I propose an extension to the variable of ‘stratification’ by suggesting that, paradoxically, by allowing members of the MRAs to maintain a controlled link with their previous dissident identity – the DC and the PSDI were able take ownership of this identity and ensure that previous members involvement with the absorbing organisation was limited. As will be

\(^{580}\) Ibid.
\(^{581}\) Ibid., p.46.
\(^{582}\) Ibid.
\(^{583}\) Ibid.
examined in greater detail below, although this variable was present in both the case of the MARP and the MAB, the success of it in terms of impeding new members progress in the organisations depended greatly on which movement was in question. This is closely linked to a further variable of ‘institutionalisation’ which relates to the ideas that

the abeyance process is enhanced when societal members believe that the ‘right thing to do’ under circumstances is to participate in the activities of those organisations that are absorbing personnel.  

This variable is perhaps the most important in terms of the MRAs as in order for dissident members to be institutionalised by thinking they are ‘doing the right thing’, it involved an ‘institutionalisation’ of regionalism itself, i.e. the adoption of regionalism in the party programmes of the DC and the PSDI, or at the very least, the promise to do so. Therefore, the variable of institutionalisation also refers in turn to the ‘the degree of legitimacy of the organisations in the eyes of the outside world’ in that the DC and the PSDI, had to be viewed by members of the MRAs as legitimate organisations in which regionalism could be pursued once they had shifted their allegiance.

While the above framework can help explain the decline of the MRAs in the 1960s and their absorption into the DC and PSDI, this only solves one piece of the puzzle regarding the abeyance process and its relation to north Italian regionalism. To address the issue of linkages between the two waves of activism, it is useful to note Mizruchi’s assertion that

organisations contributing to the abeyance process may be a source of social control and maintenance of the status quo, on the one hand, and a source of protest and change, on the other.

Therefore, in order to examine how absorption acted as a source of protest and change, it is necessary to engage with research which has evolved from Mizruchi’s theory and developed the concept of ‘abeyance structures.’

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584 Ibid., pp.26-27.  
ii. Abeyance structures

In terms of accounting for the apparent disappearance of North Italian regionalism following the decline of the MRAs in the 1960s, the concept of ‘social movement abeyance structures’ can help explain ‘how a mobilization potential [was] sustained despite ‘demobilization’. In his research on how neo-fascism sustained itself during a period of abeyance in post-war Italy, Veugelers identified a number of terms that overlap closely with ‘abeyance structures’ such as ‘submerged networks’, ‘halfway houses’, ‘free spaces’, ‘protected spaces’ and ‘sequestered social sites’. While space does not permit a full examination of this broad terminology, the important factor to remember is that each of these terms, to a varying extent ‘denote social networks, organisations or small scale settings beyond the direct control of the powerful that allow the communication of an oppositional culture. Thus, abeyance structures link one upsurge of activism and another through, according to Taylor

promoting the survival of activist networks, sustaining a repertoire of goals and tactics, and promoting a collective identity that offer participants a sense of mission and moral purpose.

As to what form these abeyance structures or organisations took in terms of the period which followed the absorption of the MRAs, I have identified two structures which can be applied to the MARP and the MAB. First, a ‘cadre of activists’ which operate as rump movements and, second, an inter-generational element of family; I also propose extending this second structure beyond family to involve also friendship and rivalry. The links between waves

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587 Veugelers, ‘Dissenting families and social movement abeyance: the transmission of neo-fascist frames in post-war Italy’, p.244.
589 Veugelers, ‘Dissenting families and social movement abeyance: the transmission of neo-fascist frames in post-war Italy’, p.244.
590 Taylor, ‘Social movement continuity; The women’s movement in abeyance’, p.762, (my italics).
of activism in terms of rump movements and inter-generational links of family, friendship and rivalry can be examined in more detail by referring to the genealogy chart in the appendix.

iii. A ‘cadre of activists’ (rump movements)

Following the absorption of social movements, one of the main effects of the abeyance process identified by Taylor is that these organisations do not necessarily disappear, but instead what remains is

a cadre of activists who create or find a niche for themselves. Such groups may have little impact in their own time and may contribute, however unwillingly, to maintenance of the status quo.\(^{591}\)

Regarding ‘maintenance of the status quo’, this is often as related to the context in which the activists are operating as with the actions themselves. Indeed, as I analyse in greater detail in the two case studies below, the rump movements that emerged in both Piedmont and Lombardy following the decline of the MARP and the MAB were confronted with ‘a non-receptive political and social environment.’\(^ {592}\) Nevertheless, what is important to recognise is not the success of these movements in electoral terms or in achieving institutional change, but that during this period of ‘relative hiatus’ these organisations developed ‘a battery of specialised tactics … [which became] … a part of the group’s repertoire of collective action and influence the subsequent range of actions available to future challenges.’\(^ {593}\) In her research on the women’s movement in the USA, Taylor comments that while the movement from 1945 to the mid-1960s was not successful in its own time … a more important question is: what consequences, if any, did the actions of feminists in this period have for the revitalised movement for gender equality in the late 1960s?\(^ {594}\)

\(^{591}\) Ibid., p.771.
\(^{592}\) Ibid., p.762.
\(^{593}\) Ibid., p.771.
\(^{594}\) Ibid., p.770.
The same question should be posed for the actions of the ‘cadres of activists’ in Piedmont and Lombardy during the 1960s and 1970s in terms of their effect on the ‘revitalised movements’ for regional autonomy, the regionalist leagues, in the 1980s. The importance of such rump movements is, thus, not that they provide any significant challenge at the time of their activism but that they ‘provide a legitimating base to challenge the status quo’ and can ‘be sources of protest and change’ in the future.  

iv. Family Friendship and Rivalry

With regard to family, Veugelers, in his research on neo-fascism, revealed the importance of family and inter-generational links in transmitting repertoires of discourse. He also raised the question of whether family can act as an abeyance structure by ‘harbouring a latent mobilization potential even when parents are not activists’. Veugelers drew on ‘a rare study of 21 Italians who belonged to neo-fascist groups’ in order to show ‘how families helped to transmit a neo-fascist potential during a period of abeyance.’ What played a vital role in the transmission of ideas was that ‘a minority of families dissented from the officially sanctioned memory of a unified national and patriotic resistance’ and taught ‘their children oppositional framings of history, society and politics.’ As will be examined in one of the case studies below, this was arguably the case in terms of the Lombard section of North Italian regionalism through the inter-generational link between Guido Calderoli, his son, Innocente and grandson, Roberto. Through these links, a ‘dissenting’ and ‘oppositional’ framing of Italian regional history may have been passed down through generations.

In the Piedmontese section of regionalism there exist no clear familial links between one period of activism and the other. Nonetheless, my research expands on Veugeler’s use of family as an abeyance structure by examining the role played by both friendship and rivalry between the previous and the new generation of regionalist activists; both of which helped transmit regionalist repertoires and promote the role of individuals in leghismo who had previously been active in the 1950s.

It should be noted from the outset that the two abeyance structures of rump movements on the one hand and friends and family and rivalry on the other in some cases overlapped. In

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595 Ibid., p.762.
596 Veugelers, ‘Dissenting families and social movement abeyance: the transmission of neo-fascist frames in post-war Italy’, p.244.
597 Ibid., p.242.
598 Ibid.
the case of Piedmont, for example, two figures in Piedmontese politics, Roberto Gremmo, who represented a new wave of activism and Toni Brodrero who had belonged to MARP, shared a close friendship and collaboration and it was as a result of this that they formed an integral part of a rump movement in the 1970s.

v. Transmission of Repertoires

The aforementioned abeyance structures allowed for a continuity of regionalist activism and a transmission of pre-existing repertoires without which the second wave of activism would have had little to draw upon. Indeed, the importance of the MRAs is that although they did not enjoy a particularly large membership or have a significant impact on national politics, they nevertheless constructed a significant pool of resources which leghismo was able to exploit following the abeyance period.  

During abeyance, according to Polletta and Jasper, these ‘dissenting ideas and identities may be transmitted through public discourse or encoded in jokes, songs, folklore and conversation.’  

Indeed, many of these methods of transmitting ideas were present in the abeyance period between the MRAs and leghismo; however, regarding these two waves of regionalist activism, further means of posters, imagery, political discourse, symbols and myths should also be taken into consideration. When considering these repertoires, it will become evident that ‘the array of collective actions that a movement develops to sustain itself should influence the goals and tactics adopted by the same movement in subsequent mass mobilisations.’

Having established the theoretical framework of abeyance, the following section consists of two case studies which examine the process of absorption of the MARP and the MAB. This will allow an analysis of the subsequent abeyance structures and the repertoires of images and discourse transmitted by these organisations.

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599 Ibid., p.244.
3. Case Studies

The purpose of the following two case studies is two-fold. First, they examine how the MRAs were absorbed in the early to mid-1960s. Second, they analyse how this period of decline led to the transition towards a second wave of activism. As noted in the previous section, a key part of the abeyance process is the absorption of dissident movements into larger organisations. Both MRAs can be considered dissident because they campaigned against the apparent post-war consensus of the continuation of a centralist institutional framework. Regarding the process of absorption, the reason behind the MRAs’ decision to enter mainstream political parties lay in both the personal ambitions of certain individuals in the movement and was also inspired by the fact that the MRAs had been in decline since their initial 1956 victories. Despite the fact that the MARP, as highlighted in the previous chapter, enjoyed a brief run of success in 1957, the MRAs had never managed to sustain any long-term political challenge following their victory in the 1956 communal elections. Additionally, the split in the votes at the time of the 1958 elections also damaged the prospects of the North Italian regionalist movement. It should be noted, however, that just as the histories of the MARP and the MAB were different, so were the processes of abeyance, including the fact that they did not undergo this process at the same time nor were they absorbed by the same movement. Whether it was the key objective of the parties or not, the DC and the PSDI undertook a ‘process of holding and absorbing personnel.’ The following two case studies will analyse how this absorption took place for both the MARP and the MAB, and how abeyance structures allowed for the continuity of discourse in the following decades.

Case study 1 – MARP

i. Movement decline and absorption – The MARP and The PSDI

Inclusiveness, institutionalization, stratification, division of labour

Following the 1958 elections, the MARP experienced a brief revival at the 1960 local elections, receiving just over 19,000 votes. This can be seen as evidence that while Turin was willing to trust the MARP to hold administrative positions at a local level, loyalty to more

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602 Mizruchi, Regulating Society: Marginality and social control in historical perspective, p.20.
mainstream parties outweighed any desire to vote for regionalists at a national level. This result, however, was to prove to be the MARP’s swansong as its already small influence on the communal council was halved from four to two councillors. It, therefore, became increasingly difficult for the autonomists to make their voice heard.

On the other hand, the PSDI (The Italian Social Democratic Party) had seen their vote in Turin increase by 2% from 1954 and had increased its council members from 6 to 8. In 1962, plans were put into motion to merge the MARP with the PSDI via a series of talks between the two elected MARP councilors, former ARI members Dr Germano Benzi, and Dr Timoteo Nobile and the PSDI exponent Guido Secreto.604

In terms of inclusiveness, the PSDI had various motives to be as open as possible to allowing a convergence with the MARP; it was felt that it would allow them to recoup votes which had been lost to the MARP’s political offer. The MARP had attracted votes from Piedmontese entrepreneurs, small businessholders and shopkeepers who, according to archival records, had previously been loyal to the social-democrats.605 Additionally, on a more administrative note, it was argued that the MARP’s headquarters would serve as a perfect location as a new headquarters for the PSDI in Turin.606 With this in mind, the PSDI showed itself willing to incorporate all 2,000 of the MARP’s members or sympathisers whilst also assuming all of the movement’s debts.607

Benzi and Nobile were able to sell this ‘institutionalisation’ of the movement to its members, by framing this decision as ‘the right thing to do’, citing the fact that the PSDI had recently added regional autonomy to its political programme, thus institutionalising the issue of regional reform.608 One key part of the stratification of the involvement of MARP’s members of the PSDI is related to the ownership and rights surrounding the MARP symbol which passed over to the PSDI when MARP converged with the larger movement. This meant that the symbol could not be used without the PSDI’s permission and so by presenting a list of candidates under a MARP symbol, the PSDI were ensuring that those members who had been absorbed were encouraged to maintain autonomist identity at a merely symbolic level and thus remain undercommitted to the larger organisation.609

605 Ibid.
606 Ibid.
607 Ibid.
609 ‘Il MARP bis non intende modificare il simbolo’, La Stampa, 29th October 1964.
Records show that the MARP’s demands of four seats on the PSDI’s executive committee to accommodate the four key exponents of the movement were ‘considered excessive’ by the PSDI’s representatives, who eventually conceded just two.\textsuperscript{610} This may demonstrate an attempt to ensure a smooth working of the abeyance process by encouraging these members to see themselves as ‘sojourners’ or ‘temporary members.’\textsuperscript{611} The assignment of executive committee posts also overlaps with ‘division of labour’ as MARP were granted one place on the executive committee with the right to vote and other two posts in the provincial council but only with a consultative and non-deciding vote, (both of these latter posts would be assigned to Nobile and Benzi). However, the PSDI was only partially successful in this endeavour. While Nobile would not play an important role in politics, regionalist or otherwise after the 1960s, Benzi would go on to play a role in the Torinese PSDI in the years to come and would in the 1970s attempt to use his position to assist a newly emerging Piedmontese rump regionalist movement.\textsuperscript{612}

Divisions between former ARI and MARP members in the early 1960s between those who wished to keep the movement alive and those who wished to see it merge with the PSDI, contributed to the movement’s decline and absorption and sowed the seeds for the emergence of rump movements. Germano Benzi, Timoteo Nobile and Achille Barricco initiated the period of abeyance by promoting the convergence of MARP with the PSDI in 1964 while more intransigent members of the MARP such as Franco Bruno, and Antonio ‘Toni’ Brodrero went on to form rump movements in the 1960s and 1970s with varying degrees of success. These rump movements are the focus of the following paragraphs.

ii. Abeyance structure (1) Rump Movements - MARP Bis, Federassion Piemonteisa & L’UOPA

In the 1964 local elections, there was a dispute over two almost identical MARP symbols presented for two separate lists of candidates. This dispute was the result of the first rump movement to emerge after the merger between the MARP and the PSDI which had caused an immediate split in the regionalist movement as can be noted more clearly in the genealogy chart. Franco Bruno, who had been instrumental in the MARP’s success and in changing the

\textsuperscript{610}Notes by the Turin police commissioner (untitled), in Fasc.\textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese} Vol.1.

\textsuperscript{611}Ibid.

course of the movement after expelling Enrico Villarboito, attempted to present a MARP list – which became popularly known as *il MARP bis* - at the 1964 election. 613 It was ruled as illegal due to the fact that ‘the only group which [could] use the symbol and current lists of the MARP [was] the PSDI.’ 614 Bruno’s reaffirmation of north Italian regionalism ensured a survival of regionalist discourse and activism during the early to mid 1960s as he stated that ‘the reasons which brought the movement into existence in 1955 are still valid today’ and Bruno urged MARP’s members to reject the aforementioned attempt by Nobile and Benzi to merge the MARP with the PSDI. 615 Various meetings were held by Bruno and his rump movement and the ideal of regional autonomy was discussed on these occasions. It is relevant to note, however, that this was still framed in the context of campaigning for the ‘ordinary region’ as he stated that ‘the movement still had a key raison d’être in battling for the implementation of the region.’ 616

With the implementation of the 1970 regional reforms, however, this regionalist frame shifted towards demands for a ‘special statute’ and would see the emergence of a new rump movement named *Federassion Piemonteisa* which involved another of the MARP’s former members, Toni Brodrero. This organisation represented a radicalisation of previous demands for activation of the region and instead now aimed at

the implementation of a special statute, maximum local autonomy for the alpine communities…the provision of subsidies to all cultural organisations which deal with traditions and folklore of the Piedmontese people and encourage the teaching of Piedmontese language, literature and history. 617

Part of this proposal also marked the beginning of a new element in Piedmontese regionalism which was the appropriation of the *Carta di Chivasso* signed by the partisans of the Valle Valdesi in 1943, and also of the *Repubblica Partigiana* of Ossola. Both of these historic events were exploited to claim historical legitimacy for regional autonomy. 618 This was

613 *Il MARP bis non intende modificare il simbolo*, *La Stampa* 29th October 1964.
614 Ibid.
616 Ibid.
617 Brodrero and Greman, *L’oppressione Culturale Italiana in Piemonte*, p.11.
an indication that the Constitutional statutes were no longer considered sufficient, and that the myths of the Resistance were called upon to play a key role in Piedmontese regionalism.

Indeed, Roberto Gremmo, part of a new wave of Piedmontese autonomists who had cut his political teeth as part of Marxist student groups during 1968, stated that ‘the myth of the *Repubblica Partigiana* was reclaimed by me … with l’UOPA (L’Unione Ossolana per l’Autonomia).’\(^{619}\) L’UOPA can, therefore, be seen as another rump movement and its significance, according to Cachafeiro, lies in the fact that ‘the visibility of the movement acquired at the local level brought about the solidarity of autonomists in Piedmont.’\(^{620}\) Also l’UOPA, whilst having its origins in Piedmont was not restricted to this region but instead represented a connection between the Piedmontese and Lombard autonomists. Cachafeiro observes that this represented ‘a transversal moment to all political parties … in the Lombard region, [Umberto] Bossi launched in the province of Varese, l’Unione Nord-Occidentale per I Laghi pre-Alpini.’\(^{621}\) The significance of this ‘transversal’ moment is that it represents a continuity of the collaboration between Piedmontese and Lombard movements which has roots in the 1950s’ links between the MARP and the MAB. Also, the fact that Bossi - a hugely important figure in the Lega’s success - was first active in a movement which had roots in Piedmont can be seen as a testament to the historical importance of this region in terms of developing autonomist ideas.

While Piedmontese regionalism was certainly distancing itself from the ideals which had seen its first political formation in the MARP in the 1950s, there were important organisational links between new radical actors such as Gremmo and his predecessors. Roberto Gremmo, in our interview, criticized the MARP’s leaders as being of little political talent; however, he reserved praise for former MARP councilor, Germano Benzi who would later go on to serve as President of the regional council between 1980 and 1985.\(^{622}\) Gremmo, however, had a particular reason to sing Benzi’s praises as the latter had proved sympathetic to one of the proposals of *Federassion Piemonteisa* regarding the teaching of dialect in schools, thus showing how the process of abeyance had led not only to the absorption of personnel but also of ideas.\(^{623}\) However, more significant was Gremmo’s relationship with Toni Brodrero. The

\(^{619}\) R.Gremmo, interviewed by George Newth via email, February 2016.


\(^{621}\) Ibid., p.76

\(^{622}\) R. Gremmo, interviewed by George Newth via email, February 2016.

\(^{623}\) Brodrero and Gremmo *L’oppressione Culturale Italiana in Piemonte*, p.11.
friendship and collaboration between the two would act as a significant abeyance structure as would Brodrero’s eventual defection to Gremmo’s rivals.

iii. **Abeyance structure (2) Family, friendship, rivalry**

In terms of friendship, Roberto Gremmo appears to have formed two important links with former members of the MARP. The first, and perhaps most significant of the friendships with MARP activists was with Toni Brodrero. The second was with the MARP’s founder, Enrico Villarboito which, although not resulting in any significant electoral consequences, nevertheless represented a collaboration between older and newer strands of Piedmontese regionalism. In contrast to the 1950s’ regionalist movements, Gremmo was instead interested in focusing on a bolder and more identifiable Piedmontese ‘nation’ rather than region.

In terms of his links with the MARP, during our interview, Gremmo stated that ‘Toni Brodrero, who formed a part of the MARP, for years collaborated with me’, thus indicating that he had been influenced by the ideas of a former MARP member. Therefore, as the genealogy chart demonstrates, Brodrero forms a key inter-generational link between the first and second waves of north Italian regionalist activism taking part in numerous regionalist movements from the 1950s until the 1990s. As noted in the previous chapter, Gremmo had used the acronym of M.A.R.P for his organisation *Movimento Autonomista Rinascita Piemonteisa* and this was likely influenced by Brodrero’s activism in the 1950s MRA.

Throughout the 1970s, Gremmo collaborated with Brodrero and, thus, ensured the continuity of regionalist discourse. In spite of this, asked whether he considered himself to be an heir to the MARP, Gremmo responded ‘only partially’. This is due to Gremmo’s disagreement with the MARP’s stance towards the Italian nation-state. Whereas the MARP’s regionalism was conducive to national unity, Gremmo’s attitude towards Italy was, to say the least, ambivalent as he viewed Piedmont as a lost nation which had been greatly disadvantaged by the process of unification. Although Brodrero (also known as ‘Barba Toni’) had been a member of the MARP which had promoted national unity, he acted as co-author of *l’Oppressione Culturale Italiana in Piemonte* in 1978 with Gremmo, which was instrumental in shifting the frame of Piedmontese regionalism towards a more radical neo-federalist and even separatist position. Therefore, whereas in the 1950s, the MARP – of which Brodrero had been a member - had emphasised the role which a more autonomous Piedmont Region could

play in strengthening the Italian state, Gremmo and Brodrero’s work of the 1970s emphasised instead that Piedmont was a lost nation, oppressed by Italy.625

In 1987, Piedmontese folk singer Gipo Farassino broke away from Gremmo’s Union Piemontese to form his own movement, Piemont Autonomista in protest against Gremmo’s authoritarian style of leadership. Following this, Brodrero abandoned Gremmo to join Farassino’s movement. Gremmo has stated that ‘the separation of Brodrero, who had shared with me the first autonomist battles, provoked an immense pain.’626 The significance of Brodrero’s defection lies in the fact that another member of this new faction was Pietro Molino, who had also been a MARP leafletter in the 1950s.627 Both men would later become representatives for Lega Nord Piemont and form a direct link of personnel between the MARP and the Lega as individuals who had participated in the MARP in the 1950s, something which is demonstrated more clearly in the genealogy chart.628

Following this defection, Brodrero’s importance in sustaining the ideas of Piedmontese regionalism can be seen in an article published in the mouthpiece of Piemont Autonomista in 1987. In this article Piedmontese regionalist activist, Mario Borsotti paid homage to the MARP arguing that in the 1950s it had ‘conquered a worthy space in the region’ and given ‘shape and form to Piedmontese pride’. Borsotti went on to state that there had followed a period of ‘apparent silence’ during which

The basic concepts of autonomy and federalism, held up by ethnicity and language became popular again thanks to the important cultural figure of Barba Toni Brodrero … the presence of the magazine Assion Piemonteisa of Luigi Cerchio and the continued action of ‘Barba Toni’ that had allowed the autonomist ideal to be re-proposed.629

Borsotti was conveying a key aspect of abeyance in mentioning the ‘apparent silence’ and the ‘reproposal’ or ‘reframing’ of the autonomist ideal. By citing members such as Brodrero he was able to claim that Piemont Autonomista was a natural heir to the MARP,

stating that ‘the foundation of Piemont Autonomista … demonstrates that the seed, planted 35 years ago by the MARP was not in vain but instead has developed like never before.’

In the same article, Borsotti also defended former MARP leader, Enrico Villarboito, asserting that the MARP’s greatest mistake had been to expel him in the first place. If this had been an attempt to attract Villarboito to Piemont Autonomista it was to prove unsuccessful. Following the split in Piedmontese leghismo in 1987, Villarboito actually came out in support of Roberto Gremmo’s movement and endorsed his plan for the creation of a separate ‘North-West alpine state of Piedmont, Savoy, Delfinato, Provenza, Liguria and Valle d’Aosta, with a separate Piedmontese constitution.’

Representing a departure from the principles of national unity promoted by the MARP, Enrico Villarboito’s collaboration with Gremmo was an attempt to merge the ideals of his two previous movements, examined in the previous chapter: the Movimento Autonomie Regionali-Movimento Azione e Rinnovamento (the MAR), which had proposed the federation of autonomist movements across the peninsula and Servire Coscientemente Ogni Pubblica Amministrazione (the SCOPA) which had instead been focused solely on Piedmont. At the same time, by joining the fight against Alleanza Nord, Villarboito can be seen to be continuing his battle against MARPadiana list which had in 1958 similarly tried to federate other North Italian regionalist movements. Villarboito, therefore, forms a vital inter-generational link between the two waves of activism, illustrated in the genealogy chart. Proposing ‘a Piedmontese grouping that unified all the movements and associations that wanted autonomy for the subalpine region’ Villarboito stated the ‘need to organise a unitary electoral force which attract[ed] the votes of whoever want[ed] to battle for Piedmont, its language and its traditions’. Gremmo stated that in spite of being ‘more intransigent’ than Villarboito he wanted to be the ‘first to say yes’ to this Piedmontese grouping and with Villarboito opened up a section in Pinerolo.

Therefore, on the one hand, Gremmo’s friendship with Brodrero in the 1970s had acted as an abeyance structure in the transmission of both old and new repertoires surrounding regionalist discourse. On the other hand, Brodrero’s defection to join another former MARPista, Pietro Molino, played a part in a rivalry involving a new collaboration between Enrico Villarboito and Gremmo and the continuation of debates which had begun in the 1950s.

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630 Ibid.
632 Ibid.
Case study 2 - MAB

i. Movement decline and absorption – MAB and DC

Inclusiveness, institutionalization, Stratification, Division of labour

In terms of the process of absorption which took place with the MAB in 1960, it is necessary to place this in the context of the preceding 1956 election victory of the Bergamascan autonomists which had depended on the fact that Guido Calderoli ‘was closely linked to the clergy in Bergamo.’ His son, Innocente Calderoli stated that in the elections of 1956, rather than voting for the DC, ‘many priests of Val Brembana asked people to vote for my father.’ Indeed, both Guido Calderoli and Aldo Rizzi had distributed materials and propaganda to priests in the hope that they would spread the message of regional autonomy.

A section of the MAB had, therefore, always attempted to walk a tight-rope between loyalty to the political subculture of Christian Democracy in the region whilst at the same time offering a political alternative to the status quo. This was evident through messages on their posters which read ‘if you vote for our list you will not be betraying the party which you are a member of.’ The strong implication was that the DC subculture would not be threatened by the MAB but rather the MAB would accommodate the DC’s demands.

In 1956, Gianfranco Gonella replaced Calderoli in the communal council after the latter withdrew for health reasons. Giuseppe Sala, when explaining the reason why his father-in-law, Gonella, had participated in the MAB stated that the movement had originally ‘adopted a characteristic of Christian Democracy i.e. to claim the importance of local autonomy’ stating that ‘historically, the Popular Party (of Don Luigi Sturzo) was born with this purpose.’ This is particularly relevant when considering the process of absorption. According to Anselmo Freddi, ‘with seven votes against one it was decided to put on the table cordial talks with the Christian Democrats of Bergamo.’ Gonella was one of the three members of the MAB who, alongside Vigilio Caffi and Anselmo Freddi in 1960, decided that the DC was the party which

634 Ibid.
637 Giuseppe Sala, interviewed by George Newth. June, 2016, Bergamo, Italy.
could act as the best vehicle for regional interests in Bergamo and Lombardy in general. On 13th October 1960, he and his colleagues penned their decision in the following way

The undersigned, are convinced today that even the parties which are ideologically opposed to regional government recognise the necessity of regional autonomy and that in the natural environment of the Christian Democrats, it is possible to finally pursue and activate institutional autonomy, putting an end to the dualism of belonging to two political organisations.639

At the root of these talks was an agreement that ‘in exchange for renouncing the autonomist struggle, the MAB’s key exponents would be welcomed into the DC list.’640 Two key variables are at work here in the absorption of the MAB. The first was the institutionalisation of MAB members such as Gonella who believed that the ‘right thing to do’ for regional autonomy was to merge with the DC. One of these members – it is not clear who, but it may well have been Gonella due to his apparent loyalty to the DC – had even before the 1956 elections written an article in support of merging with the DC rather than presenting a separate MAB list. The reason for adhering to the DC was that the party had, in some activists’ eyes, become more open to the idea of regional autonomy. In 1960, the DC ‘printed a brochure entitled “We want the Region”’, which Guido Calderoli attributed to pressure from the MAB’s propaganda in the region.641

In the results of the communal council elections in 1960, there were two acronyms beside Gianfranco Gonella’s name, ‘DC’ followed by ‘MAB’ in parentheses.642 The fact that Gonella was able to keep his identity as an autonomist with the MAB title beside that of the DC is in stark contrast with the rest of his Christian Democrat colleagues in the communal council who had no such other affiliations listed. This can be viewed as being in accordance with the second variable of ‘stratification’ since by offering Gonella this dual identity the DC was in turn limiting any upward mobility in the organisation on the one hand, whilst on the other hand ensuring his absorption by the larger organisation. While Gonella’s two MAB

639 Ibid.
640 Ibid.
colleagues Freddi and Caffi had also stood as candidates in the election, only Gonella won a seat as a DC-MAB candidate in 1960 on the Communal Council.

Regarding Gianfranco Gonella, neither his position as communal councillor in itself, nor any testament given by his son-in-law Giuseppe Sala, offer any significant detail on what tasks he was required to carry out. His absence from the communal council in 1964 might simply be down to a lack of votes or of personal choice not to participate; however, it may also suggest that the tasks which he was expected to carry out were not essential to the party and his role in the Bergamascan DC was a disposable one.

ii. Abeyance structures (1) Rump Movements – The UAI and Stella Alpina

Just as was the case with the MARP and the subsequent opposition to the merger with the PSDI from the majority of its membership, it is evident that following the decision to merge with the DC, there also remained in Bergamo ‘a cadre of activists who create[d] or f[ound] a niche for themselves’ in new movements. In the longer term, this also allowed for a continuation of the autonomist ideal and of regionalist activism beneath the surface. Anselmo Freddi states that ‘four of the seven’ autonomists after abandoning their title of Mabisti (or Marpisti) did not opt to join the DC’s list, but chose instead to ‘assume the new name of Autonomisti.’ This change of tack was evidently unexpected as Freddi notes that it was met ‘with the extreme and justified surprise’ of those who had proposed joining the DC. This rump movement formed by Calderoli and Gavazzeni presented a list of candidates for the 1960 provincial council elections but not for the communal council. In a sign of breaking away from the previous formation of the MAB, this rump movement changed its symbol from the slave breaking free of chains to one of the local bell tower or ‘il campanile.’ This can be seen to reflect the autonomists identification with ‘campanalismo’ or parochialism and the fact that as Calderoli had once stated, parochialism was a ‘point of departure for true patriotism.’

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643 Taylor Social movement continuity; The women’s movement in abeyance, American Sociological Review (p.762).
646 A.Freddi, Breve storia del MAB, pp.20-21.
This rump movement would instead continue to oppose the DC and later become the *Unione Autonomisti d’Italia* (UAI). The significance of this split is that the UAI was led by Ugo Gavazzeni, who had won a provincial seat for the MAB in 1956. With Gonella having represented the MAB in the communal council and then signed an agreement with the DC, Gavazzeni’s rump movement represented a division at the very top of the MAB. The UAI, in its constitution, represented a continuation of the regionalist programme promoted by its predecessor, the MAB i.e. arguing for the activation of the regional statutes written into the Constitution and professing the supremacy of Italian unity. Posters produced by the movement, however, also ensured a continuity of an anti-political and anti-southern discourse throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the UAI’s Constitution claimed that the movement would be representing ‘Autonomists of Italy’ rather than just of Lombardy, the fact that in the 1968 elections, a UAI list was presented in only four provinces, two of which were Bergamo and Brescia, shows the predominantly Lombard-centric aspect of this movement. Furthermore, the propaganda released by this movement referred only to these two regions.\(^{647}\) Despite this focus on Lombardy, the UAI would ally itself to the Sud-Tiroler Volkspartei (SVP) entitled *La Stella Alpina*. In claiming that this list represented a ‘logical continuity between the MAB, the MARPadania and the UAI’, Gavazzeni himself pointed to his own involvement in all of these preceding movements.\(^{648}\) Furthermore, another figure who formed a link between the movements was the aforementioned Piedmontese activist Toni Brodrero who provides evidence of how Lombard and Piedmontese regionalist movements continued to collaborate in the 1960s.

The experience of the *Stella Alpina* and Gavazzeni’s and Brodrero’s attempts to put themselves forward as candidates demonstrates the continuation and even intensification of an environment of underlying hostility to regional autonomy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Most indicative of this is that, during the *Stella Alpina*'s electoral campaign, their candidates failed to gain any sympathy for their autonomist cause. When they spoke, shouts of ‘Italia, Italia’ began to echo throughout the square. At his first speech, Gavazzeni faced an extremely hostile reception and was welcomed by insults ranging from ‘assassin’ to ‘thief’ and reportedly had to leave under police protection.\(^{649}\) The patriotic spirit which opposed any regionalist attempt to enter politics was also seen with the emergence of ‘Tricolour Committee for the

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\(^{649}\) Boulliaud and DeMatteo, ‘Autonomismo e leghismo dal 1945 ad oggi’, p. 44.
defence of Italy’s Borders’ (Comitato Tricolore per la difesa dei Confini d’Italia) which ‘put forward a communiqué deploying the presence of the Stella Alpina list.’

Gremmo claims that the former Marpista, Brodrero, had told him that the reason for his separation from Union Piemonteisa, and defection to Piemont Autonomista was due to the fear of not gathering enough widespread support with memories in his mind still fresh of ‘the unsuccessful attempt in 1968 to present a Stella Alpina list in the Valle Cuneesi.’ Brodrero’s unsuccessful attempt to organise a Stella Alpina list in the province of Cuneo was symptomatic of a doomed electoral campaign in general in which the UAI ‘managed to speak, but without making themselves heard.’ The UAI’s experience highlights some important difficulties faced by the movement related to its lack of ability to mobilise support due to both its choice of partners and also ‘the current conditions in the State they challenge.’

It should be noted that the UAI was one of many autonomist movements which sought alliances with groups committed to violent means. As Boulliaud and DeMatteo accurately observe, the UAI, allying itself with the SVP and, thus, ‘using the electoral symbol of a group which in those years pursued a political struggle with terrorist actions, probably presented more electoral disadvantages than advantages.’

Despite this disastrous experience, the UAI survived into the 1970s and was able to provide not only a continuity of anti-political discourse through their production of posters but also develop a radicalisation of their political message. Following the 1970s’ regional reforms a poster was produced which saw the use of terms ‘Padania’ and ‘Padanians’ to denote a North-Italian identity. While pledges were made to ‘defend Padanian work and Padanian traditions’, there was also a promise to fight for ‘greater participation of Padanians in regional concorsi’. Aside from domestic factors, however, were developments in European politics and the growing political ties between countries in the EEC which influenced the content of this poster. The poster called for a federation of the peoples of a united Europe, including a protection of the minority languages and their teaching in schools. In this sense, the UAI was talking of a Europe of the Regions even before the concept had officially emerged after the evolution of the European Economic Community into the European Union. Gremmo’s

652 Boulliaud and DeMatteo, ‘Autonomismo e leghismo dal 1945 ad oggi’, p.44.
653 Sawyers and Meyer ‘Missed Opportunities: Social Movement Abeyance and Public Policy’, p.188.
654 Boulliaud and DeMatteo, ‘Autonomismo e leghismo dal 1945 ad oggi’, p.44.
observation that ‘the autonomist groups which were born after the emergence of regional government in Italy had a European federalist model’ thus appears to be quite accurate.656

iii. Abeyance structure

Family, friendship and rivalry

While Ugo Gavazzeni played an important role in the abeyance structure of a ‘cadre of activists’ which emerged following the absorption of the MAB, in terms of inter-generational links between the movements, fellow MAB activist and founder, Guido Calderoli was also extremely important in providing a link between the two waves of activism. This is reflected in an account of the history of the Lega Lombarda between 1979 and 1989. Umberto Bossi himself notes the importance of the Calderoli family name in forming the Bergamascan section and also the continuing activism of both Guido Calderoli’s son, Innocente, and his grandson Roberto, of whom Innocente was the uncle, not father. According to Bossi, in 1985, towards the end of June

the first meeting of the Lega Lombarda Bergamo section was held at the house of Innocente Calderoli…it should be emphasised that the Calderoli’s are well-known in Bergamo and that the grandfather of Roberto was the founder of Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco which in the 1950s campaigned on behalf of Bergamo, for the freedom of the North from Roman oppression.657

Bossi claims that Innocente Calderoli ‘gathered four people at his house, including his nephew Roberto Calderoli’ and that in the coming years, ‘the Lega Lombarda became well-rooted in Bergamo.’658 This is evident in the results of the communal elections in 1990, when Roberto Calderoli, amongst other Lega Lombarda candidates was elected to the Bergamo communal council.659

It is worth remembering that it is in Bossi’s interest to emphasise the historical role of the Calderolis in order to provide his movement with historical legitimacy. Bossi at times

656 Roberto Gremmo, interviewed by George Newth via email, February 2016.
658 Ibid.
exaggerates and distorts the role played by Guido Calderoli who was not the only founder of the MAB, and in fact handed over his seat to a fellow member shortly after winning; both of these facts are omitted by Bossi. It is also interesting to note that Bossi’s account makes no mention of the deal that the MAB made with the DC and instead attributes the movement’s decline to aggressive tactics from the local neo-fascist party, the MSI – something which is again absent from all available historical accounts of the movement. However, just because Bossi has his own political agenda, it does not make his comments regarding the importance of the Calderolis untrue. Certainly, Guido Calderoli’s importance was in his role in transmitting information as a prolific writer of propaganda and articles and which would later be recycled by the Lega.

This importance is also underlined by Giuseppe Sala, the son-in-law of Gianfranco Gonella, who notes that in the Calderolis there was a ‘family tradition which helped push the movement forward between the two periods.’ Sala recounted his father-in-law’s observation that the early leghisti were continuing the campaign launched by the MAB in the 1950s in opposition to Roman centralism and the party system and recalled how Roberto Calderoli in his early electoral campaigns for the Lega, made references to his grandfather’s role in regional autonomy in the 1950s. Sala also claimed that Roberto Calderoli’s father, Giuseppe had no real interest in regional autonomy which, crucially as Veugelers notes, does not necessarily impede transmission of ideas. Even if Giuseppe Calderoli was not a convinced autonomist, this would not have stopped his brother Innocente or his son Roberto from reading Guido Calderoli’s writings. Of the ideas present in these writings, some were adopted, and some discarded. Many of the ideas that Guido Calderoli put forward regarding the unity of the Italian nation would later be rejected by his grandson and by the Lega; however, at the same time, ideas regarding Roman centralism and anti-southern discourse were both adopted and adapted by the leghisti.

661 G.Sala, interviewed by George Newth, June, 2016, Bergamo, Italy.
662 Ibid.
664 G.Sala, interviewed by George Newth, Bergamo, Italy, June 2016.
4. Regionalist Repertoires

While the above section has dealt with the MRAs separately in examining the abeyance structures, in terms of the regionalist messages, there was an overlap and inter-play between the MRAs which would provide the basis for and influence the second wave of regionalism. When looking at these repertoires, it is helpful to refer to the use of imagery, posters and slogans on the one hand and on the other hand poetry and essays. In this second example, the format of the regionalist newspaper played a particularly important role.

i. Posters, images, slogans

One clear element of continuity from the 1950s regionalist movements to the 1980s represented in posters and images is the executive and populist style of leadership. Throughout the 1980s, the various leagues were all led by a single domineering figure, be it Umberto Bossi in the Lega Lombarda or Roberto Gremmo in Union Piemonteis who both claimed to be representing the voice of the people against the political elite. This had previously been embodied in the 1950s by Enrico Villarboito. One reason behind Villarboito’s expulsion from the MARP was in part his domineering attitude and his determination to place himself at the centre of the movement whilst simulataneously lacking the ability or political nous to bring about electoral success. Villarboito’s attempts to stamp his personal authority on the regionalist movement is something which can be compared with the executive approach taken by both Roberto Gremmo and Umberto Bossi. (FIG 3) In particular, Villarboito’s use of his name and his image at the centre of the symbols of his movement was replicated by Bossi in the 1990s and 2000s.

One of the most famous items of Lega propaganda in the 1990s was a poster entitled ‘Così No!’ (‘Not Like This’) which showed a pained-looking Lombard hen laying golden eggs into a basket held by a distastefully caricatured Roman matron.665 (FIG 4) This poster was subsequently one of the most reproduced images of the Lega throughout the early 1990s. In a correspondence between Aldo Rizzi and Guido Calderoli in 1959, Rizzi praises his colleague for the work, stating that ‘it could not be more perfect’ and urges him ‘not to add any more regions, for now’.666 This plea to keep the poster solely about Lombardy is significant, as it

indicates that Rizzi and Calderoli wished to maintain a Lombard identity in spite of being part of the MARPadania alliance examined in the previous chapter. It was, indeed, not until the recycling of this image, that regions other than Lombardy were printed on the poster as is seen in the use of the poster by Lega Nord Piemont in 1991.667

While several accounts prior to this study have already traced origins of this poster to the MAB, what has not been noted until now is that it is highly likely that Calderoli had taken inspiration from the propaganda efforts of the MAB’s larger sister movement the MARP. In the build up to the 1956 local elections, the Piedmontese autonomists released a similar image of a Roman matron, this time taking the form of a ‘sorceress siren’ (maliarda sirena). She is depicted as compelling a hard-working Piedmontese worker to participate in the age-old ritual of throwing coins into the Trevi Fountain; however, not with the traditional purpose of bringing good luck, but to support various state entities. The parallels between the two images from the 1950s are striking, as both posters play on the stereotypical dichotomy of a hard-working North and a greedy, lazy ‘southernised’ central state. This southern element was particularly emphasised by the MARP’s poster which refers to the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Fund for the South) draining the hard-working North of its resources. Such an image was reproduced on a number of occasions by the MARP. Therefore, although it was Guido Calderoli who designed the Hen with the Golden Egg, the MARP had previously provided numerous examples of the anti-tax, anti-southern and anti-Roman framework on which the poster was based.

A further example of how imagery promoted by the Lega has been influenced by the MRAs can be seen in another similar set of posters which depict a hard-working north being sucked dry by the parasitic south. Again, the first of these images was produced by the MARP, and it was later adapted by the MAB. All images depict the North being either drained or devoured by the centralist state. However, in the case of the Lega, they appear to have abandoned the imagery of the wolf, opting instead for the image of a southern Mafioso to represent Rome whilst also employing Roman dialect to emphasise the juxtaposition between North and South. Nevertheless, the similarities between the images once again show a key link between the movements. (FIG 5) Similar parallels related to the perceived parasitic nature of Rome are also revealed in a comparison between propaganda released by the MARP in 1958 and Roberto Gremmo’s Union Piemonteisa some 30 years later which show a frustrated Piedmontese citizen with empty pockets, their funds having been siphoned off by excessive

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taxation. (FIG 6) Further examples of parallels in posters can be seen in representations of the Roman centralism suffocating the northern voice both in the 1950s and the 1990s. (FIG 7)

The idea of a North enslaved by the South can be further examined through the observation of three separate posters which also reveal a development of the idea of northern slavery and to varying degrees invoke the idea of a separate ‘Padanian’ state. These posters reveal both key crossovers and contrasts. Starting with a poster released by the Lega following its declaration of Padania, the imagery used draws heavily on the posters released by both the MAB and the UAI. An inverted version of this slogan was recycled calling for a free ‘Padania’, but also taking influence from the same image of a slave breaking free of the bondage of Roman power and bureaucracy. This shows a logical progression from the MAB to the UAI to the Lega Lombarda and an evolution of terms. The use of Padania as a marker which denotes northern identity needs no introduction to any scholar of the Lega; from the late 1980s and early 1990s, the concept of a Republic of the North with the title of Padania, became ever more present in the Lega’s political message. Nevertheless, its evolution in regionalist politics appears to have been greatly overlooked. Following the breakaway from the MAB, Ugo Gavazzeni oversaw a significant shift in the focus of this movement which was now using terms such as Padania and Padanians to denote Northern identity. A key difference, however, lies in the overall message of the posters, which changed due to the differing historical contexts. The Lega opted to associate Roman power with the Mafia, thus taking advantage of the increased awareness of the phenomenon of organized crime and its association with the south of the peninsula, which it argued had infiltrated the state. (FIG 8)

ii. Rituals and symbols

Padania does not provide the only connection between one wave of activism and another. The launch, in 1959, of a newspaper entitled La Regione Lombarda as a new mouthpiece for the Bergamascan autonomists, set an important precedent for the symbolism which would be appropriated by the Lega Lombarda in the 1980s, by printing an article which represented Alberto da Giussano as a figurehead for the Bergamascan and Lombard autonomists. Bossi claims in his autobiography that the symbol ‘was my invention.’

However, Gremmo states that the history of this famous symbol of the Lega is thus rendered much more ‘simple and banal’ in terms of its origins when one sees that the image was actually

668 U.Bossi, Vento dal Nord, La mia lega, La mia vita, Milan, Sperling and Kupfer, p.75.
copied from Guido Calderoli’s newspaper. The caption below this symbol reads: ‘in the memory of the battle of Legnano – symbol of victory against Barbarossa – the Lombard cities with the spirit of the “oath of Pontida” gather for administrative independence from Roman centralism.’ The caption thus, again, reinforced the message of opposition to Rome during this period, but also showed the first signs of appropriating symbols and myths which had been previously used to promote national unity during the Risorgimento, to promote instead a regionalist cause. The first issue of *La Regione Lombarda* had a distinctly Milanese and Bergamascan feel to it. This newspaper focused in particular on a stereotypical polarity between Milan and Rome in order to draw out the difference between the ‘moral’ capital of the North and the ‘immoral’ capital of the South while paying tribute to the Bergamascan autonomists as being the ‘oldest Lombard autonomist movement.’ (FIG 9)

The UAI decided to build on the symbolism of Alberto da Giussano in the newspaper *La Regione Lombarda*, and on 17th December 1968, members of the UAI met together at Pontida. The members organized this deliberately to coincide with the closure of the celebration of the 18th centenary celebration of the ‘Giuramento di Pontida’ and of the foundation of the Lega Lombarda. A newspaper report from *l’Eco di Bergamo* helped encourage this imagery, stating that

Since the intentions of the Lega Lombarda were exactly that of battling imperial centralism of Barbarossa to return the autonomy to the communes, it does not seem wrong to call these new Italian autonomists the New Lega Lombarda.

Prior to this meeting at Pontida, the organisers of the UAI had already spoken of ‘regional Leagues’ on ‘31st March 1968 in Rovereto, Trentino’ and proposed a ‘Lombard League represented by Ugo Gavazzeni.’ The meeting at Pontida can, in many ways therefore, be seen as a rite which confirmed the re-emergence of the Lega Lombarda in the North, especially considering the symbolic relevance it was to assume during Bossi’s leadership.

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670 Ibid.
671 Ibid.
673 Ibid.
674 Boulliaud and DeMatteo, ‘Autonomismo e leghismo dal 1945 ad oggi’, p.43.
iii. Newspapers, poetry, essays

As well as images and posters, newspapers, essays and poetry also played an important role in the development of regionalist repertoires. As mentioned above, *Piemonte Nuovo* was an extremely important means of circulating imagery; but it also appears to have laid the framework for the format of early regionalist newspapers in both Lombardy and Piedmont.

All the newspapers follow a very similar format and in particular reserve a section for published letters from the readers themselves. While *Piemonte Nuovo* published a section of letters entitled *i lettori ci scrivono*, the later newspaper of 1980s movement *Piemont Autonomista* also included a section entitled *lettere ai giornali* while the earlier editions of *Lombardia autonomista* included a section called *La Vos del Tuc*, later simplified to *Lettere all’ editore*. One could legitimately question whether these letters were genuine, or written by the autonomists in order to give the impression of a groundswell of popular support for the movements; nevertheless, they were published to give the impression of each movement representing ‘the people.’

A further element which was present in the MARP’s newspaper and which reappears in the early newspapers of the leagues was poetry written in dialect. The involvement of local Piedmontese poet Brodbero in the MARP may well have had an impact on this, while Piedmontese folk singer, Gipo Farassino’s involvement certainly influenced the level of poetry in Piemont Autonomista. Although there were no noted poets involved with Lega Lombarda or Union Piemonteisa, poems were also published in early editions of these movements’ newspapers; indeed, Gremmo’s newspapers initially only published articles written in Piedmontese but later softened this stance to include articles also in Italian. (FIG 10)

However, it was not just the newspaper which could be used as a form of activism but also other forms of literature such as essays. In terms of MAB, although this movement had no newspaper, the Bergamascan autonomists did publish a large amount of literature including essays and songs. These collections of writings published by the movement varied greatly in their style, content and, it should be said, readability. These essays and published speeches contained ideas regarding regional autonomy, regional reform, Europeanism and federalism as can be seen from the vast range of publications during this period.675 This tradition of writing

essays in support of regional autonomy was also present in the early Lega Lombarda; Umberto Bossi and Daniele Vimercati wrote numerous essays on similar themes to those tackled by the MAB and professed a knowledge of Italian history in order to legitimize their claims.676

5. Conclusion

The 1956 elections provided a platform for regionalist activism in Lombardy and Piedmont and along with the 1958 MARPadania alliance should be considered as a political tremor in the buildup to the political earthquake of leghismo in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It is not enough, however, to simply look at such obvious events and notice parallels as ‘focusing on what is salient in social life may lead to a neglect of “unmarked” features.’677 Instead, it is essential to identify how these events form part of ‘longer term patterns of social interaction.’678

This chapter has, to this end, employed a historical and sociological perspective on the phenomenon of North Italian regionalism to ‘safeguard against the failure to “appreciate that instances of political contention are not independent events.”’679 Whilst examining how abeyance accounts for the decline of the MARP and the MAB in the 1960s with the movements’ absorption into larger political organisations, it has also shown how the diverse formation of each of the MRAs contributed to different ‘abeyance structures’ following the decline of the first wave of activism.

Both Piedmont and Lombardy saw continued activism through the emergence of rump movements, or a ‘cadre of activists’, which contributed to a reframing of North Italian regionalist discourse and a transmission of mobilization potential through various means such as organizing meetings, producing posters and electoral lists, and writing essays and pamphlets. However, rump movements alone do not account for the continuity of political regionalism.

In terms of Lombardy, this transmission was also possible through an inter-generational link between the two waves of activism, which saw ideas transmitted from grandfather to grandson and his uncle. It is no coincidence either that leghismo found one of its strongest rootings in Bergamo or that the Calderoli family played a key role in both waves of activism.

Calderoli’s writings and posters during this period were both influenced by Piedmontese activism and in turn inspired the second upsurge in activism.

Previous research has already highlighted the role of family in acting as an abeyance structure. Where this chapter has contributed to abeyance theory is advancing the idea of the additional role of both friendship and rivalry. In terms of friendship, that between a former Marpista, Toni Brodrero and Piedmontese league activist Roberto Gremmo during the 1970s contributed to both continuity and discontinuity in Piedmontese regionalist discourse.

As a second wave of activism began, a period of friendship and collaboration morphed into rivalry, as Brodrero defected to an anti-Gremmo faction, which saw the re-emergence of another former of 1950s activist, Enrico Villarboito and reignited debates surrounding regionalism which had previously been clearly defined during the first wave of activism. Whilst identifying how the debates about north Italian regionalism were maintained during the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter has also identified some key repertoires of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, which contributed to the range of actions and material available to the future wave of activism represented by leghismo.

Significantly, many members of the MARP and the MAB would not have endorsed the message of the Lega. Indeed, the fact that a key member of the MAB, Gianfranco Gonella, who had contributed to the break up of the movement, voted DC in Bergamo in the 1980s and continued to do so up until his death in the 1990s (when the Lega had become a powerful political force in Lombardy), is a testament to this.\(^\text{680}\) Also, Guido Calderoli’s desire for unity and a profession of love for the nation would have found no home in the Lega Lombarda in which his grandson, Roberto would campaign against not for the concept of the nation-state. Similarly, much of the work produced by Brodrero and Gremmo represented a complete departure from the unitary message promoted by the MARP.

Therefore, just as it is too simplistic to consider MARPismo/MABismo and leghismo as two individual and unconnected waves of activism, it is equally precarious, from a historical and sociological perspective to consider them as identical movements. While the 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of some of the discourse, images and slogans which would later be used by the Lega, focusing only on the similarities in the regional discourse between the post-war autonomists and the Lega can prove more of a hindrance than a help when trying to understand both the success of leghismo in the late 1980s and the roots of its political message. This is due to the fact that behind the apparent similarities represented by their writings, posters,

\(^{680}\) G. Sala, interviewed by George Newth, June, 2016, Bergamo, Italy.
slogans and poetry, the fundamental message of the movements had changed considerably since the emergence of the original nuclei of the MARP and the MAB in 1947. The driving force behind these changes were not just individuals such as Umberto Bossi and Roberto Gremmo but also the wheels of history.

First, we need to consider the shift from demands for ‘ordinary’ regions in the 1950s to demands for ‘special’ statutes.681 Indeed the shift ‘marked a turning point in the development of movements and parties in the North Italian regions.’682 According to Cachafeiro, it also involved a ‘new political mobilisation [which] introduced new categories of nationhood.’683 Whereas the MARP and the MAB had been able to point to the lack of ‘ordinary’ region status to justify their existence and put forward their political programme, with the 1970s regional reforms any future claims for autonomy in Piedmont and Lombardy had to be reframed. These reforms were not followed by a dissolution of regionalist movements, but instead saw autonomist ideas continue to circulate in Lombardy and Piedmont.

Second, the changing context of the 1980s and the 1990s, and in particular the fall of the First Italian Republic and the transition to the Second Republic following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the revelation of the Tangentopoli scandals had influenced the discourse put forward by leghismo. The second wave of activism would have to evolve and abandon elements which had previously been present in the MRAs and had been, instead, a product of the transition between fascism and the First Italian Republic.

The following two chapters will focus in greater detail on the common themes between the MRAs identified in section 3 of this chapter. Detailed comparative analysis of how these themes were treated by both waves of activism will unavoidably reveal similarities in the message. However, I will demonstrate that these similarities are essentially superficial and pale in comparison to the difference in the ultimate objective of each movement regarding the strengthening and maintenance or the weakening and dismantling of the nation state.

681 Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern question, p.63.
682 Ibid.
683 Ibid., p.47
Chapter IV
Federalism, Regionalism and the Nation-State

1. Introduction

While both the MRAs and the Lega sought greater autonomy and freedom for their regions, the emphasis in this chapter is on the fundamental difference in each movement’s regionalist and federalist programmes.

From the outset, I argue that while the MRAs’ aim was to promote regional autonomy and, to a certain extent, federalism as a way of strengthening the Italian nation-state, the Lega promoted a different type of neo-federalism and ethno-nationalism which aimed to divide the nation-state. The chapter, therefore, also illustrates how key elements of this ethno-nationalism had actually evolved from the 1950s’ MRAs but as with other aspects of the Lega’s programme, had changed in form greatly since the post-war period. Regarding these changes, I argue that the contrast between these two movements’ approaches to regionalism owes much to the fact that the two waves of activism were operating during two different moments of crisis and transition for the Italian nation-state.

In terms of the MRAs, both the MARP and the MAB were campaigning for regional reform following the transition from fascism to democracy. This had been a period of institutional crisis for Italy due to the fact that it marked a phase of political, social and cultural reconstruction following its central involvement in the destructive conflict of World War Two and a subsequent civil war following the fall of fascism.

This chapter will focus on the most important factor in terms of transition between fascism to anti-fascism, which is that ‘a new political class emerged from the struggle against fascism.’ As Duggan argues, ‘the Republic was to be democratic liberal and decentralized – the antithesis of fascism … with regional government.’ Thus, the strong relationship between opposition to the fascist regime and support for the concept of regional autonomy was noted by Rotelli who states that

the coincidence between the end of the dictatorship and the advent of autonomy was so intimate [that] nobody doubted that the future Democratic Italian state would be founded on regional autonomy.\textsuperscript{686}

This meant that the MRAs, whilst justifying their regionalist programme by highlighting the presence of the regional statutes in the Constitution also subscribed to the dominant ideology and myth of the new Republic, anti-fascism.\textsuperscript{687}

The decades following this period of crisis saw the emergence of what Hine labels ‘an unresolved conflict between two outlooks of regional administration in Italy.’\textsuperscript{688} One outlook advocates ‘a top-down philosophy – driven by the aims of administrative decentralisation – that reflects the unitary state’ and the other ‘a bottom-up quasi-federalist view that each region is a discrete community with different political patterns, and needs.’\textsuperscript{689} The MRAs did view their regions as ‘discrete communities’ with ‘different needs’ to the rest of the country and considered elements of federalism, particularly in a European context. At the same time, both the MARP and the MAB adhered also to the former model in that it respected the Constitutional limitation that ‘the region is free to legislate provided that such legislation is not in contrast with the interests of the Nation, or of other regions.’\textsuperscript{690}

There are three crucial points regarding the inactive regions and MRA regionalism. First, the MRAs developed from their original nuclei to protest against the fact that the ‘ordinary regions were simply not set up’ following the constitution of the post-war Italian Republic in 1948; as Hine has noted ‘regionalism existed on paper but remained unimplemented because enabling legislation was blocked in parliament.’\textsuperscript{691}

Second, the decision of Italy’s law-makers to allow for a special statute, for more peripheral regions such as Valle D’Aosta, Sicily and Sardinia was highlighted by both the MARP and the MAB as unjust and used in their message to represent a working precedent for regional government within the framework of the unitary state. Finally, as highlighted by Hine,

\textsuperscript{687}Ventresca, \textit{From Fascism to Democracy – Culture and Politics in the Italian Election of 1948}, p.41.
\textsuperscript{689}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{690}Ibid., p.267.
the regional unit was recognised as a necessary one, but the region was not …
as in truly federal states, recognised as having a valid claim to representation in
the national legislature.\textsuperscript{692}

The result of this, according to Hine was that ‘the imperative of the unitary state was
the dominant one.’\textsuperscript{693} Therefore, the MRAs’ claims for autonomy, based on the perceived
injustice of the inactive statutes and exacerbated by the granting of the ‘special statute’ were,
nevertheless couched in this unitary framework. As a result, any suggestion of regional
autonomy was accompanied by a profession of loyalty towards Italy. The MRAs, thus, pointed
to the inactive regional statutes in the Constitution to justify their political programme, arguing
that regional autonomy would strengthen unity.

In terms of the Lega, as highlighted in chapter two, the period of crisis and transition
was very different. Various scholars agree that the ideas which influenced many of the Lega’s
programme surrounding regionalism and federalism should be considered in the context of a
critical juncture in Italian history which marked an unravelling of the Italian political system
and its parties.\textsuperscript{694} In particular what should be taken into account are ‘the historical processes
at work in the post-1989 world’ which included the disappearance of both the Cold War politics
of the First Italian Republic, the advent of the Tangentopoli scandals and subsequent electoral
reform and the emergence of a Northern Question.\textsuperscript{695} In this period, ‘the national party system
was breaking up, fastened by a widespread rejection of the traditional governing parties for
their alleged incompetence and corruption.’\textsuperscript{696} The Northern Question, which Diamanti has
defined as ‘the combined tensions and transformations which affected the principal areas of
the North’ led to the emergence of ‘a North united by the dissatisfaction with the central state
and, in part, by the growing integration with European markets.’\textsuperscript{697} Diamanti also defines the
Northern Question as a phenomenon which reignited debates surrounding the North-South

\textsuperscript{692} Ibid., p.110.
\textsuperscript{693} Ibid., p.111.
\textsuperscript{694} A.Cento Bull and M.Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics, Basingstoke,
M.Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern
\textsuperscript{696} Hine, ‘Federalism, Regionalism and the Unitary State’, p.113.
divide in Italy, signifying a political development in which territory represented ‘an instrument and symbol of division.’

Therefore, as Hine observes,

by the early 1990s, it was widely believed that the crisis which had overtaken the political system as a result of this heightened territorial conflict, and of the corruption which such tension had helped expose, required thoroughgoing institutional reform.

For the Lega, institutional reform was strongly linked to an overhaul of the regional system in Italy. To emphasise how much this contrasts with the MRAs, it is necessary to remember that the MARP and the MAB had limited their programmes to advocating for the activation of the regional statute in the constitution; however, as examined in the previous chapter, both movements declined and were absorbed before the 1968 regional reforms. While these reforms represented, in theory at least, an achievement of their key objective,

by the time regional tiers of elected government were established nation-wide, it was already too late for a distinctive regional class to emerge. The regional unit was largely absorbed into the hierarchy of national party organisations.

Therefore, with the establishment of regional administrations throughout Italy, the Lega had to reframe the regional question to justify its programme. To this effect, the Lega denounced the Italian regional governments established as ‘a by-product of the centralised Italian state’ and claimed that ‘existing regional autonomy in Italy [was] a mockery.’ This marked a turning point in the development of movements and parties in the North Italian regions. According to Cachafeiro, it also involved a ‘new political mobilisation [which] introduced new categories of nationhood’ being attributed to these regions.

The Lega’s calls for a constitutional reform which involved the promotion of the region as a nation-state, presented a fundamental challenge to Italian national identity, through the use of neo-federalism and fiscal federalism which aimed to fragment and divide the country. In

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699 Hine ‘Federalism, Regionalism and the Unitary State’, p.112.
700 Ibid.
701 Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern question, p.103.
702 Ibid. p.63.
703 Ibid. p.47.
terms of neo-federalism, the biggest inspiration for this reframing of regional demands came from Gianfranco Miglio’s neo-federalist vision for Italy. Miglio favoured an Italy ‘divided into three parts’, claiming that ‘the tri-partition between North, centre and South has a great importance’ and that he ‘believes strongly in the existence of the Padanian region or macro-region.’\(^7\) The influence of Miglio’s political thought on the Lega’s federalist policies was undoubtedly huge. Indeed, as Hine notes, ‘for the Northern League, it involved the division of the country into a confederation of three macro-regions: Padania in the North, Etruria in the Centre, and the South.’\(^8\) Fiscal federalism, although connected to this idea of institutional reform, refers more specifically to ‘a demand both for greater political power for subnational levels of government and for economic independence’ this term ‘encapsulates the demand that locally raised taxes should not be appropriated by national government.’\(^9\) With reference to fiscal federalism, Cento Bull notes

ever since the early 1990s, the Lega Nord has associated fiscal federalism with economic rigour and the need to drastically cut public spending, which in its view is the only means to reduce the country’s huge public deficit and to make local institutions more accountable to their electorates and more responsible in the way they spend their resources.\(^10\)

A key element in this project of fragmentation and division was the notion of Padania. From the late 1980s and early 1990s, the concept of a Republic of the North known as Padania became ever-more present in the Lega’s political message, culminating in the declaration of independence in 1996 and a period of secessionist politics between 1996 and 1998. However, as noted in the previous two chapters, the concept of Padania was actually introduced in 1958 with an electoral alliance between the MARP, the MAB and other regionalist movements in the North and would re-emerge with the UAI’s use of the title *Libera Padania*. While the Padania of the 1958 alliance and the subsequent 1970 election campaign never intended to challenge the unitary framework of the state, it nevertheless set an important precedent in North Italian regionalism.

\(^8\) Hine, ‘Federalism, Regionalism and the Unitary State’, p.112.
After establishing the differences between the regionalist programmes of the MRAs and the Lega, the subsequent sections of this chapter consist of two case studies which substantiate these differences. The first of these case studies focuses on myths and narratives of the Risorgimento. Both the MRAs and the Lega employed the concept of a ‘new’, ‘second’ or ‘incomplete’ Risorgimento to reinforce federalist ideals which lost the battle of narratives for national unification in the years between 1859 and 1861. However, while the MRAs associated the regional statutes with the new Risorgimento, the Lega’s ‘second Risorgimento’ lay in its ‘neo-federalist’ project. To be precise, the MRAs used the Risorgimento to promote Piedmont’s central role in national unification and portray the region as a historical beacon of autonomy in order to argue that Italy should once again model itself on Piedmont as in the period after 1861. It was the MARP, the larger of the two autonomist movements, which attempted to emphasise a notion of Piemontesità and conflate this notion of regional identity with a broader notion of Italianità.

Conversely, the regionalist leagues in Piedmont, both Union Piemonteisa and Piemont Autonomista, attempted to disown Piedmont’s past and distance themselves from a positive vision of the Risorgimento in order to separate their new form of regionalism from the one which had been promoted by both the MARP and the MAB and thus also from the nation-state.

Analysing the reactions of the MRAs and the Lega to respective celebrations of unification held in 1961 and 2011 will provide further evidence of how the message surrounding regionalism and federalism changed. The MARP used the celebrations to argue for greater decentralisation from Rome and present regionalism and federalism as a continuation of this patriotic movement. As will become clear through analysis of documents in this case study, the 150th anniversary celebrations held in 2011 conveyed a very different message regarding Italian unity, regionalism and federalism. Nevertheless, the case study will also demonstrate some significant crossovers in the strategy of the MRAs and the Lega which paint a clearly nuanced picture in terms of similarities and differences between the two waves of activism.

The second of these case studies focuses on the issue of Europe and European Federalism. In terms of Europe, both the MRAs and and the Lega saw Europe as a vehicle through which to further their respective goals for federalism, regional autonomy and – in the case of the Lega - secession. While both the MRAs and the Lega endorsed European Federalism, the European community of nation-states and regions offered different opportunities for each movement. In terms of the MRAs, the post-war European project was seen as a way to build a lasting peace; the MARP and the MAB therefore promoted regional
autonomy as an antidote to the aggressive nationalism and participation in war which characterised the fascist period. The Lega on the other hand, was able to take advantage of European parliamentary elections to promote the regions as ‘lost-nations’ fighting to break free from the yoke of centralism imposed upon them illegitimately by centralised nation-states. In doing so, the Lega aimed to exploit the expansion of the European Union to try and foster a federalist reform of the Italian state. Thus, leghismo distanced itself from the regional programmes of the MARP and the MAB which had in fact defended the nation-state. The Lega used Europe to encourage, rather than discourage, micro-nationalism, promoting a Padanian-European national identity, whilst building upon the European federalist identity of the MAB, and its rump movement the UAI. All of these factors will demonstrate how the second wave of north Italian regionalist activism, while drawing on some of the European federalist ideas of its predecessors, used Europe to distance the North from Italy. Therefore, while the MRAs had aimed to operate in the framework of the nation-state in the post-war period, the Lega on the other hand called into question the relevance of the nation-state in an age of greater European integration.

2. Regionalism and Federalism – Ideologies of unity or disunity?

Before examining the two case studies of how a European and a Risorgimento identity were conceived by both waves of activism in order to promote their programmes, it is first necessary to establish the fundamental difference between the type of regionalism and federalism advocated by each movement. The following section highlights how the MRAs portrayed regional autonomy as conducive to national unity while the Lega used a different type of regionalism and federalism to call into question the unity of the nation-state.

i. The MRAs – Autonomy, Liberty, Unity

The MARP and the MAB did not present a challenge to the Italian nation-state but instead promoted regionalism to ensure the survival of the Republic following the period of crisis and transition triggered by the fall of fascism. I contend, therefore, that the MARP and the MAB sought the complete unification of Italy through the activation of the regional statutes. The post-war period also enabled the MRAs to frame their calls for regionalism in an anti-fascist message.
In terms of regional statutes in the post-war period, the Republican Constitution’s Article 117 specified seventeen headings under which the region may legislate: municipal boundaries; urban and rural police forces; fairs and markets; public charities, health, hospital assistance; vocational training and financial assistance to students; local museums and libraries; urban planning; tourism and the hotel industry; regional transport networks (excluding railways); regional roads, aqueducts, and other public works; lake navigation and ports; mineral and spa waters’ extractive industries; hunting; inland fisheries; agriculture and forestry; and artisanship.\footnote{Hine, *Governing Italy: The politics of Bargained Pluralism*, p.266.}

The centrality of the Constitution to the MARP’s and the MAB’s raison d’être can be seen in the movements’ writings. One of the MAB’s founding members stated

> By 1948, our movement entered into a new stage of its development. The regional statutes we had desired had now been written into the Constitution. It now became our duty to ensure they were activated.\footnote{A.Freddi, *Breve storia del MAB*. Bergamo, Stampa Fratelli Carrarra, 1963, p.9.}

The MARP also made frequent reference to the regional statutes in its publications. Indeed, in its book *l’Autonomia regionale, perché la si volle, perché la si vuole*, the first pages cite the inactive articles of the Constitution.\footnote{MARP, *L’autonomia regionale, perché la si volle perché la si vuole*, Turin, Ruata Editore, 1956.} Similarly, in *Piemonte Nuovo*, the MARP on numerous occasions reserved sections of its newspaper to ‘refresh the memory’ of politicians who ‘seemed to have forgotten’ the regional statutes, printing articles entitled *Titolo V* and *Articolo 117* (the section and article of the Constitution which referred to regional autonomy).\footnote{M.Rosboch, ‘L’autonomia regionale amministrativo non potrà dividere il popolo Italiano’, *Piemonte Nuovo* 23rd May 1956.} The MARP also stated that ‘Rome forgets the Constitution which allows for regional decentralization.’\footnote{M.Vezzani, ‘Lettera aperta al Sindaco’, *Piemonte Nuovo*, 23rd May 1956. ‘Articolo 117’, *Piemonte Nuovo*, 17th May 1958. ‘Titolo V della Costituzione’, *Piemonte Nuovo* 15th February 1958.} The MARP and the MAB were not, therefore, arguing for any...
radical overhaul of the Italian state; merely that which had been written into the Republican Constitution.

The MRAs defended their promotion of the regional statutes in the Constitution using two key justifications which looked both to Italy’s immediate past and future respectively. Regarding the past, the MRAs presented themselves as protectors of a Constitution based on anti-fascist values and the myth of the resistance.

With roots in organisations which emerged two years after the end of World War Two, both the MAB and the MARP presented regional autonomy as a system of government which could help Italy distance itself from the fascist ventennio. One of the MAB’s essays linked a centralised bureaucracy with the descent into a fascist, totalitarian dictatorship. Freddi referred to bureaucratic centralism as the ‘original sin’ of the Kingdom of Italy, stating that this ‘was brought to a grotesque conclusion with the Fascist ventennio.’ This idea of fascist centralism being facilitated by the previous liberal period meant that the MRAs were able to present regional autonomy as a completely clean break with the past which would guarantee freedom.

The MAB argued that centralist institutional systems, even if democratic on the surface, always had the potential to deteriorate into totalitarian dictatorships; a mere eight years following the establishment of the Republic, a MAB essay read,

Mussolini demonstrated that, having taken control of Rome, he had all of Italy under his command. It is for this reason that all of the centralised states are by their very nature totalitarian … just like all autonomist states, of a pluralist nature are by their very nature democratic.

This dichotomous equation of fascism with centralism and of regionalism with democracy was also used by the MARP on more than one occasion. In Piemonte Nuovo when arguing for the justness of local government in the face of what it viewed as increasing centralization, the MARP stated that the centralised system gave fascism an effective base for the affirmation of the doctrine of a strong state, necessarily anchored in a system of control … this is the root of totalitarian states.

716 ‘Comuni, provincie e regioni i veri pilastri del autogoverno locale’ Piemonte Nuovo, 1st June 1957.
A *Piemonte Nuovo* article argued for the inevitability of the defeat of fascism stating that ‘fascism fell exactly because this absurd despotism of the state could not but fall’, but also warned against any potential continuity of the fascist state which it linked to bureaucratic centralism, stating

What remains of fascism is the chaotic bureaucratic machinery in which our aspirations will only meet a tragic end, not least the freedom of autonomist movements which act in the interest of the unity of the patria.\(^{717}\)

To reinforce their promotion of regionalism as a guarantee against a return to fascist centralism, both the MARP and the MAB cited the second President of the Italian Republic and anti-fascist Liberal, Luigi Einaudi, as having said that ‘the Regional Body was the only bulwark possible against the return of any form of dictatorship’.\(^{718}\) In doing so, both the MRAs were associating themselves with the birth of the First Italian Republic and its anti-fascist roots.

With the future in mind, the MRAs claimed that in defending the Constitution they were defending Italian unity and the primacy of the nation-state. Both the MARP and the MAB promoted the idea of regional government representing the ‘true Italy of the Italians.’\(^{719}\) In terms of greater liberty and autonomy, both MRAs argued for a decentralisation of powers from the nation-state to ensure greater freedom for the regions, provinces and communes, but without presenting it as a threat to the nation-state. The MARP, for example, stated that ‘Italy’s unity does not run any risk once the region is established.’\(^{720}\) The movement also argued that ‘if regionalism was made to divide Italy, then the constitution itself was written to divide Italians.’\(^{721}\) This message, repeated on several occasions by the MAB, was most emphatically conveyed in a speech given at a conference in 1950:

To those who fear for the unity of the nation, we would remind them that the nation means civility and liberty. The more liberty there is, the more civility


\(^{720}\) MARP, *L’autonomia regionale, perché la si volle perché la si vuole*, p.41.

there is and the more nation there is. The nation is by nature a unitary creature, even if free and unshackled … maximum freedom does not dissolve unity.\textsuperscript{722}

The idea of greater liberty was also reinforced by the MAB’s \textit{anthem of the autonomists} which, while certainly not intended as a substitute to the Italian national anthem, \textit{l’inno di Mameli}, reveals much about why the Regional statute was considered so important by the post-war autonomists. With references to the prestige of the state, regionalism was presented as conducive to national unity and fraternity

\begin{quote}
The country is one, but with different ancestry,
Even sisters have different traditions,
They each follow their own aspirations,
And bring greater unity to the family.
In memory of the free communes a new movement emerges in Italy,
With the Region and decentralisation we will have more complete liberty,
The state will acquire new prestige and the citizens new dignity.\textsuperscript{723}
\end{quote}

\textit{(FIG 1)}

Increasing national unity by respecting regional differences was also present in the MARP’s message. In one of their electoral leaflets, the movement printed that ‘in recognizing every Region’s rights and duties, united with a key sense of responsibility, the unity of the Nation is reinforced, eliminating resentment and misunderstandings.’\textsuperscript{724} In an essay in \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} entitled ‘Regione, Patria e Nazione’, the MARP presented the regional body as an ‘intermediary’ between the state on one side, and the provinces and the communes on the other.\textsuperscript{725} Whilst promoting the idea of the regional body, the MARP was keen to reinforce the idea that ‘Patria and nation, are and remain therefore the symbolic elements of our qualities as citizens and of subjects.’ The essay went on to state that ‘only regional autonomy, in the framework of \textit{superior} unity of the State, will guarantee the respect of traditions and local needs.’\textsuperscript{726} Both the MARP and the MAB, therefore, saw the region as a way of ensuring

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\textsuperscript{724} ‘MARP electoral pamphlet entitled “MARP. Perché vogliamo l’autonomia regionale”’ in Fasc \textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.1.


\textsuperscript{726} Ibid. My Italics
\end{footnotesize}
national unity. Regionalism and federalism were seen, in particular, as the ‘point of departure for true patriotism.’\textsuperscript{727} The MARP’s patriotism was also evident through the fact that it labelled itself as a ‘national movement’ which stated that in asking for the activation of the regions it was asking ‘simply for a demonstration of love for our land and for our Italy.’\textsuperscript{728} Hence, in the days leading up to the 1958 elections, the following message of the Piedmontese section of the MARPadania blended regionalism with a call for national unity:

\begin{quote}
Voters! The moral, spiritual, political and economic situation of Italy is chaotic…our movement is completely convinced that the majority of these problems can be resolved through ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONAL AUTONOMY…Long live Italy!\textsuperscript{729}
\end{quote}

The MARPadania, therefore, presented their regionalism as an ideology which would address almost all of Italy’s problems; ending the message with ‘viva l’Italia!’ reflected the unitary spirit at the heart of the MRAs’ regionalism. However, this centrality of the nation-state in the MRAs’ message would prevent any overall ‘Northern’ identity emerging.

The 1958 MARPadania alliance did not lead to any notion of a united Northern or Padanian identity like the one that would later be promoted by the Lega. While it broke ground in bringing together regionalist movements in Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto to put forward a programme for regional autonomy and a reorganization of the communes and the provinces, the lack of any overall unifying strategy is shown by the fact that the Padania label only appears to have taken root in Bergamo.\textsuperscript{730} The only available photo of the Bergamascan autonomists together is in fact labelled MARPadane , with a poster and electoral lists used in the lead up to the 1958 elections also using this title. (FIG 2 and FIG 3)

The weakness of this identity is also demonstrated by the fact that it failed to supersede a Lombard identity. The Padanian label was quickly abandoned after 1958 in favour of the creation of the Movimento per le Autonomie Regionali Lombarde (MARL), founded by Guido Calderoli alongside local art critic Mario Cugini, who had previously stood as a candidate for the MARPadania list. In 1959, Cugini and Calderoli released a newspaper entitled La Regione


\textsuperscript{728} ‘MARP electoral pamphlet entitled “MARP. Perché vogliamo l’autonomia regionale”’ in Fasc \textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.1.

\textsuperscript{729} ‘Appello agli elettori’ \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} 24th May 1957.

Lombarda which made use of the symbolism of Alberto da Giussano, the warrior who had fought as part of the Lombard League in the battle of Pontida, as a defender of Lombard interests and had been a symbol of Italian patriotism during the years of the Risorgimento. This symbol would later be used by Umberto Bossi’s Lega Lombarda as protector of a united Padanian North.\(^\text{731}\) \textbf{(FIG 4)}

In terms of Piedmont, the MARPadania alliance, whilst orchestrated by the MARP’s leading exponents, did not lead to any Padanian identity superseding a Piedmontese identity. For example, during the year of the MARPadania alliance - 1958 - the title of the fortnightly publication of the MARP remained as \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}. While the newspaper did refer to Lombardy and Veneto in the months leading up to the 1958 elections, a Piedmontese identity remained prominent. The continued reference to the Piedmontese flag as the emblem on the newspaper and on leaflets rather than the invention of any new Padanian symbol is evidence of this Piedmontese dominance over the overall movement. The centrality of Piedmont in Italian nation-building was also expressed through statements such as ‘Rome forgets that it was Piedmont which made it capital of Italy.’\(^\text{732}\)

This section has shown how the MRAs saw regional autonomy as an essential part of the new Italian Republic. By presenting themselves as defenders of the Constitution, both the MARP and the MAB put forward similar arguments to contend that regionalism and federalism offered no threat to the nation-state but, on the contrary, would strengthen and maintain it along democratic lines, thus preventing a return to a dictatorship. Although the alliance between the Lombard and Piedmontese movements in the 1958 MARPadania alliance would not lead to a unified Northern identity, this was largely due to the context in which the movements were active, when during the period of transition between fascism and democracy the primacy of the nation-state was not called into question. The following section compares and contrasts this regionalism with that proposed by the Lega, highlighting the fundamental differences between the programmes of the two waves of activism.

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\(^{732}\) MARP electoral pamphlet entitled ‘MARP. Perché vogliamo l’autonomia regionale’ in Fasc \textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.1.
ii. The Lega – Autonomy, Liberty, “Revolution”

In contrast to the MRAs who had called for an activation of the regional statutes, leghismo was demanding a new or revised constitution which would redraw Italy’s institutional framework along ‘neo-federalist’ lines. While the MRAs had acted as defenders of the Constitution and saw in this document a tool to maintain unity, the Lega saw the Constitution as an outdated relic of the First Republic, which needed either to be discarded or rewritten in the pursuit of a very different type of institutional arrangement. In short, Bossi was calling for, a ‘revolution’ in the institutional framework of the Italian state calling into question the unity of the peninsula which the MRAs had promoted as an essential component of the Republic.733

Leghismo presented a challenge to the constitutional regional set-up from as early as the 1980s, thus representing a clear departure from the MRAs. In terms of Piedmont, Gipo Farassino’s Piemont Autonomista’s first statute promised to campaign for ‘a full application of the regional autonomy’ guaranteed by the constitution.734 By contrast, Roberto Gremmo’s Union Piemonteisa’s official line was for the ‘achievement of self-government of Piedmont, bypassing the partitocratic Italian system through a Special Statute.’735 Gremmo’s personal view was actually a much more radical one, which envisioned a Helvetic-style Republic of regional cantons across the North of Italy, operating autonomously from Rome and the South.736 Umberto Bossi’s Lega Lombarda, instead, initially put forward an argument for the ‘transformation of the Italian state in a confederation of autonomous regions.’737 This idea of transforming the Italian state was one which would take precedence with the advent of the Lega Nord in 1991 and Bossi’s control of the movement.

The federalism pursued by the Lega was very different to the MRAs’ campaign for the implementation of the regional statutes in that it reflected a desire to fragment the state and weaken the unity which its precursors had defended. The aim of rewriting the constitution was mentioned in a number of publications and speeches released by Umberto Bossi between 1992 and 1995, a period during which Bossi campaigned for a federalist reform of the Italian state.738 In a significant abandonment of the faith placed by the MRAs in the founding document of the First Italian Republic, Bossi stated in one particular essay that ‘the roots of all the evils of this

country are in the centralist nature of the Italian Constitution. In a separate essay, Bossi stated that ‘to ensure the activation of federalism … [and] the passage from the First and Second Italian Republic … the constitution needs to be rewritten.’

Comparing the opening pages of the MARP’s book *l’Autonomia Regionale* with the final pages of Umberto Bossi’s *Tutta la verità*, is particularly revealing. In contrast to the citing of the original statutes of the constitution, Bossi’s book proposes a draft of a new ‘Constitution of a Federal Italy.’ (FIG 5) In doing so, the Lega was promoting itself as the protector not of the First Italian Republic as the MRAs had done, but rather of the transition to a Second Italian Republic. This had important implications in terms of the Lega’s portrayal of itself as an ‘anti-fascist’ movement.

On the surface, there was a significant connection between the Lega and the MRAs in terms of their anti-fascism. This lay in the dichotomous equation of bureaucratic centralism with fascist totalitarianism on one hand and regionalism with freedom and democracy on the other. For *leghismo*, this formed part of an electoral poster in 1988 in which the Lega Lombarda protested against Jean-Marie Le Pen in France stating that ‘the Le Pen phenomenon demonstrates that wherever regional autonomy is gagged, fascism triumphs!’

Nevertheless, this similarity is eclipsed by the fact that *Leghismo* was active three decades after the fall of fascism and therefore used anti-fascism differently. While the MRAs had argued that the application of the regional statutes would ensure that fascism would be surpassed by democracy, *leghismo* argued that fascism was hiding in plain sight within the centralist Italian state. Bossi contended that ‘the State, our central State, has never really surpassed fascism.’ In doing so, Bossi could assert that ‘the Lega is trying to break, for the first time, this continuity.’ Bossi claimed that

This is not a Republic born from the resistance….it is still the same old State which has been passed from the Risorgimento to the liberal period, from fascism

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739 Ibid., p.145.
740 Ibid., p.117.
745 Bossi, *Vento del Nord, La mia lega, La mia vita*, p.127.
746 Ibid., p.128.
to the Republic. I see no breaks in this continuity...the bureaucracy...has survived until this time.\textsuperscript{745}

Further to this, anti-fascism was employed as a rhetorical device in its portrayal of Rome as an oppressive system. Also, as Levy notes, the Lega took the view ‘against all historical evidence [that] Fascism was ... a Southern product’ whereas ‘the North was the home of the Resistance.’\textsuperscript{746} Bossi claimed that anti-fascism was a characteristic of the ethnic culture of the North whereas ‘neo-fascism was an inherent part of the Southern \textit{ethnie’}.\textsuperscript{747} Roberto Gremmo had also supported this ahistorical view by stating that

The events of the resistance demonstrate the difference between the South and the North ... the south waited passively for the arrival of the Allies ... the partisans of the North demonstrated a sense of self-government that the anti-fascists of the South did not possess.\textsuperscript{748}

This link between anti-southerism and anti-fascism is strongly connected to the context in which the Lega was operating and had not been present in MRA regionalist discourse. By associating the South with fascism and the North with freedom and liberty, Bossi was able to present federalism and later, secessionism as part of an anti-fascist struggle.\textsuperscript{749} Bossi’s attempts to show his anti-fascist credentials by participating in the \textit{Festa della Libertà} in 1994, were in contrast to the activities of Lega MP Mario Borghezio, a former member of neo-fascist organisation, Nuova Europa. Borghezio, at the same celebrations, asked Mayor of Turin, Valentino Castellani to commemorate soldiers who had fought for Mussolini’s Italian Social Republic (\textit{Repubblica di Salò}).\textsuperscript{750} Borghezio formed part of a radical right independentist wing of the party which held much greater influence from 1995 onward. This radical right element will be explored in greater detail in chapter five.\textsuperscript{751}

\textsuperscript{745} Ibid., p.127.
\textsuperscript{749} Bossi, \textit{Il Mio Progetto, Discorsi su federalismo e Padania}, p.139.
\textsuperscript{750} ‘Resti la festa della libertà’ in \textit{La Stampa}, 20th April 1994.
It should be noted that the Lega, in its federalist phase did not explicitly threaten Italian unity. On the surface, with the creation of the Lega Nord, Lega Centro and Lega Sud, Bossi attempted to sell his project as one which would benefit the entire peninsula. Following this, a new federalist constitution promoted by the Lega recommended that ‘Italy should introduce a new tier of local administration, so-called “states”, on the model of Catalonia, as an intermediary between national government and regional governments.’ However, regarding the macro-region project, according to Gianfranco Pasquino, the ‘point of departure for Miglio is that in Italy, there exist two very different political cultures between the “European North” and the “Mediterranean South.”’ Pasquino thus observes that the neo-federalist arrangement which preceded the Padania project ‘always considered the possibility of the centrifugal pressures leading to a separation of the North from the South.’ In addition, ‘Bossi began to talk of outright secession for the North almost immediately after the presentation to parliament of a bill which proposed a federal reorganization of Italy.’

The idea of a separate Padanian identity had already been present during the 1980s and proposals to reform the Italian state always contained an under-tone of secessionist threats, which had the potential to develop into a challenge to the Italian nation itself. While the MRA’s Padania had been conceived strictly as an electoral alliance, the Lega’s Padania was an exercise in fantasy politics and relied heavily on various rites and symbols. Early editions of the Lega Lombardia’s newspaper *Lombardia Autonomista*, for example, called for the creation of a Padanian-Alpinian federation to defend the rights of Padanians. According to Cachafeiro, Padania was also present in Roberto Gremmo’s literature, when emphasizing the difference between the North and the South of the peninsula. In terms of an underlying threat of secession, this was present in a number of speeches and essays released by the Lega. For example, Bossi, as early as 1992 stated that ‘if anyone tries to halt our march towards true

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753 Cento Bull and Gilbert *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics*, p.106.


For more information on Gianfranco Miglio’s neo-federalist proposals, see:


Miglio and Veneziani, *Padania, Italia Lo Stato nazionale e’ soltanto in crisi o non e’ mai esistito?*


756 Cento Bull and Gilbert *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics*, p.106.


autonomy, let them be warned: Padania, the Cisalpine Republic if not allowed to govern itself via federalism, will go it alone.’\textsuperscript{759} Regarding a distancing from the Italian nation-state, Bossi deliberately encouraged the development of factions in his party – the ‘Federalist Left’ and the ‘Separatist Right’ – as vehicles through which to encourage debates on the direction of the Lega.\textsuperscript{760}

The Lega’s Padania project, therefore, represented a shift of focus to a questioning of Italy as a nation.\textsuperscript{761} Although Padania ‘has never existed geographically or historically … the LN has attempted to construct (and invent) a geography and a history in order to justify its territorial claims,’\textsuperscript{762} Also, Cachafeiro notes, as a way of sustaining the unity of the north

The symbol of Padania became ‘la stella delle alpi’. Between September 1996 and September 1998, Lega Nord organized the birth of Padania, the declaration of the independence of the Padanian Republic, the referendum for self-determination, the Padanian elections for the Padanian parliament and the referendum on the Padanian constitution.\textsuperscript{763}

In stark contrast with the MRAs’ profession of loyalty to the Italian state ‘the overwhelming impression of the “Declaration of the independence and Sovereignty for Padania” … is one of authentic rage towards Italy and the Italian state.’\textsuperscript{764} The declaration states that the ‘history of the Italian state is a history of colonialist oppression, economic exploitation and moral violence.’\textsuperscript{765} The Lega even embarked on a ‘Gramscian’ strategy of ‘building hegemony in Padania by winning over the hearts and minds of the ordinary citizens.’\textsuperscript{766} All of this can be read as ‘deeply felt statements of nationalist principle’.\textsuperscript{767} Indeed, Cento Bull and Gilbert note that

\textsuperscript{759} Bossi, \textit{Vento dal Nord, La mia lega, La mia vita}, p.166.
\textsuperscript{761} Cento Bull and Gilbert, \textit{The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics}, p.113.
\textsuperscript{764} Cento Bull and Gilbert, \textit{The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics}, p.111.
\textsuperscript{765} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{766} Ibid., p.120.
\textsuperscript{767} Ibid., p.115.
beneath the paegentry and the symbols, and the absurd series of rigged referenda and elections, the Lega was doing something deadly serious. It was trying to establish the institutions of a parallel state that might become accepted as the voice of the North.768

Even after abandoning this project, the symbolism, imagery and divisive message behind this concept of a separate Northern nation continued to play a role in the party’s identity both symbolically and in terms of policies which favour the North over the South.

It is significant that even after abandoning the Padania project the first article of the Lega statute still aimed for the establishment and ‘international recognition’ of an ‘independent and sovereign Federal Republic of Padania.’ 769 Furthermore, at the time of writing, the Lega’s radio station is still called ‘Radio Padania Libera’ and the youth organisation still carries the name, ‘giovani padani’. All of these can be seen as a legacy of the Lega’s aforementioned Gramscian strategy.770

While secession was abandoned in 1999, the Lega’s subsequent adoption of devolution and federalism did not see the party fully identify with the idea of the Italian nation-state. This has been evident in more recent years in growing demands for fiscal federalism, ‘which encapsulated the demand that locally raised taxes should not be appropriated by national government.’771 Referring to later proposals of fiscal federalism, Cento Bull highlights that these were put forward to ‘ensure that one part of the country pays fewer taxes and receives the same level of services, rejecting the principle of national solidarity’, therefore expecting ‘any savings to be internally redistributed, so as to benefit the northern regions, as opposed to the nation-state.’772

The legacy of Padania continued to hold significance in the Lega Nord’s identity for over a decade after secessionism was abandoned as a policy; this is a clear demonstration of the different role that this concept has played in comparison to its use by the MARP and the MAB.

768 Ibid., p.112.
770 Ibid.
3. Case Study One: Myths and Narratives of the Risorgimento

The MRAs

The previous section established that although the first wave of activism sought to implement the regional statutes in the constitution to ensure greater unity of the Italian nation-state, the second wave departed significantly from this raison d'être. The following case study will substantiate these arguments by examining how the Risorgimento, while acting as the key unifying moment of the Italian nation, also paradoxically provided myths, imagery and narratives around which both the MRAs and the Lega would attempt to rally.

i. The regional statutes as the Second Risorgimento

The MRAs argued that the regional statutes symbolised a completion of the Risorgimento and presented themselves as direct heirs to Italy’s forefathers. As early as 29th June 1947, prior to the signing of the Constitution, Antonio Santinoli gave his inaugural speech as president of the Movimento per le Autonomie Regionali (MAL). Amongst the names mentioned in his speech were patriots of the Risorgimento period, ‘Cattaneo, Mazzini, Farini and Minghetti’, all of whom were cited as symbols to ‘ensure that the difficult rebirth of our nation is made safe.’

Similarly, in the MARP’s writings, exactly the same patriots are mentioned and linked to regional autonomy, stating ‘the tradition of the Risorgimento lies in the liberty found in the regions and is now alive and well.’ The MARP argued that ‘many Italian patriots favoured a unification based on a confederation’, labelling centralisation a ‘tragedy.’ The Piedmontese autonomists also claimed that ‘almost all of the men of the Risorgimento were in favour of a regional system.’ (FIG 6) The MARP argued that ‘it is a second Risorgimento we are calling for…if the Piedmontese patriots of the past could do it again, they would not choose another way.’ (FIG 7)

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773 Freddi, Breve storia del MAB, p.6.
774 MARP, ‘L’autonomia regionale, perché la si volle perché la si vuole’, p.75.
The MAB also mirrored this message through a propaganda campaign in the late 1950s, which circulated a series of postcards bearing the signatures of its leading members, including Guido Calderoli. The signatures indicated approval of a printed message which read the best way to commemorate the centenary celebrations of Italy would be to activate the regional statutes as was desired by the Patriots of the Risorgimento.777 (FIG 8)

In spite of Giuseppe Garibaldi’s enduring cult status and role in the narrative of Italian unification, he features little in the literature of the MARP.778 Only a small paragraph is dedicated to ‘Garibaldi in Varese’ detailing but one of his victories.779 On the other hand, Garibaldi takes a slightly more prominent role in the MAB’s literature due to his association with Bergamo. Guido Calderoli referenced Bergamo as the città dei mille associating Bergamo with the contribution made to the Risorgimento through Garibaldi’s redshirts.780 Furthermore, in the already cited edition of the MAB’s newspaper La Regione Lombarda, former MARPadania candidate Davide Cugini also labelled the Bergamascan autonomists as ‘grandchildren of the Garibaldini whose exploits 100 years ago made the centenary celebrations possible’.781

Count Cavour, the first Prime Minister of unified Italy was another key reference point. The MAB released a postcard with the image of Cavour with the label of Personaggi Autonomisti written beside it. The postcard also contains an extract from a speech given by Cavour in 1849, a year after the failed federalist uprisings in Italy. The extract focuses on Cavour’s denouncement of the French system of centralism – a system which would eventually be adopted by the Italian state. (FIG 9) The message went on to express that it was only Cavour’s ‘premature death which prevented him from bringing to conclusion his project of autonomy.’782 This message was also echoed by the MARP which stated in an article in

777 ‘Postcard entitled “La Migliore commemorazione centenaria dell’Unità d’Italia si farebbe attuando le Autonomie Regionali come volevano i Patrioti del Risorgimento”’, in Fasc.MAB-Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizzi, Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
782 ‘Postcard of Cavour entitled “Personaggi Autonomisti”’, in Fasc.MAB-Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizzi, Biblioteca Angelo Mai.

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Piemonte Nuovo that ‘the premature death of Camillo Cavour prevented the parliamentary approval of the institution of the regions.’\textsuperscript{783} The MRAs promotion of this specific myth of ‘Cavour the betrayed regionalist’ shows how myths are a ‘conceptual lynchpin’ of political propaganda and the MRAs were using this myth as a story which illuminated one of their key values.\textsuperscript{784} While Cavour certainly opposed a strong centralist administration, the suggestion that he was a convinced regionalist or federalist is highly dubious.\textsuperscript{785} Movements which engage with myths, however, are not interested in objective analysis of documents or historical facts, but rather the power of the myth to serve a political purpose. Indeed, as Schöpflin has pointed out, members of a community may be aware that the myth they accept is not strictly accurate, but, because the myth is not history, this does not matter. It is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account.\textsuperscript{786}

The MRAs were putting forward the idea that it was only Cavour’s death which prevented the pursuit of a regional system, arguing for the justness of regionalism by associating it with Cavour, the founder of the Italian nation and, as first Prime Minister of Italy, a key reference point for Italian patriotism. In citing Cavour, in particular, this was also a reference to Piedmont’s role in the Risorgimento; the promotion of old Piedmont as a regionalist force was to play a central role in the MARP’s propaganda.

\textbf{ii. The promotion and reformulation of “Old Piedmont”}

To legitimise Piedmont’s claim for regional autonomy, the myth of the incomplete Risorgimento was accompanied by a rebranding of Piedmont by the MARP as a region which had historically acted as a beacon of regional autonomy and distanced itself from a centralist tradition. There was also a promotion of “Old” Piedmont, which involved a glorification of the contribution made by the region to the process of national unification. An important message

\textsuperscript{783} Regionalismo e decentramento amministrativo nella storia nello spirito e nelle tradizioni italiche. Da un millenio gli Italiani sono autonomisti’, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 28\textsuperscript{th} June 1958.


\textsuperscript{786} C.Duggan, \textit{A concise history of Italy}, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p.139.

of the MARP was that the new Risorgimento meant that Italy should once again model itself on Piedmont as in the period after 1861. This led to a conflation of municipal and regional pride with national identity.

In 1958, prior to the MARPadania elections, leading MARPista, Carlo Palenzona, issued a call to arms to Piedmontese citizens stating that the regional statutes were a part of the MARP’s wider project to ‘teach Italy how to make Italians.’ This quote, a reference and homage to Piedmontese statesman Massimo D’Azeglio, formed part of a wider project to distance Italy’s forefathers from the process of Piedmontisation i.e. the centralisation of the administrative system across the peninsula. In a separate article released the year before, the MARP had claimed that ‘oligarchies’ and ‘privileged classes’ had ‘stolen’ the Risorgimento ‘changing it to suit their interests.’ The MARP was, therefore, using populist language in its analysis of the Risorgimento arguing that the process of national unification had not been controlled by the ‘people’ but rather by a distant ruling elite; indeed, the idea that the MARP were trying to put forward was that the Risorgimento could be ‘freed’ and ‘reclaimed’ for the people through regional autonomy. This populism will be explored in greater detail in chapter five. For now, what is important to note is that according to the MARP history was in danger of repeating itself and

in spite of the existence of the regional body of the State, the same oligarchies that stole the results of our revolution are not resigned to their destiny, and with various tricks are trying to keep the country trapped inside the hard circle of centralization.

It was these oligarchies, according to the MARP, that in 1861 had ‘made a France of this rough-edged Italy.’ Referring to France’s Napoleonic-prefectorial system which was adopted by Piedmont following unification, the MARP aimed to depict centralism as an element which was totally foreign to Piedmont. Alongside this attempt to re-write Piedmont’s role in the post-Risorgimento administration, the MARP also promoted a traditional image of Piedmontese military exploits to encourage an exaggerated representation of their sacrifices. This can be best demonstrated by an already cited poster which referred to the ‘fallen

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789 Ibid.
790 Ibid.
Piedmontese soldiers’ who had ‘given their life for the Patria’. While bordered by the Italian tricolor and thus conveying a clear sense of national identity, the rallying cry of the poster is not issued to Italians and not even just to the Piedmontese, but to the ‘Torinesi’. The message written in this piece of electoral propaganda is worth quoting in full in order to highlight the overlap between national, regional and municipal identity;

100 years ago, the glorious Piedmontese army, with its valour, its heroism and its fallen, gave life to Great Italy. The same Great Italy today cannot find the means to celebrate in Turin the memory of the Piedmontese who, for our Fatherland, fought, suffered and won. Does it perhaps forget or regret that moment of greatness?\textsuperscript{791} (FIG 10)

According to the MARP, Italy’s greatness depended on the Piedmontese military attributes of valour and heroism. Present in the message is a clear notion of sacrifice. This notion is also present throughout the writings of Michele Rosboch in \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} and a separately produced booklet of his essays in which he states that:\textsuperscript{792}

the Piedmontese were, more than any others, the true actors of those events that brought unity to the Fatherland…Without the unification of the patria – a duty completed principally by Turin and by Piedmont – our peoples would never have been able to enjoy the freedom and independence they enjoy today.\textsuperscript{793}

Tied in, therefore, with a desire to model a new regionalist Italy on Piedmontese traditions were explicit references to the sacrifices made by Piedmont during the Risorgimento. Such a romantic vision of the Piedmontese role in the Risorgimento would later be completely disowned by the Piedmontese leagues in the second wave of regionalist activism in the 1980s. For the 1950s autonomists, however, this traditional view of Italian unification played a key role in the promotion of the centenary celebrations in 1961.

\textsuperscript{792} M. Rosboch, \textit{Per Torino e la sua regione}, Torino, Arti Grafiche Fratelli Biamino, 1956.
\textsuperscript{793} Ibid., p. 67.
iii. The 1961 centenary celebrations

The celebrations of Italian unification were exploited by both the MARP and the MAB to portray Rome as an oppressive and colonising entity, yet both movements emphasized the need to celebrate Italian unification.

For the MARP, it was important that Rome did not forget its obligation to Piedmont in 1961. The MARP’s use of the 1961 celebrations can be seen, therefore, to be a key element in what Della Coletta defines as *Piemontesismo* in that the MARP was representative of a certain section of Piedmontese society which has always ‘aimed to model the Italian peninsula on Piedmontese identity, culture and traditions, and not vice versa.’  

The MARP stressed that Turin had a divine right to host the celebrations, due to the sacrifice the city had made to unite the country both by acting as capital in 1861 and by giving up the capital to Florence in 1864. What was at stake was a notion of both regional and municipal pride, which was conflated with national identity.

One of the MARP’s key exponents, Michele Rosboch, announced that ‘in 1961 Piedmont will fly the flag of the Risorgimento’ claiming that these celebrations would ‘ensure that Italy, one and undivided, will return to the path laid out by its fathers.’  

However, he went on to state that ‘The time has come to demonstrate that we know how to focus on the “rebirth” of our beautiful, great and glorious city … Turin must not be second to any other city’. This idea of not wanting to be a city – or indeed region – inferior to any other was combined with a sense of frustration that in Rosboch’s words, ‘in truth, it is often forgotten that all of our history of the Risorgimento holds its roots in Piedmont.’

In *Piemonte Nuovo*, a number of articles emphasised the centrality of Turin in the celebrations; these also expressed a fear that the celebrations might be taken away from Piedmont by an ungrateful political class in Rome. There was also an element of pragmatism in these articles; they were written to gain support for the release of funds to the region from the central government in order to fund the celebrations. Rosboch, in his role as councillor with responsibility for tourism, made an appeal to the Prime Minister for an injection of funds so

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798 Rosboch. *Per Torino e la sua regione*, p. 67.
that Turin could ‘support the costs necessary in order to realise the vast programme of the
centenary celebrations.’ Thus, the centenary celebrations were used by the MARP to reassert
the importance of regional and municipal pride, whilst also associating this with the Italian
nation-state.

The MAB, on the other hand, focused on using the centenary as a symbolic moment for
breaking free from a perceived bureaucratic servitude to Rome. In 1959, the MAB circulated a
series of postcards to celebrate 100 years since the start of the second war of independence,
fought by Piedmont and Lombardy against the Habsburg Empire. In a correspondence between
two MAB activists, Aldo Rizzi and Guido Calderoli, Rizzi wrote the following

I have distributed the postcards of the Roman wolf and of the slave that is
breaking the chains, at the bus station and various bars…I shall need at least
another thousand of them! (FIG 11)

This enthusiasm seems to demonstrate the centrality which the theme of the
Risorgimento played in the discourse of the Bergamascan autonomists in the late 1950s. The
postcard included the official image of the MAB which was used so often in its posters: a white,
muscular slave breaking free from the bondage of bureaucratic centralism. The dates and the
message on this item of propaganda are as significant as the message written on the sides,
which reads: ‘in 1859, the German rod did not break Italy’s back, now in 1959 let us break free
of the oppressive Roman chains.’ In this image, by highlighting the centenary represented
by 1859 and 1959, the MAB is comparing the struggle against the Austrians during the first
battles of the Risorgimento with the battle to implement the regional statutes, thus presenting
Rome as a foreign, colonising entity denying the Bergamascans the freedom guaranteed to
them in the constitution via the regional statutes.

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Rosboch, *Per Torino e la sua regione*, p.68.
799 ‘Notes by Aldo Rizzi entitled “De relazione Tempestiva”’ in Fasc. MAB-Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizzi,
Biblioteca Angelo Mai, 24th July 1959.
800 Postcard entitled “Il peggiore nemico dell’unità d’Italia è il centralismo burocratico”, in Fasc. MAB-
Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizzi, Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
The Lega

i. Neo-federalism as the Second Risorgimento

As early as 1985, Bossi had engaged with the discourse of the Risorgimento stating that ‘the time has come to perfect the Risorgimento with Federalism.’\textsuperscript{801} Just as the MRAs had presented regional autonomy as a Second Risorgimento, part of the Lega’s campaign for a revision of the Italian constitution involved associating leghismo with Italian patriots. However, in contrast to the MRAs, the Lega focused most strongly on the federalist uprisings of 1848 and presented its project of fiscal federalism as a completion of this event. This involved a veneration of those who in the years of the Risorgimento promoted federalism, especially Carlo Cattaneo, who conversely had not played a prominent role in the MRAs’ Risorgimento discourse. In 1992, following the constitution of the Lega Nord, Umberto Bossi wrote, in \textit{Vento del Nord}, his belief that ‘the unitary process in Italy began in the wrong way.’\textsuperscript{802} Indeed, as Daniele Vimercati stated, it was the ‘liberal-democratic federalists like Carlo Cattaneo, Giuseppe Ferrari and Giuseppe Montanelli’ who communicated most effectively the sense of a ‘missed Risorgimento.’\textsuperscript{803} The Risorgimento’s lack of success, according to Bossi, was that it had failed to carry forward many of the Federalist ideals of the 1848 uprisings, such as the ‘Cinque Giornate di Milano.’\textsuperscript{804} Bossi stated that ‘according to Cattaneo, there was an alternative [to centralism], the federalist path.’\textsuperscript{805}

Bossi recycled the argument made by the MRAs that Cavour ‘accepted some of the principles of federalism, or at least of regionalism’ and that it was only his ‘premature death [which] led to a disastrous centralism’, thus showing a certain level of continuity between the two waves of activism.\textsuperscript{806} This continuity is, however, limited by the fact that the Lega promoted a very different type of federalism to that of the MRAs. The contradictory nature of presenting leghismo as a New Risorgimento was that it proposed a fragmented Italy,

\textsuperscript{802} Bossi, \textit{Vento dal Nord}, \textit{La mia Lega La mia vita}, pp. 176-177. See also, Bossi and Vimercati \textit{La Rivoluzione, La Lega: storia e idee}, pp.30-31.
\textsuperscript{803} Bossi and Vimercati, \textit{La Rivoluzione La Lega: storia e idee}, p.31.
\textsuperscript{804} Ibid., p.29.
constituting ‘the total rejection of the Italian Fathers’ aspirations to achieve complete unity through the creation of a common people.’

One of the clearest examples of how Bossi’s Lega used the Risorgimento to justify a revision of the Constitution along Federalist lines came shortly after the Tangentopoli scandals, with an essay in Lombardia Autonomista entitled ‘Lega Nord, il nostro Risorgimento, il nuovo Risorgimento.’ (FIG 12) Extolling the virtues of leghismo as a potential for national rebirth, the term ‘Second/New Risorgimento’ was being reformulated, just as it had been by the MRAs in the 1950s to present the movement as

the most authentic catalyst of renewal for our political system…the Lega Nord in its steady march towards the south, is the most precise point of reference for the Second Italian Risorgimento.

The Lega’s ‘Second Risorgimento’ made reference to the project of three macro-regions. Miglio promoted the Lega’s ‘macro-region’ project as a second Risorgimento conflating national parties, Rome and the Mafia was at the heart of the calls for a renewal of the political system. Fiscal federalism was part of ‘the Lega’s critique of the centralist state [that] has continued to be based upon an ethnicized view of Italy as divided into distinct and discrete peoples.’ This message intensified in 1994, as the Lega was preparing to enter government as part of the Polo delle’ liberta’ coalition with Berlusconi. The movement’s mouthpiece Lega Nord Italia Federale regarded the campaign for fiscal federalism as a new Risorgimento. In the words of Luigi Rossi, a Lega parliamentarian, the ‘Lega Nord was rewriting the history of the Risorgimento … nobody will stand in the way of this New Risorgimento.’ The message was that with a New Federal Constitution, which was explored in section one of this chapter, ‘Italy will finally be able to rewrite the history of a new Risorgimento born from the will of its citizens freed from their subjectivity to the regime.’ A separate article stated that ‘the Lega … has finally opened, after the betrayed hopes of the

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809 Ibid.
810 Ibid.
Risorgimento, the prospects of Federalism. References to betrayal were extremely relevant in leghismo’s discourse on the Risorgimento as they related to the Lega’s position with reference to the Piedmontese role in the unification process marking a significant departure from the discourse of the MRAs.

ii. The disowning and de-Italianisation of “Old” Piedmont

Part of the Lega’s approach to the Risorgimento involved distancing the North from the actions of Old Piedmont, thus contrasting with the MARP’s promotion of Piedmont’s historical role in unification.

Bossi and Vimercati emphasised the centralising influence of ‘Old Piedmont’ in the unification process citing the Savoy dynasty, as responsible for ‘authoritarian centralism’ and arguing that the ‘exportation of the Savoy administration’ prevented a true integration among the Italian peoples. Bossi also labelled the Savoy Kingdom as a ‘sworn enemy of regional autonomy.’ This message was subsequently repeated in a 1994 Lega article stating that the federal ambitions of the Risorgimento were ‘blocked by the expansionist political project of the Savoys … unified Italy as a centralist state was an act of force not a movement of the people.’ Gilberto Oneto later reinforced this narrative, writing that ‘no-one will blame the Piedmontese any more for having made Italy, but they must avoid the even greater fault of not having made Padania.’ Therefore, the image portrayed by the Lega was that the expansionist political project of the Savoys’ had prevented federalism. A process of ‘de-Italianisation’ of the region had, however, started some time before the Padania project.

The Piedmontese leagues, tried to de-Italianise Piedmont in an attempt to create a new autonomist identity which called into question the role of the nation-state. In contrast to the MRAS, they avoided mentioning Cavour or any other Piedmontese statesman of the Risorgimento period in their newspapers. The process of unification was portrayed as

815 Bossi and Vimercate, La rivoluzione, La Lega: storia e idee, p.27.
817 ‘Un patto con il popolo non col palazzo’, Lega Nord, Italia Federale.
http://www.laliberacompagnia.org/ files/up/pdf/up_32.pdf
819 ‘Un patto con il popolo non col palazzo’, Lega Nord, Italia Federale.
Italianisation, which according to Gremmo, was tantamount to a ‘Southernisation’, of the peninsula thus weakening Piedmontese identity, culture and customs as well as its political influence.\(^{819}\) *Piemont Autonomista*’s writings also claimed that in the post-Risorgimento period the unification of Piedmont to the wider Kingdom of Italy had threatened the total disappearance of Piedmontese identity.\(^{820}\) Campaigning for regional autonomy was, therefore a way of re-asserting *Piedmontese* identity in opposition to Italian identity.

Re-asserting non-Italian Piedmontese identity, the Piedmontese leagues challenged Risorgimento narratives which were viewed as illusions and myths to be deconstructed. The Piedmontese leagues argued that the traditional narratives of national unification had ‘legitimised the utopian, unitary design’ and generated support for “an artificial, unstable and rhetorical nationalist culture.”\(^{821}\) For example, one *Piemont Autonomista* activist stated that Risorgimento narratives had

> forever been impregnated by an excessive exaltation of the heroic and romantic deeds. [It was] one-sided and therefore deformed with respect to historical objectivity.\(^{822}\)

The Piedmontese Leagues’ revisionism should be interpreted as the continuation of a process set in motion in 1978 by Roberto Gremmo and former MARPista, Antonio Brodrero. The authors had argued that that the Risorgimento was uniquely flawed due to the fact that plebiscites which followed unification only allowed a minority of ‘rich, Italian speaking men’ to vote. This had marked a significant shift in North Italian regionalist discourse which portrayed the Italian state as illegitimate at best and illegal at worst.\(^{823}\)

One-sided Romantic stories of the Risorgimento – such as those perpetuated by the MARP in 1958 – were labelled as cases of ‘historic fraud’ whilst Gremmo also stated that it had been ‘unfortunate’ that ‘in Piedmont, the myth of having made Italy had always been strong.’\(^{824}\) In an attempt to dismantle such myths, anti-Risorgimento figure, Prince Klemens von Metternich of the Habsburg Empire was lauded. Metternich’s infamous statement that Italy

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821 Ibid.
822 Ibid.
was merely a ‘geographical rather than political expression’ was described as a ‘masterful description of political realism’ and Italy was described as ‘merely a literary creation.’

Rather than fighting a patriotic war, the House of Savoy, according to Gremmo, had been ‘dragged’ into this war in 1859 as part of an ‘unnatural institutional arrangement with foreign cultures and peoples’ which ended up ‘costing the Savoy dynasty dearly.’

Finally, the Piedmontese leagues shifted the focus of Piedmontese pride towards events preceding the Risorgimento promoting, for example, an image of pre-Risorgimento Piedmont fighting as a nation-state rather than as a region spearheading the unification of the Italian nation-state. This involved exalting events such as the 1792 Battle of Assietta during which Piedmont had fought as an independent (not Italian) state alongside the Austrians rather than against them; also celebrated was the Gruppo Storico Pietro Micca, which dedicated a memorial to the Piedmontese army of 1706 that had prevented the conquest of Piedmont by French and Spanish troops.

Gipo Farassino, leader of Piemont Autonomista, used such memories to portray Piedmont as a nation-state fighting against centralisation, citing Piedmont’s ‘500 years of independence as a nation-state as hugely more significant than an Italian unity of merely 130 years.’ Discrediting Italian unity proved to be an enduring aspect of leghismo’s attitude towards the Risorgimento as the country moved towards the 150th anniversary of Italian unity in 2011.

**iii. 150th anniversary celebrations**

The celebrations of Italian unity in 2011 offered the Lega the opportunity to recycle many of the arguments it had previously used in the 1990s, citing these celebrations as an opportunity for a New Risorgimento. However, while the MAB and the MARP had encouraged a celebration of this event, the Lega discouraged and even attempted to sabotage these celebrations while promoting a project of fiscal federalism.

There were continuities between the Lega’s message in 2011 and that of the MRAs. In 1959 the MAB had released a postcard signed by its members and featuring a call for the activation of the regional statues. In 2011 Roberto Calderoli imitated his grandfather’s message

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827 Alla “Festa del Piemonte” di Domenica 17 luglio In 3500 all’Assietta” Piemont Autonomista, 27th July 1988.
almost word for word, stating in an interview with *La Stampa* that ‘the best way to celebrate the unity of Italy is the activation of federalism.’ 829 A further similarity can be seen in a recycling of the MAB’s message that the celebrations offered an opportunity to ‘defeat Roman centralism’. In an essay printed in *La Padania* by Carlo Caimi and Diego Scalvini, the two authors wrote that the last hope for Italy was ‘a New Risorgimento, which cancels the original sin of centralism.’ 830 *(FIG 13)*. In 2010 and 2011, the leader of the Lega, Umberto Bossi, also recycled the myth that ‘Cavour was a federalist.’ 831

A Second Risorgimento according to Caimi and Scalvini in their essay lay in a potential ‘federal reform of the state … a federalism which will unite the peoples of Italy from below.’ 832 Evidence that the ‘Federalism-New Risorgimento’ narrative had been recycled by the Lega was also evident in the release of Gilberto Oneto’s *La Strana Unità* a year prior to the 2011 celebrations, the conclusion of which sees him write that what is needed is a ‘true Risorgimento’ guided by the vision of ‘great federalist thinkers, Gianfranco Miglio and Carlo Cattaneo.’ 833

The Lega, in contrast to the MRAs, marked the celebrations as a time to lament the failed Italian state and in doing so, it delegitimised the notion of an Italian identity in favour of a Padanian identity. The MARP’s Michele Rosboch had previously stated that his city would ‘fly the flag’ of the Risorgimento; the MARP had also released an image of the Italian tri-colour in 1959 to promote the celebration of the Risorgimento in Turin. Roberto Calderoli, conversely, noted that there was ‘very little sense’ in celebrating this occasion and that the anniversary should not be seen as a chance ‘to just wave the tri-colour.’ 834 This sombre and aloof approach to the celebrations was designed to distance the North from any notion of Italian unity and was further reinforced by a number of essays and articles released in *La Padania* throughout 2011. For example, Caimi’s and Scalvini’s essay stated that ‘if we could have chosen the best way to celebrate this 150th anniversary, I believe we would have chosen

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829 ‘Calderoli: 150 anni dell’unità d’Italia Non so se saremo alle celebrazioni’ *La Repubblica.it*, 5th February 2010.
834 Caimi and Scalvini, ‘Un nuovo Risorgimento sconfigga il centralismo’, *La Padania*.
836 ‘Calderoli: 150 anni dell’unità d’Italia Non so se saremo alle celebrazioni’, *La Repubblica.it*.
silence.\textsuperscript{835} This essay was part of a series of polemics printed in \textit{La Padania} in 2011 against the process of unification, reinforcing the idea of Padania as a distinct cultural and political unit being forced against its will to commemorate a process which had ‘colonised’ the North.\textsuperscript{836} Additionally, Bossi cast doubt over whether any Lega delegates would be sent to the official celebrations of unification for this very same reason. According to Gori, the Lega Nord’s stance over the 150th anniversary celebrations caused ‘significant consequences’ in part due to the fact that, as a partner in the governing coalition, the Lega’s reticence contributed to a failure to organise ‘the regional exhibition, initially planned to continue the tradition started in 1911.’\textsuperscript{837} The Lega’s campaign to discredit Garibaldi provides a key point of discontinuity between the 1950s movements and \textit{leghismo}. Lega Nord MEP, Mario Borghezio stated that Garibaldi ‘was just a fraud and a freemason’; similarly, Roberto Calderoli, in contrast with his Grandfather’s identification with the Redshirts, insisted that the ‘actions of Garibaldi had caused damage to both Padania and the Mezzogiorno which were fine as they were before unification.’\textsuperscript{838} Oneto, aiming to legitimise Padania and delegitimise Italy, labelled Garibaldi as a ‘hyper-Italian’ and attributed to him a ‘conglomerate of unflattering traits’, in order to associate these traits with Italy itself.\textsuperscript{839}

All of the above examples demonstrate how the Lega, in contrast to the MRAs, attempted to use the celebrations to promote disunity, calling into question the concept of the nation-state.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{835} Caimi and Scalvini, ‘Un nuovo Risorgimento sconfigga il centralismo’, \textit{La Padania}.
\textsuperscript{836} G.Reguzzoni, ‘150 Aperte per ferie. Stiamo diventando il Paese delle “ricorrenza civili”’, \textit{La Padania}. 14\textsuperscript{th} February 2011.
\textsuperscript{837} P.Bassi ‘Padani convincetevi. Dovete essere Italiani!’, \textit{La Padania}, 10th January 2011.
\textsuperscript{838} P.Pellini, ‘Festeggiamo l’Addio ai parassiti! Uniti nel Federalismo’, \textit{La Padania}, 17\textsuperscript{th} March 2011.
\textsuperscript{839} A.Montanari. ‘Gran Gala per l’unità. La Lega non applaude’, \textit{La Padania}, 17\textsuperscript{th} March 2011.
\textsuperscript{839} S.Patriarca, ‘Unmaking the nation? Uses and abuses of Garibaldi in Contemporary Italy’, \textit{Modern Italy} vol.15, no.5, pp.467-483, (p.477).
\end{flushleft}
4. Case Study Two: European Integration and European Federalism

The MRAs

The previous section established how the regionalist and federalist intentions of the MRAs and the Lega were conveyed through myths and narratives of the Risorgimento. In terms of the following case study, it is significant that ‘during the Risorgimento period, the claim for a “united Europe” was considered within the context of freeing Italy from foreign rule.’ Indeed, ‘according to Carlo Cattaneo, only a United States of Europe could ever secure peace and prosperity on the continent.’ The idea of a united and Federal Europe played a significant role in the pursuit of regionalist and federalist reform of both the MRAs and the Lega and reflected their divergent aims.

i. European MARPismo/MABismo

Both the MARP and the MAB presented European federalism as a logical part of the campaign for regional autonomy and therefore promoted it as part of their priority to achieve the activation of the regional statutes. The MRAs promoted the ideal of freedom and democracy behind a closer union in Europe as tantamount to regional autonomy. The MARP attempted to present Europe as a New Risorgimento for Europe of which Turin should be the very centre.

An article printed in Piemonte Nuovo stated that ‘the concept of regional autonomy places itself neatly in the context of European federalism’ going on to argue that ‘it will be local regional autonomies which will … through resolving local problems be able to execute the tasks of the heavy and grand administrative machine of Grand Europe.’ The MARP argued that the very existence of the European project and of European unity legitimized the demands for Regional Autonomy as it was part of the same project of ‘freedom and democracy.’ The movement argued that ‘It is contradictory that at a time when Europe is

841 Ibid.
843 MARP, L’autonomia regionale, perché la si volle perché la si vuole, p.41.
unifying in the name of freedom and democracy, movements for regional autonomy are being denounced as anti-democratic and anti-libertarian.\textsuperscript{844}

In its earliest publication, the MARP printed that

\begin{quote}
if Europe is to be united, it is necessary first to unbind that which is united by force and liberate those who wish to govern themselves. The legitimate aspiration of autonomy should not be confused with anarchy.\textsuperscript{845}
\end{quote}

A further article in \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} also argued that

\begin{quote}
without freedom and local autonomies, freedom in Europe cannot exist. It is foolish to think that a United Europe can be achieved through centralist tyrannical states. It might be possible to make a Soviet-style block of states in this way, but not a United Europe.\textsuperscript{846}
\end{quote}

The movement then went on to state that regional autonomy was in fact a very small demand in comparison to the larger project of a European federation and therefore should be considered in this broader context:

\begin{quote}
if the aim is to really constitute a European Union, or rather, European Federation – for which it will be necessary to reduce the barriers between states to allow free circulation of people it is not absurd to allow a regional territory to govern its own streets, its own schools, the nominations of its communal secretaries.\textsuperscript{847}
\end{quote}

To reinforce its argument, the MARP labelled the European project as ‘a new Risorgimento’ in its attempt to ‘unite all Europe and create a federation between European states.’\textsuperscript{848} The MAB also associated its regionalism with the wider European project of creating a federal union between nations. The Bergamascan autonomists stated that there was no

\textsuperscript{844} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{845} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{847} MARP, \textit{L’autonomia regionale, perché’ la si volle perché’ la si vuole}, p.41.
contradiction between autonomism and European Federalism’ arguing that ‘Regional autonomy and freedom from the heavy hand of administrative centralism’ was ‘in no way antithetic with the pact made between the MAL and the European Federalist Movement … both projects want to liberate and avoid separatist fractures’.

A record of speeches from conventions of northern autonomists in the MAL’s publication, Parole Autonomiste marked a shift towards a more European federalist outlook which spoke less of the Constitution itself and more of the need to move forward with the statutes and federate between nations in order to ensure a lasting peace after a decade of war. Perhaps one of the most interesting essays in this collection equates the federalist ideal with sanctity i.e. inherently virtuous, and any form of centralism as, in the most literal sense, diabolic i.e. the work of the devil.

**ii. A Federal Italy in a Federal Europe**

Regarding the federalist aims of the MRAs, it is important to place this in the context of broader European federalist thought of the time, which aimed to maintain peace and unity following the Second World War. Michael Burgess highlights, for example, two key political thinkers in Jean Monnet and Altiero Spinelli who in spite of their divergent views on how to achieve European federalism shared fundamental views regarding

the dangers of nationalism, the anachronistic nature of the state, the importance of common solutions to common problems, the role of the new institutions and the need for a lasting peace in Europe … their ultimate goal, it should be noted, was also the same: namely, a European federation.

In particular, it appears that the ideas of Altiero Spinelli played an important role in the political thought of the MRAs as ‘a partisan who had been interned on the island of Ventotene’ and having later ‘founded the Movimento Federalista Europeo’. Both the MRAs were affiliated with this movement set up by Spinelli and promoted a message inspired by his vision

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850 Ibid.
for a peaceful Europe via a federation between nations and regions. In line with Spinelli’s views, regional autonomy in the context of European federalism was presented as synonymous with a lasting peace and as an alternative to the doctrine of nationalism which, the MRAs argued, had resulted in the descent into War in Europe and the World. According to the MRAs, war between nations was neither a desirable nor legitimate way of resolving international disputes now that a united European community existed. The MARP argued that ‘our old continent, after thousands of years of bloodshed is at the beginning of a new era following the signing of the treaty of Rome’ and

what couldn’t be united with force and ruthless oppression, can today be realized through just and loyal pacts, respecting the autonomy of the many regions that will form a cosmopolitan European community.

The MAB also reinforced this desire for a lasting peace, arguing that

the potential of human beings and the memories of the most recent inhuman tragedy (of war) must lead to unity – let’s say even world unity – forever abolishing the reign of war.

The final point of the statute printed in the MAB’s *La Regione Lombarda*, is also a commitment to ‘the politics of peace and friendship between the peoples and the free exchange of goods and men between nations of the European Common Market.’ The MAB was also committed to the ‘development of initiatives of an international character, in particular regarding the creation of a United States of Europe.’ The MAB’s writings in post-war period represented a desire to find peace and unity within a European federalist framework stating, for example, that ‘a European federation is the point of departure, not of arrival.’ The movement also insisted that ‘we need to start to think in both a European way and a global

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857 Ibid.
The release of a propaganda postcard circulated around Bergamascan cafés and bars also introduced a new design for the Italian flag. This promoted Federalism, Republicanism and Europeanism respectively in one fell swoop, adopting the symbol of the Republican party, an E for Europe and 19 stars which - imitating the federalism of the USA - denoted the number of regions in Italy and the MAB’s desire to see them all activated. (FIG 14) The maintenance of the tricolour is of particular importance in associating Italy, and patriotism with these three values. Regionalism and European federalism were seen, in particular, as the ‘point of departure for true patriotism.’

With this new post-nationalist identity a clear distinction was made between a genuine love for the nation – which the autonomists argued could be expressed through regionalism and federalism - and nationalism, which was viewed as a destructive force.

According to the MAB, the ideals behind European federalism and the global ideal ‘were not in contrast to the ideal of patriotism. Patria is one thing, and nationalism is quite another. Feelings towards one’s country is sanctity, nationalism is Satanism.’ Indeed, European federalism was viewed as the best way to overcome the destructive force of nationalism:

love for the nation is one thing and nationalism is a completely different thing.

... Everybody should love their own country. But nobody should demand the humiliation and the enslavement of other nations ... countless crimes have been committed in your holy name, Nation.

_Piemonte Nuovo_ also promoted this belief, stating that ‘nationalism is finished. nationalism is nothing but an aberration, a scandal, and it is no longer possible to sustain that ours or another nation is worth more than another.’ Both MRAs, therefore, through Europe, promoted an ideal of federalism and regionalism not surpassing the role of the nation-state, but providing a post-nationalist model of co-operation in the post-war period.

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859 Ibid.
860 Calderoli, ‘Campanalismo e Centralismo’, in Zibaldone Autonomista p.79.
iii. A European Padanian identity

The European federalist outlook of the MRAs, and in particular that of the Bergamascan autonomists, would lay the foundations for a Padanian identity in 1970, which would later be recycled by the Lega Nord. However, both the European Italian identity and European Padanian identity of the MRAs and the rump movement of the UAI, still held Italian unity at the centre of its message. In order to examine this journey, it is useful to provide a brief analysis of the European message of the MAB’s new design of the Italian flag, and the UAI’s European message of Padania in the programme of the UAI in the late 1960s/early 1970s. (FIG 15)

As examined above, the European and Federalist identity of the Bergamascan autonomists was central to their post-fascist vision of Italy. This European identity, continued to play a significant role in the identity of the rump movement of the UAI following the split in MAB in 1961 as Ugo Gavazzeni’s UAI also called for a federation of the peoples of a united Europe, including a protection and teaching of the minority languages. In this sense, the UAI were talking of a Europe of the Regions even before the concept had officially emerged after the evolution of the European Economic Community into the European Union. Gavazzeni also used the concept of a ‘Padanian’ North at the heart of Europe, promoting a list with the title of ‘Libera Padania’ in the first 1970 regional elections. (FIG 15) The movement was, however, also using the terms Padania and Padanians to denote a Northern identity claiming to wish to ‘defend Padanian work and Padanian traditions’ and to want ‘greater participation of Padanians in regional concorsi’. This Padanian identity was put in contrast with the ‘Bourbon practices’ of the centralist bureaucratic state, thus juxtaposing a European Padanian North and a southern Bourbon state.

This presents a challenge to Cachafeiro’s claim that it was ‘only through the Europeanisation of the first political parties in the northern Italian regions during the 1980s that an imagined community of the Italian north came into existence.’ Indeed, a notion of Padanian identity in 1970 and the alignment of this identity with a European community had arrived some nine years before the first European elections. Quite aside from domestic factors, however, were developments in European politics and the growing political ties between countries in the EEC. As Gremmo observed, ‘the autonomist groups which were born after the

emergence of regional government in Italy had a European federalist model.’ This was actually a logical progression from the MAB’s writings on European federalism in the 1950s, produced two decades prior to the emergence of regional government. It should be remembered that Gavazzeni had previously belonged to the same movement which had promoted the Italian tri-colour and wished to maintain unity. The Lega’s Padania was a very different concept, promoting its own flag and its own borders, the origins of which lay in a federalism and a European identity which differed greatly from that promoted in the post-war period.

The Lega

i. European Leghismo

From the earliest years of leghismo a common link between the Lombard and Piedmontese leagues was the notion of a Europe of the Peoples which could challenge the centralist state. The importance of Europe to the Lombard and Piedmontese leagues was present in each of the movements’ statutes and shows an early commitment to a united Europe of the peoples. The protection of the sovereignty of the Lombards and the Piedmontese within the context of European peoples, was also a way to promote the region as a lost nation, which could use greater European integration to bypass the nation-state. Both Gremmo’s and Farassino’s movements also spoke of the ‘Piedmontese nation’, and made references to ‘old Piedmont’ in the build-up to the 1989 European elections. Gremmo in particular spoke of a creation of a ‘federation of Padanian-Alpinian peoples … to assert the ideas of federalism, autonomy, ethnic freedom and a common Europe.’ Piemont Autonomista also contained articles with messages such as ‘we believe in a Europe of the peoples, a Europe without borders!’

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Gremmo, ‘Programma Politico’ Union Piemonteisa.
868 Cachafeiro, Ethnicity and nationalism in Italian politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the northern question, pp.92-97.
869 Cachafeiro, ‘A Territorial Cleavage in Italian Politics? Understanding the Rise of the Northern Question in the 1990s’, p.92. (Author’s italics)
The European identity of the leagues was also due to electoral pragmatism since the advent of the European parliamentary elections acted as a springboard for smaller autonomist movements throughout Europe to promote their programmes.\textsuperscript{871} These European electoral lists reflected a changing power dynamic in North Italian regionalism and allowed for the re-emergence of acronyms and regionalist messages which had roots in the period of the MRAs. The most striking of these was Roberto Gremmo’s M.A.R.P (Movimento Autonomista Rinascita Piemontese), whose inclusion on an electoral list meant that this acronym re-emerged in Piedmontese local politics but also European politics merely 15 years following its last appearance in a 1964 election in Turin. The European platform also meant that both the Lombard and Piedmontese leagues could build upon the Padanian and European message of UAI’s \textit{Libera Padania} from 1970, associating an Alpine-Padanian region with Europe.\textsuperscript{872} Indeed, there are significant parallels between Ugo Gavazzeni’s UAI and the Lega in the 1980s as promoter of ‘the creation of a confederation of European peoples.’\textsuperscript{873}

Greater European integration from the beginning of the 1980s, therefore, offered greater opportunities for the second wave of North Italian regionalism and, to a certain extent, acted as a catalyst for the growth of these movements, offering them greater exposure. Such an electoral opportunity at a European level had not been available to the MRAs.

However, even if it had been, it is highly unlikely that the MARP and the MAB would have used this European platform to portray their regions as ‘lost nations’. Nevertheless, a key link between the two waves of activism is the notion of a federalist Europe. This held roots in the MRAs European discourse, and although used to promote a different regional and federal agenda, it would become central to the 1980s leagues and further developed by \textit{leghismo} in the 1990s.

\textbf{ii. A Federal Italy in a Federal Europe}

The Lega Nord’s message surrounding European federalism shows both continuities and discontinuities with the writings of the MRAs. Regarding the continuities, the Lega promoted the idea of peace through the European Union, and also emphasised that ‘European

\textsuperscript{871} Cachafeiro, ‘A Territorial Cleavage in Italian Politics? Understanding the Rise of the Northern Question in the 1990s’, p.81.


\textsuperscript{873} ‘Internazionalismo Autonomista’ \textit{Lombardia Autonomista}, September 1983.
unification is not in contradiction with the Lega’s federalist proposal’ quoting Carlo Cattaneo’s ‘United States of Europe’ and also making reference to Altiero Spinelli in an essay of the same title. Bossi also wrote in 1994 that ‘the biggest threat to peace in the world, is a Europe which does not complete its political union.’ As with the MRAs, the Lega tried to demonstrate that federalism did not threaten the nation-state, stating that

Maastricht underlines that federalism does not threaten the nation-state’s unitary structure, but instead unity is strengthened…beginning from the communes and finishing at the nation - which ensures the development of democracy.

However, the Lega’s focus on European Federalism during the transition from the First and the Second Italian Republic was largely part of its argument for a federalist re-write of the Constitution. Prior to the declaration of Padania, the Lega portrayed the future of Europe and the future of Italy as intrinsically linked, arguing that only through a federalist reform of the Italian state, would it be possible to achieve a ‘Federal European Union’ which responded to the needs of the regions, thus creating a Europe of the Federal States. This was clear through the use of slogans such as ‘without federalism Europe will disintegrate’ and ‘no to a Europe of national states! Yes to a Federal Europe of federal states!’ There was also a recurring message of ’the key to open the door to Maastricht towards Europe, will be that of the Lega Nord: the Federalist key.’

The other way in which the destinies of Italy and Europe were linked in the eyes of the Lega was that Europe represented an extension of the Lega’s battle to rid politics of centralism and corrupt political parties. Bossi stated that the Lega had, in the European Union, found a new mission for his party to

bring democracy and federalism to Europe – After having defeated the partitocrazia in Italy the Lega now looks towards Europe in alliance with the

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874 Bossi, Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.196.
875 Bossi and Vimercate, La Rivoluzione, La Lega, storia e idee, 1993, p.212.
federalist movements of all of Europe…the European Union must become a
democratic body for the regions and macro-regions.\textsuperscript{878}

From an early stage, however, there was also a strong indication that ‘the Lega would
only accept a particular type of Europe.’\textsuperscript{879} Indeed, as noted by Huysseune, before 1998, ‘party
literature already criticised a centralist Europe, subordinated to the interests of its bureaucracy,
high finance and the multinational corporations.’\textsuperscript{880}

The European Federalism promoted by the Lega was based around the party’s own
project of a federalist reform of the Constitution. A constant threat of secession, however,
remained despite claims from Bossi that the European project meant preserving the Italian
state, albeit in a Federal form. The Lega also used Europe to argue that the South of Italy must
reach Northern levels of modernity and prove itself as worthy of belonging to a Federal Italy
and Federal Europe. The party stated that ‘the North wants to live with a South which is capable
of governing itself, capable of contributing to push the country towards Europe.’\textsuperscript{881} The Lega
also stated that ‘the Republic of the North, like that of the Centre and the South must enter
Europe autonomously, without tracing new confines or anachronistic walls.’\textsuperscript{882} However,
Bossi, having stated in one paragraph that Federalism did not threaten unity, went on to
contradict this claim by stating that

\begin{quote}
if the socio-economic discrepancies between the North and South increased due
to the defeat for the Lega … it would be almost impossible via federalism to
hold the two parts of the country together … therefore, the risk of secession
would increase.\textsuperscript{883}
\end{quote}

The re-emergence of a notion of a European Padania which recalled some of the themes
from the UAI’s \textit{Libera Padania} project, marked a turning point in the Lega Nord’s relationship
with Europe and a significant break with the unitary message of the MRAs.

\textsuperscript{878} ‘Senza il federalismo l’Europa si scioglie’, \textit{Lega Nord, Italia Federale}.
\textsuperscript{880} M. Huysseune, \textit{Modernity and Secession, Social Sciences and the political discourse of the Lega Nord in
\textsuperscript{881} ‘Patto di Pontida: Federalismo entro 6 mesi’, \textit{Lega Nord, Italia Federale}.
\textsuperscript{883} ‘Via libera al “Polo della Libertà”’, \textit{Lega Nord, Italia Federale}.
iii. A European Padanian identity

The Lega’s promotion of the idea of Padania in a European context drew upon the European and Padanian identity established by both the MAB and the UAI in the preceding decades. Yet, at the same time, this also represented a divergence from the first wave of activism in two ways. The first of these divergences was the more explicit juxtaposition of a European-Padanian identity against a Southern-Italian identity in order to legitimise claims for a separate nation-state; the second was a subsequent Euro-sceptic position adopted by the Lega in 1998 following Italy’s successful entry into the EMU. Both of these positions – a separatist European identity, and a Euro-sceptic identity - would have been anathema to the position of the MRAs in the 1950s and even the rump movement UAI in 1970.

The Lega’s use of Europe to affirm a separate state identity from the South drew upon the European and federalist identity of the MAB and the UAI; however, it also represented a complete radicalisation of this message, using Europe and the European Union as a dividing line between the North and the South. We saw above how the UAI promoted a Euro-Padanian identity juxtaposed against a Southern ‘Bourbon’ identity as early as 1970. The significance of this should not be underestimated as it drew upon ideas relating to a European North and a Mediterranean/African South, which has been a constant presence in contemporary Italian history.\(^{884}\) However, while the MRAs never fully exploited a North European identity in order to argue for a separate nation state, the Lega’s engagement with nation building ‘clearly locates Padania within Europe, and this European-ness forms a crucial feature opposing Padania to potential or real ‘Others’ deemed to be non- or only partially European.’\(^{885}\) In the case of forging a separate identity, Cachafeiro’s research on the Lega’s nation-building project has revealed that many Lega activists and supporters stated that ‘I am a European who lives in Padania’ thus distancing themselves from the Italian nation-state and any notion of Italianità.\(^{886}\)

The shift of the Lega to a position of Euro-scepticism – a position it has held until the time of writing – following Italy’s entry into the EMU in 1998, represented a significant difference to the pro-European message of the MRAs and should be understood in the context


of a different Italy and Europe to that of the period in which the MARP and the MAB were active. Before 1998, the party emphasised the incapacity of Italy as a whole to enter the EMU, because of the burden of the state’s debt, assumed to result mainly from efforts to subsidise the south. From this perspective, it proposed ‘the secession of northern Italy (‘Padania’) and its separate integration in the EMU.’

Leghismo made a distinction between Europe and the European Union’s project of greater integration which was absent in the message of the MRAs. A key part of the Lega’s hope was that in the event of failing to meet the criteria for the EMU, Italy would leave northern industry in crisis, thus rendering it more disposed towards the North (Padania) seceding from the South and the central government. A number of articles printed in La Padania under a section entitled l’Europa impossibile portrayed a nightmare scenario of Italy’s rejection from the EMU. These articles argued that the burden of a distinctly ’non-European’ South and centralist state were weighing heavily upon a European Padania. The North could gain accession by itself if it broke free of these shackles.

However, Italy’s incorporation into the EMU contradicted ‘Bossi’s claim of the inevitability of the separation of the north and south.’ From the Lega’s point of view, the EU’s decision in 1998 represented Padania’s rejection from the EU as much as Italy’s acceptance. Thus, in accepting the ‘centralist’ ‘dependent’ Southern/Southernised Italy in contrast to the Northern, hard-working Padania, the Lega extended its critique to the EU which was viewed ‘like the Italian state, as a centralist institution and an antagonist of the aspiration for self-government of the Padanian and other European peoples.

The Lega’s shift to Euro-scepticism is linked strongly with its view of the Italian nation-state; i.e. that the North needed to be distanced from the state via regionalism and federalism. As demonstrated above, whereas a certain line of continuity can be drawn between the Euro-Padanian identity of the Lega and the European-centric ideas of the MRAs and the UAI, the switch to Euro-scepticism by the Lega represents a significant shift in the message of north

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888 Ibid.
Italian regionalism in the 1990s. The Lega’s anti-European position has intensified under Matteo Salvini, who has over the past three years advocated Italy’s exit from the Eurozone and single currency and has used his position as MEP to denounce the EU ‘ruining the European dream’ by impinging on the sovereignty of European nation-states. The Euro-Padania promoted by the Lega, whether in its pro or anti-European phase represented a significant break from the European federalist identity of the MRAs in its use of Europe as a vehicle through which to separate the North from the rest of the Italian nation-state.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the complex inter-play between regionalism, federalism and nation-state in two waves of North Italian regionalist activism. While for the MRAs, the region represented a vital component of the Italian nation-state, for the Lega, the region took on a national identity of its own. In stating that it was their duty to ensure the activation of the regional statutes in the constitution, the MRAs were presenting themselves as defenders of the 1948 Republican Constitution. Regionalism was fundamental to the survival of a democratic, anti-fascist and regionalist Republic during an unstable period of transition for the nation-state. During this period, the notion of Padania emerged in north Italian regionalist politics, acting as an alliance for movements across Piedmont, Lombardy and Veneto at the time of the MARP and the MAB’s electoral alliance. While Padania never presented a direct challenge to the Italian nation-state, the fact that the term itself was used in the national elections in 1958 was still highly significant. As examined in the previous chapter, this name, and the slogans it inspired were held in abeyance between waves of activism. The release of the poster Libera Padania in 1970 by the UAI of Ugo Gavazzeni – somebody who had been active in the MARPAdania alliance – shows how this term to represent a unified North had survived during the 1960s and would later re-emerge. Both movements naturally appealed to Piedmontese and Bergamascan interests in their call for the activation of the region. This was particularly true of the MARP, which portrayed what was best for Piedmont as being best for Italy, due the region’s history of having been at the forefront of the Italian Risorgimento.

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The Lega, however, played a very different role to the MRAs before, during and following another period of transition, this time seeing the end of the First Republic which had previously fostered the development of the MRAs. By challenging the institutional and centralist framework and proposing a neo-federalist reform of the constitution, the Lega challenged the Italian state, and later would challenge the very idea of the Italian nation with its proposals of a Padanian nation. Instead of seeking the regionalism sanctioned by the constitution, the Lega, be it through proposals of a neo-federalist reform or threats to secede, was challenging the very foundations of the Italian Republic which its predecessors had so defended.

Despite these two very different outlooks on the role of the region and the nation-state, there are definite cross-overs in the themes focused on by both the Lega and the MRAs. By using the Risorgimento and Europe as the basis for case studies of both waves of activism, I have used this chapter to analyse how these two vital components of Italian identity were exploited in different ways by the MRAs and the Lega to serve their divergent views of regionalism, federalism and the nation-state.

While there are similarities in the ways that leghismo and MARPismo/MABismo linked the Risorgimento to refer to their respective regionalist/federalist programmes, the underlying difference related to opposing interpretations of the Risorgimento as either a moment of glory or tragedy for the Italian state. Regarding the “second Risorgimento”, as the MARP and the MAB were operating in the longer-term transition from fascism to the First Italian Republic, the aim of the MRAs was clear: to use these historical figures as proof that regional autonomy and national unity went together naturally. The MARP, in particular used narratives of Piedmont’s role in the Risorgimento to promote an image of Italy which should be modelled on Piedmont. In contrast, the Lega Nord were interested in weakening the concept of the nation state and as a rebellion against unification rather than a celebration of it. Piedmont’s role was discredited and seen as an embarrassment and tragedy for a region which should now reclaim its pre-Risorgimento identity as a separate nation-state.

In both the first and second period of crisis and transition for the Italian state, Europe was viewed as a vehicle through which to promote North Italian regionalism. The MRAs, in seeing Italy as European and Federalist, were enthusiastic for Italy to take an active role in European institutions and participate in a European Federation. Any association of the Italian nation-state with Europe was, therefore, viewed in positive terms. Both MRAs saw a Europe of federated regions not only as a potential way of bypassing the centralist nation-state, but also as a way of ensuring a lasting peace; this was linked with a protection of the nation, not a
desire to break it up. European federalism acted, therefore, as a way of preventing the growth of nationalism and nationalist rhetoric which was viewed as a destabilising influence. Through a European federation, both the MARP and the MAB expressed a desire for regionalism and federalism to surpass nationalism, but without threatening the unity of the nation-state. I have also identified how the European federalist and European Padanian identity adopted by the Lega Nord had roots in the MRAs political message and, during the period of abeyance, was developed by the rump movement of the UAI. However, the European Union did not exist as an institution in the period during which the MRAs were active. This changed the political opportunities available to North Italian regionalism with a platform being provided by elections to a European parliament which was previously unavailable. It also changed the position of North Italian regionalism towards Europe, allowing the Lega to position itself as a movement of the little people against the big Europe of the lobbies. The respective positions towards the European institutions of the Lega and the MRAs should, therefore, be understood in terms of the changing context of the increasing relevance of globalisation and the impact of global markets. Using the European parliament as a forum to promote a populist programme of anti-system and anti-centralist policies, the Lega, unlike the MRAs, used Europe as a tool of division rather than unity. By inter-twining the fate of Europe with that of Italy, and eventually using the notion of Padania it had inherited from the previous waves of activism, the Lega first, promoted a separate North European identity, juxtaposed against a Mediterranean South and second, embarked on an anti-EU position which would have been anathema to the European federalist spirit of the MRAs.

While providing an analysis of how two periods of activism engaged with regionalism, federalism and the nation-state, this chapter has not tackled a number of key regionalist variables which link the MRAs and the Lega. Drawing upon divergent aims of national unity and national fragmentation promoted by the MRAs and the Lega respectively, the following chapter will look at how both waves of activism engaged in a populist and nativist discourse to promote their political programmes.
Chapter V
Populist Regionalism

Torinesi! This may be your only chance to vote exclusively for our poor, mistreated, exploited Piedmont. We’ve had enough of politicians and bureaucrats! It’s time to leave the door open for a breath of fresh air ... the MARP is not a political movement, but a movement tired of the partitocrazia with one aim: regional autonomy.894

With our autonomist electoral list, we can shout: Lombardy for the Lombards!895

1. Introduction

The above extracts demonstrate how the MRAs portrayed political parties in Italy as a distant elite conspiring to maintain a centralist system and prevent regional government. At the same time, the MARP and the MAB both claimed that Piedmont and Lombardy should belong exclusively to their respective ‘native’ population. In this chapter, I argue that the MRAs and the Lega should be described first and foremost as ‘populist regionalist’ movements in that they were regionalist, populist and nativist. In doing so, I propose a new approach towards the Lega’s populist and nativist discourse by viewing it from a historical perspective connected to the MRAs. This chapter develops an argument introduced in chapter two that while the Lega had previously represented a populist and nativist form of regionalism, it later gravitated towards the radical right and became a populist radical right regionalist movement.

While radical right and New Right were defined in chapter two of this thesis, a populist regionalist framework is defined in greater detail in section one of this chapter. From the outset, however, it should be noted that viewing the MRAs and the Lega through a populist regionalist framework specifically extends and challenges paradigms constructed by Albertazzi and McDonnell on ‘regionalist populism’ and by Mudde on the ‘populist radical right.’896

894 M.Rosboch, ‘L’autonomia regionale amministrativa non potrà dividere il popolo Italiano’ Piemonte Nuovo 23rd March 1956.
McDonnell correctly argues that ‘it is impossible to understand and explain the Lega from its foundation to the present day without explicitly highlighting the party’s regionalist character.’ Albertazzi also highlights that the Lega historically posited ‘the problems of the north’ as having originated almost exclusively from its lack of autonomy’ with its ‘hard-working regions oppressed by a corrupt political class and inefficient bureaucracy, both of which are in the hands of southerners.’ Both authors therefore build upon Roberto Biorcio’s definition of the Lega as ‘regionalist populist movement’, to argue that the party offered a blend of regionalism and populism using a framework of interpretation in which a positively evaluated ‘us’ or ‘the people’ – honest, hard-working and simple-living northern Italians attached to their local traditions – is posited as prey to a series of dangers orchestrated by the powerful enemies of ‘them’ or the ‘poteri forti.’

Indeed, Albertazzi, Giovannini and Seddone more recently reinforced this view stating that ‘we subscribe to the view that ‘Bossi’s Lega’ should be best understood as a regionalist populist party, above and beyond any other label, as its regionalist and populist claims were profoundly intertwined, fed on each other and could hardly be dissociated.

However, while the term regionalist populism indicates that populism acts as a core ideology, this chapter argues that the best term to use in order to compare two regionalist movements across two different time periods is populist regionalism. In this choice of semantics, I am adopting and adapting Mudde’s preference for the term populist radical right rather than radical right populist due to the fact that

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900 A.Giovannini, A.Seddone, D.Albertazzi, ‘No regionalism please, we are Leghisti! The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini’, Regional and Federal Studies, 2018, vol.28, no.5 pp.645-671, (p.646).
in radical right populism, the primary term is populism, while ‘radical right’ functions merely to describe the ideological emphasis of this specific form of populism. Populist radical right, on the other hand, refers to a populist form of the radical right.\textsuperscript{901}

Following this line of argument, I contend that with regionalist populism the primary term is populism as a \textit{core} ideology, whereas populist regionalism refers to a populist form of regionalism. This chapter maintains, therefore, that populism is not a core ideology, but a ‘thin-centred ideology’ in that ‘it does not so much overlap with as diffuse itself throughout full ideologies.’\textsuperscript{902} While classifying regionalism and federalism as ‘thick-centred’ ideologies would be inaccurate, both the MRAs and the Lega certainly presented their versions of regionalism as programmes which could offer solutions to a myriad of issues facing the Italian nation-state.\textsuperscript{903}

While adapting Mudde’s semantic approach, this chapter also challenges his interpretation of the Lega. In identifying populist radical right (PRR) parties as primarily, ‘nativist, authoritarian and populist’ Mudde categorised the Lega as a ‘borderline’ example of a PRR party, due to the fact that ‘while populism has always been a core feature of the Lega … authoritarianism and nativism have not.’\textsuperscript{904} While authoritarianism certainly played a minor role in both the MRAs and the early incarnation of the Lega, this chapter, instead, highlights that both the Lega’s populism \textit{and} nativism, represent a significant continuity with the political message of the MRAs. This approach draws upon Spektorowski’s comparison of the Lega’s ideology and New Right, explored in chapter two, in terms of focusing on ideas of an exclusionary ethno-regionalism which creates ethnic and cultural barriers between members of a region and Others.\textsuperscript{905}

Populist regionalism also draws on the theory of ‘nativist nationalism’ which according to Zaslove ‘provides the link between the Lega’s anti-southernism and anti-immigrant position

\textsuperscript{901} Mudde, \textit{Populist Radical right Parties in Europe}, p.27.
\textsuperscript{902} Ibid., p.57.
\textsuperscript{905} A.Spektorowski, ‘Ethnoregionalism: The intellectual new right and the Lega Nord’, \textit{The Global Review of Ethnopolitics}, vol.2, no.3-4, 1\textsuperscript{st} March 2003, pp.55-70, (p.63).
and its convergence with other radical right populist parties. Anti-southernism and anti-immigration were connected via ‘nativist claims that outsiders threaten the homogeneous community are juxtaposed with an authentic, northern, and Padanian identity. However, ‘as fears of immigration grew in the mid 1990s’ anti-southernism was subordinated in Lega discourse to an increasing ‘demonization of foreigners, specifically non-European and Muslim.’

While ‘nativist nationalism’ is therefore a useful analytical tool to trace this connection between exclusionist ideology, it does not consider the nativist arguments used against southern Italians in the 1950s by the MRAs. It is here that populist regionalism becomes an essential framework in understanding the links and cross-overs between a populist and nativist form of regionalism and a populist and nativist form of the radical right between two different periods of time. I differ from both Spektorowski and Zaslove in identifying the MRAs and the Lega as connected by populist regionalism up to 1995; something which neither ideas of the New Right, nor nativist nationalism succeed in doing.

As mentioned in chapter two, the term populist regionalism refers to the Lega from the emergence of the various northern leagues up to 1995. Although during this first period it was also influenced by New Right thinking, this was subordinated to a counter-hegemonic purpose of breaking up the post-war consensus. After 1995 and the adoption of secessionism and Padanian nationalism, I argue that the Lega is best defined as populist radical right regionalist. While Matteo Salvini’s Lega has now moved to a stage of populist radical right post-regionalism, taking on a nationalist identity, this latest stage of the party is beyond the scope of this thesis and only the first two phases of the Lega’s history, introduced in chapter two will be further examined in this chapter.

The Lega’s populism and nativism have been a constant presence in its political message and have roots in the 1950s’ wave of populist regionalism. The MRAs constructed a clear and coherent populist and nativist framework in terms of discourse and imagery which would later be developed by the Lega. However, I also contend that closer examination of the narratives used by the Lega and the MRAs will reveal differences – at times nuanced, at times more explicit – between the populist and nativist identities of the two waves of activism. It is my contention that these differences can be attributed to two inter-linked key factors. First,

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907 Ibid.
908 Ibid., p.154.
while the MRAs were a product of the First Italian Republic and operated within its parameters, the Lega was a benefactor of and contributed to its downfall and, thus, a contributor to the emergence of the Second Italian Republic. Second, due to this differing context, each wave of activism belonged to a different wave of populism. While the populism represented by both the MRAs and the Lega formed part of trends which went beyond the Italian case, I argue that, in particular, the rise of the Lega was part of a much more significant rise of European and global populism in the 1980s and 1990s.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section examines the ideological features of populist regionalism, namely populism and nativism, the latter of which is strongly connected to regionalism. This section concludes with an examination of how regionalism acts as the core ideology for populist regionalism and bridges the gap between the two waves of populist regionalist activism.

The second section of the chapter then discusses two examples of populist activism, which, in tandem with the first section, will help clarify the comparisons and contrasts between MRA and Lega populism. I will argue that two populist movements of the 1950s, *Poujadisme* and *Qualunquismo* provide an essential comparison for many points of the MRAs political programme due to similarities in both origins and political message. Il Fronte dell’Uomo Qualunque (UQ) emerged in reaction against the parties of the Committees of National Liberation (CLNs) which formed the political backbone of the post-war Italian Republic. Representing the first instance of post-war populism, UQ’s leader claimed to champion the common man against the political elites and acted as an important precursor to Pierre Poujade’s Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artesans (Shopkeepers’ and Artisans’ Defense Union, or UDCA). Poujade’s movement in many ways imitated Giannini’s anti-elitist stance against the political system, claiming to stand up for the small man against big government. The latter wave of populism, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s - hereafter referred to as 1990s’ populism - is instead essential in contextualising the Lega’s populist discourse and the party’s shift to the right.

Following the establishment of this framework, the subsequent two sections will then focus on two respective case studies on populism and nativism. Section three examines how both movements attacked the so-called *partitocrazia*, (‘partyocracy’ or ‘regime of the parties’), which had emerged following the fall of fascism. Ventresca argues that ‘the advent of a national government comprised exclusively of the antifascist political parties marked a genuine
revolution in the political history of Italy.\textsuperscript{909} However, as early as 1945 the fear of a ‘totalitarianism of the parties’ had already been expressed by professor Giuseppe Maranini.\textsuperscript{910} This notion was encapsulated by the term \textit{partitocrazia}, a word which was first used by, amongst others, Liberal politician Roberto Lucifero in 1944.\textsuperscript{911} With the word \textit{partitocrazia} Lucifero attempted to establish a connection … between a one-party dictatorship and a nominally democratic multi-party system to which dictatorial characteristics could...be applied.\textsuperscript{912}

In doing so, he conveyed the idea that

the coalition governments of the parties which had made up the CLN did not correspond to a model of authentic democracy, but in some way configured a sort of new ‘single party’ dominating Italian society.\textsuperscript{913}

The \textit{partitocrazia} formed a central target for both the MRAs and the Lega. The MRAs set an important precedent for the Lega in their claims that all political parties were opportunistic, elitist and self-serving entities which maintained a centralist bureaucracy to exploit the regions in order to frustrate the general will of the people. Further similarities and continuities between 1950s’ and 1990s’ populism on this issue of anti-elitism can be found in the accusations that the \textit{partitocrazia} was responsible for an iniquitous financial policy which damaged the northern regions to benefit the South. However, the section will also demonstrate that \textit{leghismo}’s stance against the party system related closely to 1990s’ populism, through its focus on the collapse of the socio-political order in Italy following Tangentopoli. The second wave of activism focused in particular on criminality, and accusations of ‘mafiosità’ against the \textit{partitocrazia}. The section then concludes by examining how regionalism and federalism

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\textsuperscript{910} E.Capozzi, \textit{Partitocrazia: il regime Italiano e i suoi critici}, Naples, Guida, 2009, p.44.
\textsuperscript{911} Ibid., pp.50-51.
\textsuperscript{912} Ibid., p.45.
\textsuperscript{913} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
were used in different ways by each wave of activism to offer a return of popular sovereignty to the heartland of the North.

Section four focuses on nativism, highlighting how this at times also overlapped with authoritarianism. I will highlight how the MRAs developed a proto-nativist discourse in the 1950s which would later be developed by the Lega. Anti-immigration featured prominently in both the MARP’s and the MAB’s discourse; yet to label both the movements as purely anti-immigrant does not account for the fact that MRAs’ core ideology was regionalism and, thus, its political programme centred principally on obtaining regional autonomy. It is more accurate to identify nativism as a key ideological feature of the MRAs’ populist regionalism. This term not only avoids reducing the MRAs to ‘single issue’ movements, but also reflects the fact that the MRAs’ nativist arguments in many ways preceded those employed by leghismo.\footnote{Mudde, \textit{Populist Radical right Parties in Europe}, p.20.}

This section focuses on two specific waves of migration in Italy, the first internal and the second from abroad. In terms of the MRAs, it is important to note that Piedmont was the ‘prime receiving region’ of the ‘more than 2 million people [who] left Italy’s south … in the two decades following WW2.’\footnote{E. Capusotti, ‘Nordisti contro Sudisti Internal Migration and Racism in Turin, Europe: 1950s and 1960s’, \textit{Italian Culture}, vol.28, no.2, pp.121-138, (pp.121-122).} However, southern Italians also migrated towards Lombardy and its provinces, such as Bergamo.\footnote{P.Ginsborg, \textit{A History of Contemporary Italy, 1943-1988}, London, Penguin, 1990, pp.223-226.} It has been observed that the long history of these racist attitudes towards southerners ‘may well have been more exacerbated than reduced by the migratory flows of the 1950s and 1960s.’\footnote{C.Duggan, \textit{The Force of Destiny: A history of Italy since 1796}, London, Penguin, p.583.} I therefore concur with Cento Bull’s assertion that the Lega is ‘a political party which has exploited racist sentiments already present among the Lombard population’.\footnote{A.Cento Bull, ‘Ethnicity,Racism and the Northern League’, in C.Levy (ed.), \textit{Italian Regionalism}. Oxford, Berg, 1996, pp.171-189, (p.172).} However, I will also address a question posed by the same author of why the diffused quasi-racist attitudes of so many Northern Italians only found political expression and representation in the later 1980s and early 1990s and not in the 1950s and 1960s, when immigration from the South to the North undoubtedly created tension and ill-feelings among the ‘indigenous’ population.\footnote{Ibid.}
By contending that the MRAs did indeed provide the political expression and representation for such tension and ill-feelings, I therefore build upon Cento Bull’s work on ethnicity and racism present in North Italian regionalism and the Lega. I argue for a need to reconceptualise the roots of the politicising of this discourse and show that the MRAs provided a nativist framework on which the Lega would build in the 1990s. The chapter will also elaborate on why the Lega, unlike the MRAs, made an electoral breakthrough using nativist arguments against southerners.

This section highlights some important differences between the nativist discourse of the MRAs and the Lega relating to the two different waves of migration they were reacting against. In terms of the second wave of migration

at the beginning of the 1980s modern Italy reached another watershed; it ceased to be a net exporter of labour and began to welcome … a significant number of non-European and east European immigrants.\(^{920}\)

This idea of a reframing of the anti-southern discourse to target foreign migration is not new. Parati has noted that ‘there are many parallels that can be drawn between past internal migrations and recent immigrations to Italy’ and has called the migrations from South to North as a ‘dress rehearsal’ for the debates surrounding more recent migrations.\(^{921}\) Where my chapter breaks new ground, however, is in using a historical perspective to address a debate surrounding whether to define the Lega as radical right populist or regionalist populist.\(^{922}\) By viewing nativism as a historical element of north Italian populist regionalism I argue that the Lega’s eventual shift to the right in the mid-1990s can be seen as a reformulation of an exclusionary and identitarian ideology from the 1950s to suit 1990s’ populism which focused on external threats from abroad.

Padania played a key role in the Lega’s shift to becoming a party of the radical right. As explored in the previous chapter, the Lega had originally presented itself as an anti-fascist movement and Bossi had long denied accusations of fascism and LePenism, portraying himself

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as a dedicated anti-fascist in his writings.\textsuperscript{923} The Lega had, therefore, not begun as a party of the radical right; however, the creation of a separate nation-state undermined the party’s former anti-fascist stance as it formed the basis of the Lega’s radical right stance by portraying Padania as ‘a nation under threat from internal and external Others.’\textsuperscript{924}

The Lega’s Padania project led to a defence of Northern and Padanian interests. While a defensive position towards regional culture is compatible with unity, as I noted in the previous chapter, the way in which the Lega framed Padanian culture, language and customs as separate from the rest of Italy, represented a distinct departure from the message of unity from the MRAs. This is further highlighted by the Lega’s view of a separate Padanian heartland, which excluded southerners and began to shift the focus further to migration from abroad. The section then concludes by examining the continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs and the Lega regarding their proposals to stop the invasion of non-natives into their heartlands. The final section of the chapter synthesises the key elements of continuity and discontinuity between the MRAs’ and the Lega’s populist and nativist discourse and considers how these movements reflect an evolution of populism and nativism over the decades from populist regionalism to populist radical right regionalism.

2. Populist regionalism - A theoretical framework

The following section identifies the key elements of populist regionalism as regionalism, populism and nativism. While the variables of MRA and Lega regionalism (and federalism) were examined in the previous chapter, the following section briefly analyses some of the various definitions of populism and nativism before defining a populist regionalist framework.

i. Populism

Populism has long been subject to academic debate resulting in a variety of theoretical approaches. Some academics have preferred to focus on populism as a style or way of doing politics; for instance, Canovan has argued that populist appeals to the people are characteristically couched in a style that is ‘democratic’ in the sense of being aimed at ordinary people. Capitalising on popular distrust of politicians’ evasiveness and bureaucratic jargon, they pride themselves on simplicity and directness.925

Katsambekis has also identified populism as ‘a specific type of discourse, and thus as a way – among others – of doing politics and appealing to groups of people.’926 Other scholars have defined populism as a ‘political logic’ which is used by movements to bring together groups in society who seek broad transformation of existing power structures.927 This theory, pioneered by Laclau, relies on a more discursive approach and argues that populist actors use ‘empty’ signifiers with a plurality of meanings which bind demands together.928 This, in turn,

930 Laclau, On Populist Reason, pp.73-74.
creates a ‘chain or logic of equivalence’ and draws together ‘dispersed elements (agents, ideas, practices, demands) into a discourse by reinforcing what they have in common.’\textsuperscript{929} Populism has also been defined as a ‘moralised form of anti-pluralism’ which argues that all ‘other political competitors are part of an immoral and corrupt elite.’\textsuperscript{930} Another description is as

a thin-centred ideology which pits a homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous others depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity and voice.\textsuperscript{931}

In this chapter, populism is defined as ‘a thin-centred ideology’ which attaches itself to a core ideology, in this case regionalism and federalism. Populism in this sense has two key features; the first concerns viewing society as separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite.’\textsuperscript{932} This is often expressed through attributing labels to the ‘antagonistic camp’, such as ‘the regime’, the ‘oligarchy’… and so on, while labels relating to the ‘opposed underdog’ often take the form of ‘the nation’, ‘the people’ or the ‘silent majority’, to name but a few.\textsuperscript{933} Populists conflate all parties and politicians as a ‘political class’ or ‘elite’ that feigns opposition to distract the people from the fact that they ‘are essentially all the same and working together’; populism, therefore, claims to be above the traditional left-right political divide.\textsuperscript{934} The second key feature of populism is its ‘discursive construction and interpellation of “the people” as a collective subject and key actor of social change.’\textsuperscript{935} This is due to the fact that, as stated by Katsambekis

populists are placed on the side of ‘the people’, pledging to serve the popular will and reinforce popular sovereignty…making the political process more open and accountable to popular demands and grievances against power-holders and oligarchs.\textsuperscript{936}

\textsuperscript{929} Panizza, ‘Populism and Identification’. p.410.
\textsuperscript{932} Mudde, Populist Radical right Parties in Europe, p.23.
\textsuperscript{933} Laclau, On Populist Reason, p.87.
\textsuperscript{935} Katsambekis, ‘The Populist Surge in post-democratic times: Theoretical and political challenges’, p.204.
\textsuperscript{936} Ibid.
Populists often claim ‘to be the vox populi (voice of the people)’, representing ‘common sense’ policies.\footnote{937 Mudde, ‘Introduction to the Populist Radical right’, p.151.} As Taggart has noted, making reference to ‘the people’ is ‘a powerful idea because it plays on the tension in democracy between the power of popular sovereignty and the possibility of a tyranny of the majority’; however, ‘the people’ as a concept ‘is simply too broad to tell us anything substantial about the real nature of populist constituency.’\footnote{938 P.Taggart, Populism, Buckingham, Open University Press, 2000, p.98.} More useful, therefore, is the notion of a ‘single territory of the imagination’ which Taggart calls the ‘heartland.’\footnote{939 Ibid., p.96.} When the heartland ‘demands a single populace’ and emphasizes ‘the unity and the homogeneity of the imaginary residents’, this results in nativism.\footnote{940 Ibid.}

ii. Nativism

Nativism is best described as ‘a combination of nationalism and xenophobia’ and, thus, an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (‘the nation’) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.\footnote{941 Ibid.}

As this chapter deals predominantly with regions and imagined nations, I extend the argument to contend that nativism can just as well be the result of a combination of regionalism and xenophobia, if the region is viewed in exclusionary terms. Nativism is most often associated with parties of the radical right and involves a process of ‘othering’ which ‘relies on an ‘us-them’ distinction.’\footnote{942 Ibid., p.96.} In terms of who constitutes the ‘other’, different nativist parties ‘target different ‘enemies’ on the basis of a broad variety of motivations and prejudices’ and ‘socio-economic and socio-cultural factors can also play an important role.’\footnote{943 Ibid.} While the description of the native group may ‘remain vague or unspecified’ the important point is defining the native ‘in-group’ against a clearly and explicitly described ‘anti-figure’ or ‘out-group.’\footnote{944 Ibid., ‘Introduction to the Populist Radical right’, p.26.} In terms of this definition, while ‘nativism does not reduce parties to mere single-issue parties, such as the term anti-immigrant does’, anti-immigration can certainly play a
central role in nativist discourse in terms of ‘othering.’ For example, when the non-native is defined as ‘the enemy within the state but outside the nation’, in Western Europe, this group has been most commonly represented by ‘the immigrant community.’ Islamophobia has also been noted as the ‘prime nativist sentiment of contemporary populist radical right, combining ethnic, religious, and sometimes even racial stereotypes.’ Nativism is not only relevant for migrant ‘foreigners’ … but also towards minoritized fellow citizens who may be recast as virtual or de facto ‘foreigners’ – indeed ‘enemies’ within the space of the nation state. Hence, Mudde has highlighted that

a special category of the nonnative internal enemy is the so-called ‘southerners’, who can be both immigrants and indigenous ethnic minorities. Various populist radical right parties identify ‘southerners’ as a key enemy within the state, but outside the nation.

Nativism promises ‘to give power back to the people.’ The native people should be the nation’s exclusive inhabitants, and ‘nativism’s pluralist commitment to essentialized difference … is anti-assimilationist; it refuses any basis for overlap or intersection among those apparently fundamental differences.

As Taggart argues ‘the tendency for populists to be explicit in excluding certain groups as not part of the real “people” finds a strong echo in the conception of the heartland.’ A common slogan of ‘our own state for our own nation’, for example, ‘Italy for the Italians’ is central to an idea of the heartland.

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945 Ibid. pp.18-22.
946 Ibid. p.70.
949 Mudde, Populist Radical right Parties in Europe, p.73.
952 Taggart, Populism, p.96.
953 Mudde Populist Radical right Parties in Europe, p.139.
iii. **Populist regionalism**

The key elements of populist regionalism are regionalism, populism and nativism. For populist regionalists, regionalism acts as ‘the specific ideology behind targeting an “elite” and calling upon a “people” thus defining their “essence” and orientation.’ Populist regionalists focus on how a political elite or regime is conspiring against the region to deprive it of its sovereignty; regionalism is ‘fused with an anti-regime discourse to defend the region against the political class’ or a set of others. Populist regionalist parties act as the ‘vox populi’ by appealing to the people in socio-economic terms and juxtapose the ‘hard-working nature’ of one part of the country with the ‘parasitic and lazy’ other half, portraying their regions as ‘islands of prosperity that can be protected only by a radical type of ethnic “populist” democracy.’ The hard-working and virtuous region is also portrayed as exploited by the political elites which in turn are giving preference to the ‘other’.

Populist regionalists put forward their form of regionalism as the best way to return popular sovereignty to the heartland. A key part of this, is not only the notion of taking back control of the heartland for the economic benefit of its citizens but also the construction of this heartland against a series of dangerous ‘others’ or ‘non-natives’. Populist regionalism, therefore, not only pits the region against a corrupt elite but it also portrays the region as ‘ethnic’, thus raising ‘impenetrable cultural barriers even against those who are willing to integrate into the national polity, because it links the concept of participatory citizenship to cultural roots.’ This is important as populist regionalists claim to protect the ‘homogenous identity and culture’ of the region which is ‘threatened by a series of ‘others.’ Thus, populist regionalism, with its nativist ideological element, is not antithetical to radical right ideology. Indeed, in order to fully understand contemporary radical right parties with a regionalist past which either maintain this regionalism (populist radical right regionalist parties) or instead later abandon it (populist radical right post-regionalist parties) the longer-term nativist discourse of its populist regionalist precursors should be taken into account. The benefit of seeing populism as a thin-centred ideology is that this ‘ideational’ approach allows for an examination of

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957 Ibid., p.58.
‘populist forces across space and time.’ With this in mind, the following paragraphs examine two waves of populism which are relevant to this chapter.

3. Two waves of Populism

Having established a populist regionalist framework, the following section identifies the key features of 1950s’ populism and 1990s’ populism and analyses similarities and differences between these two populist waves.

ix. 1950s’ populism

Three key features of 1950s’ populism relevant to this chapter are a revolt of the small against the big, a protest against the party and parliamentary system, and heritage from the far-right and fascist systems which had preceded the emergence of representative democracy.

Uomo Qualunque

The first significant example of post-war populism in Europe was a movement entitled Fronte dell’Uomo Qualunque (UQ - ‘Everyman Front/Movement’) which was ‘created shortly after the end of the war by a flamboyant Neapolitan playwright, Guglielmo Giannini.’ The UQ enjoyed rapid success in the mainland south and ‘gained well over a million votes in the elections held in 1946.’

Giannini claimed to speak for the folla (crowd) and championed ‘the cause of those who simply wanted to be left in peace to enjoy their lives without meddling politicians … imposing taxes.’ The UQ ‘was in favour of a liberal economic policy with little state interference … and the privatisation of state-owned companies’ and claimed to have ‘the most

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962 Ibid.
961 Ibid.
liberal programme of all parties.‘964 Indeed, ‘Giannini embraced liberalism and even advocated an alliance of his movement with the Italian Liberal Party (PLI).‘965 However, Qualunquismo was ‘against the entire block of parties as it held them all responsible for the ruin of the country.’966 The UQ, according to Giannini, promoted an ‘efficient … government of technicians’ which ‘surpassed ideologies.’967 This anti-party and anti-parliamentarian position was strongly linked to the ‘disdain’ shown by the movement for the ‘values of the resistance’ and the anti-fascist parties which went on to form the partitocrazia.968 Thus, the UQ in part represented those who had not experienced the resistance against fascism and Nazism in the north of the country and for those for whom the establishment of anti-fascist values often generated preoccupations and fear.969

The UQ distanced itself from certain aspects of fascism; Giannini ‘did not embrace nationalism’ and stated ‘there is no idea more flawed than the patria.’970 Nevertheless, the movement reserved ‘high esteem’ for those who had held fascist membership and were ‘not ashamed to admit it.’971 The UQ’s interpretation of the Committees of National Liberation (CLN) and subsequent partitocrazia as a new tyrannical regime, therefore, attracted those who sympathized with the former fascist regime. The significance of the UQ can be seen in Tarchi’s analysis of the movement as not only ‘a prototypical European populist movement’ but also ‘a direct precursor of French Poujadisme.’972

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965 Ibid.
967 Ibid. p.95.
970 Ibid., p.81.
972 Tarchi, ‘Italy: A country of many populisms’, p.86.
**Poujadisme**

Another European populist movement of great relevance to this chapter was formed in 1953 by Pierre Poujade who, like Giannini, was not a professional politician and used this background to claim to be a man of the people.\(^{973}\) Poujade’s *Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans* (UDCA) represented ‘a localised protest by small shop-keepers against the punitive effects of an anachronistic tax system and the high-handedness of government inspectors in clamping down on tax fraud.’\(^{974}\) The ‘hastily constituted Poujadist Party’ enjoyed short-term electoral success, some ten years after *Qualunquismo*’s emergence and gained ‘52 seats in the National Assembly’ in 1956.\(^{975}\)

*Poujadisme* claimed ‘to incarnate the revolt of the small against the big.’\(^{976}\) Poujade espoused ‘the cause of the small man, attacking big capital and the self-serving politicians who promoted it.’\(^{977}\) This message was reflected by the fact that most Poujadist deputies were ‘shopkeepers, artisans and small entrepreneurs who appealed to the predominantly … poorer, underdeveloped and economically stagnant departments of central, southern and south-western France.’\(^{978}\)

*Poujadisme* was also significantly anti-political and anti-parliamentary; its ‘propaganda railed against the “fraud” of parliamentary democracy’ and the ‘exploitative gangs growing fat on the toil and suffering of the people.’\(^{979}\) As with *Qualunquismo*, *Poujadisme* positioned itself against the entire political class, claiming to be ‘neither on the right, nor on the left, nor on the centre’ and instead appealing ‘to the *honest people* of France, regardless of social condition, ideological conviction or political affiliation.’\(^{980}\) In spite of this typical populist claim of being ‘above politics and politicians’ Poujade’s reactionary stance against the modernisation of the French economy and the threat this posed to the lower-middle classes was ‘typical of the extreme-right.’\(^{981}\) With his promotion of anti-parliamentarism, it is no surprise that

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974 Ibid.
975 Ibid., p.72.
978 Ibid., p.72-73.
979 Ibid., p.70.
980 Ibid., p.80.
*Poujadisme*, in a similar way to the UQ served ‘as a magnet for ultra-nationalists and neo-fascists wishing to destabilize the regime and keen to exploit what they saw as its fascist potentialities.’\(^{982}\) Indeed, Poujade himself was linked to the Vichy regime, having been a section leader in the Nazi puppet-regime’s ‘Compagnon de France’; and having also previously been linked to Jaques Doriot’s fascist party.\(^{983}\)

**ii. 1990s’ populism**

Having established some of the key characteristics of European populism during the 1950s, the following paragraphs briefly analyze the similarities and differences between this type of populism and 1990s’ populism.

1990s’ populism, like 1950s’ populism represents ‘hostility … against the political class and the administrative bureaucracy and their control over fiscal policy.’\(^{984}\) This latter wave of populism, however, also shows clear discontinuities. First, it is more associated with the collapse of the post-war settlement in Europe. 1990s’ populism was tied ‘to the collapse of many of the prevailing … Cold War meta-narratives … the collapse of communism, the crisis of welfarism and the passing of Fordism.’\(^{985}\) With this changing political context the new proponents of populism reacted against the development of a heavily bureaucratized welfare state and stressed the corruption and collusion in established political parties...it sought to reconstruct politics around issues of taxation, immigration and nationalism or regionalism … a rejection of the post-war consensus … and the dominant political parties.\(^{986}\)

An example of this can be seen in the fact that ‘Italy was not immune to these broader socio-economic and political transformations’ as the Tagentopoli scandals accelerated the collapse of the Italian political system.\(^{987}\) This element of crisis and transition is, according to

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\(^{983}\) Ibid., p.68.


\(^{985}\) Ibid.

\(^{986}\) Taggart, *Populism*, p.75.

Laclau, highly significant as ‘some degree of crisis in the old structure is a necessary precondition of populism.’ Therefore, 1990s’ populism should also be viewed in the context of mass migration, Europeanisation and globalisation and an emphasis on preserving ‘the status quo-or the status quo ante.’ Therefore, by focusing on ‘political issues such as immigration, crime and corruption’, respectively, 1990s’ populists ‘rail against the establishment … arguing that they deceive the people by … putting their (or immigrants’) interests above the general will of the (native) people’ often adopting terms such as mafia to describe the political class and emphasise an alleged criminality of politicians. This shift in emphasis, particularly in terms of foreign migration, represents a significant discontinuity from the 1950s wave of populism and is linked closely to the rise in radical right parties. It also explains why 1990s’ populism has sometimes been broadly defined as ‘xenophobic populism.’

The previous two sections have established a theoretical framework by providing a definition of Populist Regionalism and also examining two waves of populism. The following two case studies make use of this framework to provide a cross-examination of the MRAs’ and Lega’s populist and nativist discourse.

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Laclau, On Populist Reason, p.177.
Ibid.
4. Case Study One: Reclaiming regional sovereignty from the partitocrazia

The following section focuses on how both the MRAs’ and the Lega’s activism conveyed a populist message through their claims that all parties of the partitocrazia regime were corrupt, elitist and conspiring against the North to deny the people their regional and popular sovereignty. Populist regionalism was also present in both waves of activism in their presentation of their respective regions as islands of prosperity being exploited by these elites. Divided into three sub-sections, the section will also highlight some important discontinuities in this anti-party and anti-Roman stance related to the context in which each movement was operating and, the wave of populism that they represented and also the ways in which popular sovereignty was to be returned to the heartland.

i. The region vs the corrupt regime of the parties

One element of the MRAs’ and the Lega’s populism lay in the claim that all of the political parties of the regime were the same. From the perspective of the MRAs, there was very little to choose between them in terms of the parties’ ideology and aims, thus linking with the populist notion that all parties are part of a corrupt elite. This extract, from one of the MAB’s essays reads

the first observation that one makes of the Italian parties is the similarity between them…instead of channeling opinions…they become instruments of propaganda, with the intent of removing any form of dissent, criticism or malcontent before it can assume any form of protest.992

The MARP also argued in Piemonte Nuovo that the movement did ‘not see any difference between Red and White Bolshevism’, thus conflating (Red) Communism and (White) Christian Democracy. In particular the idea of the left-right axis being irrelevant is evident from the idea that

sectarianism … protectionism, intolerance of free speech have by now put Christian Democracy on the same level as Communism regarding the government of the state.993

This discourse was also in play in 1980s’ and 1990s’ leghismo. An article in Lombardia Autonomista claimed, for example, that ‘the ideologies of the centre, the left and the right’ were ‘unable to represent, the people’s demands.’994 Piemont Autonomista also claimed that regionalism was a political alternative, ‘separate from the ideologies of the parties’ and put forward a call to ‘substitute the party ideologies … with the values and common sense of Piedmont.’995 (FIG 1)

A specific link between both the MRAs and the Lega was the idea that political elites were conspiring to prevent the implementation of regional government. Piemonte Nuovo’s articles argued that centralization empowered the partitocrazia, thus meaning that any proposals of regional reform were against the parties’ interests.996 The MARPs argued

no government or party has dedicated itself to the new regional path laid out by the Constitution; as if there was a tacit agreement between the parties to simply ignore the Constitution and happily continue along the old path of centralism.997

The Lega, like the MRAs also portrayed the parties as frustrating the general will of the people. An analysis of party newspapers of both the Lombard and Piedmontese leagues in the early 1990s reveals frequent references to the partitocrazia impeding the implementation of the region. When Italy’s political class refused to collaborate with the Lega after the regionalists made electoral gains in the Lombard town of Brescia, Lombardia Autonomista stated,

the arrogant refusal of the centralist parties to govern the city of Brescia together with the Lega Nord, is the clearest demonstration of how little respect the

995 M.Borsotti, ‘Che Costi!’, Piemont Autonomista, 10th December 1988.
‘La strada percorsa dal MARP in un raffronto con altri partiti’, Piemonte Nuovo, 15th January 1957.
partitocrazia holds towards the will of the communities and the popular will expressed by the vote.998

While the Lega, like the MRAs depicted itself as standing ‘against all parties of the partitocrazia’, it is equally important to reflect on differences between the two waves of activism by considering the two types of populism they represented in addition to the different contexts.999 In terms of the relevance of 1950s’ populist discourse, the MARP’s position can be seen as very similar to that of Giannini’s UQ in its opposition to the partitocrazia. An article released by the MARP in 1957 praised Giannini for ‘having fought against the tyranny of the CLN’ and ‘ensuring Italy’s freedom.’1000 The MARP, however, emphasized that ‘regionalism wasn’t Qualunquismo’ and argued that unlike Giannini, they were fighting against a ‘new tyranny’ of the ‘partitocrazia married with centralist bureaucracy.’1001

Nevertheless, equating the CLN with tyranny mirrored a common Qualunquist theme. When considering the reasons for this similarity, it is important to bear in mind the fascist heritage of a section of the MARP. Among the leading members of the Piedmontese autonomists were individuals such as Michele Rosboch and Franco Bruno who had been particularly active members of the Partito Nazionale Fascista (PNF). According to a police report from 1956, Franco Bruno had been a ‘tenacious supporter of the regime and was member of the directorate of the “fascio” of Turin’, for this reason at the moment of Turin’s liberation, Bruno ‘was forced to flee his birth-town Altare, to avoid recriminations’.1002 Meanwhile, Rosboch’s activism was marked by his request to take part in the Ethiopian campaign as volunteer for the M.S.V.N (fascist blacksirts).1003 Furthermore, although the MARP’s founder, Enrico Villarboito, appears to have belonged to the local Piedmontese CLN, police reports suggest that he went on to join the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) prior to joining the Liberal Party and then the MARP.1004 Villarboito had also formed a failed

999 Bossi, Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.113.
1001 Ibid.
1003 Ibid.
movement called the Partito Volontà Nazionale (PVN) in 1953. The fact that this name had neo-fascist overtones seeing as fascist discourse had often referred to the ‘Volontà del Duce and the Volontà di Potenza, is also highly significant in terms of the the MARP’s Qualunquista identity.

Further parallels with Qualunquismo are seen in the MARP’s engagement with the Partito Liberale Italiano (PLI), which was rooted in the liberal subculture of Piedmont. It is significant that much criticism was directed towards the partitocrazia by dissident Liberals such as Panfilo Gentile and Roberto Lucifero. They were unhappy at what they viewed as the ‘strapotere’ of the parties, claiming it was one of the root causes of a chaotic deterioration into dictatorship.1005 Whilst comparisons with these dissident Liberals are problematic due to the MARP’s hostility towards the Partito Nazionale Monarchico (PNM), of which Lucifero would eventually become a member, they nevertheless also made references to the glorious role of Piedmont in the Risorgimento and a liberal tradition in Piedmont.1006 The MARP took a firm line against the PLI, portraying them as enemies of regionalism.1007 Nevertheless, the fact that two of the MARP’s key members, Enrico Villarboito, and Michele Rosboch had briefly been members of the Liberal Party prior to joining the MARP also demonstrates a dissident Liberal current running through the movement.1008

While the MAB opposed the DC, it should be noted that they also appealed to a Catholic subculture. The 1956 election victory of the Bergamascan autonomists depended on the fact that Guido Calderoli ‘was closely linked to the clergy in Bergamo’.1009 Innocente Calderoli’s statement that in the elections of 1956, rather than voting for the DC, ‘many priests of Val Brembana asked people to vote for my Father’ is further supported by evidence that Calderoli and Aldo Rizzi distributed materials and propaganda to priests in the hope that they would spread their message.1010

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1006 Ibid.
1008 A.Busto, Il Partito Liberale Italiano ha pienamente esaurito il suo compito’, Piemonte Nuovo, 10th May 1958.
1010 Ibid.
Furthermore, Giuseppe Sala, explaining the reason why his father-in-law, Gianfranco Gonella had participated in the MAB, stated that the movement had originally ‘adopted a characteristic of Christian Democracy i.e. to claim the importance of local autonomy’ stating that, ‘historically, the Popular Party (of Don Luigi Sturzo) was born with this purpose.’\footnote{G.Sala, interviewed by George Newth, Bergamo, Italy, June 2016.} The MAB was, nevertheless, openly critical of the DC’s lack of commitment to regional reform. However, rather than painting the DC as a face of corruption, the movement conveyed an air of exasperation and bemusement at the DC for not staying loyal to a tradition of regional autonomy in the province claiming that the party had betrayed Bergamo due to it being the ‘most loyal province to Christian Democracy.’\footnote{G.Calderoli, ‘Dieci anni di servitù bergamasca’, in Idem (ed.), Zibaldone Autonomista d’un Montanaro Bergamasco, Bergamo, Gruppo Autonomisti Bergamaschi, 1958, pp.48-54, (p.49).}

In contrast to the MRAs, any collaboration between the Lega or Bossi with the political class of Rome would have been completely rejected in the context of 1990s’ populism. Responding to the changing socio-economic context in Italy, in particular following the Tangentopoli scandals, this wave of populism represented by the Lega focused instead on how the partitocrazia had now outlived its purpose. The narrative of 1990s’ populism considered the partitocrazia as criminal. A review of articles in the mouthpiece of Piedmontese leghisti, Piemont Autonomista, reveals complaints of ‘the increasingly Mafioso and clientelistic’ nature of the parties and accusations of these parties of being ‘puppets of the mafia of parties and/or parties of the mafia.’\footnote{G.Farassino. ‘Una firma verso l’autonomia. I perché dell’Autonomia’, Piemont Autonomista, 10th December 1988.} Indeed, Piemont Autonomista in the late 1980s stated that

> in some regions, following investigations, the local political exponents have resulted in ‘strong suspicions of mafia links’ … various political representatives … will be the spokesperson for the interest of the clans.\footnote{M.Borsotti. ‘Che Costi!’ Piemont Autonomista, 10th December 1988.}

While this article predates Tangentopoli, revelations of corruption further fueled the 1990s’ populist discourse of criminality and allowed the Lega to pose as the virtuous party acting in the interests of the people. The way in which leghismo’s opposition to the Roman parties was tied to accusations of mafia-linked corruption is perhaps best demonstrated by the way in which the Lega used this discourse in order to shift the focus away from Milan to which
the label of ‘Tangentopoli’ (Kick-back city) was originally attributed. This is clear in an extract from *Lombardia Autonomista* which states

Poor Milan! A city famous in the world for its efficiency, for its hard-working nature, has ended up on the front pages of all the newspapers with the nickname ‘Tangentopoli’. It certainly is not the fault of the Milanese citizens…but of a corrupt, and Mafioso political class which has … succeeded in abusing public money with the typical modes of Roman centralism.¹⁰¹⁵

This is a clear example of how Bossi insisted on the image of *Roma Ladrona* (Rome the Thief) in order to divert the focus of attack from Milan and the North towards Rome and the South. As Foot has argued, ‘the ethnic aspects of the League’s propaganda and mobilization are not to be underestimated … the focus of the scandals shifted away from Milan to more stereotypically ‘corrupt’ cities.’¹⁰¹⁶ Cento Bull also noted that the ‘origins of Tangentopoli, according to the Northern League, lie in the Southern mafiosità which has polluted the Northern political system and now threatens to destroy Northern “clean” society.’¹⁰¹⁷

Therefore, while the MRAs’ anti-*partitocrazia* message was somewhat tempered by their connections to their respective political subcultures and – in the case of the MARP – also influenced by their links to the fascist regime, 1990s’ populism related more to a narrative of substituting ideologies of the Cold War period. The Lega exploited the vacuum left by the DC in former ‘white zones’ and turning them into ‘green zones.’¹⁰¹⁸ Indeed, the conscious appeal of the Lega to former DC voters can be seen in a section of the newspaper in both *Lombardia Autonomista* and *Lega Nord Italia Federale* entitled ‘i Cattolici votano Lega’ which portrayed the Lega as the natural home for Catholic voters, thus encouraging former DC voters to shift

their loyalties to the regionalist movement.\textsuperscript{1019} Evidence of this can be found in extracts such as the following:

> A Catholic citizen cannot but vote for the Lega Nord, the political force whose federalist vision guarantees the defence of those Christian principles which lie at the root of our civilization.\textsuperscript{1020}

Parallels exist in how the MAB had attempted to appeal to DC voters by portraying the movements as an alternative; however, the Bergamascan autonomists of the post-war period had never claimed that the DC had outlived its purpose. The Lega’s appeal to Catholic voters was framed very much in its own particular context, i.e. the transition from the First to the Second Italian Republic. One of these editions stated that ‘after the recent corruption scandals of the old DC, Italian Catholics are now free to allow their politics to reflect the values that guide their life.’\textsuperscript{1021} Direct references to the Tangentopoli scandals struck at the heart of the Italian political and party system and allowed the Lega to ‘highlight the criminality and corruption of this system’, thus marking a distinct difference between the two waves of activism.\textsuperscript{1022}

Bossi claimed that ‘Catholic centralism was incompatible with federalism.’\textsuperscript{1023} This was part of a wider Lega message that ‘many Catholics have decided to rid themselves of the fraudsters of the partitocrazia and to choose the Lega for a true renewal of political life’.\textsuperscript{1024} This reference to centralism and its juxtaposition with federalism and freedom was a further variable which allows for analysis of both continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs and the Lega.

\textsuperscript{1022} Ibid.
ii. The Liberal Productive North v The Centralist ‘Roma Ladrona’

A further connection between the populist regionalism of the MRAs and the Lega was in the way each movement defined the North as liberal and free, while Rome was depicted as responsible for imposing a suffocating centralism on the region. (FIG 2) The MARP stated that it was ‘a movement conducted by free men who were tired of the partitocrazia and the bureaucratic centralism of Rome.’\textsuperscript{1025} Similarly, Calderoli put forward a call to ‘free Bergamascans from bureaucratic slavery’, arguing that the partitocrazia was responsible for the ‘lack of unity throughout Italy and lack of faith in the political system.’\textsuperscript{1026} He stated

we have fallen, in the last ten years following the liberation, into a bureaucratic servitude that our fathers … had never experienced at any point in history, not under the Austrians, the French, nor under the Venetians.\textsuperscript{1027}

A major factor in this fiscal protest was hostility towards the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Special Fund for the South), which was

set up in 1950 to assist the economic regeneration of the poorest regions of the country, [and] spent more than 1,000 billion lire during the first years of its existence on roads, electricity, housing, water supplies and other infrastructure works in the south, and over 8,000 billion lire between 1957 and 1975 on (for the most part failed) schemes to promote industrialization.\textsuperscript{1028}

Capusotti has highlighted how the Cassa played a key role in anti-southern feeling in Piedmont noting that it was a symbol of the south’s passivity, demonstrated by its need for ‘special funds to develop’ and also ‘of the north’s generosity.’\textsuperscript{1029} The MRAs played a key role in stoking such sentiments. An extract from the MARP’s Piemonte Nuovo asserted ‘we pay

\textsuperscript{1025} M.Rosboch, ‘Perché ho scelto la lista del MARP’ Piemonte Nuovo, 23\textsuperscript{rd} March 1956.

\textsuperscript{1026} G.Calderoli, ‘Il MAB ha tre punti importanti nel suo programma’, in Zibaldone Autonomista di un montanaro Bergamasco, pp.72-74, (p.72).


\textsuperscript{1028} Idem, ‘Dieci anni di servitù burocratica in Bergamasca’ in Ibid., pp.48-54 (p.48).

\textsuperscript{1029} Duggan, The Force of Destiny: A history of Italy since 1796, p.564.

\textsuperscript{1029} Capusotti, ‘Nordisti contro Sudisti Internal Migration and Racism in Turin, Europe: 1950s and 1960s’, p.126.
every year 280 million to the state and receive less than 90 million…we are tired of maintaining funds intended for the South." In a separate essay, the Bergamascan autonomists stated that Lombardy sends 440 million per year to the state and receives no more than 140 million in return. We must reflect on this. We cannot industrialise the South at the cost of draining completely the resources of the North.

This notion of the North’s resources being drained by the elites in Rome and directed toward the South is captured perfectly by two images released by the MRAs. In 1959, Aldo Rizzi wrote to his fellow MAB activist Guido Calderoli, stating enthusiastically ‘I need to have some more copies of the ‘Hen of the Golden egg … it could not be more efficient!’ The letter was referring to a poster which Calderoli had designed to illustrate the wasteful nature of the centralist partitocrazia and uses a key populist regionalist arguments of juxtaposing the hard-working nature of Lombardy with the parasitic centralism of Rome and the South. This image was inspired by propaganda previously released by the MARP. The Piedmontese movement was influential in the development of images, highlighting the wasteful partitocrazia which would influence their Bergamascan partners and, in turn, be recycled at a later date by the Lega. (FIG 3)

The Lega, to a certain extent, continued the MRAs’ protest against this state body and the opposition against sending taxes to the South. Indeed, the claim that the state was ‘responsible for an iniquitous fiscal policy that was harmful to the ‘productive North’ and advantageous to the ‘parasitic’ south’ can be found in the fiscal protest of the MRAs. A further continuity is the idea that welfare and assistance create little wealth and a lack of development. The generous distribution of wealth has not brought any real advantage to the South, because only work can truly create wealth.

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In addition to the aforementioned ‘Hen of the Golden Egg’, the Lega also took inspiration from previous imagery released by the MRAs showing an insatiable centralist state devouring the North. (FIG 4) These recycled images echoed the protests of the 1950s, with claims that that ‘without the centralist state, the North of Italy would be the richest in Europe, or maybe in the world.’

A comparison of three images from the 1950s, 1980s and the first decade of the 2000s demonstrates a continuity in the image of breaking free from the centralist partitocracia or centralist Roman state. Articles in Piemont Autonomista stressed the need to ‘break away from the chains of … centralist Roman power’ and ‘excessive power of the parties of Rome.’ Images released in this period by Piedmontese leagues also show a crossover in how both the MRAs and the Lega portrayed the parties as entities which held back Northern regions.

(FIG 5)

While there are definite cross-overs in portraying the honest, hard-working and simple-living north Italians being exploited by the elites there are equally important discontinuities. Both of the MRAs should be considered Poujadist as they claimed to represent the little man against big government and big business. The MARP, in particular, had originally been a union of small businesses and traders against taxes. These particular origins of the MARP led to a direct appeal to this group of voters in the lead up to the 1958 elections:

Business owners!... the MARP is your movement – it was born for you and principally for you!...Vote for the MARP, and you will vote to protect yourselves, your businesses, your jobs and your livelihood!

An analysis of written material in Piemonte Nuovo reveals that the MARP’s populist regionalism contained a combination of regionalism with an appeal to the common man against big government. In a section of Piemonte Nuovo entitled ‘why we want regional autonomy’, one of the motivations given was that the ‘Piedmontese are tired of paying taxes and duties in

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1035 Bossi, Vento dal Nord. La mia Lega. La mia vita, p.136.
1036 Farassino, ‘Una firma verso l’autonomia I perché dell’Autonomia’, Piemont Autonomista.
1038 Notes by Turin Police Commissioner entitled “Le origini del la MARP e gli uomini che lo rappresentano”.
1039 ‘Non abbiamo nè avremo i miliardi dei comunisti, i democristiani o i liberali’ Piemonte Nuovo 26th April 1958.
a larger quantity than any other region and receiving in return little or nothing." Indeed, it was noted by police reports that the main source of funding for the MARP came ‘from the small to medium businessmen.’ The MARP wrote numerous articles in support of small businessmen, including a piece by the future MARP councilor, Mario Vezzani who was described in police reports as ‘the most Poujadist member of the MARP’. In the first edition of *Piemonte Nuovo* Vezzani wrote, ‘Business Owners: the voice of Piedmont is reawakening…. only the Region will be able to end the economic, financial and moral ills which afflict us.’

While the MAB did not share the same origins as the MARP as a union of businessmen, they held significant Poujadist elements; it is worth re-emphasising the message of one of their electoral posters in which the movement claimed to represent those squeezed ‘piccoli popoli’ against sending taxes to Rome. *(FIG 6)*

Wasteful centralism, was seen as a malaise caused by the *partitocrazia* and connected to state intervention. The MRAs, instead, promoted private enterprise as opposed to state ownership of industries. The MARP for example, declared in 1958 that

> We are anti-interventionist … we have absolute faith in private enterprise and maximum limitation in the interference of the State in economic matters … but defence of jobs and of productive work in all of its expressions.

The MAB also echoed calls for anti-interventionism, arguing that

> we are simply asking that we are left alone to solve our own problems, with the millions that we send to Rome […] We would spend our money better and with more profit.

Nevertheless, the MRAs recognised the need for financial help for the South. the MARP stated that

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1041 Notes by Turin Police Commissioner entitled ‘Le origini del MARP e gli uomini che lo rappresentano’.
1042 Ibid.
1044 ‘Non abbiamo né avremo i miliardi dei comunisti, i democristiani o i liberali’, *Piemonte Nuovo*.
1045 Calderoli, ‘Il centralismo di Stato e il riscaldamento centrale’, p.28.
we are aware of the necessity of collaborating for the improvement in the quality of life for depressed areas with careful and gradual investment...however, imposing these investments on the vital necessities of other regions...will lead to an impoverishment of national resources...we say yes to helping but no to handouts.\textsuperscript{1046}

The slogan ‘aiutare sì, mantenere no!’ (let us help them, but not through handouts) was later taken up by the UAI, the rump movement which emerged from the MAB, in the 1970s and the historical significance of this slogan will be further examined in the second case study of this chapter.\textsuperscript{1047} Several \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} articles argued for the institution of a Cassa per le Montagne to provide funds for the mountainous areas in Piedmont, arguing that ‘we would like all of the most progressive regions to have their own Cassa.’\textsuperscript{1048} The MARP argued that ‘we are certain that … these casse would bring great results with the benefit of the regions which are well-administered.’\textsuperscript{1049} In general, however, the \textit{Cassa del Mezzogiorno} was viewed as an inefficient way of creating new industries compared with the activation of the regions. Indeed, the MRAs claimed that ‘the implementation of the special statutes has brought much more to the most southern regions than the \textit{Cassa del Mezzogiorno} has managed.’\textsuperscript{1050} Nevertheless, neither movement proposed cutting all finances to the South.

The second wave of regionalist activism represented by \textit{leghismo} also contained Poujadist tendencies blended with regionalism. \textit{Piemont Autonomista}, for example, printed articles which advocated regional autonomy in the name of the little man against big government. It argued that ‘With autonomy, the resources of Piedmont will go to the productive categories: small to medium businesses, entrepreneurs, small business holders, artisans and farmers.’\textsuperscript{1051}

Bossi also claimed that ‘the Lega represents the squeezed North which is completely fed up with this way of doing things.’\textsuperscript{1052} Bossi’s Lega called for a series of tax revolts in the

\textsuperscript{1046} MARP electoral pamphlet entitled “MARP. Perché vogliamo l’autonomia regionale?”, in Fasc \textit{Movimento per l’Autonomia Regionale Piemontese}, vol.1, Archivio di Stato Torino, Cat.A3A, 8\textsuperscript{th} June 1956.

\textsuperscript{1047} Ibid.


‘Istituire la Cassa per la Montagna’, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 5\textsuperscript{th} December 1959.


\textsuperscript{1049} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1050} O.Zuccaharani, ‘Per coloro che dicono che nessuno vuole la regione’ in \textit{Così parlano gli autonomisti}, pp.52-58, (p.56).

\textsuperscript{1051} Farassino, ‘Una firma verso l’autonomia. I perchè dell’Autonomia’, \textit{Piemont Autonomista}.

\textsuperscript{1052} Bossi, \textit{Il Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita}, p.136.
early 1990s with slogans such as ‘Basta tasse a Roma’, ‘non pagare l’ISI (Imposta straordinaria Immobile) é un dovere morale’, ‘Regime Ladro’ and ‘Nord Libero’.\(^{1053}\) Poujade himself, in 1993 labelled leghismo as an ‘updated version of Poujadisme’. In doing so, he also highlighted an important juxtaposition that Poujadisme centred its attention on the poorer rural areas of France, whereas Lega was garnering votes in the richest areas of Italy.\(^{1054}\) However, the Lega’s protest against the Cassa should, instead, be read as part of 1990s’ populism’s reaction against the heavily bureaucratized welfare state and linking this protest with a corrupt mafia state. The Lega argued that criminality and mafiosità had become the principle raison d’être of the Italian state and the Cassa formed a part of this. Bossi stated that ‘the generosity of the North has … done nothing apart from enrich the network of corruption and criminal dealings.’\(^{1055}\) As has been pointed out by Farrell and Levy,

In its early days, the Lega used slogans like *No allo strapotere meridionale* and continued to use posters depicting Sicilian peasants, recognizable by the distinctive beret or *cupola*, as thieving the tax revenues paid by honest Lombards.\(^{1056}\)

Quoting a Lega activist in his autobiography, Bossi claimed to speak for the squeezed North when he cited these words from an activist

I’ve been paying for the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno for thirty years now, they tell me that it’s right to do it because the South is poor … I don’t understand how it is that I’ve spent so much and the South is still poor.\(^{1057}\)

The fact that the Lega had chosen a Mafioso figure to represent Rome in its propaganda is further evidence of how the Lega focused not only on the wasteful centralism of Rome, but also likened it to a Mafia state, thus representing not only a recycling of this image but also its adaptation to meet the 1990s’ populist emphasis on corruption and criminality. (FIG 7)

\(^{1055}\) Bossi and Vimerate, La Rivoluzione, La Lega: storia e idee, p.155.
\(^{1057}\) Bossi, Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.181.
The Lega’s main critique of the use of the Cassa was that the South had “been allowed to stagnate by decades of state handouts.”\(^{1058}\) Bossi portrayed the solution to the malaise of the Italian partitocrazia as the Lega which had redrawn the political divides in Italy.

For years, the political divide was between the liberalist and federalist ideas of the Lega Nord and the statist-centralist ideas of all of the parties of the old regime … a struggle that resolved itself systematically with the victory of the Lega.\(^{1059}\)

Therefore, the Lega argued that the solution could be found in the ‘new, fresh and young pragmatism of the Lega Nord [which] triumphs over old ideology’.\(^{1060}\) This new ideology stated a view which was in stark contrast to that of the MRAs that

The current Italian public finance system, based on transfers from region to region, to local bodies, based on a logic of random distribution which has denied any criteria of economic efficiency, has to stop.\(^{1061}\)

A distrust of the elites remained from 1950s’ populism, as did a protest against Rome’s fiscal policies; however, the Lega, in line with populism of the 1990s had ‘in the early 1990s…as its main goal that of breaking down the prevailing political and social consensus and attacking partyocracy, consociationalism and state welfarism’.\(^{1062}\) The Lega, therefore linked their fiscal protest to this purpose which is addressed in more depth in the following section.

iii. Returning Sovereignty to the people – regionalism v fiscal federalism.

A key claim made by populist actors is a restoration of popular sovereignty.\(^{1063}\) The following sub-section will demonstrate how both the MRAs and the Lega promised that their

\(^{1060}\) Brescia: Le proposte della Lega’, *Lombardia Autonomista*.
forms of regionalism and federalism would lead to a return to popular sovereignty from the corrupt elites in Rome, albeit in different ways.

The MRAs, while keen to highlight the inadequacies of the partitocrazia, did not advocate for the destruction or overhaul of the party system. Instead, they argued that regionalism would lead to a version of the parties which was more responsive to the needs of the region, thereby, returning sovereignty to the people. the MARP stated that

the region will not destroy the parties, it will allow for the regional version of the parties which is what already exists in countries with a regional or federal structure…parties of a more flexible nature which will hopefully stop all of the splits in Italian political life.¹⁰⁶⁴

Indeed, both the MARP and the MAB argued that ‘the cure’ to the political divide was ‘an effective regional and communal decentralization.’¹⁰⁶⁵ The MARP reinforced this argument stating that ‘the MARP’s exponents are above the squabbling parties that are determined to monopolise power.’¹⁰⁶⁶ The MARP also emphasised its anti-elitism by stating

They tell us that we don’t have great names in our list. … if by big names they mean the professional political class … and the big names of finance and of capital … then we are delighted to confirm that in our list we have no ‘great names’ because we have purposefully excluded them.¹⁰⁶⁷ (FIG 8)

Returning sovereignty to the region from a distant and ill-intentioned centralised political class was fundamental to the MRAs’ populist regionalism. Presenting regional government as a type of ‘political school’, the MARP stated

nobody expects to be able to go to university without having first past their high-school exams…nobody should be able to have a seat in parliament or a

¹⁰⁶⁶Busto ‘Il Partito Liberale Italiano ha pienamente esaurito il suo compito’, Piemonte Nuovo.
ministerial portfolio if they have not first passed the exam of sitting in regional government.\textsuperscript{1068}

The MARP also looked to model Italy on the liberal traditions of ‘Old Piedmont’. The movement described Mayor of Turin, Amedeo Peyron as a noble politician of the grand Piedmontese tradition stating that he was ‘correct and just … and tied … to a pre-unitary North Italian tradition.’\textsuperscript{1069} While the MARP were critics of Peyron’s council, they directed the following message towards the Christian Democrat mayor himself: ‘if you belonged to another party … we would vote for you.’\textsuperscript{1070} With this return to pre-unitary Italy clearly beyond reach, the MARP argued that in terms of the partitocrazia ‘the cure was an effective regional and communal decentralization.’\textsuperscript{1071}

Similar to the MRAs which had claimed that regional autonomy would bring democracy closer to the people, Bossi argued that ‘only our reforms … can safeguard democracy which is threatened by the partitocrazia, and give the country back to the people.’\textsuperscript{1072} Piedmontese leghismo echoed the MARP’s idea of regional government as a ‘school of honesty’, by arguing that the partitocrazia could be ‘combatted effectively with regional autonomy … bringing honest and competent men chosen directly by the Piedmontese.’\textsuperscript{1073} To an extent, this is a continuity of the MARP’s plea to voters to choose ‘Piedmont before the parties.’\textsuperscript{1074} However, while the MARP and the MAB suggested that the implementation of regional reforms would allow for a fairer management of resources; the Lega recommended a very different solution to the financial issues facing the North.

As explored in the previous chapter, the Lega did not advocate the regional statutes sanctioned by the constitution, but rather neo-federalism and fiscal federalism. Neo-federalism referred to a plan to reform the institutional framework of the Italian state so that the country would be divided into a confederation of three macro-regions: Padania in the North, Etruria in the Centre, and ‘the South.’\textsuperscript{1075} Fiscal federalism, on the other hand, referred to the ability of

\textsuperscript{1068} Vezzani, ‘Solo la Regione potrà opporsi alla imperante partitocrazia’, Piemonte Nuovo.
\textsuperscript{1069} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1071} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1072} Palenzona, ‘Non vediamo differenze fra Bolscevismo rosso e bianco’, Piemonte Nuovo.
\textsuperscript{1073} C.Palenzona. ‘L’autonomia regionale contro la partitocrazia’, Piemonte Nuovo 15th October 1956.
\textsuperscript{1075} U. Bossi, ‘Suffragio universale: dalla partitocrazia al federalismo’, Lombardia Autonomista, 10th June 1991.
\textsuperscript{1076} Borsotti, ‘Che Costi!’, Piemonte Autonomista.
\textsuperscript{1077} Vezzani, ‘Gli utili idioti e la libertà del voto’, Piemonte Nuovo.
local governments to have greater control over raising taxes. These measures, according to Bossi, would ensure the return of popular sovereignty. This is evident through Bossi’s statement that

Federalism is evidently the form of State that can recognise the institutional participation of small business and which favours the employee who, in the Partitocratic regime, sees sums taken from his pay-check to maintain the waste of the partitocrazia.1077

The Lega’s version of federalism lay at the heart of any solution to ‘Roma Ladrona’ as is shown once again in Bossi’s writings:

Our fiscal policy is intrinsically linked to our federalist thesis and the proposal of the subdivision of the State into three republics: North, Centre and South.1078

Therefore, the Lega’s main emphasis was upon attacking the fiscal ‘rapacity’ of the Italian state and the public deficit, which had been caused by the greed of the political class and made possible by consociationalism.1079

At the centre of the Lega’s message, however, even as early as the 1990s, was a threat of secessionism, if the perceived exploitation of the North continued. Bossi further states

this way of managing the public finances, is no longer acceptable…therefore, there are two options: either the partitocrazia changes the rules and takes its hands off the money that it sends to the South … or else the North will go it alone.1080

1077 Bossi, ‘Suffragio universale: dalla partitocrazia al federalismo’.
1078 Idem, Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.133.
1080 Bossi, Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.136.
The notion of Padania as an oppressed nation was present in editions of *Lombardia Autonomista* during the early 1990s as a possible way of reclaiming sovereignty from the ‘partitocrazia’.\(^\text{1081}\) Secessionism would have been anathema to the MRAs’ notion that the regional statutes were seen as the way of taking back control. In contrast to the MRAs, therefore, which had argued that the bureaucratic centralism of the political class could be reformed at a regional level, the Lega put forward the claim that the *partitocrazia* was beyond redemption and unable to reform. Indeed, even before the declaration of the independence of Padania, Bossi expressed his conviction that

> the *partitocrazia* will not be able to change course, because no longer exploiting the North to exploit the south would mean undermining the roots of their power. This political class will sink with this rotten and corrupt state.\(^\text{1082}\)

This idea of redrawing Italy’s boundaries was linked strongly to the Lega’s nativist and anti-immigration discourse which forms the focus of the following section.

### 5. Case Study Two: Nativism as regionalism and xenophobia

While the previous section focused on how the MRAs and the Lega employed a populist regionalist argument of pitting the corrupt centralist party regime against the productive North, it also touched on anti-southernerism. The following section focuses on how each wave of activism constructed a Northern identity in oppositional terms with the South. The MRAs, in representing the first political manifestation of anti-immigration and anti-southernerism in post-war Italy, helped formulate nativist discourse and rhetoric which would later be developed by *leghismo*. The different types of populism of the 1950s and the 1990s examined at the beginning of this chapter influenced the scope of this nativist message as the Lega reconstructed itself as a party of the radical right, thus illuminating differences in how each wave of activism promised to return sovereignty to the heartland.\(^\text{1083}\)

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\(^\text{1082}\) Bossi, *Vento dal Nord, La Mia Lega, La mia vita*, p.136

\(^\text{1083}\) Katsambekis, ‘The Populist Surge in post-democratic times: Theoretical and political challenges’, p.206. (author’s italics)
i. From MRA nativism to early Lega nativism – ‘Terroni a casa!’

MRA nativism acted as a precursor to the nativism of the Lega; southern Italians were portrayed as invading and colonising the North and staking claims to ‘Lombard’ and ‘Piedmontese’ housing and jobs, whilst imposing their dialect and way of life on northerners. However, the Lega also radicalised these nativist claims in line with its 1990s populism in an attempt to counter what it portrayed as the south’s hegemony over the Italian state. The MARP, in 1956, wrote of the need for ‘a new administration capable of making Turin great again and giving Piedmont back to the Piedmontese’\(^{1084}\) The MAB’s Guido Calderoli and Aldo Rizzi also wrote essays and poems with the respective titles of ‘Lombardy for the Lombards!’ and ‘Bergamo for the Bergamascons!’\(^{1085}\) The early Lombard and Piedmontese leagues also imitated such slogans such as the Lega Lombarda stating ‘I am Lombard, I vote Lombard’ and Piemont Autonomista also releasing slogans such as ‘Piedmont for the Piedmontese.’\(^{1086}\)

Both the MRAs and the Lega pursued a process of ‘othering’ towards southern Italians, this group was considered as an ‘immigrant community’ and, therefore, within the state but \textit{outside} the region.\(^{1087}\) Delineating the boundaries between northerners and southerners, both MRAs focused on defining themselves against the ‘southerner’ or ‘terrone’ (a pejorative term for southern Italians). The MARP’s electoral slogan from 1956, promising to ‘Kick Naples out of Turin’ (‘Fuori Napoli da Torino’) was cited as ‘one of the main reasons for the MARP’s electoral success among the local middle classes’ in Piedmont.\(^{1088}\) \textit{Piemonte Nuovo} also stated that unfortunately, in seven years, the face of our city has changed profoundly. Over 200,000 individuals have come from the South and have invaded every corner of the city.\(^{1089}\)

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\(^{1084}\) Rosboch, ‘L’autonomia regionale amministrativa non potrà dividere il popolo Italiano’, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}.
A report in Milanese newspaper *La Notte* on the MAB’s electoral campaign in 1956 also presents migration as a battle and an invasion and a ‘struggle for independence from Sicilians, Calabrese, Pugliese and Neapolitans.’ The MRAs often conflated this migration with crime; the MARP for example stated that immigrants are ‘always implicated in muggings and beatings … putting at risk the safety of Turin’s citizens.’ This was, to an extent, paralleled by the leagues’ early statutes which stated that the movement wished to ‘prevent the use of Lombardy’ as a destination of ‘immigrants who had committed crimes.’

In terms of jobs and housing the MARP argued that ‘it is the duty of citizens to ask first for our children to be housed, and then say yes to immigration, but a firm no to invasion.’ The MAB activist, Guido Trapletti wrote ‘is it really right for us Bergamascans, born in a productive and industrial region to see the best jobs systematically taken away from us?’ Regarding jobs in particular, the MARP endorsed the creation of Piedmontese workers cooperatives in order to reserve work for ‘real Piedmontese’ to counter those of southern workers in order to protect their jobs.

Early programmes of Lega included the demand that housing and jobs should be reserved for Lombards and the Piedmontese. Such demands echoed the MARP’s campaign against migration from the South, which in the late 1980s lamented that Turin had become ‘the third southern city in Italy.’ By posing a question of ‘will we manage to form the Piedmontese of tomorrow?’ the Piedmontese leghisti argued that the ‘biblical style exodus’ from South to the North in the 1950s and 1960s represented an existential threat to Piedmontese customs and identity. The 1980s Piedmontese autonomists also claimed ‘the South is stealing our jobs’ arguing that the closure of the Marelli factory in Turin had been orchestrated by southerners parties to benefit the South.

Strongly linked to the protection of housing and jobs is a perceived colonization of bureaucratic posts in the North. Anselmo Freddi noted that in the 1956 elections, ‘the MAB

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1091 ‘Torino non può più assorbire altre forti masse di immigrati’, *Piemonte Nuovo*.
1100 Ibid.
became more identified with the expression of the discontent for the continued arrival of southern bureaucrats’ and argued that ‘local administrative offices should be run by a Lombard or Bergamasca’.\textsuperscript{1100} Linked to the issue of jobs being taken by southerners, Calderoli claimed that

in Bergamo in these past ten years there has been no Bergamasca judge, not even a Lombard one: all of them have been foreigners, a good part of them terroni … the same can be said for numerous other key jobs.\textsuperscript{1101}

Calderoli lamenting that Bergamo was “treated worse than a colony” also stated that ‘86 of our 92 prefects are southerners. 90 out of our 92 police chiefs are southerners … soon foreigners will be in charge of everything.”\textsuperscript{1102} The following statement from a contributor to Piemonte Nuovo also spoke of a similar problem arguing that ‘in Piedmont, one can hear Southern-speak in the police stations, government offices, railways, the offices of finance … Who is in charge of Piedmont, the Piedmontese or the Southerners?\textsuperscript{1103}

This discourse of colonisation, was present in Lombardia Autonomista with the claim that ‘Rome has transformed the North into a colony with excessive southern population.’\textsuperscript{1104} According to the Lega, this ‘degradation of Lombardy into a land of conquest’ meant northerners were ‘forced to put up with the choices of a political class in Italy … of a largely southern origin’ which shared ‘no sense of belonging’ with Lombards.\textsuperscript{1105} Moioli’s observation that ‘hostility towards the “terrone” as a public functionary’ formed a key part of the Lega’s anti-southern attitude is further reinforced by Cento Bull who has stated that ‘one of the main components of the Northern League’s anti-southern attitude is the transfer of southern employees to public-service jobs in the North.’\textsuperscript{1106}

\textsuperscript{1102} Idem, ‘Che cosa vuole il MARL?’ in Ibid. pp.56-62, (p.59).
\textsuperscript{1103} ‘Stiamo in periodo di piena immigrazione’, Piemonte Nuovo, 15th December 1957.
\textsuperscript{1104} ‘Federazione Autonomista Padano-Alpina’, Lombardia Autonomista, 1983.
\textsuperscript{1105} Ibid.
Language became particularly important in a nativist message of Us versus Them. This was demonstrated clearly in the MAB’s attempts to cause divisions between Italians by declaring that dialect was threatened by the use of ‘foreign’ southern dialects in cities such as Turin and also by the daily presence of southern dialect:

every day we see songs, speeches, comedies in Neapolitan from RAI … have you noticed instead how Torinesi are forced to feel ashamed by their dialect? Almost nobody … communicates in Piedmontese for the fear of being accused of being some kind of barbarian.1107

Calderoli also claimed it was a bureaucrat’s duty to learn to understand Bergamascan or at least employ an interpreter, writing that

many mountain folk can’t speak Italian, or speak it badly…Mr Bureaucrat, do you not feel any moral obligation to learn a little Bergamascan, or at least employ an interpreter? Is speaking Bergamascan something to be ashamed of?1108

The MAB argued that

sending elementary teachers from the South to our mountain valleys is counter-productive…differences in needs, in customs and habits and way of life constitute an insurmountable barrier to academic life.1109

There were also claims that ‘many fathers have protested against the difficulty that their children have met in elementary classrooms. They say that they do not understand anything that the “terrone” teacher tells them.’1110 The MAB also argued that it was unjust for ‘teachers from Palermo who have won concorsi to take the place of teachers of Bergamo.’1111 Continuity can be seen in the fact that ‘in Lombardy and Piedmont, the autonomist leagues valued the

1111 G.Trapletti, ‘Sperano nei voti’, Ibid.
specificity of regional dialect.’\textsuperscript{1112} The Lega Lombarda, in a manifesto entitled ‘Scuola coloniale basta!’ argued that ‘in our schools, we must speak our own language’ and that ‘our teachers must not remain unemployed to allow the employment of ‘others.’\textsuperscript{1113} The Lega, like the MRAs, therefore also promoted concorsi at a regional level.\textsuperscript{1114}

Finally, in terms of similarities in aims, it should be noted that to an extent, anti-southernism was viewed by both the MRAs and the Lega as a strategy. Leading MAB exponent Anselmo Freddi claimed ‘the necessity of the electoral battle forced our speakers to go beyond the simple and orthodox arguments of the autonomist’ and that ‘from that point onwards, there was no one that ignored the existence of the Movement.’\textsuperscript{1115} Freddi’s pragmatic view of anti-southernism can be seen as preceding comments by Umberto Bossi, who in 1980 claimed that leghismo’s hostile position against the Mezzogiorno had merely been a ‘Trojan horse’ to attract the attention of the media and the electorate.\textsuperscript{1116}

In spite of these cross-overs in nativist message against southerners, an important question remains as to how the Lega was able to make a breakthrough in national elections using this anti-southern discourse, while the MRAs remained on the periphery of administrative politics. This can be explained through examining the context of ‘the fiscal crisis of the state and the corruption crisis enveloping the political class in the early 1990s which ‘provided the favourable terrain for the emergence of counter-hegemonic populist movements and parties.’\textsuperscript{1117} When viewed through the lens of 1990s’ populism, the Lega’s anti-southernism can be viewed as more radically counter-hegemonic than that of the MRAs in that the Lega portrayed the state as having been colonised by the South. In particular, the South was viewed as ‘a metaphor summing up all that is wrong with Italian society and politics.’\textsuperscript{1118}

The Lega was able to offer a radically counter-hegemonic solution to their accusation of the South colonising the entire state, thus reformulating the argument that the MRAs had put forward of the South colonising the North.\textsuperscript{1119} The MRAs had never suggested as Bossi did that ‘the entire state apparatus had been southernized and has perpetuated a system based on favouritism’ through ‘a strategic infiltration’ of southerners into ‘political posts and posts of

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\textsuperscript{1112} Biocci, ‘La Padania Promessa: La storia, le idee e la logica d’azione della Lega Nord’, p.43.
\textsuperscript{1113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1114} ‘Programma Politico’, Lombardia Autonomista, September 1983.
\textsuperscript{1115} Freddi, Breve Storia del the MAB, p.16.
\textsuperscript{1116} Bossi, Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.174.
\textsuperscript{1118} Allum and Diamanti, The Autonomous Leagues in the Veneto, p.153.
\textsuperscript{1119} Cento Bull, ‘The role of memory in populist discourse’, p.220.
public order.’  

Biorcio’s observation that ‘the leagues had attempted to forge a connection between the importation of the mafia to the North and the predominance of the southerners in public administration’ is supported by several statutes and articles on this subject in editions of league mouthpieces. Piemont Autonomista claimed that the majority of ministers came from southern regions arguing that Campania ‘with its 9 ministers, held an influence almost equal to that of the entire North’ and that by 2001, the North would have absolutely no representation in central government due to this southern and mafioso hegemony. In this sense, the Lega’s nativism differed from that of the MRAs as it represented ‘a popular struggle by excluded and subordinated groups against the dominant bloc’ of the southernised state which was ‘aimed at shifting the balance of power within the dominant bloc.’

The preceding section has highlighted how the nativist message of the MRAs against southern Italians was carried forward by the Lega. However, it has also revealed discontinuities between the two periods as the Lega’s populist regionalism and nativism aimed to challenge the Italian state. Further continuities and discontinuities can be noted as the Lega adopted its secessionist strategy and developed a more radical view of its nativist heartland.

ii. **Fortress Padania**

The Lega’s secessionist strategy had two significant effects on populist regionalism and nativism. First, it led to the definition of an exclusionary heartland outside the borders of the Italian state. Second, it played a key role in the Lega’s shift to the right, thus also marking a discontinuity with the MRAs which did not have a radical right identity.

The creation of Padania meant that rather than excluding ‘others’ (both southern and foreign) from a region within the nation-state, Padania became the nation-state and thus the heartland in itself. To understand the significance of this, it should be noted that prior to secessionism, differences between the MRAs and the Lega regarding non-natives and those within the nation had been far more nuanced.

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1120 Bossi, *Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita*, p.175.


An analysis of material written by the MRAs reveals that their policy of exclusion of southerners from Lombardy and Piedmont, did not mean to exclude them completely from a more national heartland which could be found through regional government. The MRAs’ regionalist discourse emphasized that ‘Italy will be united only when more ample and wide-ranging autonomies are granted to each region.’\textsuperscript{1124} The MARP and the MAB argued that ‘the contrast between North and South will remain, until the government, politicians and public officials stop convincing themselves that Italy can be governed from the North and the South with the same laws.’\textsuperscript{1125}

MARP exponent, Roberto Codazza, in a letter addressed to all southern migrants to Turin, published in \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, drew upon Piedmont’s role in the Risorgimento to remind southerners that ‘we fought in order to unite your lands to ours in one Italy.’ Codazza, in an attempt to distance himself from accusations of anti-southernism, in his address to southern migrants, stated, ‘don’t think that we don’t want you as part of Italy!’\textsuperscript{1126} Similarly, the MAB emphasized the need for Northerners and Southerners to ‘become more Italian’ and encouraged greater ‘fraternity between North and South’ by arguing that ‘reflecting…upon the divisions between North and South … encouraged greater solidarity and balance in the nation.’\textsuperscript{1127}

The Lega’s nativism against southerners, in its federalist phase, also did not exclude southerners from the Italian nation per se, but was linked to the ‘pursuit of the ‘three republics’’, the scope of which is not simply an institutional separation, but the management of each individual economy separately.\textsuperscript{1128} Bossi’s call for southerners to ‘find answers for themselves via self-government’ can, thus, be seen as an echo of the MRAs’ exclusionary vision of a northern heartland, but within the framework of the Italian state.\textsuperscript{1129} Therefore, until the declaration of Padania, there had been a certain level of overlap between the MRAs and the Lega’s message of each region taking care of its own interests, whilst not explicitly excluding southerners from Italy.\textsuperscript{1130}

However, the creation of Padania led to a radicalisation of this exclusionary heartland as, with new borders of a northern ‘nation’ as it emphasised

\textsuperscript{1125}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1128}V.Moioli \textit{Il Tarlo della lega}, p.228.
\textsuperscript{1130}`Lettere al Direttore - La polemica fra Nord e Sud’, \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}. 
the impossibility of keeping together, without coercion, a multi-ethnic state…in which Southerners represent the ‘foreign’ component: a state whose multiethnic character is determined by the presence of fellow Italians classified as non-Padani.\textsuperscript{1131}

The definition of fellow Italians as ‘non-Padani’ marks a discontinuity with the nativism of the MRAs. With the project of secessionism, the Lega was not just arguing for the separation of two economic systems but was demanding a separate state split on ‘ethno-cultural lines.’ Bossi argued that ‘Padania’s citizens are becoming ever more conscious of their identity’ and that the break-up of the State is inevitable, and it is necessary, as soon as possible, to abandon any of the mild regionalist reforms and prepare with urgency, the institutions of a new Padanian nation.\textsuperscript{1132}

By proposing a Padanian heartland, the Lega was, therefore, also proposing the construction of new borders to stop the invasion of dangerous Others.

In terms of the Lega’s shift to becoming a party of the radical right, this depended largely on its prior racism and xenophobia towards both internal migration \textit{and} foreign migration. Biorcio claimed ‘from 1989, the protest against southerners was for the most part replaced by propaganda hostile towards foreign migration.’\textsuperscript{1133} While ‘in its early years, the Lega targeted the Italian south as a threat to the northern identity’, since the mid-1990s, the focus has shifted to non-European immigrants (\textit{extra-communitari}) as the key threat to the security, identity, and economic well-being of the north.\textsuperscript{1134}

Cachafeiro, conversely, argued anti-southern and anti-migrant rhetoric in fact ‘alternated and overlapped during the 1990s’ and that ‘the ways in which party discourses constructed “otherness” systematically linked the representation of Southerners and new migrants.’\textsuperscript{1135} More recently, Garau has noted that ‘Southerners seem to have now been

\textsuperscript{1133} Biorcio, ‘La Lega come attore politico’, p.63.
replaced by non-Italian immigrants in this rhetoric against a pluralistic state’, therefore, no longer constituting ‘the main concern of the Lega Nord today’.

Building upon such claims, I argue that the racism which formed a key element of the Lega’s shift to the right, had its roots in MRA nativist discourse. The MRAs, referring to northerners and southerners living in the same region, had previously forwarded the notion that ‘however hard they try, the government, will never be able to amalgamate men of such different races’ claiming that ‘whoever is from the North is always able to recognise a southerner at first glance, and vice versa.’ Calderoli had also portrayed a colonisation and influx of ‘foreigners’ (referring to southerners) as a colonisation from the south which was tantamount to a ‘genocide’ of the native Alpine people. Similarly, the MARP had argued that the central government was pursuing a policy of ‘de-Piedmontisation’ due to the aforementioned southern invasion of the city. Racism and xenophobia against southerners were therefore key ingredients of a nativism which had already found political expression in the 1950s’ MRAs.

An analysis of both the Lombard and Piedmontese leagues’ discourse against foreign migration in the late 1980s and 1990s reveals how the focus of the Other was already moving towards migration from abroad, even before the invention of Padania, while also holding key parallels with the MRAs’ nativist discourse. Just as the MARP had highlighted cultural differences between Northerners and Southerners, a threat to Piedmontese culture and the overcrowding of the city, an article printed in *Piemont Autonomista* in the 1980s stated that ‘we live in fear of this army of illegal immigrants of colour, with their colonising, rampant, invasion, irreconcilable with our customs and life.’ Just as the MRAs had argued that southerners had represented this threat in the 1950s, *Piemont Autonomista* also stated that

The few jobs that remain must go exclusively to Piedmontese residents and not the new arrivals … We will not change! And if the ‘guests’ do not adapt to our civilisation … send them back to where they came from.

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Idem, ‘Il Bergamasco è maltrattato come Cittadino e più ancora come Contadino perfino nel dialetto’ in Ibid., (p.191).
While the claim to protect Italian, European and Christian values was never used by the MRAs in arguments against an invasion from the South, such articles echoed MRA discourse in attributing blame to the elites in Rome for allowing migration to take place thus representing a continuity in terms of nativist discourse. This was also evident in the Lega Lombarda’s conflation of Islamic Front extremists from Algeria in the 1990s, with the Islamic religion, thus portraying extremists such as the Islamic Front as the true face of Islam. The Lega repeated this accusation in a number of articles against foreign migrants in their publications, Lombardia Autonomista and later in numerous articles in La Padania. Additonally, Bossi’s arguments that ‘jobs and houses should be reserved for those who belong to the country’ targeted foreign migration but had been also used by the MRAs in the 1950s against southern migration.

The vital point, however, is that while the MRAs had referred to different races, they had never spoken of the need to prevent a ‘multi-racial society’, something which was instead central to the Lega’s 1990s populism. While anti-immigration and nativism has been a constant presence in both MRAs and Lega discourse, Padania led to an intensification of this discourse and linked it to the party’s shift to becoming a party of the radical right, thus leading to the Lega’s emphasis on immigrants from abroad. Both Cento Bull and Gilbert and Garau have referred to the writings of Gilberto Oneto and the release of documents such as Padania, identità e società multi-razziale which marked a significant shift in the Lega’s anti-immigration and nativist rhetoric. Indeed, as noted by Cento Bull and Gilbert ‘since the foundation of Padania, the Lega should now be counted as an authentic member of the far-right “family” of political parties.’ This is due to the fact that the Padanian heartland meant that the Lega’s primary objective became ‘the preservation of Padanian culture and identity from the powerful global forces arrayed against it – Fortress Padania.’ The Lega’s idea of a populist heartland, unlike the MRAs, was linked to a new post-Cold War divide that pitted identity against multiculturalism. Elaborating on this theory, Garau has argued that

with the invention of Padania … the presence of immigrants was perceived not only as competitors in the allocation of resources, but also as carrying an inner

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1144 U.Bossi Viento dal Nord, La mia Lega, La mia vita, p.144.
1145 Cento Bull and Gilbert The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian politics p.106
1146 Ibid.
1147 Ibid.
cultural and ethnic difference absolutely incompatible with Northerners values.\textsuperscript{1150}

The Lega used Padania, therefore to offer a narrow definition of citizenship and campaign against ‘racial and ethnic minorities who will not “assimilate” into the desired culture’ campaigned against ‘racial and ethnic minorities who will not “assimilate” into the desired culture.’\textsuperscript{1151} In contrast to the MRAs wanting southerners to ‘become more Italian’, no such nation-building project was afforded to foreign migration by the Lega. Indeed, as has been argued by Garau, the Lega as a member of governing coalitions ‘has actively participated in the creation of an exclusionary Italian identity’ against migration from abroad.\textsuperscript{1152} A key part of this construction of an exclusionary identity was the use of legislation to stop the invasion by non-natives, to which the focus on this chapter now turns.

iii. **Stopping the invasion?**

This case study has, until now, explored the link between MRA and Lega nativism while also examining the impact of Padania on the notion of a northern heartland. The following sub-section builds on this analysis to examine how each wave of activism proposed stopping the invasion of non-natives into this heartland. Two inter-linked issues are relevant here: how the nativist discourse was framed to present stopping an invasion as beneficial for the non-natives as well as the native population and how the two waves of populist regionalism proposed stopping - or at least limiting – the invasion.

As noted in the previous case study, the MARP and the MAB had promoted a slogan of ‘aiutare sì, mantenere no!’ (Let us help them, but not through handouts!). It is worth reflecting on how this represented a cross-over between Poujadisme and nativism. Guido Calderoli wrote numerous essays for the the MAB in which he argued that taxation imposed on the squeezed middle classes was made much worse by the continuous influx of migrants.\textsuperscript{1153}

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\textsuperscript{1151} Betz and Johnson, ‘Against the current – stemming the tide. The nostalgic ideology of the contemporary populist right’, p.316.


\textsuperscript{1153} G. Calderoli, ‘Campanalismo e anti-terrorismo’ in Idem, Zibaldone Autonomista di un montanaro Bergamasco, 161-166.


This cross-over is also evident in a speech given by the MARP councillor Timoteo Nobile in 1957 in which he argued that Piedmont was the region which pays the largest quantity than any other in terms of taxes and [had a] continued influx…of southern elements and of other regions (around 3,000 per month).\footnote{Notes by the Turin Police commissioner (untitled), 20\textsuperscript{th} January 1957.}

The MAB posed the question of ‘what is the purpose of the Cassa del Mezzogiorno if it doesn’t manage to employ southerners in their regions and they continue to come to the North?’\footnote{A.Rizzi, ‘Fra settentrione e meridione, qualcosa bisogna fare’, in \textit{Cosi’ Parlano gli autonomisti} p.18.} Both the MARP and the MAB argued that southerners, therefore, should be taught to help themselves in their own regions. The MARP, for example, stated that

\begin{center}
We are often accused of being anti-southern… simply because we want the full activation of the regions… we hope that in every other part of Italy, everybody else is working for their own region.\footnote{Q.Massara, ‘Chi ha mobilitato il Sud contro il Nord?’ in \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 15\textsuperscript{th} February 1958.}
\end{center}

Southerners were encouraged to work to strengthen their own region:

\begin{center}
you can only solve your own problems by staying in your own homes and fighting to obtain the right to administer yourselves, we will gladly help you as equals, without making you rely on handouts.\footnote{R.Codazza, ‘Lettera diretta a chi viene dal Sud’ \textit{Piemonte Nuovo}, 15th October 1956.}
\end{center}

This discourse of ‘let us help them in their own homes’ demonstrates a significant continuity between the MRAs’ and the Lega’s nativism. Indeed, the Lega during its secessionist phase argued that a separate state of Padania would be of great benefit not just to the North but also the South as it would teach it fiscal responsibility.\footnote{\textit{La Padania} o il solito ombrello (rotto), \textit{La Padania}, 29\textsuperscript{th} March 1997.} After the abandonment of secessionism, the Lega continued to adapt the MRAs’ ‘aiutare si mantenere no’ to become one of their ‘immutable principles’ of ‘aiutiamoli ad aiutarsi’ (let us help them help themselves) or ‘aiutiamoli a casa loro’ (let us help them in their own homes) to apply to foreign migrants.\footnote{G.Pagliarini, ‘Perché la secessione fa bene anche al sud’, \textit{La Padania}, 14\textsuperscript{th} January 1997.}

\begin{footnotesize}
\end{footnotesize}
Bossi’s claims that ‘a Senegalese is better off tending to his affairs in Senegal than in Brescia’ provides a significant parallel with the MRAs’ insistence that each Italian should work to improve their own region.\textsuperscript{1160}

While there are definite cross-overs in how stopping the invasion was framed by both waves of populist regionalism, an analysis of how the MRAs and the Lega proposed to limit migration reveals both continuities and discontinuities. As has been examined throughout this thesis, the MRAs held an unshakable faith in the Republican Constitution’s ability to solve regional problems; this proved no exception when it came to planning for limits to migration. The MARP and the MAB both claimed - falsely - that Title V of the Constitution, which contained the articles regarding regional autonomy, would provide a solution to ‘uncontrolled migration’ to their regions. The MAB stated that ‘defending the natural right of residence, for which nobody should have to be forced, if not for extreme and just motives, to abandon their place of birth’ was strongly linked to ‘the realisation of regional autonomy … as is allowed by article 117 of the Constitution’.\textsuperscript{1161} Further to this, the movement argued that ‘when regional autonomy is activated … it will no longer be seen necessary to emigrate to other regions.’\textsuperscript{1162} The MARP echoed this idea of regional autonomy sanctioned by the constitution placing limits on migration arguing that ‘only regional government will allow us to examine the problem of immigration from a morally and economically advantageous perspective.’\textsuperscript{1163}

It went on to argue that ‘regional government was indispensable for all the Italian regions, in ensuring a limit to migration from region to region.’\textsuperscript{1164} Additionally, the Piedmontese autonomists had suggested implementing a fascist law of 1939 which had prohibited Italians from ‘transferring their residency to a major centre unless they already had a job there.’\textsuperscript{1165} Claiming that this law had not been abrogated, the MARP argued that

the application of the 1939 law is not in contradiction with article 16 of the new constitution [it] could be applied effectively to prevent the movement of those who not having secured themselves a stable job and inevitably end up shoring

\textsuperscript{1161}A.Freddi “Commento al Programma” in Gruppo Autonomisti Bergamaschi (eds.), *Così Parlano gli autonomisti*, Bergamo, Gruppo Autonomisti Bergamaschi, 1955, pp.8-11, (p.8).
\textsuperscript{1162}Ibid., p.11.
\textsuperscript{1163}M.Rosboch, ‘L’autonomia regionale amministrativa non potrà dividere il popolo Italiano’ in *Piemonte Nuovo* 23rd March, 1956.
\textsuperscript{1164}Notes by the Turin Police commissioner (untitled’), 20th January 1957.
\textsuperscript{1165}Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: A history of Italy since 1796*, p.471.
up the ranks of delinquents, thieves, prostitutes and individuals dedicated to the criminal world.\footnote{Torino non può più assorbire altre forti masse di immigrati, Piemonte Nuovo, 28th June 1958.}

The final words in this statement are particularly applicable to how the MRAs, and the MARP in particular, criminalised immigration. Linking immigration and crime gave added urgency to the need to stop the invasion. Indeed, another MARP exponent stated

\begin{quote}

some of the weaker and more desperate of you, will maybe commit a criminal offence: it is also for this reason that the people of Turin will turn against you, having come to disturb the order of the city.\footnote{Codazza, ‘Lettera diretta a chi viene dal Sud’, Piemonte Nuovo.}
\end{quote}

In spite of this, the MRAs did recognise that limited migration was also an economic necessity with Nobile stating, ‘let it be clear that we do not propose a complete block of migration: when a city is vital for the nation … it would not be wise to impose unnecessary limits on the workforce.’\footnote{Notes by the Turin Police commissioner (untitled), 20th January 1957.}

While the MRAs placed faith in the Constitution’s ability to limit emigration and, thus, stop the invasion of the Piedmontese and Lombard heartland, the Lega, in its role in right-wing governing coalitions in the Second Italian Republic, amended immigration law to adapt it to the challenges that foreign migration posed to its heartland. Space does not permit a detailed examination of the levels of success of this legislation; however, it is worth highlighting the examples of the Bossi-Fini legislation of 2002 and the Security Package of 2009 in order to draw comparison with the MRAs. In terms of the Bossi-Fini legislation, the Lega argued that previous legislation on foreign migration - the ‘Martelli law’ (1989) and ‘Turco-Napolitano law’ (1998) - ‘gave too many rights to immigrants … were too lenient on illegals, and they did not link employment with immigration.’\footnote{A.Zaslove, ‘Closing the door? The ideology and impact of radical right populism on immigration policy in Austria and Italy’ Journal of political ideologies, vol.9, no.1, 2004, pp.99-118, (p.111).}\footnote{Parati, Migration Italy: The art of talking back in a destination culture, p.151.} Therefore, the Bossi-Fini law ‘articulated itself in opposition to the previous laws in its attempt to create an even more rigid legal structure to contain immigration.’\footnote{Parati, Migration Italy: The art of talking back in a destination culture, p.151.} The law essentially ‘linked employment with the ability to obtain a work permit or a visa’ making it only possible to obtain ‘a work permit if the applicant secures a job, a place of residence, and if the employer can guarantee return passage once the new
arrival is not employed.’\textsuperscript{1171} Additionally, the immigrant would be ‘expected to find a new job, or return home when the work permit expired.’\textsuperscript{1172} Regarding the ‘security package’ of 2009, this was part of the Lega ‘championing a barrage of hard-line measures on immigration.’\textsuperscript{1173} Proposed by Roberto Maroni, Lega Interior Minister, in 2008

and introduced in August 2009 as Law 94/2009 … ‘the security package’ was designed explicitly to criminalise clandestine immigration, raise barriers to entry and facilitate the expulsion of illegal immigrants.\textsuperscript{1174}

Having established the measures laid out by each wave of activism, it is possible to note both continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs’ and the Lega’s attempts to stop the invasion. The Lega’s proposals that work permits depended on obtaining a job can be seen as being preceded by the policy recommended by the MARP of the former fascist law working alongside the Constitution. This would, in essence, have also criminalised migration in the way which was proposed by the security package in 2009. This criminalisation of migrants had also been evident in how the MRAs had linked migration with rising crime. Additional continuities are evident by the fact that, just as the MRAs had recognised that migration was necessary, as ‘while the Lega has opposed immigration … at the same time the industrialists of the party’s north-eastern heartland have campaigned for larger visa quotas and more immigrant labour.’\textsuperscript{1175}

Significant discontinuity, however, can be seen in the Lega’s emphasis on a European invasion. Indeed, the Bossi-Fini law and the security package ‘catered to the artificial perception of a European invasion perpetrated by both documented and undocumented migrants.’\textsuperscript{1176} This should be viewed as part of the Lega’s intensification of its exclusionary discourse against foreign non-natives. Additionally, while the MRAs claimed that regional autonomy would tackle the causes of migration because migration would no longer be necessary, on the contrary, the Bossi-Fini law ‘refused to confront the global phenomenon of

\textsuperscript{1171} Zaslove, ‘Closing the door? The ideology and impact of radical right populism on immigration policy in Austria and Italy’, p.111.
\textsuperscript{1172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1176} Parati, \textit{Migration Italy: The art of talking back in a destination culture}, p.151.
migration and the causes which motivate it.¹¹⁷⁷ This is due to the fact that while the Lega claimed ‘migration ought to be temporary as it concerns the Italian economic present and not the Italian cultural future’, the MRAs did indeed concern themselves with both Italy’s economic and cultural future, arguing that Italy would be further benefitted by southerners working to improve their own region.¹¹⁷⁸

6. Conclusion

The interpretation of populism as a thin-centred ideology is based on an ideational approach that claims populism can emerge in different forms at different points in history when political actors attach it to a core ideology. In this chapter, a cross-analysis of MRA and Lega discourse has sustained this interpretation of populism by revealing how populist regionalism emerged in two separate contexts in Lombardy and Piedmont.

In their protest against the partitocrazia, the MRAs and the Lega fulfilled a key populist requirement of placing themselves above the right-left axis, denouncing the political system as irrelevant and defining the virtuous region in positive terms against the decadent centralist state. Both the MRAs and the Lega emphasized the identity of their regions as ‘islands of prosperity’, whose hard-working nature was being exploited by the centralist state. A central part of the opposition to this centralist bureaucracy was a fiscal protest of the North against the Roman government. Images released by the MRAs during this period which related to this populist fiscal protest provided a vital populist regionalist repertoire which the Lega would later exploit with regard to tax revolt and protest against the inefficiency of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno.

However, the MRAs’ populism should be considered as part of the same wave of Qualunquismo and Poujadisme; the MRAs in many ways presented themselves as the representatives of small businesses, artisans and, in general the ‘piccoli popoli’ of the North against big government and interventionist states and were, thus, similar to the Poujadist movement which was active in France during the same period. 1950s’ populist discourse also relates to the fact that the MARP’s anti-party message was firmly rooted in a distrust of the CLN which was in turn connected to the fascist heritage of some of its members. This places it firmly in the Qualunquist line of thought regarding the partitocrazia, which was based on a

¹¹⁷⁷Ibid., p.155
¹¹⁷⁸Ibid.
conflation of all of the anti-fascist coalition as part of a new form of dictatorship being imposed on the country. Despite definite cross-overs in the Poujadist fiscal revolt of the MRAs and the Lega, the Lega’s anti-elitist narrative against the partitocrazia should be viewed through the focus of 1990s’ populism which emphasized a rupture with Cold War meta-narratives. The Lega’s protest against the Cassa was part of a reaction against a heavily bureaucratized welfare state and its protest against the partitocrazia, in particular in the wake of the Tangentopoli scandals also allowed the Lega, to focus on another 1990s’ populist narrative relating to crime and corruption, in particular portraying the state as criminal and linked to the mafia. This conflation of the partitocrazia with the Mafia had been absent from the MRAs 1950s’ populism.

The MRAs saw their campaign to implement regional autonomy as a way to reform the party system, ensure a survival of the First Italian Republic and return sovereignty to the people via the regional statutes. Both the MRAs related their anti-elitism to the political subculture of their region, with the MARP in particular representing part of a dissident Liberal subculture which looked back to pre-Risorgimento liberal ideals. The Lega, conversely, saw the political class as part of an inherently corrupt centralist state which needed to be swept away. A neo-federalist solution which would have distanced the North from South economically through fiscal reforms and then for the secession of Padania from the South of the country. The Lega, like the MRAs had argued that the South would be better off managing its own resources; however, the very form of ‘self-government’ is where this difference ultimately lies as the Lega, with Padania, began speaking about both economic and cultural separation of the North and South.

In terms of nativism, fiscal protest was also aimed against the South and, more precisely the institutions designed to help its development such as the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno. Using previously unseen materials written and produced by the MRAs, I have shown how the idea of non-native elements threatening the homogeneity of a community has strong roots in populist regionalism in the 1950s. This allowed the MRAs to define Northerners in oppositional terms against Southerners; presenting southern migration as a threat to northern jobs, housing, culture and identity, the MRAs provided a nativist discourse which would later be exploited by the Lega.

However, the Lega’s nativism against southerners marked a distinct difference as part of 1990s’ populism. By claiming that the entire state had been southernized, the Lega, with references to mafiosità, could present anti-southernism as part of a radical counter-hegemonic project. Prior to the creation of Padania, there was a level of continuity in way the MRAs and
the Lega aimed to exclude southerners from their Northern heartland and create a homogeneous Northern region within the Italian nation. There were also significant continuities in how preventing an invasion was portrayed as beneficial for both natives and non-natives alike, with nativism being portrayed in philanthropic terms. However, with Padania, the Lega’s rhetoric against the south and later against migration from abroad was accompanied by calling into question the Italian unity which had been central to the message of the MRAs. Padania, also marked a key element in the Lega’s reconstruction as a populist radical right regionalist party, playing a fundamental role in its exclusionary identity.

This chapter has demonstrated the historical connection between populist regionalism and the radical right as many of the arguments used by the MRAs in the 1950s were reformulated and used against migrants from abroad from the 1980s onwards in the Lega’s journey to becoming a radical right party. Populist regionalism in the 1950s, helped raise ‘impenetrable cultural barriers’ by ‘linking the concept of participatory citizenship to cultural roots.’ However, Padania, with its new exclusive borders separate from the nation-state focused on new threats posed by a multi-cultural and multi-racial society. The Lega’s legislation in the 2000s to stop the invasion of the heartland reflected a very different view to national and popular sovereignty to that of the MRAs. While the MRAs, to an extent acted as precursors in their calls to limit the migration of ‘foreign’ southerners, their faith in the constitution to limit migration reflects a clear discontinuity with the Lega. For the MRAs, the constitutional statutes would help restore sovereignty to both North and South. If each region agreed to work towards the greater unity of Italy, there would be a permanent place for northerners and southerners in the Italian state. By contrast, as the populist regionalism of the Lega became populist radical right regionalism, there was no permanent place for foreign migrants within either a Padanian or Italian heartland.

Conclusion

This thesis began with the assertion that the historical and ideological roots of the Lega Nord should be re-examined in the light of previously under-researched ‘Movements for Regional Autonomy’ in Lombardy and Piedmont in the 1950s. From the outset, I posed the following central research question: what continuities and discontinuities exist between two separate waves of North Italian regionalist activism in Lombardy and Piedmont? The motivation driving this question was that of being able to enhance our understanding of how leghismo was a product not only of its contemporary socio-economic environment but also of ideas with roots in the post-war period. In other words, this thesis has proposed viewing leghismo not as an isolated phenomenon, but instead as a second wave of regionalist activism, thus allowing for a clearer understanding of how North Italian regionalism changed from the 1950s onwards.

Three sub-questions have enabled a comprehensive response to the original research question. The first asked to what extent, and how, abeyance contributed to the decline of the MRAs and the survival of activist networks, thus ensuring the reproduction of regionalist repertoires in the 1980s and 1990s. The second asked how two periods of crisis and transition affected North Italian regionalism, transforming it from a force of unity to one of fragmentation, and the third to what extent, and how, the theories of populism and nativism explained continuities and discontinuities between the political message of the MRAs and the Lega.

These concluding paragraphs sum up how each chapter of this thesis has, in responding to each of these questions, contributed to a greater understanding of not only the origins of the Lega and the evolution of its political message, but also the nature of the party itself. After recapping the arguments in the thesis, I discuss the wider implications of my findings and the potential future avenues of research which this thesis has brought to light.

Continuities and Discontinuities between two waves of regionalist activism

Chapters one and two provided both the literary and historical context which informed the arguments developed in this thesis. The opening chapter, developed a new approach towards the history of leghismo by blending approaches from history, sociology and political studies. Developing the rationale established in the introduction, chapter one encouraged a more historical approach towards the roots of leghismo, and a more detailed, thorough and
nuanced approach towards the previously under-studied MRAs. It highlighted that despite the presence of the MRAs in a variety of chapters and articles, these movements had not been fully considered as a significant wave of regionalist activism. This chapter highlighted abeyance and populism as two theories which allow an examination of the connections between political activism and discourse.

Chapter two filled a gap in the existing literature on both Italian regionalism and the Lega. It offered a concise history of regionalist and federalist narratives in Italy between 1848 and 2013, whilst also for the first time tracing the history of the MRAs alongside that of the Lega. I underlined the central role played by the connection between crisis and regime change and the re-emergence of regionalist and federalist narratives throughout Italian history.

In doing so, the contribution of this chapter to the thesis was three-fold. First, it established the crucial role of crisis and transition in the emergence of regionalist and federalist narratives in the history of Italy; second, it placed both the MRAs and the Lega in a wider historical context, whilst also recognising them as movements intrinsically linked to their separate socio-economic contexts; finally, the chapter reasserted that the Lega has since 1995 moved increasingly to the radical right, and now belongs to a party family whose core concept is the nation and which promotes an ideology of nativism, welfare chauvinism and authoritarianism. While these parties respect democracy and constitutional order, they often express hostility towards the fundamental values of liberal democracies (pluralism, for example) and ‘contain authoritarian and extremist elements.’\footnote{C.Mudde, \textit{Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe}, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.12.} In tracing the Lega’s evolution from a regionalist movement to a party of the radical right, the chapter, therefore, laid the foundations for the analysis of how the Lega’s radical right discourse is connected to a regionalist ideology with roots in the 1950s.

Chapter three examined to what extent, and how, abeyance contributed to the decline of the MRAs and the survival of activist networks, which would ensure the reproduction of regionalist repertoires in the 1980s and 1990s. Abeyance not only describes a process by which social movements decline and are absorbed and controlled for a certain period of time but also explains the persistence of social movements at moments which are hostile to mobilization. It does this by putting forward the notion of ‘a holding process by which movements sustain...’

themselves in non-receptive political environments and provide continuity from one stage of mobilisation to another.\(^\text{1181}\)

The genealogy of North Italian regionalism was traced (see Appendix V), thus revealing the key links between *leghismo* and MARPismo/ MABismo from the emergence of the respective nuclei of the MARP and the MAB until the formation of the Lega Nord in 1991. The MARP’s and the MAB’s decline had begun shortly following their first successes in 1956 which they would never match again. Indeed, the 1958 elections while presenting an opportunity for the MRAs to capitalise on the previous successes in the 1956 local elections, would instead prove to be their swansong. While a limited number of Piedmontese and Lombard voters seemed willing to trust these new regionalist movements at a municipal level this failed to translate into votes for parliamentary representation two years later. The MRAs’ blend of regionalism, federalism, populism, and nativism and national unity was not able to make any significant inroads in the Italian political system which was dominated by the two Cold War subcultures of Christian Democracy and Communism.

The decline in votes and consensus was a cause rather than an effect of abeyance. It contributed to the decision to engage with two organisations which would end up acting as ‘holding organisations’ for certain members and ideas of the autonomist movement. In other words, while it is doubtful that either the DC nor the PSDI realised they were contributing to a process of decline and absorption of a dissident group, by making agreements with the MRAs and by accepting members of the MRAs into their local party structures they did indeed cause a more rapid decline of the post-war autonomist movements.

While abeyance did not cause the decline of the MRAs, it was a catalyst in this process; the PSDI and the DC offered ‘status vacancies’ to members of the MARP and the MAB, who either accepted or rejected such positions for various reasons. Some members may well have believed that these parties were suitable environments in which to continue the campaign for regional autonomy while others may have simply been looking for a way to prolong their political careers. Importantly, there were others who remained opposed to these larger political institutions and were committed to pursuit of the regionalist ideal in smaller movements.

Absorption and decline of dissident movements is, however, only one aspect of the abeyance process. The individual endeavor and determination of individuals such as Franco

Bruno and Toni Brodrero of the MARP and Guido Calderoli and Ugo Gavazzeni of the MAB ensured the survival of breakaway activist movements. These rump movements, while failing to replicate the results of 1956, allowed for a continuity of activism, circulation of material and, as the years went on, development of ideas and regionalist repertoires. Importantly, the splits in the early 1960s also tell us more about the fragmentary nature of North Italian regionalism which had arguably begun with the split caused by Villarboito in 1956, and contributed to the internal divisions in the MARPAdania alliance. Thus, the internal disputes and factionalism which would define leghismo in its early years can be seen to have roots in the first wave of activism. As I have highlighted in this thesis, although the MARPAdania alliance was short-lived, its significance should not be under-estimated for a number of reasons. First, it provided an important precedent for the future alliance of Alleanza Nord in 1989 between the various Northern Leagues. Second, the use of the term Padania was also highly significant and would re-emerge in 1970, linking with a European, federalist identity which had been present in the MRAs’ political identity in the 1950s.

Chapter three, therefore, demonstrated the links between these rump movements, the previous MRAs and the future second wave of activism. This thesis has re-asserted how family can form a connection between different periods of mobilization, by highlighting the case of the Calderolis in Bergamo. However, it has also expanded this analysis by highlighting how friendship and rivalry can play an equally significant role in the survival of ideas. Such abeyance structures meant that instead of many of the regionalist repertoires of the MRAs fading into obscurity, they were passed on to the next generation to then be reformed and radicalised in a second wave of activism. Therefore, by the time the MRAs were absorbed by the DC and the PSDI, a significant quantity of materials in the form of newspapers, posters, essays, poems, slogans, and postcards demonstrating regionalist repertoires had already been produced by the MARP and the MAB.

In short, a wide variety of repertoires survived and were intermittently developed and promoted by individuals committed to the regionalist ideal in the decades leading up to the emergence of the first regionalist leagues. Between the 1960s and the late 1970s these repertoires were passed on through inter-generational links between family, friends and rivalry. Therefore, what had previously been thought of as a period of inactivity prior to the emergence of leghismo, should now be seen as a period which although more hostile to regionalist movements, experienced a persistence of smaller scale regionalist activity. Indeed, the period between the late 1960s and the end of the 1970s, saw the emergence of Padania Libera, Lega Lombarda, Alberto da Giussano and the alliance between former MARPista Brodrero and
Piedmontese new wave regionalist, Roberto Gremmo, prior to the emergence of the first regionalist leagues.

Chapter four addressed the second question concerning to what extent and how two periods of crisis and transition affected North Italian regionalism and affected its transformation from a force of unity to one of fragmentation. This chapter showed how both waves of activism held regional reform at the centre of their political programmes. It also demonstrated how the MRAs and the Lega promoted a federalist ideal through narratives which referred to both the Risorgimento and Europe. However, exactly how these narratives were elaborated was linked to the differences in their regionalist and federalist programmes. Whereas the MRAs’ regionalism was limited to calling for an activation of the regional statutes written into the Constitution, by the time _leghismo_ emerged, these statutes had been active for a decade. The Lega’s regionalism and federalism, therefore, attacked the regional governments as inadequate institutions for satisfying the demands posed by a Northern Question. As these governments had been sanctioned by the Italian nation-state, such criticisms were levelled at the State itself and its unitary form as well.

To understand the relevance of this change and the implications on the relationship between regionalism and the nation-state, chapter four, therefore, returned to the working definition of ‘crisis’ previously established in chapter two and examined the impact of two respective crises and periods of transition relating to regime change. The first was the fall of fascism and the transition to a democratic and - ostensibly - regionally based Republic founded on anti-fascist values. The second was the crisis of the Italian political institutions between 1989 and 1994 caused by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Tangentopoli Scandals and electoral reform which led to a transition between the First and Second Italian Republic.

In doing so, the thesis highlights an important parallel and paradox in the respective relationship between the MRAs and the First Italian Republic and the Lega and the Second Italian Republic. Whereas the MRAs were born alongside and defended the First Italian Republic, the Lega Nord contributed to its fall and the subsequent transition to the Second Italian Republic. Linked to this was the fact that whereas the MRAs’ arguments were formulated both _during_ and _after_ a period of crisis and transition, those of the Lega began to emerge some years _before_ the regime change and crisis between 1989 and 1994.

The first crisis of regime change following the fall of fascism and the birth of the Republic witnessed the emergence of a form of regionalism which was committed to ensuring a completion of the transition between fascism and the Republic. To a great extent, therefore, the MRAs were a product of the First Italian Republic, which had been constructed on the
principles of anti-fascism. This thesis has highlighted that during a period in which Italy’s identity was being contested and re-invented following the fall of fascism, the regionalism of the MRAs was proposed as part of this re-elaboration of identity. The MRAs depicted bureaucratic centralism as the last surviving remnant of the fascist regime and by promoting ideals of autonomy and decentralisation that would have been anathema to fascist ideology, the post-war autonomists portrayed themselves as defenders of the new Republic and, therefore, the Italian nation-state.

The fact that one of the MRAs’ principal criticisms of the parties of the Republic was their failure to activate the regional statutes in the constitution demonstrates how the these movements wished to use regional autonomy to strengthen the Italian nation-state, not question its legitimacy. The MRAs’ ‘second Risorgimento’ consisted of activating the regional statutes. However, it was not only internal but also external factors which played a key role in emphasising this element of unity in Italian regionalism and federalism. The ideal of European federalism had played a key role in anti-fascist narratives and was subsequently adopted by both; indeed, the Bergamascan autonomists’ suggestion for a new Italian flag demonstrated how Europe was closely associated with the federalist vision of the MRAs.

In the case of the Lega, a “second Risorgimento” consisted of the transition between the First Italian Republic towards a Second “Federal” Republic; the MRAs, however, had never argued for such a radical measure. Even during the period of abeyance when narratives relating to a European Padania emerged in 1970, this was still in the context of Italian unity. In the case of leghismo, the shift of emphasis from unity towards fragmentation had begun before the second period of crisis and transition; this is perhaps most pertinently demonstrated in the role of the early Piedmontese leagues in their project of ‘de-Italianising’ Piedmont. Both waves of Piedmontese regionalist activism, in the 1950s and later in the 1980s, played a key role in distancing their region from a centralist identity; however, they did so by using different strategies. The fact that the Piedmontese leagues distanced Piedmont from any part of the process of unification, embracing European federalism, but not Risorgimento narratives and at best presenting it as a victim of the Risorgimento represented a sharp departure from both the MARP and the MAB.

This thesis has underlined how perhaps the most vital difference between the two movements was that regarding the type of regionalism they sought as their principle objective. While the regional statutes were a result of the first period of crisis and transition, their final implementation in the early 1970s came some years prior to the second wave of regionalist activism and before the second period of crisis and transition. The regional statutes which the
MRAs viewed as their final objective were subsequently viewed as completely inadequate by the second wave of activism. The leagues viewed the state-sanctioned regional governments, which their precursors had campaigned for with such commitment, as an extension of centralism. A significant part of MRA discourse regarding the region as the solution to many of Italy’s socio-economic and political problems, was adopted by the early leagues of the 1980s and later the Lega. Importantly, however, the call to arms by MARPadania of ‘long live Italy!’ was not only absent from leghismo but would have been anathema to this second wave of regionalist activism. Leghismo was no longer campaigning for an implementation of regional government, but instead a federal restructuring of the Italian nation-state.

While the MRAs questioned the legitimacy of the parties of the First Italian Republic, this was never extended to criticise the foundations of the Republic or of the nation-state itself. While Italy was in the process of rebuilding in the post-war period, it would have been difficult for the MARP and the MAB to argue for a deconstruction of the Republic and the replacement with a Federal Republic, which is exactly what leghismo demanded. Here again, the context is essential in understanding the difference in the political programmes. Ideas relating to fiscal federalism had developed in the 1950s, with the regional statutes viewed as a way of keeping taxes in Piedmont and Lombardy. However, the Lega’s policies of neo-federalism, macro-regions, federal ‘states’, and later a separate north Italian state of Padania were ideas which would not have fit with MRA ideology. Therefore, while such arguments had developed prior to the Tangentopoli scandals and the crisis of regime change, this second period of crisis and transition allowed the Lega to exploit them to call for a transition between the First and the Second Republic.

By contrasting the Lega’s regionalist and federalist demands with those of the MRAs, this study has highlighted the important role played by the MRAs in introducing regionalist and federalist narratives as an essential element of completing a transition between fascism and democracy. On the other hand, it has re-asserted, through a historical perspective, how the Lega exploited the second period of crisis to mark a break from the First Republic. The two periods of crisis and transition alone, however, do not suffice in explaining the continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs and the Lega as their policies can both be categorized not only as regionalist, but also as populist and nativist.

The final chapter of the thesis tackled the question of how and to what extent the theories of populism and nativism explain continuities and discontinuities between the political message of the MRAs and the Lega. In order to answer this question, I drew upon frameworks developed by Albertazzi and McDonnell and Mudde, as well as Spektorowski and Zaslove to
establish a framework of populist regionalism. This chapter also contributed to a wider history of populism in post-war Europe. The fact that the MARP and the MAB share similarities to both Qualunquismo and Poujadisme is not insignificant. Indeed, this thesis has shown how the MRAs’ anti-fascist identity overlapped with a distrust of the anti-fascist parties of the CLN. Indeed, the MARP’s ambivalence towards the partitocrazia was rooted in a long-standing distrust of these parties, while both MRAs, in their fiscal protest against measures such as the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno had a great deal in common with Poujadisme.

Although a large number of these post-war populist narratives would be recycled by the Lega, to see leghismo as a direct reincarnation of Qualunquismo or Poujadisme is to ignore the fact that the Lega formed part of a 1990s populist wave which was linked strongly to the post-1989 world and the collapse of political narratives related to the Cold War era. A comparison between the MRAs and the Lega makes for a much more apt analysis of two waves of populism. Viewing regionalism as the core ideology to which the thin-ideology of populism was attached, is fundamental to this analysis as this, in turn, informed the ideas of both the MRAs and the Lega. Recognising the inter-play between these regionalist-federalist proposals and the waves of populism is vital in understanding the differences between the MRAs’ and the Lega’s message.

In particular, central to both waves of populist regionalism was the notion that regionalism was the only way to redress the balance of power between the elites and the people. However, the differences in the regionalism and federalism established in chapter four, in turn played a key role in the divergent ways in which the populist regionalism of the MRAs and the Lega proposed returning regional sovereignty to the people of the North. The MRAs’ opposition to the Italian political class was partly due to the view that Rome was inherently biased towards the South and, as a result, looting the North’s resources to find money for the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno and encourage a system of patronage and clientelism. This thesis has shown, therefore, how prior to the emergence of the leagues, a ‘Northern Question’, had been raised by the MRAs. Cento Bull and Gilbert wrote in 2001 that

the presence of the Lega has been a goad jabbing at Italy’s political class into remembering that the North - Italy’s productive heartland - has become alarmed and angry about the inadequacy of the Italian state.\footnote{A.Cento Bull and M.Gilbert, The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2001, p.7.}
Such warnings had been present in MRA discourse; indeed, the focus on the inadequacy of the parties and the centralist system to respond to the divide between the North and the South formed a central plank of MARP’s and the MAB’s political message. Therefore, the MRAs’ preceded the Lega in the sense that they existed ‘because there is a Northern Question’ and had ‘contributed to creating such a question.’

Fundamentally, however, the Lega, unlike the MRAs, succeeded in making the ‘Northern Question ... at least as important as the more familiar Southern Question in the political debate.’ This had not been the case in the 1950s and was linked to the second wave of populist regionalism which allowed the Lega’s narratives challenging the post-war consensus in Italy of a heavily bureaucratized welfare state to flourish.

While for the MRAs the regional statutes were a way of ensuring Northern taxes stayed in the North, the Lega proposed a federalist overhaul of the state as a solution to the Northern Question. The Lega’s version of federalism did not initially pose an explicit threat to Italian unity; nevertheless, the move towards secessionism in 1995 reflected a radicalisation of returning the ‘heartland’ to the people with respect to the MRAs previous message. This idea of the heartland was also intrinsically linked to the nativist element within populist regionalism. While the MRAs and the Lega both saw the partitocrazia as denying regional sovereignty for the Northern people, the MRAs’ idea that state-sanctioned regional government would have returned this sovereignty to the people would have been anathema to the Lega.

The populist regionalist framework established in this thesis has also challenged Mudde’s analysis of the Lega as a populist radical right (PRR) party from the early 1980s until 2013. Mudde categorized the Lega as a ‘borderline’ example of a PRR party, due to the fact that ‘while populism has always been a core feature of the Lega ... authoritarianism and nativism have not.’ Populist regionalism instead shows how the Lega has, since its inception, always been a nativist movement and this is tied in with its populism and regionalism. While such a theory draws upon Spektorowski’s analysis of the Lega as New Right and Zaslove’s theory of nativist nationalism, where it differs from either analysis is in a consideration of the historical role of the MRAs in providing the framework for regionalism, populism and nativism.

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1183 Ibid.
1184 Ibid.
This thesis has contributed to a greater understanding of the roots of the politicisation of anti-southern sentiment in post-war Italy. The MRAs laid out a framework of racist and nativist repertoires against the South in their essays, articles, images, which would be recycled by the Lega in the 1980s. The Lega’s nativist discourse of anti-southernism built upon many of the stereotypes, discourse and imagery which the MRAs had used during the migratory flows of the 1950s. I have demonstrated how the anti-southern and anti-immigrant campaigns of the MRAs set out a framework and a store of pseudo-racist messages for the Lega to draw upon. While many of the arguments against the migrant remained the same and were simply transferred from the Southerner to the “foreigner”. The notion of an “invasion” be it from the South or from abroad, was used to justify arguments for the secession of the North or Padania as the Lega attempted to construct new borders for its imaginary state.

In terms of the longer-term analysis employed throughout this thesis, while the MARP and the MAB certainly pursued a policy of exclusionism against southern Italians, it would be inaccurate to categorize the MRAs as parties of the radical right. This is due to the fact that aside from nativism, neither of these movements pursued other policies which can be readily associated with the radical right party family such as anti-globalisation discourse or a challenge to liberal democratic values. Nevertheless, it would also be an error to see the Lega’s lurch to the right as unrelated to both its and the MRAs’ previous nativist stances against southerners and against migration. Indeed, the populist and nativist form of regionalist ideology which the Lega had represented and which it had inherited and developed from the MRAs lent itself to the exclusionary aspects of radical right ideology.

In short, populism and nativism are essential in understanding the continuities and discontinuities in regionalist discourse between the MRAs. By adopting an ideational approach to populism which sees it as a thin-centred ideology, this thesis has allowed for the examination of two examples of ‘when populism has come to the fore not only in different historical moments and parts of the world, but also in very different shapes or “sub-types.”’\textsuperscript{1186} This has brought to light how regionalism can act as a core ideology to which populism is attached, while also demonstrating how an exclusionary form of regionalism can lead to nativism. The Lega’s shift to the radical right was inextricably linked to the decision to pursue secessionism. This in turn was due to changing opportunity structures for the Lega relating to the European Union, increasing immigration and a politics of identity in reaction to globalisation. Therefore, the Lega’s intensification of their opposition to migration from abroad, the movement’s

increasing hostility to the EU, its anti-globalisation position, its authoritarian stance on law on order and its emphasis of a Christian identity in opposition to Islam represented a radicalization not only of its previous discourse, but also a clear departure from its 1950s’ predecessors.

**Wider implications and avenues for future research**

Having established how the key arguments discussed in the thesis have responded to the central research question, the following section focuses on the wider implications of my research and avenues for future developments before drawing some final conclusions. This thesis makes a significant contribution to studies on the Lega, Italian regionalism after WW2. However, with its inter-disciplinary approach and its development of frameworks relating to populism and abeyance the thesis also offers a wider addition to the fields of history, political science and sociology.

These final paragraphs demonstrate how, just as the adaptation and development of sociological and political frameworks has furthered understanding of both the history and durability of the Lega, so can such a cross-disciplinary approach be used to benefit studies of other social and political movements.

This thesis has demonstrated that the role of Piedmontese regionalism in Italian history deserves to be re-evaluated. Indeed, the Piedmontese origins of a large number of materials from the 1950s onwards should lead to a re-evaluation of this region’s role in developing regionalist ideology not only in the 1950s but also the 1980s. Piedmont’s influence on leghismo should not be solely measured on the electoral success of the Piedmontese leagues of the 1980s. The pioneering role played by a number of Piedmontese autonomists in the mid to late 1950s not only acted as an inspiration to its smaller sister movement, the MAB, but also formed a key part of the framework for leghismo. While the MARP was not the ‘Father of the Lega Nord’ in the direct sense that Bossi had claimed in his speech at Pontida in 1994, it was responsible for developing regionalist repertoires which attacked the perceived centralist state and argued that regionalism was the best way to cure the country’s ills. A vast number of regionalist repertoires had been developed by the MARP before being adapted and developed by the MAB, and later, in turn being adopted by the Lega.

Although Piedmont has been a key focus of this thesis, an exclusive study of the development of Piedmontese leghismo has been beyond its parameters. Bearing the findings of this research in mind and the fact that literature on the history of the Lega has tended to focus on Lombardy, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, and more recently on Emilia Romagna, future
research may be able to address the comparative lack of literature on Piedmontese *leghismo*. Any future study of this kind might draw upon my research to further our understanding of the links between regional and national identity. In particular, it might provide explanations of why a region which had played such a central role in unification and centralisation in the Risorgimento gradually distanced itself from the Italian nation-state and embraced regionalist and federalist narratives.

Further to a re-evaluation of the role of Piedmontese regionalism in the development of post-war and 1980s North Italian regionalism, this study also has wider implications for the Veneto, a region which has not formed a key focus of this study. Indeed, one of the main limitations encountered in the course of my research was the lack of available material on the Movement for Venetian Regional Autonomy (MARV). Should archival material on such movements as MARV become more readily available, this would present an opportunity to understand how and to what extent any Venetian movements from the 1950s or early 1960s followed the same discourse, imagery and electoral tactics of the MARP and the MAB. As has been established, the two waves of North Italian regionalist activism at the centre of this thesis held very different objectives with regard to the Italian nation-state: in essence, the first wave of activism represented by the MAB used regionalism and federalism to argue for national unity, while the Lega pursued a programme of national fragmentation and secessionism. Further studies on the MARV would also further our understanding of whether or not the MARV professed the same level of loyalty towards the nation-state as the MAB and in particular, the MARP. Furthermore, due to the fact that the first documented record of the MARV is in 1960, at a time when the MARP and the MAB began their decline, additional research would enhance our understanding of this period of abeyance by examining whether the MARV was absorbed into a larger organisation and if so, whether any rump movements emerged which allowed a continuity of activism and discourse.

Regarding abeyance, this thesis has added to the literature on this sociological and political theory, applying it to a new context of regionalism. I have shown that a process of absorption and decline, while leading to a period of inactivity in terms of mobilization, did not signal the decline of an ideology itself. In the case of North Italian regional autonomy, the ideology of regionalism survived due to the fact that the process of decline had encouraged the formation of cadres of activists or ‘rump movements’ which continued to campaign for regional autonomy. I have provided a greater understanding of the abeyance process by demonstrating how decline can encourage the desire to survive politically. This in turn leads to an absorption of part of a group, but almost inevitably a surviving cadre of activists who
remain loyal to the ideal of the movement. The previously unexamined role of the DC and the PSDI in absorbing members of the MRAs in the early 1960s has reinforced Mizruchi’s assertion that ‘these processes typically, although not always, occur without the awareness of those who participate in them or those who derive losses or benefits from them.’

My thesis, as the first in-depth study of north Italian regionalism to use abeyance theory, paves the way for future research to examine the survival of regionalist narratives at a European and global level from the post-war period until today. Further to regionalism, however, this study also forms part of a much wider debate on the origins and survival of social and political movements in general. Political scientists, sociologists and historians working on a wide range of ideologies, parties and social movements may further refine and develop the frameworks applied in this thesis to pursue a cross-disciplinary approach between historical sociology and political science.

This is particularly relevant in the current socio-political climate at the time of writing, with the seeming collapse of a social-democratic consensus in Europe since the financial crisis of 2008. The subsequent re-emergence of political narratives of both the far left and far right, the mainstreaming of racism by both the mass media and ostensibly centrist political parties, the continuing debates over European Union membership and integration, and militant climate change activism all have deep roots in a variety of social and historical repertoires.

My adaptation of Mizruchi’s theory of abeyance has demonstrated how this theoretical framework can explain the decline, absorption of movements and their ideas. At the same time, my addition of friendship and rivalry to the already existing abeyance structures of rump movements, highlighted by Taylor, and family, examined by Veugelers, has helped account for the survival of ideas during periods of non-receptive political environment. It has also demonstrated the wide applicability of this concept in the sense that abeyance structures can take various different forms. If adapted and applied to the examples cited above, it can help account for the role of both structure and agency in the survival, continuity and discontinuity of a variety of movements, their ideas and inter-generational links.

A further contribution of this thesis in terms of abeyance theory is how the theory interacts with populism, which in turn contributes significantly to populism studies in itself. As discussed in chapter one of this thesis, in spite of the different intellectual traditions behind

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abeyance and populism, historical sociological theory can provide an explanation of the latent nature of the populist movements, ideas and repertoires.

The fact that the populist regionalist narratives used by the Lega drew on those of the MRAs owes much to the abeyance structures active in the 1960s and 1970s. Abeyance therefore accounts for the preservation and transmission of populist regionalist narratives in a period during which populism appeared to have disappeared or at least become much less visible.

Structural factors can help account for how different ‘master frames’ of populism emerged in both the first and the second wave of activism and which the MRAs and the Lega were able to exploit. However, while these different types of populism certainly affected elements of populist discourse used by each wave of activism, there were broader populist regionalist narratives common to both the MRAs and the Lega. The preservation of these narratives can be explained by looking at agency in the form of abeyance structures. The transmission of populist regionalism in the form of essays, posters and leaflets, through rump movements friendship, family and rivalry accounts for the survival of these narratives over these two decades, thus bridging the gap between the two waves of activism.

While this thesis has focused only on two waves of populist activism in Italy, in broader terms, the theoretical framework used in this thesis can benefit the study of populism and its seemingly intermittent and latent nature. The cross-disciplinary approach developed in this thesis may be used by scholars to examine how other political movements draw on populist repertoires developed by past cycles of mobilisation. Therefore, future researcher may apply abeyance theory within the field of populism studies to trace continuities and discontinuities in populist discourse and between specific populist movements at both a national and transnational level.

Further to this this aspect of inter-disciplinarity between populism and abeyance, my research has also contributed to the field of populism studies in two key ways. First, it has widened the field by adding the MRAs to the category of 1950s’ populism alongside Qualunquismo and Poujadisme. This has opened up the possibility of a more detailed comparison between the discourse, methods and levels of success of the MRAs with Qualunquismo and Poujadisme to better understand the roots of post-war populism in the wake of the fall of fascist regimes and transition to democracy in Europe. This is particularly true not only of the MARP and the MAB, but also of other movements such as Enrico Villarboito’s MAR and SCOPA which, although short-lived, can provide clear examples of populist
discourse in the 1950s and provide evidence of Italy as a breeding ground for populism in the post-war period.

Second, the populist regionalist framework used in this thesis has the potential to open avenues of future research in the field of populism studies by analysing other regionalist movements which either developed into or were from the very beginning radical right movements. The definitions adopted in this thesis of the Lega as populist regionalist, populist regionalist right regionalist and most recently under Salvini’s leadership populist radical right post-regionalist, while drawing heavily on existing frameworks, offer a fresh perspective on the debate surrounding whether the Lega was a radical right or regionalist movement. In particular studies on movements such as the *Vlaams Belang* (formerly Vlaams Blok), Horst Seehofer’s CSU in Bavaria as well as more marginal movements such as Alsace d’Abord which have promoted a federalist or regionalist ideology alongside radical right ideology, can be brought into sharper focus through a populist regionalist framework. This can help develop a greater understanding of the links between regionalism, nativism and populism.

Due to the fact that this thesis has focused on two waves of activism which developed nativist as well as populist narratives, the instances above focus only on what can be described as the populist regionalist right. However not all forms of regionalism – or indeed nationalism- are nativist and exclusionary. Future research may refine the definition of populist regionalism to apply it also to left wing regionalist and nationalist movements which attach themselves to the thin-centred ideology of populism, without nativism. It is my contention that the populist regionalist framework, as well as being adaptable to left wing wing movements, can also be extended to become a ‘populist nationalist’ framework.

Several autonomist and separatist parties in Catalonia, for instance, while focusing strongly on economic regionalism, do not hold overtly nativist programmes, but could easily be defined as both regionalist and populist, arguing for greater autonomy and in many cases even secession, while attacking Madrid’s elites for exploiting Catalan wealth and resources and not allowing for heterogeneity in culture and traditions.

The same can be said of the campaigns of the Scottish National Party, which has targeted the Westminster elite, but has done so from the left and with narratives of social justice and inclusion. This distinction between the populist regionalist/nationalist left and populist regionalist/nationalist right will help avoid the equation of populism with nativism. Therefore, a populist regionalist (and eventual populist nationalist) framework which builds on and consolidates existing frameworks, distinguishing clearly between left and right, would help
provide more accurate definitions of movements which attach populism to their regionalist or nationalist ideology.

In terms of the Lega’s radical right identity, this appears to have been consolidated under the leadership of Salvini. In removing the iconic words ‘Nord’ and ‘Padania’ (the latter of which had since 1995 represented the Lega’s imaginary northern state) from his party’s symbols in 2017, Salvini ended the second of two waves of North Italian regionalist activism, and embarked on a third wave of activism in which he has opted to defend Italian national sovereignty. Since I began writing this thesis, Salvini has therefore changed the name and mission of the Lega beyond the recognition of what the MRAs had intended with their original campaign for regional autonomy. Nevertheless, populism and nativism were present in Salvini’s successful electoral campaign in 2018, as seen in his promise to ‘return sovereignty to “the people” from the “poteri forti” (powers that be) in Brussels’, and his slogan of ‘Italians first.’

While this thesis has not systematically engaged with Salvini’s rebranded and ‘post-regionalist’ Lega (without Nord) due to this disappearance of the common denominator of regionalism, Salvini’s third wave of activism and his populism and nativism have significant roots in the two waves of regionalist activism which preceded him. One of the ways in which this thesis can be developed further is by examining how and to what extent Salvini has reformulated populist and nativist narratives previously used by the prior two waves of regionalist activism in his third wave of activism. Since Salvini has abandoned regionalism and federalism for nationalism, such research may also allow for a greater comparison and overlaps between regionalism and nationalism and their respective links to nativism.

This third wave of activism has seen Salvini’s Lega play a key role in absorption of the traditional regionalist elements of the party which are for now, being held in abeyance. Nevertheless, there are strong abeyance structures, in the form of party factions which may develop into rump movements or cadres of activists, promoting and developing north Italian regionalist narratives. As the recent debate over the autonomy referendums in Lombardy and the Veneto and the continued presence of the slogan ‘North First’ in the party’s headquarters

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1188 F. Poletti, ‘Salvini cancella il Nord e la Padania dal simbolo’ La Stampa, 22nd December 2017.
in via Bellerio have demonstrated, the regionalist identity of the party has not been completely superseded.\textsuperscript{1190}

In conclusion, while leghismo’s political message should be viewed as a revival of a previous wave of regionalist, federalist, populist and nativist activism represented by the MARP and the MAB during the 1950s, insisting too much on continuities between the two movements hinders our understanding of both of these movements. Instead, as this thesis has demonstrated, a more nuanced analysis of both continuities and discontinuities between the MRAs and the Lega allows for a reappraisal of the roots of leghismo while raising awareness, in general, of the relationship between political movements and the context in which they are active. Herein lies the key importance of understanding leghismo as a second, albeit much changed, wave of North Italian regionalist activism. While the MRAs blended their ideology of regionalism, federalism, populism and nativism with narratives of national unity to defend the Italian Republic, their successors, conversely attacked the Italian nation-state by drawing upon and adapting many of the 1950s’ and 1960s’ repertoires. The Lega, therefore, reframed the repertoires inherited by the MRAs to suit the political context of the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, this thesis has shown that the historical environment in which a political movement operates is that which makes it unique to its time in terms of purpose, objectives and individual endeavor, therefore, highlighting the benefit of a historical approach towards leghismo. Essentially, the historical approach employed in this thesis allows for a greater understanding of how and why the Lega has changed and continues to change to this day. At the same time, it also sheds light on the fact that the Lega has always remained attached to some core elements which can be traced back to the first wave of activism in the 1950s. This is particularly relevant with regard to populism, nativism and the ways in which these concepts have allowed the morphing of north Italian regionalism into a broader nationalist narrative. With this in mind, while the question of how the Lega develops next in its post-regionalist phase remains to be seen, in the opinion of this writer one thing is highly likely; given the durability of the populism and nativism which has survived since the 1950s through the 1980s and 1990s until today, these two concepts will remain a key part of the party’s identity for years to come.


Enrico Villarboito’s political movement the MAR (right) presented itself as an alternative to what he labelled as the “parochial” regionalism of his first movement, the MARP (left), from which he had been expelled in 1955. The contrast between the regional and national scope of each respective movement is represented by the differing flags used in the headings of each leaflet, with MARP’s leaflet using the Piedmontese flag and the MAR using the Italian tricolour. However, the leaflets reveal also many convergences regarding anti-politics and a determination to see the regional obligation in the constitution respected.

The MARP and the MAB merged under the name of MARPadano (MARPadania) for the 1958 national elections. The use of the Piedmontese flag as the symbol of this alliance indicates the unequal balance in this partnership and the predominance of the MARP.

The presentation of two autonomist lists in Piedmont had a damaging effect on the MARP’s momentum in the build up to the 1958 elections with the disruptive influence of its former member, Enrico Villarboito, putting forward an alternative programme with the SCOPA list. Villarboito put forward the argument that Piedmontese citizens paid disproportionate levels of taxes by circulating 1,000 fake cheques around the city signed as ‘nauseato sfiduciato’ (disgusted sceptic).

1193 Movimento Autonomia Piemontese Villarboito, folder Cat. A3A, b.1 Archivio di Stato, Torino. 8th April 1958
Appendix 2 - Chapter III FIGS 1-10.

FIG 1 The MAB and Autonomisti Campanile.

The original MAB symbol in 1956 and the subsequent “rump” Campanile movement in 1960 following the merger with the DC.

FIG 2 Libera Padania 1

The UAI’s ‘Libera Padania’ list included the use of terms ‘Padania’ and ‘Padanians’ to denote a North-Italian identity. Pledges were made to ‘defend Padanian work and Padanian traditions.’

1195 Ibid.
1196 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
The centrality of the leader, whilst not present in the period following Villarboito’s expulsion from the MRAs was nevertheless a key part of Villarboito’s movements, be it the MARP or his future movements. This set a precedent for leghismo in both Piedmont and Lombardy for strong executive leadership.

1197 Movimento Autonomia Piemontese Villarboito, folder Cat. A3A, b.1 Archivio di Stato, Torino. 8th April 1958
1198 Ibid.
1199 Lombardia Autonomista, October 1988.
1201 Ibid.
The story of the hen of the golden egg (La Gallina dalle Uova d’oro) was adopted by all the Lega Nord sections for propaganda campaigns during the 1990s. It was, however, previously designed by Guido Calderoli for the MAB. Calderoli, in turn, took inspiration from the MARP’s artwork for the 1956 elections.

1203 Courtesy of Giuseppe Sala and Maria Chiara Gonella
1204 *Piemont Autonomista*, 19th April 1990.
The notion of a parasitic Roman State was a constant presence in north Italian regionalist propaganda, be it in the form of the wolf in the 1950s or a southern Mafioso in the 1990s.

1208 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
Roberto Gremmo’s links to the MARP via Toni Brodrero influenced his choice of propaganda imagery as can be seen through these two images separated by over 30 years.

1210 Piemonte Nuovo 10th May 1958
FIG 7 The silencing of the North

Propaganda used in both the 1950s and 1980s show a northern voice being silenced or suppressed by a ‘southernised’ central state. It was this idea of penalisation and victimisation of the North by the southernized State which was silencing, even suffocating the North in the 1950s, according to MARP and, for very similar reasons in the 1980s, according to the Lega.

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1211 *Piemonte Nuovo*, 15th November 1956
1212 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi, Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
While the two latter posters use an almost identical slogan albeit inverted, the first and last posters share the imagery of the Northern slave breaking free from the shackles of Roman centralism. Significantly, the Mafia is not mentioned in either of the previous posters, indicating a shift in discourse towards the criminality of Rome in the second wave of regionalist activism.

Whether or not Bossi was aware of it or not, his choice of Alberto Da Giussano was not an original one. It had previously been appropriated by the MAB in 1959.

1214 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
1215 Ibid.
1217 Lombardia Autonomista, December 1983
The format and content of regionalist newspapers, particularly that of Farassino’s *Piemont Autonomista* took great inspiration from MARP’s fortnightly release, *Piemonte Nuovo*. This was evident not only in the format of the newspapers but also in the content. The regionalist newspapers often contained poetry in regional dialect.

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1221 Ibid.
1222 *Piemont Autonomista*. Ann.1. No.1 April 1987
Appendix 3 – Chapter IV FIGS 1-16

FIG 1 L’inno degli autonomisti

The anthem of the autonomists reveals much about the unitary message of MAB; through the lyrics, it is evident that regionalism was seen as a way of creating stronger unity and giving more prestige to the state.

FIG 2 MARPadania Bergamascan delegation

The only photo available of the Bergamascan autonomists is from 1958 and takes the label of the MARPadania rather than the MAB.

1224 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archivio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
1225 Ibid.
Bergamo was the only section in which the Padanian label took root, also on the logo of electoral propaganda.

La Regione Lombarda (cited by R.Gremmo and L.DeMatteo in their respective works) was released by Guido Calderoli and Davide Cugini of MAB in 1959, using Alberto Da Giussano (who would later be appropriated by the Lega) and also laying out a regionalist programme.  

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1226 Ibid.
While MARP’s book made reference to the regional statutes in the Constitution to argue its point, the Lega put forward a complete redraft of the Constitution declaring that ‘Italy is a Federal Republic.’

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1229 MARP, L’autonomia regionale, perché la si volle perché la si vuole, Turin, Ruata Editore, 1956
FIGS 6 and 7 The MARP, Regionalism as the Second Risorgimento

The best commemoration of the centenary of the Unity of Italy would be to activate regional autonomy as was desired by the Patriots of the Risorgimento. An enduring myth of both the MRAs and the Lega was that of Cavour as a ‘betrayed regionalist/federalist’. While Cavour had originally been opposed to a system of centralization, the claim that he had planned for a system of regional autonomies and federalism was an exaggeration.

1231 Piemonte Nuovo, 5th April 1958.
1233 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
1234 Ibid.
FIG 10 Piedmont as the model for Italy

This poster released by MARP shows how the movement associated the region strongly with having made Italy. It is evidence of how MARP aimed to model Italy on Piedmont through leading the battle for the activation of the Regional Statutes.

FIG 11 – Rome as the Habsburg Empire

This postcard, containing the message “The worst enemy of Italian unity is bureaucratic centralism” compares Rome with the Habsburg Empire. The propaganda formed part of a wider attempt during the build up to the 1961 centenary celebrations to use the Risorgimento to argue for the activation of regionalism.

1235 *Piemonte Nuovo*, 14th July 1959.

1236 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
FIGS 12 and 13 – The Lega’s New Risorgimento

The Lega released articles from as early as 1992 up until the 2011 centenary celebrations claiming to represent a New Risorgimento

FIG 14 The United (European) Federal Republic of Italy

The United (European) Federal Republic of Italy was one of MAB’s earliest ideals.

1239 Courtesy of Giuseppe Sala and Maria Chiara Gonella
Viva La Padania Libera – Ugo Gavazzeni, previously a MAB provincial councillor envisioned a European Padania – but it was a far-cry from Bossi’s view of a separate Padanian state.

1240 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
The MRAs and in particular, the MARP, portrayed the political parties of the *partitocrazia* as self-serving and exploitative entities. This is an argument which would later be used by the Lega. The MARP also released propaganda showing the movement fighting back against the centralism and the ‘*strapotere*’ of Rome and centralist Parties.

---

1241 Piemonte Nuovo, 23rd May 1956
1242 Piemont Autonomista, 18th May 1987
1243 Piemonte Nuovo 23rd May 1956,
Roman parties draining the North

The imagery of the Roman parties draining the North and of the central state and the South exploiting the hard-working nature of the North had already been introduced by the MRAs in the 1950s.

1245 Courtesy of Giuseppe Sala and Maria Chiara Gonella.
1246 Piemonte Nuovo, 1st November 1956.
1247 Courtesy of Giuseppe Sala and Maria Chiara Gonella.
Breaking free from the chains of Rome was a key element of continuity between the MRAs and the Lega; however, the Lega radicalised this message with the conflation of southern political hegemony and the notion of a ‘mafia-state’.

1250 Ibid.
1251 Piemont Autonomista, 24th July 1987.
FIG 6 The MARP and the MAB as Poujadist movements

The MARP

Both the MARP and the MAB campaigned against what they perceived as unfairly high levels of taxation.

1253 Piemonte Nuovo 6th December 1958, Anno.III. No.29
1254 Fasc.MAB – Autonomisti, Archvio Aldo Rizzi. Biblioteca Angelo Mai.
MARP was keen to present the anti-political nature of its list of candidates in order to detach itself from the partitocrazia. The mock voting sheet states ‘on the day of the elections, don’t forget this emblem: it belongs to a movement which is made up of honest and capable people who are not tied to any party interests.’

Appendix 5 – Election Results and Genealogy

THE MARP’S ELECTORAL HISTORY - TURIN - 1956-1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNAL COUNCIL</th>
<th>1956&lt;sup&gt;1256&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1960&lt;sup&gt;1257&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>31,370</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>19,094</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>4 (Out of 80)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCIAL COUNCIL</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1964&lt;sup&gt;1258&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>34,927</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>29,937</td>
<td>13,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>6.04%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>1 (out of 30)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL ELECTION</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1958&lt;sup&gt;1259&lt;/sup&gt; (MARPadania)</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a)13,721&lt;b&gt;1259&lt;/b&gt; b) unknown</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a)2.15% b) unknown</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a)0 b) 0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<sup>1259</sup> Risultati per la Camera a Torino-Novara, Vercelli” in. La Stampa. Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 1958
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PINEROLO 1956</th>
<th>VERCELLI 1957</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COMMUNAL COUNCIL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>2,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>3 (out of 30)</td>
<td>3 (out of 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROVINCIAL COUNCIL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>3,471</td>
<td>10,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>(unknown)</td>
<td>1 (out of 30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1261 “Magnifica affermazione del MARP nelle recenti elezioni amministrative Vercellesi” in *Piemonte Nuovo*. 15th November. 1957
1263 “Magnifica affermazione del MARP nelle recenti elezioni amministrative Vercellesi” in *Piemonte Nuovo*. 15th November. 1957
## THE MAB’S ELECTORAL HISTORY
### BERGAMO – 1956-1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNAL COUNCIL</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOTES</strong></td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>1.98%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SEATS</strong></td>
<td>1 (Out of 80)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCIAL COUNCIL</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOTES</strong></td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>2.23%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEATS</strong></td>
<td>1 (Out of 30)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL ELECTIONS</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>1958</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1964</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VOTES</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a)772 b)764</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a)1.11% b)1.23%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEATS</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>a)0 b) 0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1265 Ibid
1266 Ibid
1267 Ibid

PIEDMONT

1946
THE ARI - (Associazione Regionale Italiana)
Michele Rosboch
Tiziano Nobilia
Carlo Palazzona

1946-55
THE MARG
Enrico Villarbechi (President 1946)
Franco Lasi (Vice-President 1945-1946)
Achille Bertino (President)
Piero Malin (Secretary/Member)
Mauro Vezzani (Secretary 1953)
Franco Bruno (Secretary 1954)
Michele Reddick (Secretary 1955)
Tiziano Nobilia (Secretary 1956 & 1958)
Giancarlo Barsi (Secretary 1962)
Carlo Palazzona
Antonio Brizziero (Member)

1957
THE FDSI
Michele Rosboch
Tiziano Nobilia
Carlo Palazzona

1957-68
THE MARG
Franco Bruno

1971
FEDERAZIONE PIEMONTESI
Luigi Cerutti
Antonio Brizziero
Roberto Greener

1975
L’UNIONE OSSELANA
Roberto Greener

1980
M.A.R.P ( Movimento Autonomisti Rinnovati Piemontesi)
Union Piemontese
Roberto Greener (Leader)
Antonio Brizziero

1989
PIEMONTE AUTONOMISTA
Oliviero Fazzalini (Leader/Founder)
Antonio Brizziero
Piero Malin

1989
THE LEGA ALPINA UNION PIEMONTESI
Roberto Greener (Leader)
Enrico Villarbechi

1991
THE LEGA NORD PIEMONTE - ALLIANZA NORD
Oliviero Fazzalini (Leader/Founder)
Antonio Brizziero
Piero Malin

1991
THE LEGA NORD FEDERAL CONGRESS

LOMBARDY

1947
THE MAL (Mendicamento Autonomia Locali)
Guido Calderoni
Aldo Rizzi
Anselmo Freddi
Ugo Gregoratti
Gianfranco Gennolla

1956
THE MAB - MAIL
Guido Calderoni (Chairman 1956)
Ugo Gregoratti (Chairman 1956)
Anselmo Freddi
Aldo Rizzi
Gianfranco Gennolla (Chairman 1956)

1958
THE DO
Guido Calderoni
Ugo Gregoratti
Aldo Rizzi
Anselmo Freddi
Gianfranco Gennolla

1960-63
THE UAI-ZVP
Aldo Rizzi
Ugo Gregoratti
Antonio Brizziero

1970
L’UNIONE OSSELANA
Uniberto Bosil

1982
THE LEGA LOMBARDA
Roberto Calderoni
Uniberto Bosil

1999
THE LEGA LOMBARDA - ALLENNZA NORD
Roberto Calderoni
Uniberto Bosil

KEY

Links Between First and Second waves of settlement
Spills between movements
Bumps Movements
Absorption
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