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Popular Discontents

The Historical Roots of Italian Right Wing
Populism

Anthony Marshall Simone

Paul Dosh
Political Science

4/26/16

Many people are beyond deserving of my thanks for helping me along the way, and for undertaking such as this, I could not have done it without them. First, like any good Italian, no matter how diluted by multiple generations of Americanization, *la mia famiglia*. I want to give a special thank you to my mother and father for the unrivaled gifts of both an exceptional education and unconditional love. Next, I must thank the other scholars, experts, and reviewers for their generous gifts of their precious time. For many, this involved branching out of their comfort zones to explore the labyrinth of Italian politics. I must give special thanks to Paul Dosh, my advisor for this project, for his tireless efforts and endless good cheer. Without so sturdy a foundation, this project would not be where it is today. I must also thank David Blaney for his guidance and enthusiasm as an advisor and reviewer. His keen eye sharpened my insights here and in general. And then there is Frank Adler. Scholar, mentor, friend, to me, he is all. This project, as well as my academic career in general, would look very different without his influence. For all these people, their incalculable contributions shaped my thinking around the complex and multifaceted issues tackled in this exploration. Their contributions were solely positive; any errors that remain are mine alone. I must also thank my dear friends, Jeff “Big Jobs” Witter, Ricardo “Dick Rogers” Rodriguez, Gabriel Duarte, and Fabian “Fabio” Arrizon for helping me stay sane throughout this process. I would amiss if I were not to thank my Italian friends abroad and in the *bel paese*. Thank you for sharing your history and culture with me as well as making me feel *incluso insieme*. *A ogni uccello il suo nido è bello, ma grazie a voi, anche se quel nido è un altro.*

Abstract

Emerging from the ashes of the old electoral system of the First Republic, an ideological populism built on regional identity, most significantly espoused by the Lega Nord political party, became a dominant force in Italian politics. This populism initially attacked a corrupt state, but evolved to confront perceived threats to its homeland region, such as globalization and immigration. Despite these developments, this populism continues to create a discourse which pits a virtuous, homogenous people against a set of self-serving poteri forti (powers that be). What self-serving powers gave rise to this populism? This anti-state, xenophobic populism exists as a response to a “negative aggregation” of political, social, and economic conjunctures systemic to Italian politics since its formation as a republic in 1861. It is clear that specific elements of contemporary Italian state formation and political economy gave rise to this populism and sustained its particular ideological construction. Thus this investigation traces these forces that have allowed Lega and the populism it embodies to emerge politically at the end of Italy’s First Republic.

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Introduction

The year is 1992 and the Italian Chamber of Deputies is trying to elect a new president of the Republic. Not normally civil, the halls of Palazzo Madama and Palazzo Montecitorio are filled with outbursts of *ladri* (thieves) and other insults. The more populist leaders are in rare form. Rallies denouncing the state are common; slogans decry *Roma Ladrona* (Thieving Rome). Everyone seems to hate Italian politics—save for their own faction. It is a tumultuous time; everyone seems restless. This is to be expected. They don't know it, but the Italian First Republic is about to come to an end.

Why is everyone so angry? And how did it get this way? Answering these questions requires investigating the widespread populism that spread all across the country. These questions also reveal that analyzing the rise of Italian populism requires an analysis of the particularity of the case. These particularities arise from the case's history. Many accounts of populism do not investigate these particularities beyond the immediate context surrounding rise of the populist phenomenon. Although the immediate conditions feeding populism are certainly important, the historical continuities of its rise, which cumulated in the immediate crisis, provide a deeper analytic story. A deeper analytic story is necessary because “populism” as a concept in political science is difficult to define. It is typically a descriptive category. Populism typically is understood as some sort of variation on a social or political mobilization or discourse that references a “people” as a homogenous entity with exclusive positive and permanent values. However, analytically, this formulation means that populism is an appeal to the people. Populism, then, is open to numerous formulizations because it is not limited by things

like state structure, political organization, or ideological program. Due to this openness, populism is often grounded in a theory of personality. Thus, analysis in this scheme focuses on populist actors. But since populism's openness to numerous formulations is preserved in this theory, "populist" can, and has been used to describe such a diverse group of actors from Peron to Perot, Castro and Chavez to Reagan and Thatcher. Even within Italy numerous manifestations that can be described as populist have occurred. The concept of populism must be limited if it is to be analytically useful.

The study of populism has spawned a sprawling field of scholarship, often with many studies attempting to limit the concept. There are a few ways in which this limiting often occurs. One way is to look at the populist's rhetoric. In other words, how is the populist constructing an idea of the people? Another tactic is to make it a historical phenomenon. Populism responds to a set of social and political conditions usually by advocating for a set of idealized relations. But even this limitation can vary significantly. Is the populist project forward or rearward looking? Emancipatory or reactionary? Then there is a structural approach. This structural approach is not a general theory of populism. Rather, it is an analysis of how the movement situates itself within the various political and social contexts to which it responds. The openness of the "people" is maintained while allowing for the intense variation to which populist movements respond. Both the referents, those exclusive positive and permanent values, and the "problems" they are pitted against are historical in nature. But the populist is responding to a specific moment in time often to show how far some "ideal" has gone astray. The people are under threat from outside forces. Structurally, populism takes the form of an us/them binary. But even this formulation seems lacking of analytical content. In order to

avoid the same problems of analysis presented above, the structural approach must treat populism as a conjunctural phenomenon. The historical focus necessary to make populism a conjunctural phenomenon grounds its more elusive conceptual elements, the us and the them, in the concrete historical tendencies of the case. In doing so, populism becomes a socio-political phenomenon of the environment within which it operates. Specifically, this focus helps explain why the populism that emerged in the early Italian Second Republic was both regionalist and anti-establishment.

A way of illustrating populism as a conjunctural phenomenon is to look to one of its most powerful practitioners, the Lega Nord. The Lombard League, or Lega Autonomista Lombardia was formed on April 12, 1984. Intensely regionalist, the Lombard League espoused a passion for the Lombard dialect and culture. Although the league started with this cultural focus, by the early 1990s this cultural passion gave way to a critique of the political structures of the Italian state coupled with demands for federalism or outright autonomy. Lombardy was not the only region to see the formation of an “autonomous” league. Throughout northern Italy, cultural and quasi-political organizations took root. And on December 4, 1990, six of these leagues—Lega Veneta, Piemonte Autonomista, Lega Emiliana- Romagna, Alleanza Toscana, Unione Ligure, and Lega Autonomista Lombardia—signed a pact in Bergamo, which was formalized in Milan on February 10, 1991 giving birth to Lega Nord. Lega is a populist and regionalist group focused on issues important for the localities it represents. But Lega is more than a regional, tax revolt group; it has become one of the more successful parties on the right. It is a major political party today and considering it stems back to the 1980s before the fall of the First Republic, it is one of the oldest formal parties.

The Lega Nord formulates its ideology through a fusion of regionalism and populism. Regionalism must inform the populism of the Lega Nord because Lega arose in a specific political and socio-economic environment in which it could develop its themes with reference to the territorial context of its heartland areas. Furthermore, it was created as a fusion of regional groups and thus has an institutional history built on regional features. The regionalism and populism allows them to create a narrowly defined “people” based on their specific self-conception bounded by conceptions of what they are consciously not. This formulation is significant because, as Marco Tarchi has argued, Lega represents the fusion of populism into a mass party on the right.¹ Because these masses are constituted through a regional space, Lega can frame issues in terms of a “people” vs an “outsider.” To put it generally, their politics is defined by a fluid us/them binary in which they can use shared characteristics to form the “us” and render everything else as “them.” Lega is particularly interesting because it extends this binary to the state when it is advantageous to do so. Specifically, Lega formulates a discourse that pits a virtuous, homogenous people against self-serving “*poteri forti*” (powers-that-be) and which provide the basis for this paper’s analysis.

The famed historian of Fascism Renzo de Felice described the political project of Fascism as a “negative aggregation” of forces that developed in the Liberal Italy that preceded the regime. The negative aggregation took full force when the regime was brought down by a crisis of legitimacy in the early Twentieth century. Considering Lega, as a mass party, also emerged in a time of crisis, it is advantageous to also look at Lega as a negative aggregation. This is not to suggest that the Lega Nord is a Fascist party or

¹ Tarchi, Marco,. 2015. *Italia Populista : Dal Qualunquismo a Beppe Grillo*. Bologna: Il mulino. All translations from Italian, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

even displays Fascist tendencies. It is to suggest that the radical alternatives, hyper-nationalism on one hand and federalism on the other, emerge as alternatives as legitimacy crises played out. And considering these were both precipitated by rather similar crises in the apparatuses of government, the comparison is even more applicable. Thus I argue that Lega's emergence, and that of populism in general at the time, is a negative aggregation of the problems of centralized government and its practices in Italy and the political, social, and economic problems that arise out of this particular mode of organization.

I focus on the centralized state because it is one of the few entities that remain constant across Italian political history following the country's establishment as a republic in 1861. The drive for centralization won out then, saw a hyper-intensification during the Fascist period, and was reconstructed during the post-World War II period. Throughout all of these periods, the state forged its institutional practices in an effort to promote unity. These relationships, best characterized by a desire to rule from the center whilst creating a modern Italian nation, can help explain problems like a lack of transparency between large firms and state actors, a semi-representative democratic government that insulates the parties in power, and a reliance on patronage politics and clientelism among other problems that come to characterize the Italian nation from the *Risorgimento* into modern day. The practices of this governmental model, particularly in the areas of clientelism and what Arend Lijphart called the "politics of accommodation"—the Italians call it *trasformismo*—remain steady and are typically intensified or expanded into new areas over time.² In a way, this investigation traces this

² Lijphart, Arend. 1968. *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

continuity and its effects on Italian society not just in Lega's populist moment. These developments provide the backdrop for Lega's populism's fluid us/them binary.

The following chapter outline summarizes the structure of this argument. Chapter 1, "*Il Risorgimento* and the Central State," explores the establishment of the Republic of Italy. I start here because governmental systems and the logic employed in the exercise of power are historical in nature. We can trace the Italian government's penchant for centralization to its unification moment, *il Risorgimento*. I trace the historical factors and political attitudes that produced Italy's centralized government. The political consequences of this choice are also historical in that they led to the governmental crises that precipitated Fascism. Chapter 1 thus focuses on both the formation and crisis of Italian liberalism. But despite the crises, Italian liberalism set in motion a political *modus vivendi* whose legacy would stretch far beyond the context of 19th and early 20th century Italy. Specifically, the architects of *the Risorgimento* chose to focus on creating a national Italian identity, the consequences of which was that, over time, all local particularities and regional differences became subsumed in an abstract notion of nationalism. It is precisely this abstraction which regional populism seeks to undo.

Chapter 2, "The State Reasserts Itself," explores how that state was reconstructed after the fall of Fascism. I trace the re-establishment of the Italian political system in the aftermath of the war. By investigating the political constraints and post-war necessities of this period, this chapter reveals a continuity of the Italian state that maintained many elements of pre-Fascist politics. Rather than simply reasserting itself in Italian society, the political system it expanded its influence. By investigating developments in bureaucratic political institutions, this chapter reveals how the central state expanded its

influence into society in its attempt to develop political hegemony. Here again, the abstraction of the citizen continues but it is clear that the state exists not for the sake of the citizen but for itself. The major political entities pursue reforms in such a way as to strengthen their own claims to hegemony over the Italian peninsula. These massive projects also give credence to the populists' accusations that the state wastes resources for political ends, especially in the service of party politics. The centralized state becomes ubiquitous and in doing so becomes synonymous with party politicking.

The expansion explored in the second chapter did not limit itself to the political sphere. The state looked to the public and private spheres much in the same way it viewed the administration system. Chapter 3, "the State Expands," sketches the expansion of the public sphere in the domain of economic development. It also traces the development of power linkages in the private sector during the expansion of Italian capitalism from the economic boom between the end of the Second World War and late 1960s onward. The state, through its provision of resources and economic decisions, intertwines itself in the economy in such a way to increase its overall centralization. In addition to showing a further expansion of state power, this chapter begins to reveal major consequences of this peculiar form of mediated modernization. Dualisms in development across space are maintained rather than managed or eliminated. These dualisms are only reduced by dynamism in the economy outside of the state and internal migration. Over time, it becomes clear that the uneven allocation of resources and poor public services are due to the influence of the parties in the bureaucracy. This problem becomes amplified by the fact these agencies are dominated by Southern Italians, the same class of people immigrating northward and putting strain on local northern

economies. Not only does the Southernized bureaucracy drain resources from the North in order to redistribute them to the South, the scheme does not create widespread Southern prosperity, hence the proliferation of Southerners in the North. In short, State expansion built imbalances in the economy and social relations, all of which extend into the conjunctural moment of widespread populism.

Chapter 4, “the State in Crisis” brings the analysis to the fall of the post-war republic and the eruption of political discontents. It traces developments in the central state that brings all political actors into the state system, with the exception of the Communist left. It then explores the withering the Communist left following the tension of the late sixties and seventies. After continuing to fend off challenges or absorb them, the state continues its *modus vivendi* of increased centralization and distance from the people it governs. This governance style only ends with the legitimacy crisis brought on by widespread judicial investigations and corruption scandals that revealed the system of clientelist linkages building for decades. It is within this crisis that populism saw its strongest resurgence. It becomes clear to the populists that, despite the state’s constant focus on modernization, it does not embody the principles of a modern society. Rather it is a parasitic entity in which all actors, the *ladri* (thieves), are guilty of perpetuating bureaucratic irrationality and clientelism. When coupled with the other issues that resulted from Italy’s political development, this populism found a situation ripe for its widespread growth.

Chapter 5, “Populism Emerges and Responds,” concludes the project by connecting these tendencies to produce an image of contemporary right-wing populism in Italy. By examining/analyzing the calls for federalism, both politically and economically,

we see the importance of the developments in the centralized state for the populist message. The fluid us/them binary can easily become a centralized/federalized binary. The populists responded to the corruption scandals by demanding federal representation, if not outright secession, because the particular form the growth of the Italian state took—and not just in its own political sphere— penetrated and bureaucratized social and economic institutions to such a degree that it eroded the very basis of political legitimacy, autonomous citizens. Politics in Italy took place at a level over and above the abstract Italian not to mention the Lombardian, or Varesian.³ I also investigate the area where the binary is typically identified: xenophobia. Much of this xenophobia was expressed in economic terms, revealing how the social and economic issues that arose from the state's development model fueled these messages. These messages gained traction for a reason. And that reason was a cultural xenophobia that was much more than biological racism.

Lega capitalized on the confusion of Italian politics wrought by the rapid changes precipitated by the legitimacy crisis experienced by the Italian political system. But simply positing that populism was regionalist and anti-establishment fails to explain the force behind the discontent expressed. This radical populism requires a historical analysis that explores the continuities which allow for its emergence and success. For that, the analysis must explore not only the legitimation crisis that opens space for the populism but also the very *modus vivendi* of the Italian state that the populism criticizes. Only by doing so, can this populism be understood as embodying a radical “negative aggregation” which brought the state itself into question.

³ Varese is a commune of Lombardy and a major center of Lega support as Umberto Bossi, the founder of Lega Nord hails from here and frequently held party congresses in the commune's hinterland.

Chapter 1: *Il Risorgimento* and the Central State

The formation of the unified Italian state is a historical anomaly. First, in terms of Western democracies it is recent. Italy was proclaimed a nation on March 17, 1861. Italy's unification marked the country's first lurching step toward securing a place in modern Europe. This modernization context shaped the unification period profoundly. The arguments driving unification and the form it would take reflected both geopolitical constraints and attitudes toward liberal governance. Stepping toward modernity also had consequences for the young nation. This particular mode of the rise of the Italian state—particularly its rise over unchanging social, political, and economic conditions—set in motion a host of challenges that would shape Italian politics into the modern day. These challenges become clear in the role this form of modernization would play in precipitating the crisis that swept in Fascism. These crises often laid bare the internal contradictions of the Italian state that created so much animosity amongst movements and citizens alike. These crises provide an opportunity to investigate the internal logic of the Italian state as a unified entity because internal logic, rather than external intervention, often precipitates its moments of crisis. A recurring theme is a failure of Italian liberalism to bridge a divide between the people of Italy and the national government. Throughout this complex history, efforts at instilling a thoroughgoing nationalism failed due to international politics and internal state-society relations. In investigating these moments and the logic that gives rise to them, it becomes clear these efforts exist as a continuity in Italian history rather than a series of isolated events.

These continuities set the stage for the challenges of post-WWII developments in party politics, administration, and political economy in general. Many of the

contradictions within the liberal state find their roots in the inability of a liberal model and a political class to adapt to a modernizing country. The contradictions of Italian liberal governance and the crisis they advance not only give rise to two decades of Fascist rule, but help shape the reconstruction period following the fall of Fascism. The logic and problems of centralized government emerged in this time period but are not relegated to the period itself. In fact, they provide the material upon which a continuity of the state, post-Fascism is established.

Despite this gloomy picture, unification of Italy was a well-intentioned goal and project of immense proportions. It involved questions of internal governance and international relations; modernization and conservatism; Italian identity and local particularity, but above all else, the unification moment is best understood as a moment about *Italy*. What do we mean by a national moment? The historian Denis Hays writing on composing a history of Italy wrote: “we mean the way the country has acquired self-consciousness, and the play of interests, political, social, cultural, within the perimeter established by language, by geography and by relations, acquisitive or concessive, with its neighbors.”⁴ As we will see, all of these elements would have profound effects on the form Italian unification would take. But the common denominator is that the unification of Italy was seen by a wide swath of people as a reawakening of Italian greatness. In fact, the name unification took—*Il Risorgimento*—can be translated in a slightly different ways, but the sentiment of the time is best encapsulated by *the rising again*. In order to understand what Italy was rising above and towards a few words about pre-unified Italy are necessary.

⁴ Hays, Denys, 1961. *The Italian Renaissance in Its Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pg. 26

The Context of the *Risorgimento*

In the centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire, the Italian peninsula was made up of city-states. These city-states served an important purpose, which Charles Tilly coined as containers of coercion and capital.⁵ Capital represents resources that the state could exploit for growth and preservation. Capital could be the monetary resources, labor power resources, and infrastructure needed to sustain the state. The apparatus of coercion represents what this capital sustained. The city-state relied on force to control its subjects and expand or defend its territory. These city-state needed both to survive and in their efforts to obtain them established a monopoly of capital and coercion in their given territories. Even from Roman times these territorial units contained a mixture of functions, powers, and social classes. This mixture did not oppose Italian cities to the surrounding countryside but rather created a symbiotic relationship. The largest of the cities, areas like Milan, Florence, and Bologna formed large urban districts, almost always exceeding 350 square miles, with clearly defined municipal institutions.⁶ These cities exerted influence over these districts, or *contadi*, in a way to establish the city as the head of a unitary body. Cities and the *contadi* they controlled strove for and quite often achieved sovereignty over the territories that they controlled.

Governance varied across city-states, yet they shared a common trait due to this territorial sovereignty: autonomy. Trade routes and specialized industries insured power and wealth for these city-states. Italian city-states fulfilled these characteristics, but as far

⁵ Tilly, Charles, Willem Pieter. Blockmans, 1994. *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press

⁶ Chittolini, Giorgio., *Cities, City-States, and Regional States in Italy* in Tilly, Charles., Willem Pieter. Blockmans, 1994. *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press. pg. 24

as an Italian nation was concerned the city-states remained isolated containers of wealth, power, and identity. Furthermore, as these city-states captured wealth and power, heated rivalries erupted. Despite the multiple invasions by the Saracens, Normans, Germans, and others the city-states, for the most part, did not form common fronts of mutual aid. Rather local rulers tended to side with invaders for the sake of private advantage.⁷ As the Renaissance began to come to a close, some of the more powerful tyrants began to unite the dispersed city powers into about a dozen regional states. One city did not necessarily equal one state though Italian city-states guarded their sovereignty and remained loyal to their territorial interests.

By and large, these cities lacked an interest in territorial expansion. This began to change at the end of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century, intensifying at the beginning of the fifteenth century with the rise of aggressive princely states. This began when Milan and its North-central territories, under the leadership of the Visconti family, led a campaign to establish hegemony of his monarchy over the scattered northern cities. Previously, city-states and their rulers tended to pursue a policy of maintaining the status quo. Maintenance of the borders of the communities under their dominion was the primary goal. This rise of territorial expansion subjected the city-state system to a great deal of tension. The new princes sought military conquest and monarchical centralization; the cities and their urban leagues resisted to defend a system based on the federal order of towns, republicanism, and their ideals of civic life.⁸ A consequence of this struggle was the expansion of larger commercial centers, already large by virtue of the *contadi* they

⁷ Mack Smith, Denis 1997. *Italy; a modern history*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. pg. 7

⁸ See Baron, Hans, 1966, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in the Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, Princeton: Princeton University Press

oversaw, into territorial states.⁹ These territorial states took the same form of the smaller city-states that predated them. The territorial states often maintained control over the historical *contado* and expanded their power outward in the establishment of protectorates and principalities.

This system was not to last. Italy's cultural and political power saw a sharp decline as a result of shifting power on the European continent. Tilly argues that two major forces brought down European city-state systems: "First, commercialization and capital accumulation in the larger states reduced the advantage enjoyed by small mercantile city-states, which had previously been able to borrow extensively, tax efficiently, and rely on their own sea power to hold off large, land-bound states. Second, war eventually changed in a direction that made their small scale and fragmented sovereignty a clear disadvantage."¹⁰ The mercantilist Italian city-states and territories simply could not compete with the larger powers. This contrast in type of state arrangement occurred because Italy never achieved unity during the Renaissance. By comparison with other parts of Europe, power was concentrated in powerful city-states usually under the dominion of powerful families.¹¹ As the capacity for both capital and coercion declined for the Italian city-states, they remained isolated yet had diminished power even in the areas of their historical domain.

As other European powers began to centralize, Italy remained fragmented. When the Italian cities were confronted by these larger powers a new era was ushered in to

⁹ Chittolini, Giorgio *ibid* pg 34

¹⁰ Tilly, Charles., Willem Pieter. Blockmans, 1994. *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press. pg. 24

¹¹ This can be illustrated in the familiar image of Machiavelli's prince. The prince was less of an authoritarian despot seeking the expansion of privilege and more of a personality capable of holding together the diverse interests under the territorial units of their dominion
See: Landon, William, *Politics, patriotism, and language : Niccolò Machiavelli's "secular patria" and the creation of an Italian national identity*, New York : Peter Lang,.

Italy: the period of “foreign preponderance.” After about four centuries of autonomous rule, the territorial powers of Italy found themselves subjugated to the influence, and in many cases outright dominion, of the great European powers most notably the Austro-Hungarians, French and the Spanish. Many great Italian urban centers became absorbed into the administrative systems of these empires. The cities still enjoyed relatively wide areas of social and political autonomy but the monopoly of capital and coercion had slipped from their grasp. These cities declined as they became increasingly inert and secondary in the new world economic system especially as they were unable to adapt their political and economic arrangements that were legacies of the previous four centuries of domination.¹²

Rivalries continued but now contained a greater foreign presence. These geopolitical rivalries would bring the chapter of Italian city-states, and the Renaissance, to a close. As a contrast to Milan and the Visconti’s attempt to establish monarchical hegemony over the scattered northern cities, when Venice tried to expand territorial hegemony, she was crushed by France and a confederation of other provinces. When Spain began to make claims on central Italy, Florence was left alone to resist them. Furthermore, the Medici, Florence’s leading family at the time, chose to support the Spanish emperor against their native city in an effort to expand personal privilege. Foreign soldiers flooded the peninsula, particularly the major centers of Rome and Florence, and shocked the civilization of the Renaissance to a standstill. By the end of

¹² Chipolla, Carlo, 1970 “The Economic Decline of Italy” in Chipolla, Carlo ed. *The Economic Decline of Empires*. London: Methuen

the seventeenth century the position that the cities continued to hold depended on past achievements or a rentier role derived from territorial and agrarian advantages.¹³

A consequence of this parochialism, especially following the decline of power after the Renaissance and the domination that accompanied it, was the concept of Italy as a territorial unit. Italy was a peninsula before it was a nation. At the peak of their domination, power was concentrated in cities and the *contadi* that they dominated rather than in the geographical space that was referred to as Italy. Despite the fact that the national frontiers of Italy are well-defined—three sides bounded by water and the fourth bounded by the Alps—a common denominator of both identity and power rarely was inscribed by these frontiers. Claims to provinces were often based on geographic boundaries within Italy but more often were grounded in ethnographic and historical terms. These claims were often intensified during disputes, particularly disputes concerning other countries. Corsica and Nice have been claimed from France, Canton Ticino from Switzerland, Tyrol and Trieste from Austria-Hungary to name a few prominent examples. But with the decline in power of the Italian cities during the two centuries preceding the unification period, territorial claims were made by outsiders rather than Italians.

These claims drastically changed the arrangement of power on the Italian peninsula. Most of northern Italy fell to the Austrian Hapsburg Empire. Southern Italy was dominated by a Bourbon dynasty from Spain. Between the two, the Catholic Church retained its traditional seat of power in the Papal States. As subordinated lands, these areas lost much of their original power. Some regions like Venice and Genoa retained some political independence due to the geographic sheltering of Venitian lagoons and

¹³ Chittolini, Giorgio op cit. pg 39

Maritime Alps respectively.¹⁴ But for the most part Italy existed as a regional entity subject to international domination.

Change would come to the peninsula through another invasion from the outside, this time from France. With the invasion of Napoleon in 1796, Italy was forced out of stagnation and would experience new modes of governance that would change the politics on the peninsula forever. Historian Denis Mack Smith reveals a contrast between the shifting political parochialism of the previous centuries:

Napoleonic armies [1796 – 1814] brought with them the germs of liberalism fostered by the French Revolution of 1789, and introduced a minor industrial revolution sufficient at least to provide some of the war equipment required by this foreign emperor. Experience of Napoleonic rule convinced some people how much Italy stood to gain from strong centralized government, for the French brought more efficient methods of administration and a far more enlightened code of law.¹⁵

This French presence profoundly and irreversibly shaped Italy's political and cultural contexts of modernization. Although relatively peaceful, the years of foreign preponderance prior to the rise of revolutionary France were years of political and cultural stagnation in Italy, especially compared to the years of the Renaissance they followed. This stagnation was partly caused by the control over which the *ancien regime* held Italy. Power, both economic and coercive, was held by a small number of influential families. Under the Napoleonic administration, numerous reforms, implemented with varying degrees of success depending on the region, served to change this arrangement of power. One way in which the Napoleonic reforms went about this task was by changing the arrangement of government itself. *Ancien regime* principalities were transformed into centralized and bureaucratic autocracies. Feudalism and all other forms of independent jurisdiction were abolished in order to assert the absolute sovereignty of the state, at least

¹⁴ Mack Smith op cit. pg. 8

¹⁵ Mack Smith ibid pg. 9

in the North. The satellite Kingdom of Naples would resist these changes leading to remnants of feudal arrangement being preserved or only slightly altered in form.

Throughout the country however, administration was centralized and rationalized.

Energetic interventions occurred to privatize of land, to modernize agricultural practices, and to encourage the development of new industries.¹⁶

Ideas also spread quickly during this time, especially during the years prior to full Napoleonic domination. Picking up on many of the radical ideas of the French revolution, political dissent took on a character of popular sovereignty and democratic representation. These ideas contradicted earlier reformers who insisted that change be entrusted to enlightened rulers. Although Napoleon's authoritarian regime silenced this type of dissent, the character of the ideas would not be lost on Italian politics and culture and would play a powerful role as the populace subjected to foreign rule grew weary of French domination. French rational modernization attracted considerable support at first particularly as it shrunk the personal privilege of the *ancien regime*. However, as the autocratic tendencies of Napoleonic rule became more pronounced with his increasing demands for tax revenue, soldiers, and *materiel*, dissatisfaction spread across all social classes. Because social classes were united in their political discontent and because ideas of enlightenment equality had begun to creep into the peninsula, political discontent, for the first time, would focus around the issue of constitutional government. Noted political historian John A. Davis encapsulated this paradigm shift when he wrote, "the call for political representation voiced the heterogeneous discontents of the aristocrats resentful at

¹⁶ Mack Smith *ibid* pg. 10

the loss of former privileges, as well as the aspirations of the emergent propertied and professional classes to acquire a public voice of their own.”¹⁷

Subordination to the French was instrumental in creating a political nationalism that transcended the parochialism that defined the peninsula prior to the era of foreign preponderance. Nationalism, of course was not born during this time period. There was a developing sense of shared cultural and historical identities. These shared identities however, more closely aligned with the regions and their city-state legacies rather than a conceptualization of Italy as a country. With the spread of French ideas about *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* coupled with new ideas about rationalized state administration, numerous Italian patriots began to advocate for a unified Italy on this model.

The centralized model would be implemented by Napoleon as he moved throughout the peninsula. Despite variances in implementation, by 1810 Napoleon dominated the entire peninsula. Only Sicily and Sardinia remained under their old monarchs. But Napoleon’s aims were not the establishment of a unified Italy. Consolidation meant French domination in order to exploit resources and eventually use this domination as a lever in negotiations with Austria. Italy served as a reservoir of men and *materiel* for Napoleon’s other European conquests. As his exploits struggled, demands became more severe leading to hostility towards his regime. In fact, by the time Napoleon’s Russian campaign began to fail, Italy was full of secret societies advocating for independence and a liberal constitution. These secret organizations posed no real threat to the Napoleonic order, however, nor were they in a position to establish Italian

¹⁷ Davis, John A. 2000. *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900* (Short Oxford History of Italy) Oxford University Press. pg. 8

unification.¹⁸ Napoleonic rule would come to an end in October 1813 when Austria invaded the kingdom of Italy. The Austrians entered Milan and restored their domination over northern Italy. They also reestablished the old dynasties in central and northern Italy. The centralized administrative order under Napoleonic rule was at its end.

The experience of two decades of French dominance left significant political legacies. First, the experience consolidated the ten pre-Napoleonic regional states into three. Within each of these areas there were tremendous differences in language, economic production, politics, and social characteristics but for the first time, they all came under a unified code of law, a uniform system of conscription and taxation, and one system of administration. Because this system required educated workers, it resulted in an amalgamation of old landed nobility and a new wealthy bourgeoisie that would serve as Italy's ruling elite throughout the nineteenth century. The experience also inspired new political activism in which fresh ideas and plans for unity and independence emerged based on a strong central state.

However, following Napoleon's domination, The Restoration years also represented an attempt to turn back the clock to the models of political life done in by his occupation. Everywhere the aristocracy regained their power and privilege. The Viennese returned to northern Italy, Lombardy in particular. Venice was taken back by Austria as a province while Austria reestablished its dominance over Tuscany. The Bourbons recaptured the Kingdom of Naples. The three political entities created by Napoleonic rule were broken into eight kingdoms in the process of re-establishing the aristocratic class. The only one which was independent, and even that independence was not wholly

¹⁸ Grab, Alexander, "The age of Restoration" in Davis, John A. 2000. *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900* (Short Oxford History of Italy)Oxford University Press.

confined to an Italian power, was Piedmont. Politically, it seemed as if the progress made a few years earlier had vanished.

The Risorgimento and the Idea of Unification

Even if power arrangements reverted to pre-Napoleonic forms, the changes of the previous decades had a profound impact on the other forms of social life. Ideas of liberty and justice did not disappear. In fact they found new footing in revolutionary individuals and statesmen advocating political deliverance from the reestablished political order. These ideas, rather than situated locally, were expressed in nationalistic terms. Italy was becoming conceived of politically as concept of a nation rather than solely a geographical entity. Nowhere was this more clear than in culture. Alessandro Manzoni, between 1825 and 1827, published *I Promessi Sposi* (The Betrothed) arguably the most influential novel ever written in Italian. In depicting life in Northern Italy in 1628 when the Spanish oppressively controlled the region, Manzoni's masterpiece is seen as a thinly veiled attack on the Austrian rule presiding over the same region during the years of the book's publication. Other famous works were not quite so veiled. The poems of Giacomo Leopardi were confiscated by Austrian and Piedmontese censorship authorities because they feared the patriotic messages would incite the populace into revolt.¹⁹ Culture became imbued with a sense of *Italianità*, fanning the growing flames of Italian nationalism. Even if this literature preferred historical legends of past greatness to the contemporary events occurring around them, these works helped shape the consciousness of Italy's past, present, and future during this period of history. As Mack Smith put it, "National

¹⁹ Carsaniga, Giovanni, "The Age of Romanticism" in Brand, C. P., and Lino. Pertile. 1997. *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature*. Rev. ed. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press.

consciousness would never have become practically effective without visionaries and evangelists to implant it by degrees in the minds of the few people who had the strength, the skill, and the courage to act.”²⁰

If culture can account for elements of the political consciousness of the times, economic changes had a structural impact on Italian efforts of national unification. Centralization had profound economic effects, many of which the reestablishment of the old order was not commensurate. Centralization, with its unified code of law, a uniform system of taxation, standard currency, and uniform weights and measures, helped give rise to a new commercial middle class. These bourgeois individuals saw increased prosperity as the primacy of Mediterranean trade routes was reestablished over the span of these decades. These new economic actors would provide a social base for consistently intensifying push towards unification. For them, centralization under Napoleon was good for business. When this period concluded and political centralization diminished, patterns of business also changed. Each of the separate states saw tariff barriers reintroduced along with the reestablishment of individual systems of coinage and measurement. Calls for centralization thus signaled a return to a system of administration that allowed for less burdensome transactions.

As these ideas gained traction, the cause for unification needed someone or a group of people to translate these ideas into action. Undoubtedly, the greatest influence on revolutionary action was Giuseppe Mazzini. Mazzini, born in Genoa in 1805 and by age 26 he was exiled from Genoa, Switzerland, and France in quick succession. He made his way to London where he formed numerous underground societies and publications aimed at convincing people that Italy could be united through the efforts of the common

²⁰ Mack Smith op cit. pg. 11

people. His nationalistic writings based on an egalitarian view of human nature proved impossibly utopian but that did not stop many Italians, feeling disillusionment under restrictive norms, from taking his messages to heart. Even if they were not directly influenced by Mazzini's calls—he would become much more well known in Italy posthumously—numerous Italians participated, often at the cost of their lives, in insurrections across the peninsula.²¹

These revolts peaked in January 1848 when revolts broke out in Palermo, Sicily. These revolts forced the Bourbon King Ferdinand to relinquish elements of his absolutist rule and to grant representative institutions to both Sicily and Naples. When similar revolts erupted in Paris that February, King Leopold reduced absolute rule of Tuscany. Pope Pius IX did the same for the Papal States. Perhaps the most significant effect of the revolts combined with liberal activism throughout Italy during the rapidly approaching years of the *Risorgimento* was to convince King Charles Albert of Piedmont to grant liberal constitutional rights with the *Statuto* of March 4th, 1848. The *Statuto* would form the basis of the liberal constitution that emerged out of the *Risorgimento* when the new constitution literally started where the *Statuto* left off. This hybrid would remain the basic law of Italy until it was replaced with the reconstruction constitution in 1946.²²

This period of social unrest had a major effect on the constitutional design that would emerge after the *Risorgimento* in that the period closed off many of the alternate forms of constitutional arrangement available to proponents of unification. The increased *Italianità* sweeping the nation as well as institutional memory of central administration stemming from the Napoleonic period certainly made centralization an attractive and

²¹ For more on Mazzini see Mack Smith, Denis. 1994. *Mazzini*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

²² Mack Smith op cit. pg. 27

popular choice. But centralization was far from the only model available to proponents of Italian unification. Numerous federal models as well as monarchical arrangements found expression in popular commentary as well as the revolts themselves. The years leading up to national unification were flush with ideas and models for Italy's constitutional arrangements.

The revolts proved short lived and by 1849 the uprisings had collapsed or been crushed by the monarchy. The lack of a coherent vision for unification further undercut these efforts. After the failure of Italy's "first war for independence," absolute rule was reestablished in many areas. This collapse lent support to the idea that liberation would come only through a national effort. The collapse of these scattered revolts "ended neo-Guelph programs for Italian federation under the Papacy and greatly weakened any claims for federalism."²³ The one area that survived this rapid collapse was Piedmont. Piedmont maintained its status as a parliamentary monarchy. Piedmont had kept its independence because of the rivalries of France, Spain, and Austria.²⁴ Because Piedmont maintained its status, it "carried with it an implicit acceptance of its system of centralized government and administration as the model of government for all of Italy."²⁵ Due to its relative independence, Piedmont was able to participate in international affairs. In 1855, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, the most effective politician of the Risorgimento, sent the Piedmontese army to Crimea to fight the Russians but since Russia remained a powerful check against the Austrians who controlled Lombardy, the region neighboring Piedmont, Cavour offered an alliance. At the Paris peace conference in 1856, Cavour

²³ Grew, Raymond, 1963. *A Sterner Plan for Italian Unity: The Italian National Society in the Risorgimento*. Princeton: Princeton University Press pg. 5

²⁴ Mack Smith op cit. pg. 18

²⁵ Sabetti, Filippo,, 2000. *The Search for Good Government : Understanding the Paradox of Italian Democracy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. pg. 40

publically asserted that Piedmont had as much right to interfere in the other regions of Italy as did foreign powers.²⁶ These events set the stage for the beginnings of Italian unification that would occur in the following years.

Cavour's move grabbed the attention of other foreign powers that continuously made claims on Italian regions. Until 1848, the Austrian presence in Italy had maintained a fragile peace within the peninsula but by the end of 1849 it had become a threat to that peace.²⁷ France had regained its strength with the rise of Louis Napoleon and with this newfound strength sought to regain its influence in Italy. Cavour's statements at the Paris peace conference opened the opportunity to pursue this plan. 1859 saw the outbreak of the Franco-Piedmontese war against Austria. This war led to the annexation of the long-coveted Lombardy to Piedmont. Meanwhile, uprisings in central Italy removed the old aristocracy which made the acquisition of the central regions by Piedmont more achievable. Using the same diplomatic strategy of exploiting international rivalries, Cavour folded these regions under Piedmontese authority shortly after.

This left out the South, which continued to be a land of revolts against authoritarianism. But because the regions of the south, the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, had been artificially fused together under Bourbon rule into the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, internal rivalries boiled underneath the surface of Bourbon rule. Sicilian liberals wished to end absolutist rule and to free Sicily from the "Yoke of Naples" a historical seat of Bourbon power. Neapolitan liberals wished to end absolutist rule without breaking the territorial unity of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.²⁸ For this reason, Southern liberals, often large landowners, had little involvement in pan-Italian

²⁶ Mack Smith op cit. pg. 19

²⁷ Sabetti op cit. pg. 41

²⁸ Sabetti ibid pg 33

unification. The south became part of unified Italy through force. In April 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi precipitated a popular revolt against the Bourbon regime. This revolt was condensed into an offensive when in May Garibaldi landed a “thousand men” at the Sicilian town of Marsala.

Cavour was hesitant to support the insurrection for fear of undermining the predominance of Piedmont and its French support. He had recently ceded the Northeastern provinces of Piedmont—Savoy and Nice—to France in exchange for autonomy to pursue the annexations of central Italy. In order to avoid a spiraling out of control at the hands of the revolutionaries, Cavour orchestrated uprisings in the Papal regions of the Marches and Umbria as a pretext for invasions. He later justified this invasion into Papal lands as a way of preventing the anticlerical Garibaldi from seizing control of Rome.²⁹ By controlling these lands, Cavour was also able to force Garibaldi to hand over Naples and Sicily at the threat of civil war. Meanwhile, Cavour held plebiscites to regularize these acquisitions and by the time parliament met in the 1861, the Italian kingdom could be officially declared. Only Rome, still controlled by the French, and Venice, Trentino, and Trieste, controlled by Austria, remained outside of unified Italy.

The nationalist Italian government made acquiring these areas a key priority. Republican revolutionaries in the spirit of Garibaldi and Mazzini continued their nationalistic, and often intense anti-clerical calls for a “march on Rome” to complete the unification process. Although these radicals would have preferred a glorious seizure of these lands, both Rome and Venice would become part of Italy through geopolitical developments rather than nationalistic conquest. North of Italy, Prussia was gaining strength and by 1866 was at war with Austria. Italy was put in the difficult position

²⁹ Mack Smith op. cit pg. 24

because she formed an Alliance with Otto von Bismark in Prussia with the agreement that the Venetia would be ceded to Italy. The King, Vittorio Emanuele II, still very much in the mindset of pre-liberal aristocratic geopolitical negation, not to mention married to an Austrian archduchess, insisted that Italy negotiate with Austria rather than participate in the Germanic expansion. Austria complicated the situation hopelessly when she offered the Venetia in exchange for Italian non-intervention. Italy had already formed an alliance with Prussia at this point, and the Prime Minister, General Alfonso Lamarmora insisted that Italy remain faithful to the agreement—a decision that was supported by the Republican radicals uneasy of royal power. Bartering failed and war broke out. Italy performed poorly in the conflict that ensued, but Prussia won several key battles in the summer. Recognizing their success, the Prussians were ready to end the conflict as their expansionist goals were met and Bismarck recognized the value of a friendship with Austria and the hegemonic control it created in much of central Europe. During the peace talks it was agreed that Austria should surrender the Venetia but to France because Austria agreed to cede Venetia to Napoleon III in exchange for non-intervention in the War after that plan had failed with Italy. This decision horrified the Italians but because of Austria's strengthened position they were forced to agree. France ceded the Venetia to Italy that October in recognition of their earlier annexation of Nice and Savoy.³⁰

Italy's poor performance in the 1866 Austro-Prussian conflict and Venice's acquisition-by-gift ran counter to nationalist visions of Italian strength and agency; the acquisition of Rome would represent another failed incorporation of conquest. Rome was an ideal for radical nationalists like Garibaldi and Mazzini. Not only was it the historical seat of the classical empire but seizing Rome from the pope would represent a major

³⁰ Mack Smith *ibid* pg. 72-77

victory for revolutionary anti-clericalism. Many of the new Italian politicians, even if they did not follow the anti-clericalism of Garibaldi and Mazzini to its core, supported ending Catholicism's temporal power because it clashed with the new secular laws established under unification.³¹ Since it was the last area outside of unified Italy and maintained a revolutionary presence, many Italian politicians hoped that Rome would rise on its own accord and annex itself to Italy formalized with a plebiscite. This approach would also help avoid tricky geopolitical concerns about the Italian state moving into the temporal realm of the Catholic Church, especially since it was technically still under the control of the French garrison. This stagnation did not placate the revolutionaries still smacking of Venice's illustrious acquisition. In the summer of 1867, Garibaldi gathered a band of revolutionary volunteers and assembled on the papal frontier. It would seem if the glorious march on Rome was going to finally occur. Hesitant of provoking a conflict especially since the liberal presence in Rome did not make an emphatic statement in support or in opposition to these developments, the government had Garibaldi arrested and sent home. He was not put under strict control and by September had returned and was commanding his band of volunteers to advance. Meanwhile Napoleon III, cognizant of French Catholic public opinion sent troops back to Rome to stop the impending invasion. Vittorio Emanuele sided with Napoleon and marched Italian troops against Garibaldi as well. Garibaldi's volunteers were defeated and Rome remained in French hands. It wasn't until 1870 with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War that Rome's control would change hands. Needing troops for his Northern conquests, Napoleon III removed the French troops from the garrison in Rome. Many radicals urged taking the

³¹ Kertzer, David, "Religion and Society, 1789-1892" Davis, John A. 2000. *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900* (Short Oxford History of Italy)Oxford University Press.

opportunity to seize Rome without a major conflict. Such a seizure would have bolstered nationalism. Vittorio Emanuele still supported the French and thought, by backing them, Italy could be victorious in yet another European war. However when Napoleon suffered crippling defeats at the hands of the Prussians in September 1870, Italy was forced to change her stance—not that it was difficult as many liberal politicians supported the ousting of both French and non-Secular authority within the peninsula. The radicals hinted at revolution if the opportunity was not seized and the leftists threatened to leave parliament altogether. Vittorio Emanuele acquiesced and attacked the Eternal City on September 20th, 1870.³²

The form in which Italy's unification occurred left a specific set of political legacies. Historian Christopher Duggan looking northward to the German unification which occurred around the same time asks: “the completion of Italian unity occurred against the backdrop of the dramatic unification of Germany: why could Italy not have affirmed itself in such emphatic style?”³³ Although both had staunch adherents to a nationalistic form of unification, the Prussian monarchy remained firm in its commitment to nationalistic principles whereas in the Italian case centralized national rule was one of a handful of competing visions for the country's future. And when Italy pursued its plans for national autonomy it had to rely on the successes of both French and Prussian expansionist plans, most notably in 1859, 1866, and 1870. Geopolitical developments aided Italian efforts for unification as the country tended to fare poorly on its own. A major consequence of this impotence was a diminished sense of nationalism.

Revolutionary patriots and their spokesmen like Mazzini and Garibaldi continuously

³² Mack Smith op. cit. 85-89

³³ Duggan, Christopher, “Politics in the Era of Depretis and Crispi 1870-96” in Davis, John A. 2000. *Italy in the Nineteenth Century: 1796-1900* (Short Oxford History of Italy)Oxford University Press. pg. 155

championed Italy's potentiality of breaking through first foreign domination and then geopolitical second-class status but Italians remained less convinced. In fact, Garibaldi looking back on his experiences leading a multitude of patriotic uprisings lamented that Italians failed to back a united Italian nationalism and when they were stirred into revolutionary activity it was motivated by social and regional concerns.³⁴

This failed nationalism was exacerbated by the differences in interests motivating the wars of the *Risorgimento*. Italy's focus on international politics as a tool to be used for unification goals left the vast majority of the population outside of the concern of the government. Preoccupied by regional concerns and grievances, the majority of the population had little in common with the governing upper classes that pushed for independence from Austria, France, and Spain. It is true that these powers were responsible for many of the problems suffered by the populations but the degree of separation between the governing class and the governed precluded a consciousness of this fact. The vast majority of the population saw the roots of their principle problems as the landowners and a distant hostile government regardless of the form that government took. These populations, because they were rooted in regional differences even to the point of linguistic differences, had even less in common with the patriotic intellectuals that championed the patriotic myths as a justification for national liberation. Even when the Italian state was trying to forge itself it created a separation between itself and the population of citizens that it was supposed to encapsulate. In fact, the early years of the republic, as the unification conquests show, were dedicated to forming a nation-state that would hold together a group of nationalistic, abstract citizens. Local particularities were precisely the nemesis, produced by centuries of autonomy, which the new liberal

³⁴ Mack Smith op cit. pg. 77

nationalism sought to overcome. Through international conflict and centralized administration practices, *Risorgimento* patriots sought to form a liberal nation composed of patriotic citizens. And in so doing set the foundations for the divide between the population and those who were to govern them in addition to setting in motion a process of abstracting local particularities in favor of a unity of nationalism.

Liberal Italy and the Crisis of Legitimacy

This separation between the governors and governed found explicit representation in domestic politics in the years following the *Risorgimento*. On March 23, 1865 the legislature passed the Law of Administrative Unification in which the central government was established as the sole locus of authority to use of force in the organization of society. All aspects of public goods and services were to be folded into a centralized and overarching public administration. Locally elected officials and professional government workers were to be hierarchically ordered under the direction of the department heads at the center. Filippo Sabetti sheds a little light on the motivation for this law. He writes:

the creators of the Italian state anticipated that the forced creation of unity through administrative measures under common parliament, backed by a national army, would produce both good policies and good individuals by forging the diverse communities of peoples into one strong and great self-governing nation, insuring a uniform provision of public services, and removing once and for all the spectre of foreign intervention in Italian affairs.³⁵

The state itself became a mechanism for producing the ideal liberal Italian society.

Foreign domination proved a hindrance to this plan which led to the desire to foster nationalism. The Pope's temporal power was also a deterrent to the secular element of this liberal ideal. But once these obstacles were tackled, the liberal state was left only with internal problems but a lack of a common enemy. Lawmakers tackled this problem

³⁵ Sabetti op. cit. pg. 49

by attempting to forge the diverse communities occupying the peninsula into a common Italian identity. Hence Massimo D'Azeglio's oft quoted joke: "We have made Italy; now we must make Italians."³⁶ Much of the governing activity that was accomplished in the decades following unification would take "making Italians" as its primary goal.

Although this sentiment was applied to the whole peninsula, the South was the region that most concerned governing elites and provides a lens through which this form of governance can be starkly illustrated. Even pre-*Risorgimento*, political elites worried about the inclusion of the primarily agrarian and undeveloped south. The differences in development between the regions were thought to be a threat to the revolutionary patriot's plan for a bourgeois and liberal Italy. In short, they were a threat to the idea of unity that had propelled the *Risorgimento*. One prominent example is Carlo Cattaneo, who in light of these regional differences, advocated for a more federal arrangement of power. Cattaneo, as Nelson Moe tells us through a close reading of a few of his early texts, turns his attention to the South to show the South lacked characteristic features of bourgeois civilization that existed in the North. Moe quotes a passage from a review of a work Cattaneo completed on the economic situation of Naples:

The effects of the lottery in the kingdom are more pernicious than any other country, because those peoples have for centuries been under the yoke of an arbitrary and prohibitive system, enemy of all industry and are extremely inclined to trust in fortune more than in their own assiduous labors and savings.³⁷

Here Cattaneo invokes two of the principle elements of what would become known as *La Questione Meridionale* or the Southern Question, namely that Southerners, as a result of living under exploitive and arbitrary rule, lack the industrious and frugal habits of the

³⁶ D'Azeglio was the Prime Minister of Sardinia and a contemporary of Cavour during the *Risorgimento*

³⁷ Cattaneo, Carlo "Stato delle Finanze 1836", pg 108 Quoted in Moe, Nelson,, 2002. *The View from Vesuvius : Italian Culture and the Southern Question*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press., pg. 104

bourgeois North. The South is portrayed here as the opposite of the liberal philosophy that would come to dominate Risorgimento idealism over the next decades.

This view would be further developed as unification approached and bourgeoisification of Italian society developed. Cattaneo addressed the Southern question in the prominent journal *Rivista Europa* (Journal of Europe). *Rivista Europa*, sought to promote Italian civilization in the context of contemporary Europe. It became a bastion of progressive liberal thinking and served as an outlet for views on a changing Italy. Cattaneo's essay in *Rivista* is a summary and analysis of geographical reports on the regions of Italy in 1845. His attention is directed mainly toward the reports on the Northern regions—this in and of itself is evidence of the marginal position of the South in the thinking of Northern elites—but he does analyze Neapolitan Matteo De Augustinis's report on the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In this summary Cattaneo lambasts the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies for being an area of “immense poverty and rudeness.” They “lack local industries” and must migrate to find work. They return “tattered, exhausted, infected with fatal diseases” These masses “go barefoot and half naked, sleep outdoors or in filthy, fetid shelters. Because of the poor state of roads, many loads that could be carted are carried on their backs or heads: the head of a woman or man equal to the back of a donkey... these miseries are unfortunately a disgrace to Italian agriculture.”³⁸ Portrayed as the opposite of bourgeois civilization The South is seen as a disgrace to a nation trying to define and distinguish itself as modern and fit itself into a cosmopolitan Europe. The South is seen as locked in the agrarian systems of the past, lacking signs of modernity like infrastructure and localized commerce.

³⁸ Cattaneo, Carlo. *Annuario Geografico Italiano* 1845, pg 88, Quoted in Moe *ibid*, pg. 108

This sentiment would continue because not only did the south exist in a state of relative poverty, it also contained deep-seated patterns of violence that northern lawmakers viewed as a threat to the new state. Organized crime and banditry alike were constant issues as were organized peasant revolts against landholders. The government responded to all of these issues with the attempt to provide security in the form of a military clampdown. Hesitant to spend state resources on constructing infrastructure necessary for modernization because of a desire to balance Italy's finances after the accumulation of debts during the military campaigns of the *Risorgimento*, the liberals in power opted to instill order rather than let it build on its own. They instituted martial law through the passage of the Pica Act in 1863 as an attempt to control the rampant highway banditry sweeping the South.³⁹ Forces mobilized to impose order and shortly after the passage of the act, historians estimate that nearly 120,000 soldiers—half the national army—gathered in the south.⁴⁰ These forces crushed uprisings and banditry, but at enormous cost. Not only did the use of force accentuate regional differences as southerners saw themselves as conquered, but national forces also suffered deep losses. In fact, more Italian soldiers died from malaria and conflicts with bandits and peasants in the pacification of the south than in all of the wars of the *Risorgimento*. Thus, the pacification of the South presents a stark picture of the Italian state's effort to forge a unified structure of administration based on a liberal model at the expense of local particularities.

Liberal preoccupation with the finances of the country also profoundly shaped the state-society relations at this time. After unification, the desire to cement national

³⁹ Mack Smith op. cit pg. 71

⁴⁰ Mack Smith ibid pg. 71

unity had obscured efforts toward tight fiscal control. But as the 1870s set in, these efforts became a priority. Banditry and uprisings had been repressed and many church lands had been seized and redistributed by this time. Taxation became a primary issue. These taxes tended to focus on production thus they hit the agrarian areas of Italy particularly hard. And because these funds were funneled into the central administration, local government agencies, the agencies responsible for collection, began to go bankrupt. The government responded by attempting to redistribute land taxes which served to infuriate the larger landowners. These developments led to a wave of opposition deputies being elected in 1874 reducing the right's majority to about 40 deputies.⁴¹ And in 1876, the right lost their majority entirely which led to the resignation of the prime minister and the institution of a new one, Agostino Depretis.

Depretis and the left also championed the vision of a unified, liberal nation of Italy but for them the efforts of the right did not live up to liberal principles. The left sought decentralization and an expansion of the franchise. These goals however were stifled by tensions in society during this time period. The economic situation was worsening yet taxation practices remained unchanged. The left wanted to bring more social groups into the government though most politicians on both the left and the right feared the rising numbers of both reactionaries and radicals, particularly as the state was still fragile. The fragility of the state became even more pronounced as the liberal ideal towards which Italy aspired lost degrees of legitimacy due to the state's governance practices. The taming of the south, high taxation, unbalanced budgets, a limited electorate, and other transgressions on individual rights did not bode well for Italian

⁴¹ Duggan, Christopher op cit. pg. 159

liberalism. Furthermore, these problems, as many reformers like Sydney Sonnino argued, were actually decreasing the national political education of the populace.⁴²

In light of these contradictions, the central government began to solidify itself as a system and not just an abstract idea of unified nationhood. Achieving stability would require the forging of governing blocs—*trasformismo*—which produced centrist coalitions to strengthen state institutions through ideological moderation. Rather than legitimating power through traditional democratic means like the consent of the governed, *trasformismo* politics use power to obtain or augment consent.⁴³ The logic went that if the governing institutions at the top remained stable, stability would be easier to maintain throughout the country. But because the expansion of this practice was occurring at the same time a debate about the representativeness of the government was raging, *trasformismo* became synonymous with political opportunism and corruption. As Christopher Duggan wrote, “*trasformismo* seemed a further nail in the coffin of parliament’s credibility: principles and programs sacrificed on the altar of expediency.”⁴⁴

These developments eroded the patriotism that the revolutionaries of unified Italy championed. Recognizing this attrition, the state attempted to re-bolster nationalism. The *Risorgimento* was glorified as a grand unification moment, its patriots turned into national icons. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, foreign policy became a means of generating patriotism. Francesco Crispi, the man who followed Depretis after his death in July 1887, linked war and patriotism, military service and citizenship but inserted Italy into disastrous colonial exploits culminating in the humiliating defeat in which 5000 Italian troops were massacred outside of Adua, Ethiopia in 1896.

⁴² Mack Smith op cit. pg. 99

⁴³ Sabbatucci, Giovanni, 2003, *Il Trasformismo come Sistema*, Laterza:Roma

⁴⁴ Duggan, Christopher op cit. pg. 165

These developments inched Italy toward a massive legitimacy crisis that called the governmental structures themselves into question. Centralized governance and a lack of political nationalism left the government without civic traditions to draw on and a political liberalism that was based more on the practice of government rather than an ideological base. A nationalized liberalism was the force behind the *Risorgimento* and following that unification up until the birth of Fascism was essentially synonymous with national politics. Despite its popularity, Liberalism eventually failed because of the lack of a thoroughgoing bourgeois revolution. Rather than strong and hegemonic, the bourgeois revolution was weak and lacking mass legitimation. The substantive failure of Liberalism is best understood as an accumulation of crises brought on by this non-hegemonic system of contradictions, defined by competing interests scrambling to a transformist compromise, operating within the Italian political and social structure. The accumulation of crises led to collapse because the Liberal State could not summon the necessary acumen to deal with the new societal problems; the old Liberal order was an antiquated structure operating over an unevenly modernizing nation. This contradiction and subsequent inability to adapt led to a state ripe for mobilization by any new order promising peace and stability.

The lack of a thoroughgoing bourgeois revolution caused this main structural failure in pre-fascist Liberal government. Here Barrington Moore's conception of a lack of a thoroughgoing bourgeois revolution—"revolution from above"—is key. Moore claimed that the lack of popular revolutionary upheaval, such as in France, or the application of significant popular pressure put on the ruling aristocracy, as in England,

lent itself to the eventual takeover by authoritarian regimes.⁴⁵ Furthermore, in the absence of popular pressure, revolutionary or otherwise, the aristocracy was free to consolidate power over the masses. The aristocracy exercised its influence and was able to rule in the face of Liberal and democratic forces. Operating as a controlling force over many sectors of society, especially the major economic spheres like agriculture and industry, Moore's guiding aristocracy is defined by a reactionary and powerful elite that hijacked modernization and society for its own ends. Moore claimed: "the landed upper class will use a variety of political and social levers to hold down a labor force on the land and make a transition into commercial farming (post feudal capitalism) in this fashion. Combined with a substantial amount of industrial growth, the result is likely to be what we recognize as Fascism."⁴⁶ The masses cannot exist as a revolutionary force and are subjugated within this system as social change is imposed from above.

Here, it is essential to qualify Moore's formulation of "revolution from above" because Italy does not completely conform to this model. For Italy, the lack of a thoroughgoing revolution must be viewed as a form of bourgeois insufficiency rather than an authoritarian control of social adaptation. The Italian bourgeoisie was not forced to become revolutionary. The main source of bourgeois revolutionary strength is the call to end feudalism and enter a modern capitalist and Liberal system. Feudalism did not have to be overturned by the bourgeoisie in Italy. Decades earlier, Napoleon had eliminated that structure with his Kingdom of Italy which established a system of codified laws and social relations. Also, the bourgeoisie had no interest in upsetting the

⁴⁵ Moore, Barrington. 1966. *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: lord and peasant in the making of the modern world*. Boston: Beacon Press. pg. 433

⁴⁶ Moore, *ibid* pg. 420

social order. Significant portions of the bourgeoisie were landowners themselves and often faced no real political threats. In Italy, feudalism was done in by an outside force rather than a politically powerful bourgeois revolution and the bourgeoisie was content with the existing semi-modern social order.

Two significant problems arise from this bourgeois insufficiency. First, the bourgeois class is unable to mobilize and impose a social program on the country. Second, a conservative social structure incapable of dealing with a modern industrial society is established. Lack of a significant bourgeois Liberal revolution created a weak Liberal State with more of its concerns placed on preservation and a state without the political resources to exert ideological control. These two problems would underlie the major challenges the Italian state faced during the lead up to Fascism.

Although the principles of governance reflected the liberal ideal of equal representation and responsive government, late nineteenth and early twentieth century Italy can be described not by who was included but who was excluded despite its insistence on creating a national identity that held together a homogenized swath of abstract citizens. To complicate this picture, it is important to keep in mind that Italy began to experience rapid economic growth beginning in the mid-1890s with the uptick of industrialization. In fact, before the economic crisis of 1907, industrial production grew about 7 percent annually. In the early 1900s, Italy, particularly the industrializing North was not suffering. This positive change did not come on its own; it was encouraged by state through channeling funds to industry. Adrian Lyttelton points out that the difficulties of organizing private capital and the need to modernize infrastructures made the increased intervention of the state indispensable for sustaining growth and growing a modern,

diversified industrial economy.⁴⁷ This intervention helped build some of Italy's largest firms, many still visible today. Workers also benefited in that national growth made it more and more difficult to justify keeping a lid on social conflict. Giovanni Giolitti, a political veteran and Italy's prime minister at this time, allowed the labor movements important advances. The effects were drastic. Real wages of industrial workers rose by nearly 40 percent between 1900 and 1913.⁴⁸ The liquid funds often channeled through the state fueled growth in the short term but were to bring unexpected problems in the future particularly as the growth in Italy slowed due to the introduction of foreign goods.

Despite their advances, unemployment and poverty remained major issues especially in the rural areas. Many landless laborers still experienced brutal poverty and domination from landholding elites. Internal immigration helped alleviate some of this pressure but by and large the problems of the rural areas remained unsolved. When the situation became unbearable, many of the landless laborers responded in the same way they had always done, by rioting. Some on the left began to organize these landless laborers even though the left gave most of its attention to industrial workers. An example, the Po valley, which stretches through Emilia Romagna, was a major area of leftwing activity in which the socialists organized peasants to make claims on land rights. Following these organizations, land holders and employers in agriculture began to pushback, questioning whether or not the liberal state could adequately control this social tension. In fact, many landholders supported the oftentimes draconian state response in which the authorities, usually the *carabinieri*, would shoot rioters in order to restore order. This authoritarian

⁴⁷ Lyttelton, Adrian *Liberal and Fascist Italy* Oxford University Press, 2002, pg. 1

⁴⁸ Lyttelton, *Ibid*, pg. 2

mentality only increased with the rise of agrarian fascism as a response to increasing peasant riots.⁴⁹

At the same time, industrialists and the emerging capitalist classes were also concerned about labor's increasing gains and wondered if social conflict could be contained by democratic state structures. Italian industrialists, experiencing rapid growth in new Italian industries, developed a productivist and liberal yet technocratic ideology that they would remain committed to throughout the prewar growth period, including through the social instability of the immediate pre and post-World War I moments, fascism, and the post-fascist reconstruction period.⁵⁰ Even industrialists from aristocratic lines exhibited little reactionary tendencies to Italy's modernization because they had integrated themselves into capitalistic market relations.⁵¹

Governance was also changing. The liberal state failed to establish a mass base, let alone establish a national political organization. Liberalism's advocates came from landholders and an expanding bourgeoisie, yet these classes did not represent the primarily agrarian country. But other entities were developing mass bases of consensus with important political effects. As the socialists became stronger politically and the Catholics formed their party, *Partito Popolare*, to assert themselves into the debate, the liberals became increasingly dependent on securing parliamentary support. To find it, they looked to Southern politicians and their local clientele networks. By employing a mix of patronage and intervention through the police and prefects, the liberals were able to build political support. Antonio Gramsci and other intellectuals became critical of this

⁴⁹ Corner, Paul. 2002. "The Road to Fascism: An Italian Sonderweg?" *Contemporary European History* 11 (2): 273-295.

⁵⁰ Adler, Franklin Hugh. 2002. *Italian Industrialists from Liberalism to Fascism : The Political Development of the Industrial Bourgeoisie, 1906-34*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pg X

⁵¹ Adler, *ibid*, pg. 3

process because it papered over real problems in southern society and privileged both the northern bourgeois order and the southern landowners. Gramsci even coined a term to describe this alliance, *blocco storico* (historic bloc). This bloc was defined as the alliance of large landowners and northern industry. This bloc was often expressed in public policy addressing Italy's changing economy.

Nadia Urbanti provides a brief historical sketch of the public policy occurring at the time of these writings. She reports that the Italian government legislated tariff policies protecting Northern industries, primarily steel and textile production, and Southern wheat from foreign competition.⁵² Both Northern industrialists and Southern landowners supported the policy because it instituted a degree of economic protection previously lacking across these large and rapidly growing industries. These policy decisions targeted the benefits to elites and their patronage networks. They did not address the crippling poverty and brutal working conditions of the landless peasants. These people and their grievances would prove to be an explosive problem when conditions worsened because of the First World War and the importation of cheaper American and Russian grain throughout Europe and Italy.⁵³

These problems were never addressed because they lay beyond the scope of the Italian government's mode of operation. This patronage politics was a defining feature of Italy's politics during this time period. Unified Italy was a product of elites and the system that they constructed was placed over all of the social, economic, and political problems occupying the country. Rather than deal with these problems directly because

⁵² Urbanti, Nadia "How critical was De Martino's "Critical ethnocentrism" in southern Italy?" in Schneider, Jane. 1998. *Italy's "Southern question": orientalism in one country*. Oxford: Berg. See also Mack Smith, Denis. 1997. *Italy: a modern history*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press pg. 142-146

⁵³ De Cecco, Marcello "The Economy from Liberalism to Fascism" in Lyttelton, Adrian *Liberal and Fascist Italy* Oxford University Press, 2002

that often meant compromising one's interests like the ones discussed above, elite governance characterized Italy's liberal government. For example, post *Risorgimento*, the makeup of the Parliament began to shift but it did not shift in a more democratic direction. As noted, initially it was dominated by strong regional interests. These interests often had strong ties to agriculture or land ownership and gave support to Gramsci's *Blocco Storico*. Early Parliament was defined by a homogenous constellation of Liberal, often noble, landowners. This began to change with the development of the *Sinistra Storica*, or historical left, and industrialization. Landowners were eased out by a younger crowd, which as Paolo Farneti points out, was composed mostly of lawyers and other professionals.⁵⁴ Society was changing; parliament was not. These demographic characteristics of Italy's government meant that Italian Parliament was composed of who were not representative of the Italian people as a whole and operated through political brokering.

This political brokering was the principle contradiction of democracy in the Liberal State. Known as *trasformismo*, this system operates as an alternative to the formation of traditional political entities like parties and interest groups. Political actors, most often the prime minister, would use local prefects and discretionary means to doctor political activity by "making elections" and "manufacturing majorities." *Trasformismo* worked because the Liberal system was not propped up on major ideologies claimed by self-contained political entities like mass parties of diverse interests. In the initial stages of Liberal government, members came from similar backgrounds and shared similar interests. In fact, *trasformismo* proved quite effective at managing regional differences because favors and small concessions could be granted. Even when the composition of

⁵⁴ Farneti, Paolo, 1971, *Sistema politica e societa civile*. Turin. Giappichelli.

Parliament began to shift, Parliament relied on transformist politics. The lawyers and other professionals found themselves with a great deal of political autonomy and insulation. Also, the southern intellectuals and politicians that did not come from the traditional “liberal” classes participated in *trasformismo* for patronage reasons. Gaetano Salvemini, expressed the harshest criticism of Giolitti, particularly around the issue of Southern development, when he labeled him as *Il Ministro della Malavita* (the minister of the underworld) accusing him of using political backwardness and force for his own short-term political goals.⁵⁵ The vote was limited and Liberal proclivities still maintained a dominant presence amongst the politically enfranchised. Due to this autonomy, these professional politicians were separated from the political wishes of the masses and other forces and interests. Majorities could be brokered based on concessions and favors just as had occurred under the rule of the nobility. The Italian State was ruled through *combinazioni* (combinations) designed to produce unity rather than democratic ideals.

A major reason for the success of *trasformismo* is the historical lack of a hegemonic Liberal order; nothing forced the political system to adapt. The Italian Liberal State emerged in a time that was both pre-industrial and post-feudal. First, Napoleon had eliminated much of the formal feudal structure with his kingdom of Italy. Second, for decades following unification, industry and labor relations had yet to exist as a major oppositional force. The Italian Liberal state had no real organized enemies. Socialism had yet to develop a major following. That would come with Italy’s industrial modernization which would speed up toward the end of the 19th century. The only real ideological challenger to liberal rule was the Catholic Church, who in protest of the Cavour’s seizure of the Papal states, cut themselves out of the political system with Pius IX’s *Non Expedit*

⁵⁵ Salvemini, *il Ministro della Malavita*, in Salvemini, Gaetano. 1961. Opere. Milano: Feltrinelli.

which stated that all practicing Catholics were to refrain from participation in political activity.⁵⁶

Despite the focus on creating a liberal democracy, masses did not have a voice in the system because of strict electoral laws and major social questions like labor relations had yet to develop. These questions would develop as Italy modernized toward the end of the 19th century but were managed for a time by the state intervention into the economy. These questions, however, would prove explosive as the situation in economy worsened in the years leading up to the First World War. Save for a few examples, the peasants lacked a major organizational body thus their activity remained relegated to spontaneous violence. The Liberal State existed in an oppositional vacuum and was not forced to develop a dominant ideology. As long as *trasformismo* could mitigate differences and disputes between these relatively similar interests, the state was not forced to adapt.

For all of its uses, *trasformismo* could not solve political problems forever. Italy began to suffer under international and internal political pressure. As Italy modernized, contradictions within the Liberal state appeared, illuminated by old practices incapable of managing new demands and challenges. The first time these contradictions exploded was during the 1890s. Before, strife could be contained by placating the interests of ruling elites and the relative elites they represented. By this time, however, industrialization had ensured the creation of new social needs. Unable to have their demands met peacefully, worker and peasant organizations began to institute major programs of unrest. The government often responded with declarations of martial law, dissolutions of “subversive organizations,” arbitrary arrests, and assertions of exceptional powers, particularly in the South.

⁵⁶ Mack Smith, op cit. pg. 91

In addition to this social unrest, Italy was engaged in imperialistic activities at the urgings of the Nationalist party. A strong, united Italy had yet to be created and military conquest would provide the final push needed to achieve this goal. These expeditions often proved disastrous for Italy and resulted in frequent humiliation on part of the government. This humiliation reached its peak in the humiliating defeat at the hands of poorly armed indigenous Ethiopians at the Battle of Adwa in 1896. When this strain brought on by imperialist ambitions was combined with the onset of a severe economic downturn caused by cheap grain from Russia and America, Italy saw the overall value of its exports decline sharply.⁵⁷ This addition of economic strain added a sense of urgency to the rapidly escalating political crises occurring during this time period.

These crises were largely internal to Italy's political system. The Liberals in the years following unification failed to establish a widespread national political culture or national organization. Meanwhile, Catholics and Socialists began to gain a stronger footing in the government. For ideological reasons, these two parties rarely worked with each other. Because *trasformismo* operated through the forging of deals, it could not encapsulate the political conflict of these groups. This conflict and lack of compromise also spilled over into other disputes like labor rights as workers began to be socialized. Giolitti was willing to grant small concessions—his government preferred a policy of non-intervention in these struggles—in order to diffuse social conflict but as industrialization picked up and firms swelled, these demands began to strain the system of *trasformismo*. *Trasformismo* worked best with narrow interests and isolated political actors. It, as Antonio Gramsci noted, functioned on “molecular absorption” of individual

⁵⁷ De Cecco, Marcello *ibid* pg. 80

preferences.⁵⁸ Because these changes meant integrating the masses, Giolitti was trying to absorb entire oppositional groups like labor syndicates, nationalist organizations, and later, the Vatican. *Trasformismo* was extremely effective up until the point where those contradictions were too great to maintain compromise. As Gramsci put it, *trasformismo* worked up until the point its elasticity ended. And when that elasticity snapped, so did Liberal rule.⁵⁹

Giolitti stretched *trasformismo* to its limits as he tried to build consensus for policies. He wanted to replace the exclusive and repressive status quo by incorporating new social groups into the framework of the state. He had hoped that this inclusion would render the state more stable and less prone to disorder.⁶⁰ Giolitti appeased the Socialists through offering universal manhood suffrage and national health insurance. At the same time he tried to appease the Nationalist right by declaring war on Turkey. At this point the socialists went into strict opposition to Giolitti. Left with a barely appeased Nationalist right, Giolitti approached the Catholics by offering to drop support for the legalization of divorce. Despite his delicate position, he was able to emerge victorious after the 1913 election. Despite victory, Giolitti was left with a weak Conservative majority which was further eroded with the loss in support of his own laic party following the news of his involvement with the Catholics. Alberto Aquarone described this Giolittian experiment as an attempt to “govern from the center, with slight and always well controlled oscillations, now in the conservative direction, then in a progressive one, with the preoccupation of enlarging as much as possible, both in parliament and in the country, on the right and left, the consensus behind the institutions

⁵⁸ Gramsci, Antonio, 1955, *Il Risorgimento* Turin: Einaudi, pg. 157

⁵⁹ Gramsci, Antonio, *ibid*

⁶⁰ Corner, Paul, *ibid*

and the existing social order.”⁶¹ Indeed the logic of *trasformismo* would, as Giovanni Sabbatucci suggests, marginalize extremism while simultaneously blocking alternative policies let alone systems of organization.⁶²

This conservative majority also expressed hostility towards granting more concessions to labor leaving northern industrial workers the only group Giolitti was able to bring in. And that was temporary; he quickly lost support from the socialists with the pursuit of imperialist policies. Furthermore, agrarian peasants saw minimal gains as most distributive reforms were quickly defeated by the landholding interests that dominated the conservative majority. Giolitti’s grand idea of a conservative mass base of consensus not only failed ideologically, but because universal manhood suffrage was instituted as the last piece of his plan, virtually assured the lack of workable majorities and effective policies during tumultuous and divided times. Thus, Giolitti’s program, despite its intentions, accentuated the worst aspects of Italian Liberal politics. The entrenched interests coupled with a failure to institute basic reforms only added to what Paul Corner called the “division between ‘real Italy’ and ‘legal Italy’,” the division between the people and those who governed them.⁶³

Throughout the history of the Italian First Republic, the theme of a government attempting to solidify itself at the center meanwhile creating a national identity of a modern *Italianità* leads to a specific set of governance practices that when combined with the lack of a thoroughgoing bourgeois ideology behind the dominant liberalism precipitates a crisis of legitimacy in the Italian state. This crisis is precipitated because

⁶¹ Aquarone, Alberto, *L'Italia Giolittiana (1896-1915)*, Bologna: Il Mulino 1981. Quoted in Davis, John *ibid* pg. 4

⁶² Sabbatucci, Giovanni *op cit*.

⁶³ Corner, Paul, “State and Society 1901-1922” in Lyttelton, Adrian *Liberal and Fascist Italy* Oxford University Press, 2002

the liberal state responded to new issues that accompanied modernization with its particular *modus vivendi* of politics, *trasformismo*. This *modus vivendi* set in motion a process of ever increasing abstractions to produce modern and nationalist *Italianità*. The lack of bourgeois revolution during the *Risorgimento* and the establishment of Conservative political order ensured Liberalism never had to develop this hegemonic presence. In the early stages, the Liberal State had no enemies to defeat and no masses to persuade. The abstracted citizen did not have to confer legitimacy to liberal Italy because *trasformismo* as a system sustained itself over and above the particular communities it governed.

What issues the government did have to face came from competing interests within the government, interests easily absorbed by *trasformismo*. When these needs did develop as a result of Italy's long modernization, the State used force or turned to international solutions to enforce or engender consensus. Furthermore, the principle tool of Liberal political activity, *trasformismo*, thrived on contradictions. *Trasformismo* never solved problems because it fused contradictions for political gain. Coalitions were formed to produce the highest amount of agreement and to ensure the extremes, groups on both the left and the right who wanted to change the system of politics itself, remained on the edges of influence. The results of this coalition building were large alliances that contained within them many competing interests that would become enflamed the moment these social pressures demanded attention to the issues represented by the competing interests. Interests would fracture leaving politicians or small groups to pursue their atomized interests.

A consequence of this particular form of political modernization defined by a stunted nationalism, interest accommodation, and eventual scapegoating was Italian politics lacked institutional durability. The politicians often remained the same, or at least came from the same social class, but the ruling bodies they occupied did not last. This put even more pressure on party leaders like Depretis and Giolitti to use *trasformismo* which further accentuated the problem of an instable government distinct from its subjects. By the time Fascism emerged as a major contender, it represented a force of social unity and institutional stability in politics rather than a radically new ideology. This is evident in the fact Fascism adopted many of the same goals of liberalism such as fostering a sense of *Italianità* and pursuing labor reform.

Throughout these developments, it remained clear that governance in Italy operated on a level above the people. This was factually evident in the debates over the expansion of the franchise that reached its peak under Giolitti. But it is also evident in the logic of government itself. Legitimacy under this model flows from above; nationalism is to be instilled or at least fostered by the institutions the government forms and in so doing homogenizes the population especially at the level of political debates. *Trasformismo* has little interest in the needs of the people. The only possible exception to that would be if the people's interests were condensed and represented by a party or some other elite representative. The Italian left attempted to do this but were highly fractured themselves as they would continue to be after World War II. And even if interests could be condensed, competing interests in the catch-all coalitions would bring the government to a standstill before real reform could be instituted. It is this transformist model that

comprised governance during Italy's first liberal government; it now must be investigated if it is the model that comprises its second.

Chapter 2: The State Reasserts Itself

Like the Italian republic before it, Fascism too would suffer a crisis of legitimacy leading to its downfall. Mussolini's relentless revolutionary push to make a modern, industrial, and imperial Italy faced serious setbacks in his disastrous handling of the Italian war effort, internal failures to live up to the promises of a "corporate" Italy between capitalism and communism, and most importantly sustained Allied aerial bombardment, rampant food shortages, and rapidly rising prices for consumer goods. But Fascism did not come down with popular revolt, a fact that would have powerful effects on the country's government over the following years. This chapter traces the political developments at end of the war and in the years following it. It investigates the Resistance effort and its role in the political culture of the new republic. Related to the politics of the Resistance, this chapter investigates the reestablishment of the party system and political practices embodied in that process that would become ingrained in modern Italian political life. It then explores the mechanisms through which consensus emerged: power and patronage. The chapter discusses the agrarian reform of southern Italy as an instrumental step in the formation of a voting bloc for the most dominant political party at the time: *Democrazia Cristiana*. It also looks at the reestablishment of the central bureaucracy, something that came to be known as *la continuità dello stato*, and the systems of power and patronage present there. By the end of the chapter, it will be evident that this continuity maintained many of the same abstracting discontents of the central state that plagued Liberal Italy and contributed to its downfall.

The nationalism of the unification years found resurgence during the Fascist years. Fascism was a major era for Italian politics. Initially seen as something that would

only last temporarily in so far as it was a means to establish order in the political and economic climate of the early 1920's, Fascism instead maintained a grip on the Italian government for over two decades. The drive toward centralized power was accentuated by the Fascist desire to “remake” Italy in the image of the strong nationalism embodied by the idea of *italianità* present within Italy since thinkers began to conceptualize Italy as a nation rather than a territorial entity.⁶⁴ In fact, this hypernationalism helped perpetuate the regime's downfall. Many high-ranking fascists, particularly those involved in the war effort, had grown critical of Mussolini and demanded that he should share power with them and King Victor Emanuel. The fascists had little power to challenge Mussolini but the king did have a margin of power. On July 25, 1943, Mussolini went for his weekly meeting with the king at which Victor Emanuel asked for his resignation and informed him that he had already made plans for Marshal Badoglio to take his place. A stunned Mussolini acquiesced and was escorted away in an ambulance later to be placed under arrest. Twenty-one years after he came to power in the march on Rome, Mussolini was brought down by the same king who brought him to power.

From the Resistance to Governance

This section details a basic history of the re-establishment of democracy in Italy. The reason for doing this in light of the sustained argument about discontents of the nation-state is that the continuity of state practices appeared immediately with the final days of the Fascist regime. Political constraints severely limited the possibilities for democratic modes of organization and despite the alternatives put forth by Resistance

⁶⁴ For more on Italy and *italianità* under fascism and especially its connection to Italy's conceptions of modernization see Gentile, Emilio, Suzanne. Dingee, and Jennifer. Pudney. 2009. *La Grande Italia : The Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century.*. Madison, Wisconsin.: University of Wisconsin Press.

revolutionaries, many of them leftists, centralization and the representation problems it entailed reemerged across the Italian peninsula. For many, the anti-Fascism and commitment to democratic principles that were born during the Resistance served as a new national myth upon which a new nation could be formed. But history suggests that these principles represent a *rivoluzione mancata*, (missed revolution) for representative government in Italy. Nowhere is this clearer than with the albeit necessary *attendismo* of the Communist party—the policy of more limited resistance while waiting for liberation at the hands of the Allies—that developed into a conciliatory attitude, based on an abstract notion of “progressive democracy,” toward more conservative Italian political entities as the state was reconstructed. The limited political opportunities for the left and the organizations they dominated meant that revolutionary activity and reformism became condensed into the abstract category of anti-fascism. Anti-fascism became the backbone of democracy and due to more conservative interests, both internationally and domestically, the reestablishment of democracy came to mean the reestablishment of centralization.

The period following Mussolini’s fall from power, a period that has gone down in history as the Forty-Five Days, conditioned the balance of power in the country during the crucial few years following the end of fascism. Paul Ginsborg argues that this coup from above preserved the control and freedom of action of the traditional ruling elites in Italian society.⁶⁵ The king’s choice of Marshal Badoglio is significant because he decided not to pick an anti-fascist but someone who consistently held increasingly lucrative and powerful posts in the Fascist administration. Furthermore, Badoglio was not a liberal and

⁶⁵ Ginsborg, Paul. 1990. *A History of Contemporary Italy : Society and Politics, 1943-1988*. London, England ;: Penguin Books,. pg. 12

tended to favor the monarchy. Thus fascism was immediately replaced with what Dennis Mack Smith termed a “monarchical autocracy” founded on the army, police, and ex-fascist civil service.⁶⁶ Democracy would have to come later, held onto by citizens through the promise of free elections once the war was over.

Badoglio and the new government sought to maintain a military dictatorship. They wished to maintain peace throughout the country. The Forty-five days began with enormous and destructive demonstrations celebrating the end of fascism. Badoglio and the government feared an insurrection brought on by the fraternization of soldiers and civilians and were augmented by a fear of Germany and the Allies. The German army began to pour troops into Italy in anticipation of the Allies assault through the country. Meanwhile, the Fascist party was declared illegal, but political censorship continued, most Fascist officials kept their jobs, and Badoglio maintained the Fascist militia. In addition, the new government had yet to sign an armistice with the Allies. This ambiguous policy meant the Italians were effectively put between the two great warring powers as both had reasonable cause to treat the Italians as a potential enemy. The government played for time. While secret armistice talks were occurring, demonstrations were met with violence often with the army opening fire on demonstrators. A severe armistice between Italy and the Allies meant unconditional surrender, with the added humiliation of the refusal of the Allies to allow the Italians to join them. Instead Italy was termed “co-belligerent”.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Mack Smith op cit. pg. 417

⁶⁷ Ginsborg 1990 ibid pg. 12-14

Tension in Italy rapidly gained pace as the Germans continued to flood into the north. The Allies wanted to move into Rome through performing an airborne landing north of the city with the help of the Italian army thus gaining ground and mopping up residual Fascists around the capital. Badoglio, still unsure about the looming German threat was evasive about this plan leading General Eisenhower and Allied command to abandon the northern landing in favor of a southern landing at Salerno. Eisenhower was outraged at the Italian procrastination and on September 8 made public the armistice, far too early for the Italian authorities still managing the delicate German issue.⁶⁸

The announcement of the armistice greatly accentuated the situation in Italy. The same day, Badoglio was forced to announce the armistice to the Italians. The king and his family promptly abandoned the capital and sailed south without knowing whether or not Brindisi, the city where they eventually decided to land, was still occupied by Nazi troops. Luckily, the Nazi's had withdrawn from the city by the time they landed on September 10th. This flight had been hasty and ill prepared but had the benefit for the creation of the "Kingdom of the South" which the Allies would control. With this setting up of the Kingdom of the South, Italy was cut in two once again. The Allies and the Italian king controlled the territory south of Naples. The Germans solidly controlled the northern regions. They freed Mussolini and set him up as the head of a puppet government based in the town of Salo' on Lake Garda. Even though he was given control over all of the northern regions, the Germans exercised most of the authority.

As Nazi rule was established over the north, the Resistance was born. The Resistance provided many with a new political culture and purpose. Through its modes of

⁶⁸ Ginsborg 1990 *ibid* pg. 12

organization, commitment to anti-Fascism, and progressive politics, the resistance was a vital step in reforming democratic government in Italy. Much of the organizational backbone of the resistance, as Guido Quazza shows, was made up of the traditional organized anti-Fascism that always opposed Mussolini and whose groups and parties were declared illegal by the regime.⁶⁹ Quazza makes this distinction in order to draw attention to the fact that this organized resistance was dominated by the communists and more specifically the communists that historically and continuously fought against Fascism. It was not just older communists who composed the resistance effort. For young workers who wished to oppose the regime in the thirties and forties, the Italian communist party was the most obvious point of reference despite the fact the party had been forced mostly underground by the regime. Communist formations, which went by the name Garibaldi Brigades, composed over 70 percent of the resistance partisans.⁷⁰ Because of this large role played by communist party members, Italian communism took on anti-Fascism as its defining characteristic in these early years. In fact, as we will see in more detail later, communist strategy became one of establishing a relationship with other emerging political entities to reestablish democracy and solidify themselves as a mass-based and legitimate political party. Revolution was put off to not only establish communism as a legitimate project but give it the patriotic veneer of anti-Fascism.

Other political entities formed during this time to combat fascism. The liberals returned to the scene but in a much diminished position. Alongside the resistance groups dominated by the communists, another anti-fascist group formed: *il Partito d'Azione*

⁶⁹ Quazza, Guido. 1976. *Resistenza E Storia D'Italia : Problemi E Ipotesi Di Ricerca*. Biblioteca di storia contemporanea Milano: Feltrinelli. Pg. 115-117

⁷⁰ Ginsborg 1990, op cit. pg. 15

(Party of Action). This party shared the commitment to radical anti-fascism of the resistance but wished to see progress come about in the formation of a new democracy within the framework of capitalism adjusted to combat the striking inequalities existing in Italy. Notably, they were also deeply committed to pursuing greater measures of regional autonomy. Socialists were also present. Their movement had shrunk considerably since the pre-fascist years. This shrinking occurred because unlike the communists the socialists maintained a harder stance on the far left. Most of this positioning remained in the place of theoretical discussion. Part of the reason for this diminished presence was the fact that the socialists failed to maintain a similar amount of contacts within the working class. Contact with the working class was mostly maintained by the communist presence. Finally, the party that would come to dominate Italian politics over the next five decades, *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democrats) was only just in formation.

These parties played very little role in the immediate fall of Fascism. Those that existed were either driven underground or numerically weak under Fascism. When the regime fell, the king and Badoglio took over the major roles of governing, effectively outflanking the efforts of all the anti-fascist parties throughout the Forty-five days. However, once the country began to split apart, these parties took on a much greater role. They formed the National Committee of Liberation (CLN) in Rome on September 9th, urging the Italian people to stand with them in the fight against the Nazi's in the North. Many clandestine CLNs were formed in German occupied territory with significant governing responsibilities. In fact, the Milan committee took the name of the National

Committee for the Liberation of Upper Italy (CLNAI) and became the ultimate head of the Resistance movement.⁷¹

Because the Resistance was predominately composed of communists, they experienced constant difficulties with the Allies and anti-fascists who also were anti-communist. As the number of partisan bands grew, most with deep communist ties, the Allies became apprehensive. This apprehension was heightened with changes in the international sphere. Not only was the Soviet Union growing stronger, communist partisans under Josip Tito relentlessly pursued the establishment of a communist state after they had received backing from the British. Not wanting the same thing to occur in Greece, the British pursued military action when the truce between the Monarchists and Communists fell into civil war. The British backed the Monarchists and by January, 1945 the Greek communists were forced into an armistice and were expelled from the capital. Wishing to avoid both of these outcomes, the Allies watched the developments in Italy closely. They needed the assistance of the Resistance fighters in the numerous protracted conflicts with German squads but they were nervous about the prospect of a heavily armed popular insurgency with a strong leftward bent—especially one that had such direct ties to the CLN organs of government in the North.⁷²

The Italians were highly aware of this delicate position they occupied. They were placed between Nazi violence and Allied apprehension. Even though the resistance fighters often engaged Nazi troops regardless, the enormity of Nazi reprisals encouraged many within the labor movement, including parties within the CLNs, to argue in favor of

⁷¹ Ginsborg 1990, op cit. pg. 16

⁷² Ginsborg 1990, ibid, pg. 42-44

a policy of more limited resistance while waiting for liberation at the hands of the Allies. This policy of *attendismo* had its roots in a desire to limit bloodshed but resulted in significant backlash, particularly from the militant communists.⁷³ *Attendismo* came under severe criticism because the Italians would only recover national dignity they lost during the two decades of fascism if they fought against the Nazis. Furthermore, the events of 1943-1945, Nazi occupation, mass strikes, resistance networks, economic struggles, gave rise to much collective action, especially amongst workers, and a myth of solidarity.

The Italians, especially the Communists, responded to Allied apprehension in a much more active way than *attendismo*. The Italians pursued a strategy of national unity, establishing democracy, and a lasting coalition of mass popular parties.⁷⁴ One of the most significant champions of this strategy was Palmiro Togliatti. Togliatti returned to Italy from Moscow where he had taken refuge during the rise of Fascism eventually becoming the Vice-Secretary of the Comintern. Along with Antonio Gramsci, he was one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in 1921. When he returned in March 1944 he outlined, greeted by some degree of astonishment by many of the other Communists, his plan for the Party. In this “*Svolta di Salerno*” (redirect of Salerno) as it became to be called, the communists were to set aside for the moment their expressed hostility to the monarchy and instead to persuade all of the anti-fascist forces to join the royal government.⁷⁵ The royal government, which by this point controlled all of Italy south of Salerno, provided the opportunity achieve the most important objective following the fall of Mussolini’s government: national unity against the Nazis and Fascists. They were also

⁷³ Delzell, Charles F. 1961. *Mussolini's Enemies: The Italian Anti-Fascist Resistance*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. pg. 300-301

⁷⁴ Ginsborg 1990, op cit. pg.43

⁷⁵ Ginsborg, 1990, Ibid pg. 42-43

to set aside the goal of revolution for the same reason. Togliatti left little room for interpretation on this issue when he wrote instructions for the party in June 1994:

Remember always that the insurrection that we want does not have the aim of imposing social and political transformations in the socialist or communist sense. Its aim is rather national liberation and the destruction of Fascism. All of the other problems will be resolved by the people tomorrow, once Italy is liberated, by means of a free popular vote and the election of a Constituent Assembly.⁷⁶

Within this small segment of Togliatti's views, his commitment to democratic institutions shines through. Unlike Tito in Yugoslavia, he had no intention of making the resistance or PCI the short term strategy to a dictatorship of the proletariat. But his goal was not simply a reestablishment of the liberal parliamentary state that existed prior to fascism. He advocated for something he called *democrazia progressiva* (progressive democracy). The exact content of this vision remained deliberately vague but as Ginsborg elaborated it was meant to convey a form of state that involved more direct popular participation than traditional parliamentary democracy. The working class would become the predominant political class and would carry through a number of social, political, and economic reforms including the final destruction of Fascism, radical agrarian reform, and actions against monopoly capitalism but not against all capitalism as such.⁷⁷

In order to achieve "progressive democracy" or anything resembling it, politics, communist or otherwise, needed to establish a broad coalition of social and political forces. The era of mass parties had only just come into being as the liberal state collapsed. If democracy was to succeed, it would need to be based in mass consensus. The communists and socialists had been successful at developing consensus within

⁷⁶ Togliatti, Palmiro. 1974. *Opere Scelte*. 1. ed. Gianpasquale Santomassimo, Roma: Editori Riuniti. Pg. 331-332

⁷⁷ Ginsborg 1990 op cit. pg. 43

various working class and factory movements. But the focus on economic revolution, as we have seen, was severely limited. Mass consensus would have to come through coalition building. Togliatti insisted that unity of anti-fascism should continue into reconstruction. This grand coalition was to include not only the Socialists but the rapidly emerging Christian Democrats. Deeply controversial, this desire to work with *Democrazia Cristiana* would shape Communist strategy for the next few years. This strategy, despite its tabling of traditional communist plans of revolution, is unsurprising for two reasons. First, any rash move or proclamation of revolution would lead to another dark age of illegality for left-wing parties like the communists. The Allies, especially considering British apprehensions and their previous actions in Greece, would have crushed a militarized left-wing uprising. Second, these ideas about forming mass consensus were not new to Italian communism. Gramsci had argued that in western society a direct assault on the state was doomed to failure. Rather western communism needed to permeate civil society in order to establish political and cultural hegemony. Communism in the west would be based on the famous “*blocco storico*”, the historic bloc of social forces that asserted themselves against those of the capitalist class.⁷⁸

The “Italian road to socialism” was based on this “war of position” in civil society and the building of alliances around the working class. Togliatti wished to continue this program, especially with the focus on a bottom-up strategy as argued in Gramsci’s “Prison Notebooks.” But Togliatti’s plan included the addition of political alliances from the top downwards. He insisted on partnering with the Christian Democrats to expand the mass base of progressive democracy. This partnership was instrumental in developing

⁷⁸ Gramsci, Antonio, Quintin Hoare, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. Pg 238

support for the new government in the immediate post war years as we will see in greater detail when we discuss governance by the Christian Democrats. Partnership also had immediate benefits. Togliatti's decision to enter Badoglio's government in the South ended the political isolation of the anti-fascist forces of the CLN. In other words, it brought legitimacy to the Resistance and recognition of clandestine government in the North by what was effectively the Italian government at the time. His decision also made sure that, politically, anti-fascism remained a key focus of regime in the South.

This policy of cooperation was not without setbacks however. One setback came for communism as a whole. The debates about the strategy and direction of Italian communism, particularly after Togliatti's takeover are numerous and cannot be treated in full here. However, Paul Ginsborg offers a convincing estimate of the predicament for communism: "the two tiered strategy of liberation first, social and political reform second, caused them to dissipate the strength of the Resistance and of worker and peasant agitation. As a result, they were completely outflanked by the Allies and by the more conservative forces in Italian society."⁷⁹ This is clearest in their decision to enter the monarchist government. The decision confirmed on them legitimacy but it also let legitimacy to their historical opponents. Democratic parties and communists both contested the monarchist Kingdom of the South but became unreservedly accepted in the name of national unity and anti-fascism. Many average members of the party accepted these developments as a tactical move on Togliatti's part to confer legitimacy on the party. The hope was once the Allies left, revolution would become the focus once again. This confusion of strategy and compromise, *doppiezza* (doublethink), helped solidify the

⁷⁹ Ginsborg op. cit. pg 47

program based on acceptance and partnership with more conservative elements.

Acceptance was the first stage in the conservation of state institutions and central bureaucracy—entities that would prove to be major barriers to political, economic, and social reform. This “continuity of the state” as it became known as now had an opening for extension across the peninsula.⁸⁰

These concessions helped prevent reforms from taking place across Italy and in doing so helped insure the continuity of the state. The years between 1943 and 1945 were marked by a great deal of social unrest. Military and political defeat coupled with invasion from the North and the South dealt a large blow to the old ruling order in Italian society. Rural poor began to demand an end to the oppressive system of land tenure and agrarian contracts. Northern workers went on strikes that were both anti-fascist and a call to change their material situation. But with the focus on national liberation, there was little space for both revolution and reform. Furthermore, the presence of the Kingdom of the South by and large insulated the southern regions from developments in the North and contained a great deal of the agrarian protest. Furthermore, the government and the Allies were more concerned with restoration than with reform. To help achieve that goal, Badoglio and the King maintained the Fascist bureaucracy and other organs of the state.

Government changed in June 1944 with the liberation of Rome. The CLN forced King Umberto, who had taken his father’s place at the head of the kingdom, to replace Badoglio. Umberto replaced Badoglio with the president of the CLN, Ivanoe Bonomi an aging anti-fascist liberal. Crucially, Bonomi, agreeing with the more conservative

⁸⁰ Pavone, Claudio. 1995. *Alle Origini Della Repubblica : Scritti Su Fascismo, Antifascismo E Continuità Dello Stato*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri. Pg. 70

elements of the Kingdom of the South and the Allies, realized the necessity of establishing the main organs of the new Italian state before the north was fully liberated hence limiting the influence the Resistance could bring on the formation of the central government. This meant maintaining the continuity of the state at the expense of reform. Under Badoglio, the principle opposition to reform came from southern agrarian elites hostile to changes in land tenure arrangements. Bonomi and the pressure to maintain the continuity of the state meant reinstating the cumbersome central administration without changing its major arrangements or even purging fascist personnel. The problem of political purging was less divisive than in other countries like France since much of the central administration was built under Fascism hence involving a great deal of both existing government personnel and the civil class socialized under the two decades of rule. Also, civil servants were obligated to join the Fascist party. A policy of *epurazione* (purging) was pursued but failed. Judicial councils pursued some cases, usually rank and file members, but discharged as many cases as it could without raising suspicion, often on suspect rationale.⁸¹ Debate was relegated to the institutional question of the time: the choice between a republic or a monarchy. Since this question could only be resolved with the end of the war and reunification, and the communists in entering the Bonomi government with the policy of cooperation, meant that this reestablishment of the single greatest opposition to reform occurred without a modicum of opposition.

Meanwhile the struggle in the north against the Nazis continued to intensify. By November 1944, the Resistance was facing significant opposition and was in need of reinforcements and supplies. A delegation from the CLNAI sought out assistance from

⁸¹ In 1960 it was estimated that 62 out of 64 prefects-the central administration's head representatives in the regions-were former fascist functionaries. See Pavone *ibid*

the Allies in Rome. This meeting became of vital political importance culminating in the Protocols of Rome. The Allies agreed to grant the Resistance a subsidy of 160 million lire per month along with a commitment of “maximum assistance.” CLNAI was not formally recognized but they were granted the responsibility of executing the orders of Supreme Allied Command. In return, they were ordered to surrender “all authority and powers of local government previously assumed “ to the Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief at the moment of liberation. They were also required to disband all partisan units and consign all arms to the Allies when the conflict was over. Finally, military command was given to a regular army officer.⁸²

The opportunity to negotiate from a position of strength after liberation was lost with the signing of the Protocols of Rome. The alternative government apparatus of the CLNAI in the north was irrevocably lost when they were not recognized as a governing entity and required to surrender any authority that they had produced through the liberation campaigns. The CLNAI would take another blow shortly after when Bonomi and its representative signed a clarifying document further limiting the governing position of the CLNAI. Bonomi, like the Allies, did not recognize the CLNAI as the government of the North. They were only the “organ of the anti-fascist parties in the territory occupied by the enemy”.⁸³ The potential alternative government contained in the CLNAI was irrevocably lost with the refusal of both the Allies and the Italian government to recognize its authority. The Resistance and the ideals it contained were lost to the pressure to restore the central state.

⁸² Ginsborg, 1990, *op. cit.*, pg. 57

⁸³ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid.*, pg. 58

In the spring of 1945, the liberation of Italy was at hand. The Resistance pushed ahead with plans for insurrections in the cities with the help of the Allies. They wished to demonstrate the power of the movement. Massive armed uprisings occurred in major northern Italian cities like Genoa, Turin, and Milan. All these major insurrections were bloody but successful. The Resistance was handed another victory on April 27th when they intercepted a German column fleeing the insurrection of Milan. Within it was Mussolini disguised as a German soldier. Ignoring the orders of the Allied commanders, the Resistance leaders and the 52nd Garibaldi Brigade immediately ordered Mussolini to be shot. His body, along with that of his mistress Claretta Petacci and other Fascist leaders, were hung upside down in Piazza Loreto in Milan.⁸⁴

These events brought the struggle for liberation to a dramatic conclusion. The Resistance had acted with unprecedented autonomy and independence. The experience was instrumental for a solidification of a social consciousness and an idealistic patriotism. It would become a “founding myth” that penetrated more deeply than the Risorgimento had ever done for the masses. There was also a great deal of revolutionary energy at the conclusion of the conflict. Factories remained occupied and workers armed during the ten days it took the Allies to arrive in the north. The conditions were strikingly similar to those that led to the Fascist takeover with rampant unemployment and high inflation. Only this time it looked like the revolution would be red, not black. In reality, the communists were unprepared to risk a conflict, especially with the Allies. The disarming outlined in the Protocols of Rome was accomplished quickly, especially as the vast majority of Italians greeted the Allies with genuine gratitude. The CLNs were

⁸⁴ This was the same Piazza where the previous summer, German soldiers had left the bodies of fifteen political prisoners on display as a reprisal for the blowing up of a German truck in the city the day before.

weakened by both the Italian government in the south and by the Allies. There was little chance of them becoming the organs of government. The Allies also tried to defuse the economic tensions that could have led to massive social unrest. The governments agreed to a moratorium on firings and a guarantee for wages to be paid on time with one third coming from the employer and the other two thirds coming from the government.⁸⁵ This combination of measures was an effective check any revolutionary activity brought on by the events of liberation. The violence of war had come to an end across the peninsula. Much of the old state had been preserved or reconstructed in such a way to limit the radical influences of interests like the communists or the more locally based CLNs. But the political fight over the new state, of which we have already seen elements, was only just beginning.

The Birth of *Democrazia Cristiana* and their Quest for Hegemony

The political compromises occurring during the final years of the war had the consequence of condensing competing interests into mass parties. The reestablishment of party politics helped to ensure the continuity of state institutions especially since the reestablishment of these parties favored the more conservative interests. Party conflict within a democratic structure was vastly superior to revolutionary conflict. Anti-fascism proved to be a strong unifier as the call for democracy normalization helped establish these mass parties. Within the span of only a few years, one party became the mass party with whom other interests needed to work: the Christian Democrats. Once the party achieved political power, it focused quite extensively on reform, agrarian reform in particular. Although these reforms were designed to alleviate the plight of the Southern

⁸⁵ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit, pg 70

agricultural worker, they expanded the power of the party into new social areas. This expansion was given legitimacy through Catholic associationalism. In pursuing these reforms without the existence of other major political forces to check their activity, the DC gained a system of alliances based on the party's control of state resources.

Founded in Milan in September 1942 by steel magnate Enrico Falck, the Christian Democrats became the new mass Catholic party after the previous one, *Partito Popolare*, collapsed in 1926 at the hands of Fascist repression and improved relations between the Vatican and the Fascist government. DC was founded on an appeal to Christian values with the assumption that those values alone could reconcile human conflict. This social thinking and the fraternity that went along with it was manifested in a defense and strong encouragement of small peasant property and small business. The focus on peasant property gave the DC a great deal of support because the *Coldiretti*, the catholic association of peasant property holders founded by Paolo Bonomi in 1944, convinced many peasants that they had a material interest in the DC because the Communists would likely nationalize all land.⁸⁶ At the same time, the vision of the DC was articulated against the excesses of landholder capitalism and its imperial ambitions; a stance that was often seized upon by PCI and other left-wing forces as proof of the party's progressive nature.

The party's progressive nature found a powerful outlet in its first leader, Alcide De Gasperi. De Gasperi, the last general secretary of Partito Popolare, maintained a strong commitment to parliamentary democracy particularly in the face of forces like the rise of Fascism and Communism. His regular column in *L'illustrazione Vaticana* which he wrote while he was employed in the Vatican library during the 1930s often considered

⁸⁶ Lepre, *Storia della Prima Repubblica: L'Italia dal 1943 al 2003* pg 27-28

the principle battle of the current times to be the opposition between Christianity and Communism.⁸⁷ He had to temper his anti-communism during the resistance; he too saw the advantages of cooperation . But this collaboration was to be a temporary arrangement rather than a lasting alliance, particularly as the DC rose in stature across the peninsula. As the party's stature rose, along with its veiled hostility towards communism, the capitalist class began to look towards the party as an outlet for their interests. Slowly the industrialists and other capitalists abandoned the struggling Liberal party, the traditional outlet for their interests. The liberals failed, much as they did pre-fascism, to produce a mass base of support beyond the bourgeoisie of Italy's major cities. The Liberal's focus on a restricted group of elites could not guarantee electoral success whereas the DC's broad focus on property holding and Catholic values could. This growth of support became especially pronounced as the Italian left maintained its ties to Stalinism despite the outpouring of information surrounding his practices in the Soviet Union. It was not by chance that the party chose to make *libertas* a key word of their political vocabulary, not to mention emblazon it across the crusader's shield at the center of their political iconography.⁸⁸

Communism and Christian Democracy, now the two dominant political forces in the country clashed over the construction of a mass basis of consensus for their respective programs. The Christian Democrats succeeded in forming an interclassism at the basis of their conservative movement. Through organizations like the *Coldiretti* and others that offered mutual services like insurance, the DC was able to make inroads with the

⁸⁷ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 49

⁸⁸ Sassoon, Donald. 1986. *Contemporary Italy : Politics, Economy, and Society Since 1945*. London: New York. Pg 237

peasants. Other organizations gave them similar access to Catholic workers. These activities lent them the image that they were trying to establish direct relationships with the individuals they governed,

Most significantly, they made an appeal to the urban *ceti medi*. The *ceti medi* were, and still are, the middle class of Italian society characterized by artisans, shopkeepers, white collar employees, small business owners, and artisans. Deeply suspicious of Communism and Socialism, the *ceti medi* provided much of the support for the Fascist regime. These groups were thrown into disarray with the fall of Fascism and were left without an outlet for their views. Because the DC promised to both safeguard property and reign in monopoly capitalism, the *ceti medi* found a natural home in this party. When all of these forces came together, Catholic morality, democracy, anti-communism, capitalism, the Christian Democrats had a sizeable cohesive mass consensus to lend legitimacy to their cause.

The Communists sought to do the same through producing a historic bloc of interests. Progressive democracy was intended to provide for a wider swath of needs than had been addressed under the previous liberal democracy. Progressive Democracy would also destroy the possibility of a return to Fascism. The Communists continued to focus on their natural sphere of influence, the working class movement but with the added focus on social unity throughout the country. Even the *ceti medi*, themselves not far separated from the working class, would support the goal of progressive democracy and its focus on reform and criticism of the monopoly capitalist bourgeoisie.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 82

These projects were sustained because between 1945 and 1947 the alliance between the Christian Democrats and the Communists endured. The Communists were forced to make concession after concession as the strength of the DC grew but Togliatti was convinced that the progressive nature of the party remained. This strategy eventually came under enormous criticism from many angles, not just Communist scholars and party members, because the DC began to represent more and more forces within society to which the concept of progressive democracy was anathema.⁹⁰ Restraint was necessary for the Communists to insure their intentions for both the Allies and the DC. Thus revolution was exchanged for electoral gains because electoral gains signaled a shift in power. Furthermore, the Communists failed to make inroads with the *ceti medi*. The defense of private property offered by the Christian Democrats was far more convincing than the abstract concept of progressive democracy despite its hostility to monopoly capitalism. This strategy left the Communists with a dilemma that would follow them far past these early days of the post-war era. As Ginsborg surmised: “either they diluted the socialist content of their program and thus attracted the electoral support amongst shopkeepers, small employers, etc.; or they refused to compromise and risked leaving the working class in isolation and their alliance strategy in tatters.”⁹¹

Despite these weaknesses, the Italian left viewed the elections with optimism. In the wake of fascism, the promise of progressive democracy would appeal to the masses. The left’s confidence allowed them to make substantial concessions to the right to ensure that the elections were not delayed. These concessions allowed De Gasperi and the DC to

⁹⁰ Quazza, Guido “The Politics of the Italian Resistance” in Woolf, S. J., and University of Reading. 1972. *The Rebirth of Italy, 1943-50: [proceedings of Seminars Held at the] Centre for the Advanced Study of Italian Society*, University of Reading. London: Longmans.

⁹¹ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 84

buy time to ensure the success of moderate forces throughout the country. The CLNs became consultative in nature despite the protest of a few of the more radical politicians.⁹² In December 1945, De Gasperi became the President of the council of ministers in a governmental crisis precipitated by the liberals when they abandoned the government. Togliatti was given Minister of Justice.

With De Gasperi in charge, the hope was that elections would come swiftly and without any major political crisis. De Gasperi proved to be more controversial than the left and the coalition in general anticipated. In order to conceal the divide between the monarchist masses of the party and its republican leaders he insisted that the question of whether Italy was to become a monarchy or a republic should be decided by referendum. He also requested that the new Assembly only be responsible for drawing up the new constitution rather than have full legislative powers. The left strongly objected to this proposal to limit the scope of the new assembly because they figured the influence they developed would help them control the majority even if De Gasperi controlled the largest single party.⁹³ De Gasperi insisted, and with the added pressures like possible Allied intervention, the left backed down.

If the left expressed little resistance to De Gasperi's political moves, they expressed even less resistance to the institutional conservatism that occurred at the same time. The CLNs, once seen as a potential alternative government, were scrapped along with the more localized representation they controlled, with little protest. Much like under Ivanoe Bonomi, the state bureaucracy continued to be expanded. For them, these

⁹² Quazza, Guido, *ibid*

⁹³ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg 91

state institutions were mostly neutral. The real concern was the factory floor and securing enough electoral representation to push the cause of progressive democracy. The lack of opposition meant not only did the central administration increase in size, but also none of its apparatuses were questioned. The administration that existed since Fascism became the primary organs of the state. Bureaucratic elements, including the ubiquitous semi-independent special agencies, were not a central electoral issue and thus received little attention from the parties, particularly on the left, vying for attention during this time period.⁹⁴ This strategy would become even more pronounced as the elections approached.

The crisis of legitimacy of liberalism and the establishment of Fascism had destroyed Italy's liberal democracy established at the end of the Risorgimento, yet liberal democracy was still considered a model for the new government. The experience of two decades under Mussolini ensured that any governmental model would avoid allowing for one aspect to gain too much power. But despite these fears, the country still had to decide between a republic and a monarchy. At the urging of De Gasperi, this issue was the subject of a referendum held at the same time the people were to elect members to the Constituent Assembly. On June 2, 1946, the Italians held their first free elections in over two decades. The election was momentous because of the issues and the fact that women voted for the first time. Italy voted in favor of a republic.⁹⁵ This was not a token victory; the king had possessed absolute control over foreign and military affairs. In the other aspect of the election, the DC received strong backing in the rural areas and became the leading party. This came as a shock to the Communists who had anticipated becoming

⁹⁴ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg 92-93

⁹⁵ This vote revealed substantial divides in Italy's politics. The South, where the monarchy traditionally meant work and subsidies, voted predominately against the abstract idea of a republic.

the leading party. The loss of rural votes, as well as divisions on the left accompanied by a stronger than expected showing by the Socialists, ensured the Communists' failure.

The new Assembly was charged with formulating the new constitution. The proportional representation system—a system that would not change until the referendum of 1993—was designed to be extremely representative. The concerns of excess power brought on by Fascism persuaded the delegates to pursue this “pure” representative system. Parties with as low as two percent of the votes were able to secure representatives in the Chamber of Deputies. This system safeguarded the interests of minorities and reflected public opinion but it had the disadvantage of encouraging a dispersion of votes across competing interests and made weak coalitions almost inevitable. The Senate experiences less of these issues because it was elected via a combination of proportional representation and single member constituencies. The new political system, in its desire to limit power, created an arrangement that encouraged political deal making and *trasformismo*.

Trasformismo, once again, became a central feature of Italian governance to balance interests and govern from the center. Competing interests made this style of politics necessary. These competing interests, in the short term, proved to be too much for the young government. De Gasperi maintained the partnership with the left but it was increasingly obvious that this was an unnatural state of affairs for the young government. The Communists continued to recruit members for their cause, especially as worker agitation in the north and agricultural agitation in the center and south picked up once

again.⁹⁶ This increased social agitation put the DC and other more conservative elements in Italy on edge. Togliatti welcomed the agitation but so long as it did not seriously jeopardize the alliance with the DC. Stalling was common but it was obvious that the government needed to respond to this increased agitation, particularly the agricultural agitation. De Gasperi stipulated that landlords contribute a sizeable portion of the year's income to repairing damage done during the war coupled with an additional contribution for land improvements. But he also banned the *consigli di fattoria*, the farm councils, mostly found in central Italy, that were run by the farmers to supervise the sharing of land and resources.⁹⁷ In doing so, De Gasperi used the landowners in the short term to diffuse social tension while simultaneously significantly weakening the agricultural movement across Italy.

This diffusion of social agitation marked the beginning of the end for the alliance between the left and the DC. The social agitation convinced De Gasperi that the new government needed to be reformulated without the influence of the Communists. Excluding the communists was a serious political gamble. If they were forced into pure opposition, the country risked civil war, a daunting prospect considering the buildup of support for the Communists and anti-communists alike. The moment for governmental reformulation came when on May 1, in the province of Palermo, fifteen hundred people gathered to celebrate Labor Day. As the celebration was beginning, gunfire fell on the crowd. Eleven people were killed and sixty-five were wounded. The attack was organized

⁹⁶ Sassoon op cit. pg 246 -247

⁹⁷ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 109

by the local Mafia to remind the peasants of the real power holders in the province, regardless of the new elections.⁹⁸

Mostly talk resulted in the houses of government. But on May 13, De Gasperi resigned. As stipulated by the new constitution, the President of the Republic had the task of selecting someone to form a parliamentary majority. This task fell to the anti-fascist Francesco Nitti. After Nitti failed to form a parliamentary majority around his candidacy, De Gasperi returned with the announcement that he would form a centrist government, reliant on the support of all right-wing parties. The vote of confidence, passed 274 to 231 and confirmed the end of the anti-fascist coalition that had existed since the final days of the war.⁹⁹

This new political arrangement was shortly thereafter subjected to the test of a national election. De Gasperi and the DC needed to perform well at the polls in order to secure a dominant position within the government. The vote of confidence that swept them into power could easily be undone with a new set of hostile representatives. The DC had the fortune of being aligned politically with the objectives of American foreign policy. The ousting of the Communists only furthered this view in the eyes of the Americans, especially as the cold war was beginning to heat up. The US played an invaluable role in that they provided a great deal of foreign aid to Italy; aid that was desperately needed to repair a war-torn nation. With the aid came the preaching of America's virtues. James Dunn, the US ambassador, turned the distribution of money and goods into political events all across the country in which he would speak in the name of

⁹⁸ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg 110-112

⁹⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 112

America and the free world, which by extension meant the Christian Democrats. To be even more explicit, George Marshall warned that help to Italy would immediately cease in the event of a Communist victory.¹⁰⁰ The Christian Democrats used this influx of funding to speak about the political skill of De Gasperi and the party in general. They maintained their influence with farmers and workers by speaking of reform and asserting their Catholic values.

The DC swept the election. They secured 305 out of the 574 seats in the chamber of deputies. Even more significantly, they were able to secure victory at the expense of parties on both the left and the right. They gained heavily in northern working class regions while simultaneously picking up the residual Monarchist and other right-wing faction votes in the south. The Communists, despite the defeat, actually gained seats moving from 106 in 1946 to 140 in 1948. The gains came at the expense of the Socialists because they and the Communists decided not to run on separate lists but instead asked voters to indicate their preferences. The Socialists went from controlling 115 seats to 41.¹⁰¹ The Christian Democrats were now solidly in control. The policies and practices that they would pursue after this election shaped Italian politics in profound ways and set the course for state-society relations over the coming decades.

The DC had established its grip on electoral politics by emerging as the largest and most significant mass party in Italy. The Communists were a close second but, due to internal and international concerns, were forced into a much more subsidiary role. But this process reveals little about the governing practices that maintained the power of

¹⁰⁰ Lepre, *op cit.* pg. 88

¹⁰¹ Ministero dell'Interno., Camera 18/04/1948 ., Archivio Storico delle elezioni. Available at: <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=18/04/1948&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

politics over the country's abstract citizens. The Christian Democrat influence in Italian political life can be broken into two categories: administrative and agrarian.

Administrative changes are significant because they mark the expansion of the bureaucracy in the form represented by the *continuità dello stato* discussed earlier.

Agrarian changes are significant because they represent the reforms that were instrumental in creating the voting bloc that helped propel the DC to electoral victory.

Both will be explored in detail.

Part of what made the DC so successful in 1948 was their articulated commitment to reform. This reform particularly targeted the social inequalities in the agrarian regions of Italy. Reform in these regions had been a major issue for Italian politics for decades. The Communists and other leftist parties consistently insisted for structural reforms of progressive democracy in the productive sectors of Italian society. For them, structural reforms were the only way that the government could address the excesses of monopoly capitalism.¹⁰² The Christian Democrats pursued a different strategy. They saw themselves as a spiritual and socially just Catholic party and argued for sweeping welfare reforms to address inequality. Structural reform was viewed with suspicion as it often smacked of revolution, something barely tolerable for the conservative party within which some of the more conservative members expressed hostility to reform, let alone revolution.¹⁰³ The Christian Democrat solution to social problems was piecemeal rather than radical.

De Gasperi and others within the DC, rather than pursue structural changes, favored the creation of a stratum of independent peasant proprietors which could help

¹⁰²Amyot, Grant. 1981. *The Italian Communist Party: The Crisis of the Popular Front Strategy*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Pg. 43

¹⁰³ Sassoon op cit. pg 235 - 236

stall the spread of Communism.¹⁰⁴ This strategy was difficult for the DC to pursue because it would mean engaging in land reclamation and the land magnates, most of them Southern, were well represented within the DC. It would not be easy to infringe on their property rights. This particular roadblock was substantially mitigated because of developments in the peasant movement. In the summer and fall of 1949 there were numerous instances of armed peasant bands marching on the large estates. The peasants would typically occupy the land or estate buildings in order to win small concessions of land for themselves.

One such occupation brought the plight of the southern peasantry to the attention of the entire nation. Over the course of 1946 and 1947 the peasants of a medium-sized Calabrian village, Mellisa, had occupied a large estate half of which had been assigned to their village by pre-Risorgimento Napoleonic legislation. Over time however the local landowner usurped the entire estate. As the movement took over the land the landholding family offered one third of the land in recognition of their claim. The peasants refused.

Local representatives, growing tired of the ceaseless occupation, called for state intervention. Police arrived to the village on October 28th and in the morning of the 29th tried to force the occupiers off the land. The villagers and other occupiers refused to be intimidated by the authorities. The police proceeded to open fire. Three people were killed, fifteen wounded, and six were arrested. Journalists rushed to the South to report on the events and conditions of the peasants in general. Within the South, after Melissa, peasant agitation spread far beyond Calabria. Occupations became more and more

¹⁰⁴ See Mottura, Giovanni. "La DC e lo sviluppo del moderatismo nelle campagne" in Vianello, Fernando (1975) *Tutto il Potere della DC.*, Rome: Coines

common over the course of the next few months.¹⁰⁵ Over these months nine more peasants would die, countless wounded, and thousands arrested.

It was obvious that the government needed to intervene in the situation, at least in a manner that was different from sending armed force to break up occupations. The events at Mellissa and the outrage produced by the consistent use of deadly force—especially after a similar event occurred in Modena leaving six dead at a workers’ demonstration—ended the procrastination of the DC.¹⁰⁶ Even so, the landed interests in the party forced the DC to adopt a practice that would be repeated numerous times over the coming decades: “temporary” measures with the promise of “real” reform. In May 1950, they passed the first provisions of the *Sila* law. Shortly after a draft of the *legge stralcio*, literally “extract” from the agrarian law, was narrowly approved at the end of July. These laws provided for the expropriation of sections of the largest landed estates and the redistribution amongst the peasantry. The largest estates were targeted while the most productive were safeguarded. Land was to be distributed in two forms, small farms, *poderi*, for the families who had no land to their name and *quote* which were meant to supplement peasants with smallholdings. The peasants were meant to pay for the land through thirty annual payments after which it would become theirs. Compensation for the previous landholders was given in the form of government bonds.¹⁰⁷

The reforms themselves were far less effective than hoped. Much of the land was arid and constructing adequate irrigation systems was prohibitively costly. Also, the

¹⁰⁵ For Melissa events see Ginsborg op cit 124-125, Lepre op cit. pg. 127, and Bevilacqua, Piero. 1980. *Le Campagne Del Mezzogiorno Tra Fascismo E Dopoguerra : Il Caso Della Calabria*. Piccola biblioteca Einaudi, 393. Torino: G. Einaudi. Pg 447-9

¹⁰⁶ Lepre, *ibid*, 128-129

¹⁰⁷ Lepre, *ibid*

amount of land that came under the authority of the laws was far too small to adequately meet the needs of the sheer number of peasant families. The liquidation of land, coupled with the large landowners bringing more land to the market due to fears of greater expropriations, also caused the prices of usable land to rise sharply.¹⁰⁸ This put strain on the peasants and the systems of credit set up for them. The plight of the Southern agrarian class was lessened with these reforms but the pressure of too many people and not enough good land meant that suffering would continue. In fact, immigration, both internal and external, would prove to be a solution of sorts for the problems of southern productive life.

The laws left one important legacy for Italian politics. The laws also set up reform boards that divided the land amongst the peasant families. These boards were also to assist in the construction of housing and irrigation systems as well as provide credit and technical advice. From the outset however it was clear that these boards were enclaves of DC power. Often there were no peasant representatives on them and Southern land magnates often found ways to get their people into positions of power. These boards often became powerful bureaucracies. Overstaffed and costly, these boards consumed much of the funds made available for the land programs. The most notorious example was the Sicilian board which employed close to 3000 people, 2000 of whom worked in the new eight story headquarters based in the city of Palermo.¹⁰⁹ Not surprisingly this system was costly, consuming about a third of its budget on administrative costs alone. This coupled with the fact that most of these boards were not democratic and relied on

¹⁰⁸ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit. pg. 131-140

¹⁰⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit. pg. 136

the principles of bureaucratic decision-making meant that they exercised a great deal of power over the peasants.

This power fundamentally changed the experience of the agrarian classes. The efforts of the Communists to build agrarian blocs around the energy of the uprisings quickly crumbled. Mutual cooperation, present mostly in the form of agitation, was substituted for dependence on the state apparatus of the reform boards. Peasant life thus began to revolve around the prerogative of the reform board. This dependence amplified the power of the boards and thus the DC. In turn the DC became reliant on the peasants because the landowners, traditionally a bastion of support for the moderate conservative catholic party, defected. Most turned further to the right. This was not a loss for the DC because in losing the landowners and their traditional domination of the peasants they gained a system of alliances based on the party's control of state resources.¹¹⁰ When these social alliances were combined with the efforts of Paolo Bonomi and the *Coldiretti* to establish networks of Catholic associationalism through the control of resources like farm equipment, supplies, and eventually pensions and health insurance, the DC and its values became a central feature in the lives of the southern agrarian class hence lending electoral strength to the party.¹¹¹ This exercise of power through the apparatus was by no means unique to the agricultural sector.

¹¹⁰ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 137 - 139

¹¹¹ Bonanno, Alessandro. 1988. "Theories of The State: The Case of Land Reform in Italy, 1944-1961." *Sociological Quarterly* 29 (1): 131-147

Bureaucratic Power

Power through bureaucratic apparatuses became a central theme of Christian Democrat governance throughout the 1950s. As the decade passed, the party built a state system on top of the state inherited from fascism and earlier. Over these years the party continued the theme of centralization that had existed since the Risorgimento. All decisions, even minor deviations, were required to be made in Rome. Most authority was located in three ministries: Internal Affairs, Finance, and Justice. At the local level, the prefects exercised authority over the elected municipal councils. These decisions were legalistic in the sense they were based on administrative law. This legalism meant that most activities of the Italian bureaucracy can be summed up as a history of minute regulations of administrative activity through the promulgation of laws, statutes, circulars, and directives. This legalism was intended to protect the citizen from the arbitrary power of the bureaucracy or its bureaucrats. In reality, it resulted in to what can only be called administrative chaos. There were an estimated 100,000 laws and directives governing the administrator's activity. When this sheer number of regulations was coupled with a strictly hierarchical civil service what resulted was thousands of lower level bureaucrats unwilling to take initiatives or move outside the confine of the regulations.¹¹² Inefficiency and unrepresentativeness were inevitable. Furthermore, despite these regulations, the bureaucracy became a breeding ground for clientelistic practices. Political fidelity could be traded for jobs, favors, expediting tasks, and anything that fell under the purview of the agency. Rather than operate on an impartial execution of tasks within clear time limits demanded by the *Rechtsstaat* principles of bureaucratic legalism, the Italian bureaucracy

¹¹² Hine, David, "Italy" in Ridley, F. F. 1979. *Government and Administration in Western Europe*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

exercised discretionary power. A citizen's experience with the bureaucracy depended on the extent of the pressures the citizen could exert on the administrator.

The Italian administration was omnipresent because of what came to be known as the phenomenon of parallel bureaucracies. From the early years of the 20th century, special agencies were founded which were not part of the traditional ministerial system. These *enti pubblici* started as state agencies that controlled railway, telephone, and postal services, as well as state monopolies like salt and tobacco. This administrative arrangement quickly expanded into a whole series of autonomous institutions, each with their own internal bureaucracy. These agencies were consistently in competition with each other over purviews and the pressure to establish enclaves of power within the state. Much of this growth occurred during fascism but these agencies were reincorporated into the republican state. These public bodies, which had both administrative and financial independence even though they were under state supervision, became the *parastato*, the second state of the service agencies. In addition to this *parastato* there were numerous other small agencies for services which quickly took on the pejorative name, *enti inutili*, or the useless agencies.¹¹³

Controlling these agencies was a way to achieve party political ends. Ginsborg provides a brief sketch of how control, mostly through the distribution of funding, flowed through these agencies. At the highest level, spending was on major public works initiatives, the contracts for which were in the gift of the local council. In the middle, control was exercised through banks and the assigning of credit. At the lowest level,

¹¹³For these aspects of the Italian bureaucratic system see: Cassese, Sabino. 1983. *Il Sistema Amministrativo Italiano*. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino.

government funds could be used to create an excess of menial government jobs.¹¹⁴ The discretionary power mentioned above included areas like licensing—building permits were particularly notorious—processing paperwork, and acting on directives.

As the state administration grew, it took on a particular character. The administration of the first liberal state was dominated by northerners, particularly individuals from Piedmont. As the north industrialized and new job prospects became available for educated citizens, the civil service increasingly became staffed with educated Southerners. Because industrialization stagnated in the south, these educated citizens faced poor job prospects but could seek security in the civil service. Southern universities turned out thousands of law graduates who had little other option than to work for the state. By 1954 over 50 percent of the administrative workforce was southern despite the fact the southern population was only about 37 percent of the national total.¹¹⁵

The bureaucratic arrangement, mostly inherited from fascism, operated on a deformed relationship between state and citizen. The discretionary power of the bureaucratic elements, coupled with the rampant inefficiencies, ensured that many citizens did not receive the services they required in a timely manner. This was only possible for those who controlled contacts or other clientelistic means to exert pressure on administrators. Furthermore, this particular arrangement served politics better than it served people. The necessity of political fidelity insured that the interests of faction and coalition were better represented in the bureaucratic entities than the needs of citizens. This factionalism stemmed from the nature of Italian elections. When presented with an

¹¹⁴ Ginsborg, 1990, *op cit.* pg. 178

¹¹⁵ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid.* pg. 146

electoral list, Italian citizens express their preference not just for a particular party but for a specific candidate in the list proposed by that party. This system encouraged rampant infighting within the party as well as insuring the necessity of a cult of personality surrounding a candidate. Patronage was the most effective way of developing that cult through the politicians' individual and party means or through contact with administrators. In exercising significant power, mostly through their sheer ubiquity, these agencies circumvented the elected bodies of the republic, especially on the local level.

The political history of the Italian republic following the fall of fascism is a history of rapidly intensifying factionalism coupled with an effort to engineer the consensus of the Italian people. The immediate post-war years, although rife with conflict, benefited from a strong anti-fascist consensus. The Resistance helped provide a new political education for thousands. But the Resistance was a northern phenomenon. The benefits of bloc formation provided by the Resistance and the myth it later became did not span the peninsula. The peasant agitation in the south was briefly sought as an equivalent by some of the more far-sighted communists. But agrarian reform, engineered to suit the plans and preferences of the DC, helped preserve the individualism and competition that the militants and their allies so desperately wanted to overcome. At the level of party politics, anti-fascism brought two antithetical parties together, the DC and PCI, to establish a new democracy. They were successful but internal and external pressures, coupled with the hyper-representative nature of Italian parliamentary rule would insure that the alliance would not last. It did not, leaving the Christian Democrats as the dominant political entity.

As these great ideological battles raged, profound developments in the Italian state structure were occurring. The state was becoming embedded in the lives of the Italian citizens. But it was not any closer to their needs. The bureaucratic apparatus of the Italian state with its sheer volume of agencies, both *utile* and *inutile*, served the interests of party factionalism and private prerogative notwithstanding the crippling legalism of the entire apparatus. The state was no closer to the people it was designed to represent. With a central government based in Rome, these agencies were typically the only interaction with political structures for the average citizen. Despite this distance, many Italians found themselves dependent on the state in some fashion. The resources the state controlled, as well as the employment prospects it offered for many, insured that aspiring politicians could trade promises and patronage for votes. Bureaucrats of all types, themselves reliant on the system, were constrained by the regulations flowing from above them.

This arrangement, so fundamental to the operation of the Italian political system, profoundly shaped the lives of the Italian citizens it was designed to serve. It would touch even more lives and produce an even greater array of effects as it was expanded into other aspects of the public sector and the private sector alike. It is these developments that we must turn to next.

Chapter 3: The State Expands

This chapter provides a brief sketch of the primary way the Italian state and its peculiar distance from the people it was designed to represent expanded further into the public and private sector. As we saw, reforms and the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus helped expand the state's reach. However, often through the guise of reform or bureaucratic linkages, the state expanded beyond these traditional parameters. Public works projects and state-private sector partnerships are the principle protagonists of this story. These entities became major fixtures in the lives of every-day Italians and like the other entities that touched peoples' lives carried within them the dominant power-relations of the post-war state. And in doing so, expand the bureaucratic power of the abstract state in such a way that it permeates the socio-economic relationship of its subjects. This becomes particularly problematic due to the reach of the parties. Segments of the economy and the population became integrated into an administrative framework in which the political parties and their power relationships were dominant.

These developments were accompanied by major changes in the social structure of the Italian peninsula. More specifically, developments in Italy's economy coupled with unchanging realities in the southern regions lead to massive waves of internal and external immigration. Although these waves of people were not a direct consequence of the expansions of the state we have and are continuing to deal with, their story is crucial for understanding the environment of contemporary Italy and the issues facing it. Immigration from the south, particularly the immigration that occurred internally, forever changed the face of the country socially, politically, and economically.

The State and the Public Sector: The Case of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*

As with agrarian reform, the major areas of expansion occurred in the growth of Southern reform spending. The major outlet for this increased spending was a massive public works project known as *La Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*. *La cassa*, or the Fund for the South, can be thought of in the modern terms of a “development project” with its principal purpose neatly captured by a vision of “catching-up” the south. The *Cassa* was significant because as two external commentators put it a few years after the promulgation of the law, “The whole area of the South had not been viewed as a unit for public works purposes until the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno was established.”¹¹⁶ The fund was established in 1950 through Law 646 with the expressed purpose to plan, finance, and carry out a program of “extraordinary” public works in the South in the public interest.¹¹⁷

Despite extraordinary plans to speed up development in the south, Christian Democrats chose not to focus on rapid industrialization, but rather on public works in the rural south. The law targeted irrigation, land reclamation, road construction, aqueducts, dams, drains, and public infrastructure to support agrarian production. The principal problem with the fund’s approach was that it focused too heavily on these agrarian aspects of production. For one, much of the South, arid and mountainous, was not suited for large developments in agriculture. This fact would have been obvious to anyone who looked to unsustainability of the agrarian ventures supported by rapidly tightening public

¹¹⁶ Perry, Jane , Clark Carey, and Andrew Galbraith Carey. 1955. "The South of Italy and the Cassa Per Il Mezzogiorno." *The Western Political Quarterly* 8 (4): 569-588. Pg. 576

¹¹⁷ Legge 10 agosto 1950, n. 646 recante: "Istituzione della Cassa per opere straordinarie di pubblico interesse nell'Italia meridionale (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno) Text available at <http://www.consiglioregionale.calabria.it/upload/istruttoria/Legge%20n%20646-1950.pdf>

credit offered by the agrarian reform boards. Nonetheless, the Cassa development fund focused primarily on areas with less than 200,000 inhabitants and between 1950 and 1960 a meager 12 percent of spending was dedicated to industrial projects.¹¹⁸ Again, this decision was motivated by interests outside of the south. A large focus on infrastructure projects suited the interests of northern industry for two reasons. First, the lack of industry in the south protected their historical monopoly of the Italian market. Second, they were able to provide the heavy machinery and other resources for these projects.

Two major consequences resulted from this arrangement. First, the focus on these agricultural and infrastructural projects froze the southern productive classes in place. The public works program provided a staggering amount of jobs especially for a region that chronically suffered from inflated unemployment. But these jobs were temporary at best. Typically, laborers would be called on by the state to support construction projects and other temporary laboring positions. The Cassa provided relief from unemployment, but it was only temporary.

This temporary relief was at best augmented by the developments in the agricultural sector. These years, and the 1950s in particular, saw a significant fracturing of property holding across the south. Reclamation and access to credit was instrumental in this process as well as a shifting of elite interests towards booming industries in the north. Sharecropping declined sharply and landowners found that their profit margins and traditional authority were being eroded. Furthermore, the liquidity of the land market encouraged property selling. This selling, supported by the state-provided mortgages, allowed the historical sharecroppers to purchase land for themselves and fulfill the

¹¹⁸ Petriccione, Sandro. 1976. *Politica Industriale E il Mezzogiorno*. Tempi nuovi,. Roma: Laterza. Pg. 7

southern peasant's historical pipe-dream of land ownership. The flood of funds to the south encouraged this fragmentation because if a landowner was well positioned geographically on fertile soil and structurally with access to real public assistance from reform boards, developed or developing infrastructure, and development funds property ownership presented a path to crop specialization and a foot in the agricultural goods market. This path was very much encouraged by the *Cassa* plans to augment agricultural production. But for the majority of the southern productive classes, trapped in the arid hill and mountain regions, these prospects were non-existent. They had property and often could survive on subsistence farming. If geographic or structural barriers precluded them from this agriculture, they could sometimes survive off of temporary work. Prosperity, the golden horizon of the Italian dream of land ownership was traded for simple survival. And for many millions of rural southerners, there was not even the consolation of these small plots of land.¹¹⁹

This *Cassa* spending created another significant political effect which Paul Ginsborg, echoing the words of Gabriella Gribaudi, has called the rise of "the mediators."¹²⁰ These people were the local Christian Democrat party bosses, the bureaucrats, the building speculators, lawyers, and other specialists who were in receipt of development funds from the central government and who mediated between the state and the local communities. They often juggled public prerogative and private patronage. Crucially, these mediators gradually replaced the old agrarian elite. Power thus flowed

¹¹⁹ For more on land fracturing and agricultural challenges faced by the southern peasantry see Medici, Giuseppe., Ugo Sorbi, Antonio Castrataro, and Istituto nazionale di economia agraria. 1962. *Polverizzazione a Frammentazione Della Proprietà Fondiaria in Italia* : Relazione. [1. ed.]. Milano: Feltrinelli. Pg. 1-20

¹²⁰ Ginsborg pg.162 See also Gribaudi, Gabriella. 1980. *Mediatori : Antropologia Del Potere Democristiano Nel Mezzogiorno*. 1. ed. Da leggere, 22. Torino: Roerg & Sellier.

from the faction leaders who controlled the flows of *Cassa* funds, down to the special agencies of the state and the mediators, then to the local government, and finally down to the community members. Much like with the bureaucracy, these relationships existed to sustain themselves, rather than serve the interests of the population.

The intervention of Cassa funds transformed the south. Between 1961 and 1965, the Cassa's funding for industry increased to 30 billion lire, keeping its total industry spending steady around 12 percent of its budget. But by 1973 this spending had increased to 230 billion lire annually, a shift that inflated industry spending to roughly 30 percent of the budget.¹²¹ Throughout the South, new factories, petro-chemical plants, and steelworks sprung up. Unfortunately, these developments were capital intensive rather than labor intensive. They solved unemployment in a similar temporary way as the agricultural development projects. Also, distant ownership helped ensure that these new dramatic symbols of economic growth had very little effect on the local economies that surrounded them.

Part of the reason for this limited effect was the way the fund targeted specific priority areas. These areas were divided into two categories based on size and importance. The larger zones, the *poli di sviluppo*, were major cities like Salerno and Cagliari. Smaller areas, the *nuclei di industrializzazione*, were of less importance but still received aid money. For both types of zones, the state offered an attractive package for would-be investors. 20 percent of the initial investment was made available in the form of a non-repayable grant while 70 percent of the investment cost could be obtained in a loan

¹²¹ Ginsborg 1990, *ibid*, pg.229

repayable over 15 years with interest set at four percent.¹²² This development augmented the previous decision, made in 1957, that required IRI, the special agency responsible for industrial reconstruction, to concentrate 40 percent of its total investments and 60 percent of investments in industrial plants in southern regions.¹²³ The combined effect of all these measures insured that a great deal of money flowed into the South with the expressed purpose of development.

The capital intensive nature of these investments did not leave much room for sustained job growth. This lack of growth was augmented by the dispersed nature of the investments. These zones often drew labor from the hinterlands of the regions as many of these developments were located on the periphery of the urban centers. Rather than concentrating a new industrial proletariat in the areas in which these plants were located, diffusion occurred as cities grew in unplanned sprawls propped up by building speculation coupled with the collusion of municipal governments.¹²⁴

To conclude the discussion on the *Cassa*, it should be noted that the arrangements it took reflected serious political needs at the time. Overall, there was little confidence in the ability of the Italian economy to expand significantly during the early 1950s. Italy was still in the process of reconstruction from its disastrous participation in the war. As Percy Allum surmised:

In view of limited resources, the choice lay between either leaving Northern industry to expand as best it could on its own, or creating industry in the South with the spur, but also the risk, of competition. Moreover, in view of the fact that the government majority was founded on the reconstruction of the Southern

¹²² Ginsborg 1990, *ibid*, pg. 230

¹²³ Gribaudi, *ibid*, pg. 104

¹²⁴ Cecchini, Domenico. 1991. "Il Mezzogiorno Urbano Tra Passato Recente E Futuro Prossimo." *Meridiana*, no. 11/12: 253-280.

system, the only politically acceptable choice was to abandon the idea of industrializing the South. This left a social welfare program as the only alternative.¹²⁵

The possibility of competition with the expanding Northern industry precluded a focus on industrialization. Even when a program of industrialization was adopted, it was designed to give existing entities, both private and, in the case of the IRI, public, the advantage. Furthermore, the provision of funds for industry provided a prime opportunity for the clientelism practices that typically accompanied Italian provisions of funds. In this case, clientelism was most explicitly present in building speculation and construction in the peripheries of major cities where most of the industrial projects were located.

Power and Growth: The Political Consequences of the *Boom Economico*

Economic developments were not limited to the state's efforts to boost economic performance of the southern regions. In fact, the growth occurring in the north was arguably more significant for the country as a whole. Before the *boom economico*, post-war Italy looked much as it did during Fascism and even before. The industrial sector could claim some advanced elements in the production of steel, fibers, electricity, and automobiles. These areas were limited both geographically, confined mostly to the north-west regions and their overall weight in the Italian economy. The majority of bread-winning Italians made their livings in the traditional sectors of the Italian economy: small, labor-intensive firms, in public administration, small artisanal enterprises and shops, and agriculture. This was to change drastically for Italy

¹²⁵ Allum, Percy,. "The South in National Politics, 1945-50" in Woolf, S.J., 1972, *The Rebirth of Italy*,.London: Longman Group pg. 119

International trade drove growth for the country between 1950 and 1970.¹²⁶ Italy had ended its traditional economic protectionism—protectionism, particularly in the steel and energy sectors, that had reached astronomical heights under Fascist rule—especially after its integration into the European Common Market in 1957. By the time of integration, Italy’s industrial sector had achieved sufficient level of technological development and diversification across products to respond positively to integration. Competition would occur but it would not squeeze Italy out of the market. This diversification, coupled with the development adoption of Fordist modes of production ensured a competitive place in the market for Italian firms. Fiat invested heavily in mass production lines leading to a veritable sea of new Fiat 500s. Fierce competition in Italy’s energy and petrochemical sectors led to great advances in chemicals and other products, most significant of which were the development of new fertilizers for agriculture. Furthermore, economic risk for these endeavors was significantly mitigated because all of this economic activity was supported with Marshall Aid and its influx of American machinery and liquid funds.¹²⁷ Furthermore, Italy’s ability to compete was greatly aided by the discovery of new sources of energy—Fascist dreams of rapid industrialization hinged on German coal—and developments in the steel industry. Hence, energy and steel were available to Italian firms relatively cheap. Also, because of high unemployment and the weakening of leftist forces we explored in the last chapter, labor was cheap relative to other European countries and other international markets.

Italy’s growth was initially driven by an uptick in domestic consumption but quickly shifted to an export driven economy. Exports increased at an average of 14.5

¹²⁶ For a brief discussion on the following economic developments see Sassoon *op. cit.* pg. 26-34

¹²⁷ Ginsborg, 1990, *op. cit.* pg. 213

percent per year during the boom years. This was driven mostly by integration into the European Common Market. The percentage of Italian goods flowing to EEC countries rose steadily during this time. The rate started at 23 percent in 1955 and rose to 29.8 percent in 1960 and by 1965 it had reached 40.2 percent.¹²⁸ The higher purchasing power of northern European countries matched perfectly with the volume of inexpensively produced consumer goods flowing out of the Italian north. The growth propelled by the production of consumer goods was augmented by other industrial production. Petrochemicals became a large sector as did Fiat's automobile production. In fact, Castronovo estimates that by 1964 approximately 20 percent of total investment in Italy derived from production choices made by Fiat through smaller firms which supplied components and tools, rubber production, steel, petroleum products, and other goods related to automobiles.¹²⁹

New factories and plants clustered outside the city. This scattered the industrial proletariat, diffusing the potential worker agitation. The new centers of population located around these new islands of production that sprung up outside of the major cities became concentrations of people who shared similar perspectives in that they often identified the transformation of their fortunes with the fortunes of the firm. This transformation was driven by the rapid increase of consumer goods which encouraged individual or familial roads to prosperity while jettisoning collective and public responses to various everyday needs.¹³⁰ This change was mirrored in an emphasis on private

¹²⁸ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid* pg. 214

¹²⁹ Castronovo, Valerio. 1995. *Storia Economica D'Italia : Dall'Ottocento Ai Giorni Nostri*. Piccola biblioteca Einaudi, 619; Torino: Giulio Einaudi. pg. 430-431

¹³⁰ Ginsborg in his focus on social relations and the changes that occurred within them throughout the history of the first Republic, draws attention to this atomization especially considering Italy's long history

consumer goods throughout this time period coupled with a severe lack in a corresponding development in public consumption. Goods of utmost importance like schools, hospitals, public transportation infrastructure, low-cost housing, and other public goods lagged behind private consumer goods.

This expansion was accompanied by an expansion of industry outside of the traditional industrial triangle made up of the cities of Genoa, Turin, and Milan. The historical regions of Lombardy and Piedmont remained the epicenter of growth but industrialization moved southward towards major Emilian cities like Bologna and eastward toward port cities on the Adriatic Sea like Ravenna. Outside of the state-supported endeavors that came towards the end of the economic boom years, industrialization left the south predominately untouched. The South did not possess the capital, despite the best efforts of the government to provide it to support rapid industrialization. Also because the north had a historical head start in industrialization, the northern regions possessed more technical expertise. Many southerners did not look to industrial jobs or training that would provide for the necessary technical expertise because the civil service offered more stability. Higher education thus focused on turning out southern law degrees in the thousands rather than engineers.¹³¹ Finally, because most of the production was occurring in these northern regions, the export companies chose to remain nearby to keep costs lower. This was feasible because Genoa was one of the largest ports in the Mediterranean Sea, northern rail infrastructure was more developed, and eastward expansion opened new shipping opportunities on the Adriatic side. There

of communal labor relations epitomized in practices like sharecropping and communal living arrangements. Op cit. Pg. 216

¹³¹ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid* pg. 146

was no real need to expand Southward because all of the key resources had been concentrated there.

This picture could overstate the permeation of industry into Italian economic life. These sectors were incredibly dynamic. They grew by using technology and diversifying product development. They were highly productive regardless of their size. But at the same time, the Italian economy maintained the traditional sectors of production. These traditional sectors were labor intensive and compared to their industrial peers, lacked productivity. The economic boom, in growing a set of industries, accentuated the dualism present in the economy between the productive sectors and labor intensive and less productive sectors. Again, this dualism was spread geographically.¹³²

Economic growth created another opportunity for the central state to permeate society. Much like the provision of social services explored earlier, sectors of the economy were made into instruments of clientelism. This expansion occurred underneath the open struggle between the DC and private business on one hand and the PCI and trade unions on the other. This expansion occurred through a growth in what during the 1970s became known as the *“borghesia dello stato.”* This state bourgeoisie is the actors of private sector or the business groups that ran public entities that nonetheless attached themselves to the state and its political power in order to increase their economic gain or manipulate competition.¹³³ Patrick McCarthy, echoes this formulation when he describes the growth of the 1960s on as the *“publicization”* of the economy as the improper

¹³² Lutz, Vera C. 1962. *Italy, a Study in Economic Development*. London: Oxford University Press.

¹³³ Scalfari, Eugenio., and Giuseppe Turani. 1975. *Razza Padrona : Storia Della Borghesia Di Stato*. 2. ed. Attualità; Milano: Feltrinelli. Much of the following discussion on Montedison is drawn from here as well as Patrick McCarthy's account cited in the following note.

invasion of these actors and their tactics into the economy.¹³⁴ This permeation occurred through networks of control, often traceable along party lines, over finance and debates over which industries should be public.

These debates were most notable surrounding the electrical industry and can help illuminate how the state managed to pursue its own interests as the boom occurred. By 1960 much of Europe's electricity was provided through public utilities companies. Italy had one such company, ENEL, it played a relatively minor role compared to capitalist giants like Edison. Edison was one of the pre-war capitalist giants and as the boom progressed, spent millions upon millions of dollars to avoid being nationalized within Italy. The motivation for nationalization was clear. Government control of the industry would allow it to make prices uniform and make power resources equally available on a national scale, most notably through targeting investments where they were most needed. Edison was far from the only company providing electricity, but by the mid-1960s it was clear that a major merger was going to occur between Edison and the major petrochemical giant Montecatini, which was also experiencing "publicization" issues with the major holdings company ENI diversifying into chemical production.

These inroads between giants were an attempt to change competition in this sector. The Italian petrochemical sector grew mostly at the bottom rather than the specialized, technology driven top. In other words, the Italian petrochemical sector grew through converting oil into simple petrochemicals like gasoline. This model was not labor intensive, nor did it require much investment around technological innovation. These

¹³⁴ McCarthy, Patrick. 1995. *The Crisis of the Italian State : From the Origins of the Cold War to the Fall of Berlusconi*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Pg. 83

firms already possessed the technological resources to produce simple hydrocarbons. To grow, firms only needed to increase output. This output was increased through constructing more processing plants. Thus the growth model for Italian petrochemical companies was one of capital investment in production centers rather than diversification in product line. This model was further encouraged by the development grants to the south. Companies leaped at the incentive and mobilized cheap, available capital resulting in a rapid proliferation of oil processing plants along the southern coasts.

This proliferation insured that the Italian market was inundated with simple petrochemical products. Competition was fierce between the various firms engaging in their production. For many, it was clear that there was a significant profit to be made in diversification into more forms of complex petrochemicals. This diversification provided the principle motivator for the Edison-Montecatini merger. At the time, Montecatini was experiencing financial trouble but also had the technological expertise. Edison brought sheer liquid funds to the table. The result was Montedison, a petrochemical giant that controlled 80 percent of the Italian chemical market.¹³⁵ In December 1965, a capitalist giant was born. But the history of Montedison offers far more insights than a lesson in diversification and monopoly capitalism. Montedison can show how the state proliferated the private sphere to produce a hybrid public/private system that benefited competing interests while insuring a mutual reliance on each other. Montedison is a powerful example of the proliferation of the *“borghesia dello stato.”*

Montedison, through the leadership of Enrico Cuccia was intended to be a bulwark of private capitalism in the face of increasing government intervention into the

¹³⁵ McCarthy, *Ibid* pg. 86

economy. This was not to be the case. A major check on the government's ability to take of a sector or a business was its profitability. Montedison failed to develop this check. Across from Montedison in the petrochemicals game was the *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* or ENI. ENI, as a public conglomerate like the equally massive IRI discussed earlier, had access to public money, particularly through the spending schemes intended for development. The ability to mobilize funds when it needed to increase its holdings put ENI at a competitive advantage relative Montedison. Eugenio Cefis, the head of ENI set his eyes to Montedison. Shortly after its formation, Cefis began to buy shares in Montedison. By 1968 he controlled a block of shares in Montedison that was sizeable enough to exercise authority in decisions there. At the same time, Cefis slowly sold off parts of ENI's chemical sector to Montedison. Due to his rapidly increasing influence within Montedison circles, he moved over to become the conglomerate's president in 1971. It made no sense to compete with Montedison when he had the resources, both financial and technological, to take the company over.¹³⁶

Cuccia supported Cefis's moves because they seemed to maintain the enterprise as a private entity despite the fact that they were backed with public money.¹³⁷ For this illusion, there was another development in Italian capitalism to thank. Nationalization of major trusts had political motivations. Nationalization of the electrical industry would, it was hoped, break the conservative on Italian capitalism. The electrical trusts controlled, either directly or through their holdings, a disproportionate amount of influence in Confindustria. Confindustria, the agglomeration of industrial interests, was frequently at odds with not only the centrist government but with elements of Italian capitalism not

¹³⁶ Scalfari and Turani *ibid* pg. 280-81

¹³⁷ McCarthey pg.89

represented by its ranks. Breaking up the trusts through nationalization would end the influence of the trusts and free the government from its most powerful opponent.

These struggles benefited ENI. Because ENI was engaged in public holdings, many activities needed the blessing of the government. As ENI's moves were occurring, the DC's struggle against entrenched conservative, capitalist interests brought them into conflict with lay organizations, most notably the northern financial bloc Bastogi. This skirmish became a struggle for the provision of capital. Through Bastogi, Cefis saw an opportunity to increase his autonomy from the politicians. Bastogi owned a sizeable portion of Montedison shares. Cefis planned to take control of those shares as a package, essentially a smaller cloned company of Montedison, and merge them with another company, Italpi. Italpi typified the system of interlocked ownership present in Italy at the time. Italpi was owned by Montedison, but itself owned a block of Montedison shares. By fusing more shares into Italpi, Cefis could form a new company, Italpi-Bastogi. In owning Italpi-Bastogi, Cefis could control himself through a private company supported by public capital.¹³⁸ The government did not protest because Cefis's moves weakened Bastogi's position as a provider of capital and the Cefis's moves into Montedison brought petrochemicals and electricity closer within the domains of the state.

With this fusion of private and public enterprise came a very particular pathology as the economy cooled with the completion of major public works projects, the principal driver of growth for Italy's public enterprises. The remainder of the growth in Italy outside of exported manufactured goods was largely self-generated through public projects. ENI achieved modest growth until 1969 after which it transitioned into the red

¹³⁸ Scalfari and Turani, *op cit.* pg. 288

with less massive projects like highway construction being pursued.¹³⁹ ENI was the most successful; many other state enterprises showed heavy losses. With heavy losses came serious job losses that were augmented by the fact that much of the growth was capital and not labor intensive. Unemployment improved, mostly through jobs in the manufacturing sector, but not in a way that was commensurate with the levels of growth experienced. These state/private enterprises responded to unemployment with the spoils system known as *Lottizzazione* (loosely, allotment). *Lottizzazione*, at least initially, was the practice of dividing among the governing parties the command posts of the public sector. With the growth in the number and influence of employees in the state/private sector, many of them appointed even in the lower levels of control, came a massive growth of hiring on the principle of *Lottizzazione*. At the top of the leadership pyramid was a new generation of individuals like Cefis who were linked to the dominant political parties on both the left and the right and who used their management skills and entrepreneurial talents to wield power and divert public funds into private channels.¹⁴⁰

Although there existed many entities that did not ascribe to this pattern of development, most notably a small business sector that profited from a lack of attention by the state, Italian capitalism developed in such a way that competing power interests became intertwined and dependent on each other. Business and the state grew in sync but resulted in unique problems like a heavy focus on capital intensive growth rather than labor intensive growth. Labor intensive production remained confined to the more traditional sectors of the economy, like agriculture, that remained comparatively stagnant.

¹³⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit. pg. 284

¹⁴⁰ For more on *Lottizzazione* and this new political class see, Nannei, Alessandra. 1978. *La Nuovissima Classe*. Milano: SugarCo.

Employment in the public/private sphere, especially as growth constricted, was managed through personality means, most notably *lottizzazione*. But all these drawbacks were not enough to hold back one of the most powerful forces of change to sweep the Italian peninsula.

The South Moves North

How did these developments in the Italian economy change the country? These developments created a perfect environment for migration. A lack of systematic changes in the south coupled with a booming north virtually assured that the social pressures present in less developed regions of Italy, mostly the south but also the rural east, would be released through the pressure valve of migration. Crucially for our purposes, a great deal of this migration was internal with thousands upon thousands of Southerners fleeing their plight in search of new opportunities in the North. This migration has implications for later developments because these migrants tended to concentrate in areas around employment hence surrounding the islands of industrialization.

Italy's population underwent a revolution. Migration occurred in two phases split by a small lull in the mid 1960s. In total, between 1955-1971, over 9 million Italians migrated to a new region. For one, internal migration was a rural exodus. These changes had the most significant effect on the South. In order to switch professions from agriculture, Southerners had to leave the Mezzogiorno.¹⁴¹ These migrants were typically

¹⁴¹ The number of people involved in agricultural work plummeted. In 1951 the north-west regions had some 25 percent of the population employed in agriculture. By 1964 it had fallen to 13 percent. For the same years, the number of people working in agriculture in the south fell from 57 percent to 37. The north-east saw the starkest decline with 48 percent falling to 26 percent in the same time span. Figures quoted in Ginsborg pg. 219

from the poorest agricultural regions, the hill and mountain regions that precluded agricultural development. Initially, many of these migrants went to the provincial capitals. There was job growth there with the development of the capital intensive industry. But many could not resist the pull of the Northern industrial cities for long. Those brightly colored Fiats pouring out of Turin were not only a source of national pride; they were a beacon of hope.¹⁴²

The prospect of a regular wage that was significantly higher than what they were earning in agriculture if they had a job and regular hours was a major pull for many of the migrants who fled from the South. These prospects were especially convincing for young people as they watched the prospect of wealth through land ownership dry up with spread of unproductive small-holdings mortgaged on increasingly tightening credit. As grain markets became gradually less restrictive during the 1950s and on, small agricultural ventures became even less viable. At the same time, the demand for labor was being restricted as *Cassa* funds were used to purchase machinery from the North. The North and the prospects it held for a better life were not only aspirational, they became increasingly necessary.

New people flooded into the major industrial cities and their peripheries. New people also flocked to the more provincial cities of the north. Cities like Verona, Padua, Bergamo, and Varese swelled with the influx of new people looking for work. At first,

¹⁴² Ginsborg offers a concise description of the sheer number of migrants. Between 1958 and 1963, more than 900,000 southerners changed their place of residence from the South to the other regions of Italy. In 1958 the communes of the Industrial Triangle registered 69,000 new residents from the South. In 1962, after the repeal of the anti-urbanization law of 1939, this number leaped to 203,800 and in 1963 remained at the very high level of 183,000. Similar figures for 1958 show 60,100 new migrants from the South in the central and north-eastern regions, increasing to 104,700 in 1963. Puglia, Sicily, and Campania were the southern regions which, in absolute terms, suffered the greatest hemorrhages of population pg. 220

Southern workers found employment through cooperatives. These “cooperatives” were run by organizers or bosses, typically also of southern origin, who used their contacts to provide labor to factories and other labor intensive industries. This model was extremely lucrative for the bosses and cost-effective for the employers. The worker would pay a fee to join the cooperative. When they began work, usually without a contract and the benefits associated with contracted work, the firm would pay the cooperative a sum per worker. A worker was lucky if half of this sum made it to their pocket after all other hands had an opportunity to take a piece.¹⁴³ These cooperatives were extremely helpful for the employers for another reason: they divided the labor force. Workers found their collective bargaining power undermined by the southern “*terroni*” (a slur, still popular today, for southern Italians suggesting they are only useful for working the land) who would perform the labor for a fraction of the typical salary. Cooperatives numbered in the hundreds and managed thousands of workers. In October 1960, after widespread protest by trade unions and immigrants, they were declared illegal.¹⁴⁴

To conclude these changes mark a concentration of forces within Italian society. With the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, *Democrazia Christiana* continued its push to establish hegemony within Italian society. The provision of funds, and even more importantly the mechanisms of their provision, helped the party extend its reach into society. Future governments, particularly the center-left coalitions, allowed left wing forces like the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) to mirror this governing practice. But for these boom years, DC is the prime protagonist. And their development of the *mediatori* class is

¹⁴³ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid* 223-224

¹⁴⁴ Law 23, October 1960 n. 1369 Text available at http://www.servizi.cgil.milano.it/ARCHIVIO/2008/11/19601023_Legge_1369_ABROGATA.pdf
The law was repealed in 2003 by Decreto Legislativo 10 settembre 2003, n. 276 in an effort to add flexibility to the labor market

of prime importance for understanding how political power was wielded over the Italian people in the post-war period.

DC's concentration of influence through these methods is significant for another reason: it shows the way in which the government approached policy problems. The *Cassa* project was no minor commitment. Its initial earmark was an expenditure of more than two billion dollars over a twelve-year period.¹⁴⁵ With a commitment this large, especially considering those figures are not adjusted for inflation, the *Cassa* arguably was the Italian government's attempt to reform the conditions of the south and do away with the dualistic development problem, the *questione meridionale*. But the centralization of the state and its apparatuses precluded a meaningful reform. The south made advances where agriculture was feasible and industrialization occurred but many contracts stagnated for political reasons, money flowed for clientelistic purposes, and successful projects simply effectively mobilized capital resulting in new production centers for distant companies. Gains in employment were sacrificed for other interests.

These practices only intensified as the state attempted to move into other sectors of the economy. Even when massive capitalist entities boomed, the interests of the state permeated them through the intertwining of interests. The brief outline of the battle between Montedison and ENI illustrates the intertwining of public and private interests in a way that allowed both to benefit. And when challenges to growth occurred those interests were not to be challenged too. Practices such as *lottizzazione* insured that those interests remained insulated. State power was allowed to concentrate alongside economic power in major firms as well as in the public sector.

¹⁴⁵ Perry, Jane, Clark Carey, and Andrew Galbraith Carey. op. cit. pg 569

A positive consequence of the intertwining of the state and private industry was that certain sectors like small business and artisanal operations were left alone and were allowed to concentrate into a clearly defined sector, especially in the North and Central regions. Also, when this relative lack of attention is coupled with the fact the DC attempted to court the *ceti medi* who made up these industries, meant that these areas were allowed to flourish. This flourishing, created an even more powerful consciousness of autonomy amongst the *ceti medi* concentrated in Northern half of the country. Their mutual feeling of “I made it despite the presence of the state,” especially when combined with the importance of small and medium sized towns for economic and cultural activity, is crucial for their political project. Arguably, the *boom economico* resulted in far more than a concentration and intensification in the production of exportable manufactured goods.

The final area of concentration that resulted from the developments of the boom years was internal migration and the concentration of a new demographic, Southerners, in Northern industrial cities. Turin’s periphery grew by over 80 percent between 1961 and 1967, a change so great that it became known as the third largest “Southern” city after Naples and Palermo.¹⁴⁶ With changes as large as these social tensions were bound to occur. These were intensified because they were truly outsiders despite the fact they came from within Italy. Many Southerners only spoke the local dialect of their home region or village. These differences made Southerners easily identifiable and thus led to discrimination. We already saw how discrimination divided the labor force. Housing was another problem area. Most cities were woefully underprepared to handle the large influx

¹⁴⁶ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 220

of new residents. Overcrowding was rampant and many landlords refused to rent their flats to Southerners. Gradually, cities, often with the help of private firms, constructed large brutalist housing projects in the periphery for the new populations.¹⁴⁷ These projects eased the plight of the southerners but in the process concentrated them geographically and democratically. Only time and sharing the mutual space of the city and the workplace would ease these divides. But anti-Southernism would remain a problem, perennially supported by stereotypes based on real economic differences between the North and the South and differences in custom and culture across population centers. This was not only a problem during the 1960s and 70s; these differences provide material and the conditions for contemporary anti-Southernism and informed what it meant to be a specific “people” in Italy

¹⁴⁷ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 225-227

Chapter 4: The State in Crisis

How did the state respond to the new socio-economic changes brought on by the boom years? During these years the coalition system had remained a defining feature of Italian politics. The government during these years was made up of stable coalitions dominated by the Christian Democrats. The question thus becomes: was the political system able to meet the challenges of responding to the developments within Italian society, many of which stemmed from Italy's rapid and piecemeal modernization? This chapter reveals that the Italian government responded to political, economic, and social developments with its own brand of internal politics. The interests of party politics, a level of *trasformismo* not seen since the Giolitti years, checked reformism. The concern over party politics made Italy's governments remarkably stable considering the developments occurring in Italy over the final two and a half decades of the First Republic. The political system was able to weather recessions, student and worker agitation, and terrorism without being forced into reforming its structure. The practices of institutional government continued despite a myriad of pressures. In fact, such tendencies only strengthened. The final years, dominated by the Socialist Bettino Craxi, exemplified the practices of state preservation. If you can't beat them, join them. It was only a complete crisis of the system which revealed an uneven power structure in which corruption, clientelist, and transformist administrative practices defined much of the Italian social experience, that instituted major structural changes in Italian politics.

Transformist party politics was not the be all end all of the regime's practices. Alongside the blatant political brokering existed clientelistic government. The centralization of the state incentivized the use of public funds for political needs. This

charge would become a central feature of Italian politics as the corruption investigations, known as *Mani Pulite* or Clean Hands, swept the nation at the beginning of the 1990s. Many of Craxi's socialists became implicated in the scandals that started in Milan but rapidly swept the nation. As the firestorm spread, the politicians implicated became more prominent and of diverse political backgrounds. Complicity in clientelistic behavior was very much a shared phenomenon. This chapter illustrates how the state continued to preserve its own interests, but in doing so to such a high degree, effectively wrote its own obituary.

Opening the DC to the Left

During this time, the DC was dominated by Amintore Fanfani, a former university professor with, like so many in Italy's political establishment, a Fascist past. Fanfani had taken over as party secretary of the DC well before the boom years but during the elections of 1958 he took the mantle of President of the Council of Ministers and Foreign Affairs while maintaining his role as party secretary. His dominance within the DC and the government as a whole allowed him to push for fundamental shifts in governmental political alliances.

Fanfani wanted to strengthen the ideological influence of the DC. The governments of the 50s had been weak centrist coalitions. They took little initiative to lead the country or address major issues developing in Italy. As Ginsborg points out: "from the time of the DC's national council at Vallombrosa in July 1957, Fanfani argued that the DC should 'open to the left' and include the socialists in the government."¹⁴⁸ The political reasoning was simple. With Fanfani in charge, a DC-PSI coalition could serve as

¹⁴⁸ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 255

the basis for social planning. The government could pursue moderate reforms and further intervention in the economy, reducing the influence of major trusts and firms. A DC-PSI partnership would provide another benefit: isolating the communists.

Before Fanfani could put his plans in motion, push back from within the DC erupted. It is not surprising these lofty ambitions coupled with Fanfani's personal control of them would create resistance, even from within his own faction. But it was another faction that would halt the opening to the left in these early years. The faction was the Dorotei. Named for the convent of San Dorotea where they first formed the coalition, the Dorotei were composed of DC politicians that felt the time was not yet ripe for the socialists to enter government. Much of this sentiment came from the influence of church hierarchy. The Dorotei attracted many followers and by the time the DC's seventh congress was held in Florence in October 1959, the DC was bitterly divided.¹⁴⁹ The central question of the congress was party leadership. After bitter disagreement, the Dotorei and their backers emerged victorious.

One of the largest names in Italian political history emerged as the party secretary, Aldo Moro. Moro, a southern law professor, was devoutly catholic, reserved, and courteous. He was also extremely ambitious. He did not abandon the opening to the left; he simply delayed it as long as necessary. Unfortunately for his plan to stall, party politics would make the opening to the left a necessity.

The congress left many DC politicians bitter about the party's direction. Factionalism led to stalling. In the spring of 1960, recognizing the need for real governance, the President of the Republic, Giovanni Gronci invited a junior member of the congress, Fernando Tambroni, to form a new government. Tambroni was liked by

¹⁴⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 255-257

many in the major parties, not just the DC. But factionalism prevailed once again. He was only able to secure a vote of confidence with the support of the Italian far right, dominated by the Monarchists and the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI).¹⁵⁰

The government had only been in power for a few months when the MSI announced it was going to hold a national congress at Genoa. The party leadership wished to bring the MSI more into the mainstream Italian right, perhaps with an alliance with the Monarchists. Leadership wanted to address the party's marginalization at the hands of its fascist street gang supporters and those who were nostalgic for *il Duce*. Also, becoming a mainstream party would allow the MSI to participate in the spoils system further strengthening their southern base. The problem came from their selection of Genoa. Genoa, as we explored in the section on the Resistance, had a vibrant antifascist tradition. The MSI made matters worse with their announcement that Carlo Emanuele Basile would speak at the congress. Basile was the last prefect of Genoa during the Republic of Salò, the Fascist puppet government, who was responsible for the deaths and deportations of many Genoese workers and anti-fascists.¹⁵¹

The reaction was immediate. On June 30 a massive demonstration of tens of thousands of Genoese workers, students, Resistance veterans, and others broke out all united under the banner of anti-fascism. The police intervened and widespread violence broke out. With the tensions running high, the prefect of Genoa, in consultation with Tambroni, insisted the MSI congress had to be postponed. Celebration swept the city.

Tambroni reacted to the demonstration in a disastrous fashion. He attempted to assert his authority at all costs. Police were given the authority to use deadly force in

¹⁵⁰ Lepre, *ibid*, pg. 191

¹⁵¹ Lepre, *Ibid* pg. 191

“emergency situations”. Shortly after, the police intervened in a demonstration in Sicily, killing one and wounding five more. Two days later, in Reggio Emilia five demonstrators were killed and nineteen wounded. For many, the combination of events looked like the run-up to the fascist regime. CGIL, the national labor union, proclaimed a national general strike which gained massive support. The police intervened in this demonstration as well resulting in more deaths, mostly in the South.¹⁵²

The government was forced to respond. They responded by trying to replace Tambroni as quickly as possible. He resigned on July 22 and Fanfani returned to form an interim government. The need for a new government revealed the profound effects the Tambroni affair had on politics and the opening to the left. For one, anti-fascism remained an ideological underpinning, especially in the northern cities with a historical referent to the Resistance. Second, any government could not hope to exist with the support of MSI and the Monarchists. The Italian far right had too many Fascist tendencies to be broadly acceptable for the country. Coalition partnership with the right was not possible. Only the opening to the left remained.

On the left, there existed apprehensions about entering government with the DC. Many on the left had watched prized reforms, the agricultural reforms being a notable example, be undertaken with less than pleasing results. But the socialists did have a notable group of members that supported participation in government. These were led by Pietro Nenni. At least since 1955 and the Turin congress of PSI did major elements of the party look to cooperation with the Christian Democrats. Then Nenni had argued:

We must face and try to resolve in a new way, and as well as we can, the problem of our relations with the Catholic masses, with their party and their organizations. Since the DC has announced a program of political and social reform, it must now

¹⁵² Lepre, *ibid*, pg. 192

have the courage to do what it says. If it takes this first step on the road to committed planning, the PSI will support the proposed reforms and take its share of the responsibilities involved.¹⁵³

Debate over this issue occupied the socialists during all the years of the economic boom. Politics at the time however had kept the opening to the left from being a real possibility. But by the 1960s, the opportunity was a real one. The socialists were keenly aware of that fact as well. By the 34th Congress of the PSI, held in Milan in March 1961, the socialists had to decide if government participation was a path they wished to pursue. Nenni and his “Autonomous” faction of the PSI gained a significant victory in Milan when 55 percent of the votes backed him.¹⁵⁴ At the time the PSI remained radical. For example Tullio Vecchietti, who led the left elements of the party, continued to insist that the Soviet Union was “the country with the highest wellbeing at the individual and collective level.”¹⁵⁵ For these leftists, DC coalition would not lead to structural changes, but an integration of the PSI into the existing corrupt, capitalistic political system. Nenni had similar apprehensions but did not go so far. He clearly did not have any intention for the PSI to denounce its Marxism for some abstract conception of Social Democracy. He distinguished the PSI’s plan from Social Democracy because “it does not obscure the sense of diversity between bourgeois democracy and socialist democracy; because it does not postulate an insurrection into bourgeois society, but is designed to create the civic instruments for the conquest of the state for democracy, and the conquest of democracy for socialism.”¹⁵⁶

This perspective, coming from the party congress, provoked unease in the center-right politicians looking to make an alliance. But Nenni and his autonomists was the most

¹⁵³ Quoted in Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 194

¹⁵⁴ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 261

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Lepre, *op cit.*, pg. 195

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Ginsborg, 1990, *op cit.* pg. 262

moderate faction within the party. Many others, including the chief theoretician Riccardo Lombardi, spoke of conquering the state from the inside.¹⁵⁷ The Christian Democrats had no intention of allowing the PSI to pull them any further away from the center that they willing but at the same time, they needed the electoral support of the socialists. And for some, there was common ground on reforms, particularly economic ones. For many in the DC, the economic disequilibrium between the North and the South meant greater social and political disequilibrium. And if the DC could have a hand in achieving that stability, it may lead to more electoral stability. Thus both the DC and PSI spoke of state intervention, but for different reasons.

These areas of common ground proved useful for another reason: the DC leadership wanted to partner with the PSI in order to divide the left. If the Socialists could be pulled away from their comrades in the PCI, then the PCI would be in total political isolation. Considering the fact that PCI consistently polled at a high number but not high enough to win a majority in the Chamber of Deputies, this political isolation would put them in an almost guaranteed opposition role for some time. A division between the PSI and the PCI would also have repercussions for left-wing cooperation in other areas like within labor unions. If done correctly, the opening to the left could further solidify the influence of the DC within politics in general.

At the 8th Congress of the DC held in Naples in January 1962, party secretary Moro delivered a six-hour speech in which he laid out the prospect of the center-left coalition. Deeply ambiguous, Moro's speech spoke of building relationships with the social forces in Italian society in order to govern effectively. Moro, with the memory of the recent social unrest surrounding the Tambroni affair still fresh, insisted that the DC

¹⁵⁷ Lepre, *op. cit.* pg. 201

was not a class based party but a party “of people fielded not with the few but with the many.”¹⁵⁸ These appeals were very effective. The Dotorei were reassured with Moro in charge and 80 percent of the delegates at the congress backed the list, “the friends of Moro and Fanfani.”¹⁵⁹

With the making of the opening to the left a distinct possibility, the issue of reform took center stage. Ginsborg outlines three major categories through which we can think about the attitude toward reforms both pursued and not pursued in Italy during this time. There was the corrective attitude, the structural attitude, and the minimalist attitude. The corrective reforms were the reforms of the reformers, people who felt capitalism was to be supported but steps had to be taken to remedy the deformations and imbalances specific to the Italian model development. The structural attitude, supported by all major figures of the PSI and PCI, held that each reform was a stepping stone on the Italian road to socialism. Efficacy was to be judged on the reform’s influence on anti-capitalist consciousness and its role in preparing the proletariat to be the dominant class. The minimalist attitude rhetorically supported corrective reform but was not prepared to let reformism weaken the unity of the DC or its role in the state. Every governing act was subordinate to the needs of the party.¹⁶⁰

These perspectives are instructive for our understanding of state power in post-war Italy. The corrective attitude represented a keen awareness of the problems of Italian socioeconomic development. Corrective reforms addressed the perennial problems present in Italian society. These included the persistent poverty of the south as well as imbalances between private and social consumption. Many reformers looked to the

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Lepre, *ibid*, pg 196

¹⁵⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, *op cit*, pg. 264

¹⁶⁰ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 265-267

bureaucracy as a prime offender. Corrective reforms would target the inefficiency and corruption present in the central bureaucracy. Decentralization, a goal of reformers since the Risorgimento, was a prime example of corrective reform. Decentralizing the government and giving more control to the regional and local governments would help with the new needs arising from rapid urbanization and economic development. Other corrective reforms included modernizing the education system and building the national health service.

Structural reforms remained hypothetical because the tenuous relationship between various political entities precluded major, rapid changes. The structural reforms were as Lombardi put it “revolutionary reformism,” a process that “continually destroys the equilibrium of the system and creates a series of counter powers.”¹⁶¹ This idea was not completely utopian due to the system of interlocking powers present in Italy. The principle opponents to structural reforms were the great monopolies, the electrical trusts and their linkages to high finance being a prime example. These entities opposed reform, even when it was not structural, because reformism smacked of nationalization. At the same time, these monopolies and trusts were at odds with corporations like FIAT, Olivetti, and Pirelli. Thus the possibility of a utopianism alliance between the leftist structural reformers and progressive capital existed because industrial capital opposed the trusts and monopolies who were corrupting and stagnating capitalism. Any reform would be for capitalism’s sake, not socialism’s. These plans fit more squarely into corrective reforms because any effort to extend beyond the necessary would be met with hostility.

As for the minimalist view, to say nothing of structural reforms, corrective reforms were a secondary objective. These reforms could expect tacit support so long as

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 266

they did not conflict with party needs. The center left plan was not to transform Italy, but transform the PSI into an element of the government and in so doing strengthen the hegemony of the ruling parties.

These were the competing interests that provided the backdrop to the first center-left coalitions. In March 1962, Fanfani formed the first center-left coalition government. It was made up of the Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Republicans. The PSI, despite the changed conditions stemming from the Tambroni debacle, were not yet invited to join the government. However, the PSI, at Nenni's insistence, did not vote against the government and support for the government would continue so long as three major areas of reform were pursued. These were the nationalization of the electricity trusts, the institution of a single form of middle school, and the formation of the regional governments. Fanfani agreed and added a few more areas to the list of proposed reforms including more agrarian reform, national economic planning, and reform to state institutions.

Before any major effort could be undertaken, the new government faced a political challenge that would require real cooperation. Gronchi's term as President was about to expire and the Chamber of Deputies needed to elect his successor. The choices came down to Antonio Segni who was to the right of many within the DC and Giuseppe Saragat, the leader of the minor socialist party *Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano* (PSDI). Saragat had wide support from the left and Fanfani's faction. Moro and the Dotorei however, preferred Segni. Moro threatened a governmental crisis if Fanfani and his faction did not tow the party line. They agreed and Segni, someone who was not only lacked commitment to reform but doubted the idea of a center-left coalition itself, was

elected. To make matters worse, his election required the votes of the DC as well as the Monarchists and MSI.¹⁶²

Despite these initial challenges, Fanfani's government went about pursuing reforms. The electrical trusts were nationalized. It also succeeded in establishing compulsorily secondary schooling until the age of 14. These were remarkable achievements for the new government but by the end of 1962 the reform energy had all but been exhausted. The government faced opposition from the structural reformers. The PCI and PSI had pursued constructive opposition, often pushing demands to extend reform efforts beyond where the DC wanted to go. A notable example came from the compensation paid for the abolition of the electrical trusts. The structural reformers, led by Lombardi, wanted compensation paid to the tens of thousands of former shareholders as opposed to the trusts. The structural reformers effectively wanted to abolish the trusts completely. After significant opposition, which was brought to an end after Guido Carli, the president of the Bank of Italy, threatened to resign, compensation was paid to the trusts but with the hope of reinvestment.¹⁶³

Beyond this productive opposition, many on the left were skeptical about the direction reform was taking. The experience of the electrical trusts, with the compensation battle effectively ensuring a continuity of the status quo, helped convince them that real changes continued to remain unfulfilled. This pushback was most notable in any area that involved labor relations. The PCI and the left wing of the PSI were deeply skeptical of the reforms that were promised in exchange for wage restraint. When these demands were coupled with the fact that by 1962 demand for labor was exceeding

¹⁶² For the Segni, Gronchi, Saragat conflict see Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 268-271

¹⁶³ Scalfari & Turani, *ibid* pg. 14-15

the supply for the first time, wages rose sharply. Many of the larger firms could absorb the increased costs, but many of the smaller firms of the *ceti medi* could not and were quick to blame their misfortune on the “pro-labor” government. These wage increases were passed onto prices resulting in rapid inflation.¹⁶⁴ This inflation was coupled with an uptick in financial uncertainty brought on by ex-electricity trust interests that had maintained their influence in financial circles, especially after the payment of compensation.

These poor economic conditions put reform efforts to a halt and helped propel Moro to the head of the government. Inflation and financial uncertainty hit the small and medium producers and savers of the *ceti medi* the hardest. These individuals had traditionally been the primary supporters of the DC. Faced with the prospect of losing a wide basis of their support, the DC leadership chose to placate their interests. Reforms like regional governments and urban planning were put on hold. The DC was in a weak position as the elections approached and when they did arrive on the 28th of April 1963, the DC dipped below 40 percent for the first time in its history. The Liberal party picked up most of what the DC lost. The Monarchists also declined to just below two percent but their loss was MSI’s gain. The Socialists dipped slightly. The largest gains were made by the Communists who jumped to over 25 percent their best showing in years.¹⁶⁵

Segni invited Moro to form the next government. By this time, the socialists had to be formally included in the government because they were no longer prepared to offer external support following Moro’s indefinite postponing of various reforms a few months

¹⁶⁴ For wages and inflation see Zamagni, Vera. 1993. *The Economic History of Italy, 1860-1990*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. pg 338 Inflation was also aided by a drop in Italian exports

¹⁶⁵ Numbers and the consequences for the loss of support by the *ceti medi* reported in Ginsborg, 1990, op cit, pg. 272-273

earlier. Moro made inroads with the socialists and appeared to have succeeded at forming a center-left government by mid-June 1963. Then what would go down as the Night of Saint Gregorio happened on of June 16. That night the Lombardi faction of the PSI vetoed Moro's proposals, most notably his ambiguous town planning reform package. Nenni's faction quickly became a minority, leaving the government without a vote of confidence.

An interim government was formed while the socialists sorted out their internal disagreements. At the party congress that October, Nenni and Lombardi settled their differences and a motion was passed in favor of Socialist participation in the government. That December, the Socialists joined the government. Moro, his party still in the majority, took President of the Council. Nenni took the Deputy position. Lombardi chose not head any ministerial position.

Moro quickly placed reform at the center of the discussion, the establishment of regional governments being a primary task. But the push for structural reforms suffered a serious blow from the outset. For many Socialists, entry into Moro's government was deeply controversial. Many on the left wings of the party refused to vote confidence for the coalition. They broke from PSI in order to form PSIUP, the *Partito Socialista di Unita Proletaria*, the borrowed name from the Socialists in the 1940s. Lelio Basso led the charge, insisting they could not "sacrifice the autonomy of the worker movement" and subordinating its political choices to the "organic design of the dominant classes."¹⁶⁶ PSIUP divided the left—30 percent of PSI joined PSIUP and even more defected to labor organizations like CGIL.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Lepre, op cit, pg. 205

¹⁶⁷ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit, pg. 27

The economic problems continued to undercut reform. Inflation gave the Moro government more reason to stall. To curb inflation, officials at the Bank of Italy, Guido Carli and Emilio Colombo, introduced full-scale deflationary measures.¹⁶⁸ The results were predictable. Unemployment rose, small firms closed or were bought up by larger ones, consumption reduced, and labor lost significant bargaining power, especially over wages. The political consequences were equally significant. Moro insisted reform could not proceed until the economy was restored to health. Nenni could not protest this stalling of reforms because the government had just been formed and to resign in protest would lend legitimacy to the claims of the secessionists in PSIUP. Moro's logic won out over the interests of reform. Moro would pursue similar logic over the course of his next three governments that lasted between 1963 and 1968.

Over the course of these years politics became the dominant focus of the state. Throughout the 1960s, reform was a central topic but consistently took a back seat to either interests of the parties or the economic interests. This would change with the worker and student agitation of 1968 and the "hot autumn" of 1969. Through the decade, there had been no fiscal reform and the state bureaucracy was not touched. Even the establishment of regional government, a popular reform on both sides, was delayed.

Why?

For one, the support for radical structural reforms no longer existed. The Socialists could not be a locus for this reform because they lacked the support of PCI and later PSUIP necessary to form a significant reform coalition. But corrective reform also proved elusive. The DC was unprepared to pursue these changes despite the powerful presence of Fanfani and his followers on the party's left. Economic problems precluded

¹⁶⁸ Zamagni, *op cit*, pg. 342-343

the DC from delivering structural changes to the economy because the economic problems hit the small business and administrative *ceti medi* the hardest. The DC was not prepared to sacrifice the political power this group brought to table. This was clearest in the *ceti medi*'s domination of Confindustria at the time. This influence was coupled with the interests of the electrical trusts and the financial sectors that they controlled. These capital interests formed a grouping that was significant to counter reform, especially as they could always worsen the economic situation through flights of capital and investment strikes.

These developments halted reform efforts throughout the 1960s. The government was not compelled to respond to societal problems in a way that went beyond providing lip service to reform. There were reformers on both the left and right but they saw their efforts checked by these impediments. But delaying reform only prolonged the inevitable. Throughout Italian society pressure was building. In the final years of the 1960s that pressure would break through in a profound way: the student movements of 1968 and the worker movements of the "Hot Autumn" that followed in 1969 and played out through the early years of the 1970s.

The conjunctural moment, an era of collective action, serves our investigation in two ways. For one, it reveals that there were real grievances beneath the veneer of political and economic brokering that took a central role in the 1960s. Second, this moment sets up another significant moment in Italian political history: the Historic Compromise between the DC, PCI, and PSI.

From Collective Action to Violence

The educational legislation of the 1960s opened university education to an even wider section of Italian society. Many of these new students came from the ranks of the *ceti medi* and lower classes. When they entered the university system, they encountered a system unprepared for the rapid influx of new students. Overcrowded and poorly staffed, the university system, due to the economic situation, was not able to guarantee jobs to those who did manage to complete their studies. Dissatisfaction was rampant. This coupled with the fact many students were reading radical Catholic and Marxist thought fueled a desire for revolt.¹⁶⁹ As the agitation developed, many participants looked to the earlier social protests of the trade unionists as a model thus took on a “workerist” mentality.¹⁷⁰ Unflinchingly radical, the student movement attracted a peculiar response in Italian society. The older members of the *ceti medi* rejected the uprising within their midst. The students called into question the values of individualism and personal success learned from the economic boom years. But the conservative elements were not the only ones to question the student movement. Many on the left questioned the merits of what was essentially a middle class rebellion, especially since it was dividing society. Pier Paolo Pasolini published an inflammatory poem in L’Espresso on June 16th 1968, *Vi Odio, Cari Studenti* (Dear Students, I hate you). A few excerpts show quite clearly the problem the student movement:

You are late, children...

Now the journalists of all the world (including those on the television)

Are licking your asses (as, I believe, one says in the lingo of the university)

¹⁶⁹ Breschi, Danilo. 2008. *Sognando La Rivoluzione : La Sinistra Italiana e Le Origini Del '68*. Firenze : M. Pagliai., Pg 11-19

¹⁷⁰ Ibid pg 123-54

Me No, friends
 You have the faces of spoiled children
 Good race does not care
 You have the same bad eyes
 You are afraid, uncertain, and desperate...
 When, yesterday at Valle Giulia you fought
 With police
 I was with the police
 Because the police are the sons of the poor
 They come from the peripheries, in the cities and countryside...
 At Valle Giulia, yesterday, if like this, it was a fragment of class struggle
 And you, friends (although the side of reason) were the rich
 While the police (who were on the side of the wrong)
 Were the poor...¹⁷¹

Despite these criticisms, the student movement represented a seminal moment in which a substantial element of the *ceti medi* broke with its dominant values inherent from the economic boom. Also by focusing on the working classes, they also helped usher in the next major wave of social protest spearheaded by the workers themselves.

The Hot Autumn swept across Italy in 1969. Themes we have already investigated, the rigidity of the labor market, worker alienation and discrimination, and southern immigration all contributed to the social discontent. Jobs were still scarce and the development of Fordist production techniques resulted in a mechanization of

¹⁷¹ Pasolini, Pier Paolo 1968, *Vi Odio, Cari Studenti*, L'Espresso June 16th vol. 14 no. 4 Available at <http://temi.repubblica.it/espresso-il68/1968/06/16/il-pci-ai-giovani/?printpage=undefined>

production. This acceleration of piece-rate working exaggerated differences between workers and foremen.¹⁷² This declining influence of workers coupled with worsening conditions sparked a push for increased representation.

As workers began to protest, a remarkable number of left-wing factions sprung up across the country. These factions differed across ideological lines but many held that the revolution was at hand. Many of them espoused Maoist tendencies or at least tried to update Leninist vanguardism to the material realities of Italian society. Taken together, they were the largest new left in Europe. Throughout the period of 1968-76, they mobilized thousands of militants in an attempt to develop an anti-capitalist and revolutionary consciousness. Despite their prominence, the movement was bound to fail because the factions remained divided and lacked applicability in Italian society. For one, they focused on ideology, often igniting conflict between groups over issues of theory. They also were modeled on the political parties and their hierarchies. This left little room for innovation. They also adopted a casual attitude toward violence. They had adopted South American and Asian liberation movements as their model. And when this was coupled with an unsupported confidence in the imminence of revolution in the West, led to dangerous urgency within the movements.¹⁷³ And Italian politics moved with anything but urgency.

As these groups increased their militancy, the state had to respond. Both the DC and PSI who made up the ruling coalition were unwilling to ignore the social protest. DCs interests needed normalization but also reform. For the PSI, inaction was effectively political suicide with PSIUP always available to take away party members. Reform

¹⁷² Lumley, Robert. 1990. *States of Emergency : Cultures of Revolt in Italy from 1968 to 1978*. London: Verso. Pg 92-93

¹⁷³ Lumley, Robert. *Ibid*, 283-286

legislation was undertaken, most notably the establishment of regional government. The right to referendum was also established during this time. But once again, the state did not pursue structural reforms. This is clearest in the establishment of regional governments. There was a wide difference in funds and personnel available to the regions. Furthermore, as Robert Putnam showed, they were instituted in isolation, unaccompanied by any wider attempt to reform state institutions and political practices.¹⁷⁴

These reforms and the efforts of the revolutionaries encountered roadblocks. The private sector fought these developments. Wage increases were passed on to prices and capital flights spiked. The mini economic boom during the early years of conflict initially absorbed tensions but traditional interests soon took hold. Politics also intervened. The term of left wing Giuseppe Saragat came to an end in 1971. The DC sponsored Fanfani as their official candidate. The Socialists and the Communists supported Francesco De Martino who stood further to the left than Saragat. The parties were unable to reach a majority agreement on these candidates leaving the DC to drop Fanfani for the compromise candidate Giovanni Leone. Leone won but only with the support of MSI.¹⁷⁵

Leone shortly after and with the agreement of the parties decided to call elections in 1972. This was the first time in history that the Parliament had not lasted its full five year term. Both the left and right had hoped that the revolutionary vigor would energize the electorate. The Communists maintained their position but PSIUP lost significant electoral support. The party dissolved, most members joining PCI. The DC maintained its position as well but the far right saw significant gains. MSI had absorbed the Monarchist

¹⁷⁴ Putnam, Robert D., Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella. Nanetti. 1993. *Making Democracy Work : Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

¹⁷⁵ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit. pg 335

party becoming MSI-DN (*Destra Nazionale*) and rose to take nearly nine percent of the votes. The clear right wing mandate allowed them to form the first center-right government in years. Giulio Andreotti presided over the new government. His government did not last long. A resurgence in worker militancy forced the center-right onto the defensive, and because of internal divisions, moved again toward a center-left partnership. By June 1973, a new center-left coalition had taken hold. Political stagnation would usher in new forces trying to upend the political status quo. Their methods would differ—one preached compromise, the other condoned violence—but both would shape the last 15 years of the First Republic.

The Communists witnessed the decade of the center-left from an outsider's perspective. The Cold War precluded any major action on the part of the Communist left. A government majority presided over by the Communists would have been met with skepticism if not outright hostility from most NATO members, even after the Communists promised not to withdraw Italy from NATO if elected into the majority. Recognizing these barriers, many on the left once again looked toward making a compromise with the other major parties. This plan came to be known as the "Historic Compromise." Plans for the Historic Compromise began in 1972 when Enrico Berlinguer became the secretary of PCI. Using the overthrow of the socialist and democratically elected government in Chile, Berlinguer insisted that similar divides existed in Italy. Every action of left wing militancy was countered by a mobilization of the extreme right. These tensions, argued Berlinguer would open a path for authoritarian government.¹⁷⁶ The "Historic Compromise" was put forward to counter these tendencies. The grand alliance was supposed to be like the coalition of anti-fascist forces of 1943-1947. The

¹⁷⁶ Lepre, op cit. 262-63

Compromise would help dispel the social tension and the escalating political violence occurring across the country by tying the principle political entities into an alliance with each other. One area where this intertwining was most important was the social level. The Compromise, if done correctly, would be a masterpiece of *trasformismo* in that it would tie the working class and the *ceti medi* together in such a way that revolutionary and reactionary appeals would be curbed if not outright eliminated.

The Historic Compromise was offered at the end of most of the revolutionary activity in Italy. In order to continue the fight many on the left felt like compromise was the only option left open to them. By 1973 most of the agitation in the schools and factories was coming to a close. Some reform, particularly in wages, had been accomplished but overall the system remained as it was. There was not going to be the mass breakthrough in revolutionary politics many had seen as implicit in the student and worker agitation a few years earlier. Many of the revolutionary groups accepted this fact and either disappeared or folded themselves into more mainstream Communist circles. But not all. For a small number of militants, even these groups, which often defied mainstream left decisions, were not enough anymore. These militants decided to fight the capitalist system on their own terms. The *Brigate Rosse* (Red Brigades) crystalized into an organized movement. They called themselves “autonomous workers’ organizations” but in reality their goal was to accelerate the course of history through replacing political action with political violence. Using the Latin American guerrilla movements as a model, the Red Brigades initially concentrated their efforts on elements of capitalist power. Bosses and foremen were attacked or kidnapped. Property was damaged and other symbolic actions, like firebombing bosses’ cars, were common. But after 1974, their

actions changed to target the state. The Brigades achieved national notoriety that April when they kidnapped a Genoese judge, Mario Sossi.¹⁷⁷ Sossi was released unharmed but the event marked a turning point. The police began to target their activities leading to an escalation of violence and increased concentration within the Brigades.

In light of this violence, Fanfani presented the DC as the party to restore order. They were able to point to new public order legislation to back up their claims. At the same time, the Communists presented themselves as beyond the corruption of governmental institutions. They contrasted their positive local governments with the clientelism of the regions under the DC's control.¹⁷⁸ At the regional level this message resonated and led to most major cities falling into left wing control. The DC maintained a slim majority in national government however. The DC needed to recognize this growth in the power of the left. They opened dialogue with the PCI over the Historic Compromise. Berlinguer seized the opportunity to try to make inroads with the DC. Meanwhile, the PSI had replaced the left-wing De Martino with the more right-wing Bettino Craxi. Craxi, who was to become a major figure in Italian politics, decided that the PSI had to assert its autonomy vis-à-vis the Communists. Recognizing that the Socialists already had made inroads into the, the PSI was nevertheless left isolated during this period. Craxi, in making this move, was playing the long game. He recognized that a new center-left coalition would have a better chance of survival under his Socialists than under a "hegemonic" project coming from the Communists.¹⁷⁹

Andreotti formed the new government in August 1976. He did not include the Communists or the Socialists in the government but both parties voted *non sfiducia* (not

¹⁷⁷ Lumley, Robert. op cit. pg. 280-282

¹⁷⁸ Ginsborg, 1990, op cit. pg. 371

¹⁷⁹ Ginsborg, 1990, ibid, pg 377-378

no-confidence). Their abstention maintained the government by not bringing it down. This government lasted until January 1978 after which Andreotti formed a new government with the Communists included but not receiving any ministries. As an opposition party, they were to gradually acquire the benefits of state participation through *trasformismo*. Any revolutionary move was countered by the threat of an authoritarian, law and order crackdown. This is precisely what happened. The Communists embraced *lottizzazione* particularly within the banks, like Monte dei Paschi di Siena, of the central regions where they had exercised influence and in the state television sector, RAI.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, Communist participation in government changed economic interventions making them more neocorporatist. The major labor unions, private industry, and the government got together to solve economic and labor issues. CGIL and the Communists were prepared to offer wage restraint in favor for decreased unemployment and a greater attention to problems in the South. Both of these demands ran up against the usual structural barriers to reform leading to little real change on the demands of the left.

This neocorporatist strategy and Communist absorption into the state outraged many on the militant left. The Red Brigades stepped up their activities to make up for what they saw as a half-hearted attempt at reform, let alone revolution. This dissatisfaction was particularly potent in that rather than championing civil rights, the PCI championed the law and order measures put in place by the government. By trying to prevent violence and shed the illegality from their party, the Communists were creating more incentives for militant violence. By 1978 the Red Brigades adopted a “strategy of annihilation.” The strategy was to target whole sections of the political and economic elite, in addition to their supporters. The ensuing chaos would make the system unable to

¹⁸⁰ Ginsborg, 1990, *ibid*, pg. 388

function thus leading to its collapse.¹⁸¹ They decided to take the most radical action of their illustrious career on March 16, 1978. Andreotti was due to present the new government with the Communists in the area of the government for the first time. On the way to Parliament, Aldo Moro's car and police escort were ambushed in Via Fana. The police and Moro's driver were killed and Moro was thrown into a waiting car, which promptly disappeared in traffic. Moro's kidnapping shocked the country. But the country had to entertain a gruesome question: should the government negotiate with the Brigades to save Moro's life or should it remain firm in its commitment to not negotiate with the terrorists?

Craxi, the Socialists, and many others advocated compromise. The humanitarian exchange of prisoners would strengthen democracy. The Communists disagreed. Compromise would legitimize the terrorists, incentivizing more kidnappings. The DC was divided. Many feared letting the Communists be the only party that stood firm against the terrorists, but many also felt humanitarian concern for Moro. After much internal debate, the DC announced its refusal to compromise with the Red Brigades.

Aldo Moro was murdered on May 9, 1978 and in a deeply symbolic gesture, his killers took his body to Via Caetani, the street equidistant from the DC and PCI party headquarters.

Moro's killing revolted the nation. This disgust was amplified as the killings continued throughout the final years of the 1970s. These were not victories for the Brigades however. Italian democracy solidified in the wake of their actions. The Brigades lost members as the state cracked down on their activities and incentivized

¹⁸¹ Briziarelli, Marco. 2014. *The Red Brigades and the Discourse of Violence : Revolution and Restoration*. 1st edition. Routledge studies in modern European history, New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Pg. 3 - 11

defectors with lighter prison sentences. Slowly the terrorist groups were dismantled and the *Anni di Piombo* (the years of lead) came to an end. The effect of terrorism on collective action was immediate. Violence closed off many of the spaces for social protest leaving the status quo dominant. But on the other hand, appeals to revolutionary violence lost the luster they carried throughout all of the student and worker protest only a few years earlier.

This resurgence of the status quo forced the PCI to change strategy. The violence had caused a hemorrhaging of support for the party during the national elections of 1979. To make up for the loss of support, Berlinguer dropped the call for a historic compromise and moved the party into the opposition wing. With the help of PSI, the goal was to take power from the DC. It is with this combination of status quo and political ambition, that Italy entered the 1980s.

Change the Leader, Maintain the System

Politics in the 1980s represents the apex the of the transformist and clientelistic continuities of Italian politics that have dominated the narrative up to this point. The government reverted to the alliance between the DC and the PSI, which had dominated for two decades. Much like in the early 1960s, the government appeared stable. This stability was particularly salient this time because the government was made of the *pentapartito*, the five party alliance of the Social Democrats, Republicans, Socialists, and Christian Democrats. As was usually the case, the Socialists and Christian Democrats dominated this alliance. The transformist partnership between these two parties was anything but calm however. Craxi and the lead Christian Democrat, Ciriaco De Mita were often in open conflict with each other. This conflict was significant in that it would

open the space for alternative leadership within the Chamber of Deputies for the first time in decades.

After the Christian Democrat Giovanni Leone was forced to resign due to allegations made in the USA over the Lockheed Corporation bribing a number of high-profile politicians purchase its products, Craxi insisted that Leone's successor came from the Socialist party.¹⁸² The government elected Sandro Pertini as its next president. Pertini was extremely popular because of his advocacy of democratic values, his constant references to his anti-Fascist past, and his outreach to the Italian public. Most significantly, Pertini broke with the past and insisted on autonomy from the parties in his choice of possible prime ministers. In 1981, he invited Giovanni Spadolini to form the government. This was the first time since Ferruccio Parri in 1945 that the country was led by someone from outside the DC. This appointment led to significant developments within the DC. De Mita sought to reform the party to update the "cultural and ideological mediation" it pursued.¹⁸³ Mita's quest was more rhetorical than material. His reformism based on a new "rationality" in politics left many wanting. Craxi pounced on the divided party. In 1983, he pulled his and the PSI's support from the government, forcing national election a year ahead of schedule. De Mita responded with a campaign based on the same elements of his reformism. What was the result? A crushing hemorrhaging of support. The DC fell from just over 38 percent of the vote to just under 33, the worst defeat in the history of the party.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ginsborg, Paul., 2003, *Italy and Its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, State 1980-2001*. Palgrave: New York pg. 142-143

¹⁸³ Quoted in Ginsborg, Paul., 2003 *ibid*, pg. 148

¹⁸⁴ Ministero dell'Interno., Camera 26/6/1983, Archivio Storico Delle Elezioni available at: <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=26/06/1983&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

De Mita's fall marked the beginning of the rise of Craxi. Due to his stature, and the Socialist Pertini, Craxi was set to be the first Socialist prime minister in the history of the Republic. Craxi ushered in period of longevity in Italian politics. His two governments lasted from August 1983 until April 1987. Craxi was a deeply anti-communist. Stung from the marginalization during the years of the Historic Compromise, he sought to transform the Italian left into a broader Socialist movement. His plans would receive significant support from the slow crumbling of the Soviet Union and the crisis of international Communism. Craxi was also attuned to the developments occurring in Italian society around consumption and individualism. He celebrated these developments, often taking a realist position to them. This innovative approach certainly differentiated him from the austere calls and social critiques emanating from the PCI and its leader Berlinguer.

Reflecting this realist take, Craxi personalized politics and attempted to demystify political dealings. When taken together, these attempts amplified the cult of personality within the government. This growth, fueled by the spread of the television in Italy, was extended to other politicians as well. These appeals were made in the language of "governability," echoing a century of similar concerns. But in reality little was accomplished in the way of major reforms. No major attempt was made to reform the public administration. In fact, the excess of this sector only grew. The per-capita income of the public administration rose almost 30 percent between 1985 and 1987.¹⁸⁵

Craxi's hold over the status quo was aided by the withering of Italian communism. An electoral pact with the PSI was out of the question. The very policies of the PCI precluded an alternative to *Craxismo*. As we saw above, the PCI of the 1950s and

¹⁸⁵ Ginsborg, 2003, op cit. pg. 154

1960s put a great deal of focus on structural reforms, each inherently anti-capitalist, that would be steps on the Italian path to socialism. This plan never took root on its own terms and the Historic Compromise of the 1970s pushed that plan to the side. Nothing of much substance replaced the Historic Compromise after it was suspended and Italian communism was dealt a serious blow with the sudden death of Enrico Berlinguer in 1984. And after the fall of the Soviet Union and international Communism, the PCI unaffectionately became *La Cosa* (The Thing) until it was renamed the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS) in 1991.

Interestingly, as the PCI was busy imploding, the other parties of the *pentapartito* began to consolidate into a stranglehold around Craxi and the PSI. Craxi and the PSI had earned an unfortunate reputation surrounding their moves around commercial television. In the mid-1970s the Constitutional Court had created regulations on television transmission. National broadcasting had to be public but local transmissions could be privatized provided there were enough frequencies available to prevent the formation of monopolies or oligopolies. Silvio Berlusconi, a close friend of Craxi, built his media empire by buying up these channels. Regulators looked to Berlusconi's three national television channels as flagrant violations of the provisions of the Constitutional Court. In response, they ordered a partial blackout of his television channels in October, 1984. Popular outcry was considerable and Craxi's intervened with a decree law ordering the return of national commercial transmissions. The law was declared unconstitutional but Craxi intervened again with new temporary legislation. When it expired, the ruling

parties dropped the issue. It would take five years for the issue to be taken up again to produce any comprehensive legislation on commercial television.¹⁸⁶

This brazen use of political power coupled with the political stalling that typified Italian post-war politics, created dissatisfaction within the other members of the *pentapartito*. By 1987, these elements were better prepared to compete with the PSI. Elections were held in June and the DC reemerged with De Mita at its head winning 34 percent. The PCI remained remarkably strong at 27 percent. The Socialists captured 14 percent. And a relatively unknown organization, the Lombard League, managed to elect a senator, Umberto Bossi and his close friend Giuseppe Leoni as a deputy.¹⁸⁷ De Mita formed a short-lived government. When he was appointed prime minister, he did not relinquish his post as party secretary. This consolidation of power made many within the DC uneasy. In-fighting torpedoed the 18th Congress. The right faction formed to defeat De Mita won a narrow victory and replaced De Mita with Arnaldo Forlani. Forlani partnered with Craxi to replace De Mita and shortly after Giulio Andreotti formed his sixth government in July 1989. This partnership, the CAF (Craxi, Andreotti, Forlani) alliance, the last of the First Republic, lasted three years falling in April 1992.

Corruption and Clean Hands: The Fall of the First Republic

April 1992 was not a simple falling of the government in which one government was replaced with another only to perpetuate the same state of affairs. April 1992 marked the end of an era. First, the government faced an external crisis—the dissolution of the Soviet

¹⁸⁶ For more on the relationship between Craxi, Berlusconi, and commercial television see Fiori, Giuseppe. 1995. *Il Venditore : Storia Di Silvio Berlusconi E Della Fininvest*. 1. ed. Milano: Garzanti.

¹⁸⁷ Ministero dell'Interno., Camera 14/6/1987, Archivio Storico Delle Elezioni <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=14/06/1987&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

Union—which allowed scandalous information about terrorist acts and other anti-communist activity to enter the public consciousness. This occurred through revelations about Italy’s participation in militarized anti-communist operations known as Operation Gladio.

Gladio was a complex operation designed as a firewall in the event that the Cold War escalated. A document was discovered in the secret service archives detailing an agreement between the CIA and SIFAR (the Italian military secret service) to create a “Stay-Behind” network of clandestine groups which could be activated in the event of a foreign invasion. Training grounds were designated along with 139 arms and explosive caches hidden across the country. Training and direction would be provided by the CIA.¹⁸⁸ The discovery alarmed the Italian populace, the memory of factional violence still fresh in their memories. Andreotti and other prominent politicians downplayed the developments arguing it was a NATO structure only to be used in the event of a war in which Italy was invaded.¹⁸⁹ This line was severely undermined by another document depicting a meeting with the CIA delegate in Rome, Howard “Rocky” Stone and his Gladio counterparts. The Stone warned that “there could occur an extraordinary insurrectionary situation in the South, as a result of which certain pockets of territory could in effect be controlled by forces contrary to the government” and in such a situation Gladio would operate “exactly the same way” that the CIA had operated in Vietnam.¹⁹⁰ Gladio was dissolved by Andreotti at the end of 1990 but its effect on the public lived on. When coupled with geopolitical changes, the strong anti-communist sentiment that had helped guarantee a DC-PSI majority had all but disappeared or at least disappeared to

¹⁸⁸ Ginsborg, 200, op cit. pg. 171

¹⁸⁹ Bellu, Giovanni Maria., “Gladio, Ora Andreotti ‘Dimezza’ il Segreto” *La Repubblica*, 26 July 1991

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Ginsborg, 2003, op cit. pg. 172

enough of an extent that the government could not rely on it to bolster their support or justify their agenda. First Republic *trasformismo* had lost a major tool of consensus construction.

The second crisis was internal to the system. Following closely on the heels of the famous *maxiprocesso* anti-mafia trials, Italy was treated to a fresh batch of political scandals. These were *Tangentopoli* (loosely, “Kickback City”) corruption scandals and the *Mani Pulite* (Clean Hands) investigations that occurred after it. This legitimization crisis would have catastrophic effects on the legitimacy of coalition government. The *Tangentopoli* scandal and *Mani Pulite* investigations that followed revealed a system of clientelist corruption that spread throughout the central government and all across Italy. Prominent politicians, particularly in Craxi’s PSI, were accused of using clientelist structures to secure votes, particularly in the South. After this came to light, these party’s share of the vote dropped dramatically and most of their leaders were ousted from the positions of power they had held in the organs of the state, parliament and the local authorities.

The *Mani Pulite* investigations began on February 17, 1992 when Mario Chiesa, a PSI official and director of a retirement home, was arrested. Chiesa had earned a reputation for bullying and demanding 10 percent for contract work done at the retirement home. Eventually, business leaders got fed up with his activities and informed Antonio Di Pietro, one of the principle magistrates in the *Mani Pulite* investigations. One such businessman went to pay his *tangente* with a wire and the Carabinieri on standby. Chiesa was caught in the act, desperately trying to flush the 30 million lira kickback

down the toilet.¹⁹¹ Chiesa was outcast from the party and referred to as a rogue by Craxi during the national elections.¹⁹² Chiesa eventually turned states-evidence and recounted the full details of the system of *tangenti* occurring in Milan.

Chiesa's arrest proved to be much more than an isolated incident. But before the investigations could unfold, the political system had to be weakened. April 1992 was that weakening. The elections of April 1992 were plagued with the Gladio scandal, mafia violence, and tightening economic conditions. Chiesa's arrest only added fuel to the fire that was burning away at ruling party hegemony. The DC fell from just over 34 percent to just under 30. The greatest losses were in the North. These losses were absorbed as wins by Lega Nord. Overall, the party jumped from .5 percent in the previous election to 8.7 percent in 1992.¹⁹³ This weakening of the political class opened the door to the Milan magistrates' investigations.

The chief prosecutor of Milan Francesco Saverio Borrelli formed a pool of magistrates, *il Dipartimento*, dedicated entirely to investigating the linkages of corruption in Milan. The populist junior prosecutor Di Pietro, known for his humble background, innovative investigation techniques, and pragmatism, quickly became a national figure. The *Dipartimento* was awash with information. Chiesa collaborated as did other Milanese businessmen in naming increasingly powerful political figures. Borrelli did not hesitate to include them in the investigation. This inclusion in investigation had its own peculiar effect. Under the Code for Penal Procedure passed in 1989, anytime someone was placed

¹⁹¹ Nascimbeni, Enrico, and Andrea. Pamparana. 1992. *Le Mani Pulite : L'inchiesta Di Milano Sulle Tangenti*. 1a ed. Frecce. Milano: A. Mondadori. Pg 13-14

¹⁹² Ginsborg, 2003, op cit. pg. 254

¹⁹³ Ministero dell'Interno., Camera 05/04/1992, Archivio Storico Delle Elezioni <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=05/04/1992&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S> Regionally, they performed even better. They gained 25 percent in Lombardy, 19.4 percent in Piedmont, 18.9 percent in the Veneto, and 15.5 percent in Liguria.

under investigation he or she had to be informed by the magistrates.¹⁹⁴ This Notice of Guarantee took on an aura of accusation in the scandalous atmosphere. Prominent politicians, on both the left and the right, received these notices effectively accusing them of illegally financing their activities.

As these investigations were occurring, the office of the President of the Republic opened. The President could exert control over the magistrates thus it became of central importance for the ruling parties to elect someone who could control the crisis. As the majority party, the DC fielded the first candidate. They chose Forlani who was reluctantly backed by Craxi and the PSI. Forlani failed to reach a quorum of votes and the nomination passed to the PSI. Their candidate Giuliano Vassalli also failed to reach a quorum.¹⁹⁵ It looked as if the back and forth over the next President was to continue.

The back and forth would have continued were it not for an escalation brought on by tragedy. The *Maxiprocesso* Mafia trials had progressed far further than anyone had expected. The life sentences handed out to many prominent Mafia members had been upheld after numerous appeals. The Mafia was not about to let these developments go unpunished. The Mafia had retaliated by assassinating Salvatore “Salvo” Lima, the DC politician and former mayor of Palermo on March 12, 1992. Giovanni Falcone a key anti-mafia prosecutor was targeted next. On May 23, as he was driving home from Palermo’s airport with his wife, bodyguards, and police escort, the Mafia detonated over 650 pounds of explosives hidden in a drain pipe underneath the highway. The three policemen in the

¹⁹⁴ Ginsborg, 2003, op cit. pg 256-257

¹⁹⁵ Ginsborg, 2003, ibid, pg 259

lead car were killed instantly and Falcone and his wife died in the hospital shortly after.¹⁹⁶

In the aftermath of Falcone's killing, the government called a joint session to elect a President. They settled on Oscar Luigi Scalfaro who had been Minister of the Interior under Craxi's governments but nonetheless was distant from the business class of the 1980s. He had a reputation for supporting the autonomy of the magistrates and in his acceptance speech took a clear position on *Tangentopoli*. He said, "the abuse of public money is a very grave thing... nothing is more dangerous, for democracy, than the turbid interlacing between politics and business."¹⁹⁷ Scalfaro insisted that Craxi nominate someone to lead the government other than himself. If he did not, Scalfaro hinted that he would ask someone from the Christian Democrats.¹⁹⁸ Craxi had little choice to accept and offered a list of names. Scalfaro chose Giuliano Amato, the former treasury minister. Amato was close to Craxi but there was no evidence he was part of the *tangenti* networks.

Meanwhile, the *mani pulite* investigations began to spread beyond the confines of Milan. All across Italy, prosecutors like Borrelli's *Dipartimento* began to investigate clientelistic linkages. Over the course of his several months in power, seven of Amato's deputies were forced to resign over issues relating to *mani pulite*. And on December 15th, 1992 Bettino Craxi received his first of several *informazione di garanzia* informing him that he was under investigation for corruption, including violation of the law on the public financing of political parties.¹⁹⁹ Shortly after, Craxi fled to his villa in Tunisia

¹⁹⁶ Viviano, Francesco., "Due Ore Di Agonia Per La Moglie Giudice" *La Repubblica*. 24 May 1992

¹⁹⁷ Reprinted in Scalfano, Oscar, "Io Saro per tutti il Supremo Garante" *La Repubblica*, 29 May 1992

¹⁹⁸ Ginsborg, 2003, op cit. pg. 264

¹⁹⁹ Colaprico, Piero, Fazzo, Luca., "Signore Craxi, Fermi Qui", *La Repubblica* 16 December, 1992

To those in government, it seemed as if the investigations would never end. A notice alone was an accusation. Amato decided that something needed to be done. He, along with Giovanni Conso, the new Minister of Justice announced four decree laws and three bills to address the escalating situation. The most significant, and the one that created the most outrage, was the immediate depenalization for the illegal financing of political parties.²⁰⁰ Prominent Italians, including Eugenio Scalfari, the author of the term *borghesia dello stato*, accused Amato and Conso of blatantly lying to the public.²⁰¹ The public was outraged that the political class would attempt to let themselves off in such a manner. Scalfaro insisted he would not sign the decree law on constitutional grounds. The political situation only grew worse. On March 28th Andreotti received a Notice from the prosecutors in Palermo notifying him that he was under investigation for association with the Mafia.²⁰²

Once prosecutors reached the level of Andreotti, it was clear that the First Republic needed to be replaced. On April 19 a series of referenda, including a referendum to reform the electoral system and one to address the public financing of parties, was passed with an overwhelming margin.²⁰³ The political system had to confront itself. Amato was pushed out and Scalfaro formed an interim “president’s government” which was to last until new national elections in March 1994. The investigations continued but without the fever that had preceded. During this time, the DC's last secretary, Mino Martinazzoli decided to change the name of the party to the Italian

²⁰⁰ Rhodes, Martin. 1997. "Financing Party Politics in Italy: A Case of Systemic Corruption." West European Politics 20 (1): 54-80

²⁰¹ Scalfari, Eugenio,. "Il Governo Dello Scippo", *la Repubblica*, 7 March 1993

²⁰² Cowell, Alan,. "Ex-Premier Faces Inquiry on Mafia", *New York Times*, 28 March 1993

²⁰³ Ministero dell'Interno., Referendum 18/04/1993, Archivio Storico Delle Elezioni <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=F&dtel=18/04/1993&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

Peoples' Party with Berlusconi's center right *Forza Italia* eventually absorbing most of the party in 1994.²⁰⁴ The socialists officially disbanded on November 13, 1994 but they had been losing members well before that date. Most of their members and voters shifted over to PDS the reformed Communist party. As 1994 approached, the First Italian Republic came to an end.

The final quarter-century of the First Republic present a story defined by tension and conflict. This fact is not controversial. The conflict was on display for the world to see. What is far more significant, is the fact that many of these episodes were either precipitated or enhanced by the state itself. Whether it was the inability of the state to accomplish reforms at the hands of *trasformismo* politics or direct political corruption, the state served as a powerful perpetrator of its own demise. One way of approaching this issue is to say a few brief words about clientelistic politics in Italy in general.

Many accounts of clientelism in Italy treated it as an issue of cultural path dependence. Perhaps the most famous example of this approach is Edward C. Banfield's book *The Moral Basis of Backward Society*. Written in 1958, Banfield based his analysis on a paternalistic analysis of a good Northern society and a bad Southern one. Banfield above all wanted to show a causal connection between economic development and a people's propensity to engage in social associations and engage in collective projects for the common good. He argued that poverty and "backwardness" could be explained largely by the inability of villagers to act together and transcend the immediate interest of the nuclear family. Banfield called this behavior "amoral familism". Amoral familism was above all, an ethos that rose out of the economic and social situation found throughout the South defined by a high mortality, land tenure conditions, and the absence

²⁰⁴ Ginsborg, 2003, op cit, pg 280

of extended family.²⁰⁵ Robert Putnam's regional government performance analysis took a similar outlook. He focused even more heavily on the role of social associations in shaping government performance across a variety of measures. Finding that the Northern regions outperformed the Southern ones in their ability to enact and implement policy Putnam explained this differentiation in terms of a "civic tradition" present in the North but absent in the South. This structure in the South, largely a legacy of the Spanish Hapsburgs and the Bourbons, destroyed horizontal ties of solidarity in order to "maintain the vertical ties of dependence and exploitation."²⁰⁶ Whereas the North saw government as means of expressing citizenship through mutual cooperation, the South's government maintained the people as subjects through rigid hierarchies. Because of this uneven power structure, corruption and clientelist administrative practices defined much of the Italian social experience.

Mani Pulite calls all of this into question. For one, it began in Milan, Italy's supposedly most modern city. But more than that, *Mani Pulite* revealed that clientelism was the core of the Italian state. There is little doubt that had the DC-PSI coalition won a decisive victory in the 1992 elections, the investigation would have been blocked, like many before it. This blockage would have been aided by the splintering of the magistrates themselves into the political factions omnipresent in Italian political history. The magistrates, especially the proactive ones, took action because the political class was weak and divided. Also, any blockage of judicial inquiry would have created an uproar. The deaths of Lima and Falcone were endemic to the problem of corruption. Falcone was not to be the last victim related to the Mafia trials. On Sunday July 19 1992, Paolo

²⁰⁵ Banfield, Edward C.,. 1958. *The moral basis of a backward society*,. Glencoe, Ill.; [Chicago: Free Press; Research Center in Economic Development and Cultural Change, University of Chicago. pg. 10

²⁰⁶ Banfield, *ibid*, pg. 135-136

Borsellino, another popular and prominent anti-Mafia prosecutor, went to visit his mother at her apartment in Via D'Amelio, Palermo. He was accompanied to the gate of the apartment block with five heavily armed bodyguards. As they reached the gate, there was a powerful explosion, which killed all six of them instantly.²⁰⁷ When all of this violence was combined with the accusations of political corruption spreading throughout the country, the country developed a desire for justice. Any political blocking to the pursuit of that justice, as was evident with the backlash against Amato and Conso, was met with uproar.

A second element that places clientelism into the domain of the state rather than society alone is the fact that the corruption investigations spread furiously across Italy. The investigations started as small inquiries into small to medium sized bribery payments to government personnel and exploded into a full-blown investigations into the most powerful politicians in Italy. Milan broke the firewall that protected the political class from being held accountable for their actions. Furthermore, the actions of the Socialists—who, as they made clear in their opposition to Communists from Togliatti to Berlinguer, were hostile to using the state for political purposes—shows that the state could be a tool to reduce opposition. The spoils system that the state provided to those that were included in it helped maintain the state itself. It was only actions from the outside, structural reform had consistently fallen on deaf ears, that changed the system. And it remains an open question to what extent the fall of the First Republic produced change for the Italian Republic.

²⁰⁷ Fuccillo, Mino., “L’Italia in Trincea” *La Repubblica*, 21 July 1992

Chapter 5: Populism Emerges and Responds

In 1992, voters signaled what the *Corriere della Sera* called the earthquake elections.²⁰⁸

The Italians had held a protest vote even if at this point it was not for anything or anyone in particular. As the scandals unraveled the political system, it became clear that they had voted for an alternative—*any* alternative. Even before the elections occurred, this push for an alternative asserted itself through the electoral rise of the Lega Nord. The crisis of legitimacy in Italy provoked structural changes and opened space for new political actors. This space benefitted Lega and its brand of populism because extreme right parties do not support the political system, either with unconventional participation or direct action. Piero Ignazi argued their anti-system connotation pushes them to delegitimize the 'fundamentals' of representative democracy.²⁰⁹ A deepening of the crisis—which would occur in Italy as the investigations progressed—fuels the anti-system parties rather than the 'reformist' ones.

Evidence of this claim comes from the fact that the crisis boosted populist, anti-establishment parties like Lega Nord who saw a surge in popularity amid demands for legality and democratic renewal. Lega capitalized on the crisis of the centralized government by offering a populist program and regional federalism as an alternative to the decades of misrule. They mobilized around one of their most recognized slogans, *Roma Ladrona* (Thieving Rome), and secured representation through alliances with Silvio Berlusconi's newly formed Forza Italia party and MSI, which had reformed itself as the far-right *Alleanza Nazionale*. This alliance would mark a reestablishment of

²⁰⁸ Gianfranco, Piazzesi., "L'Italia Protesta, Elezioni Terremoto" *Corriere della Sera* 7 April, 1992

²⁰⁹ Ignazi, Piero., 1996. "The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties." *Party Politics* 2 (4):549-66.

coalition governments that defines Italian national politics to the present day. The end of the First Republic marked the beginning of the Second, which was defined by a fresh array of political actors.

The rise of this populism in Italy is marked by the references to the past political history that we have explored up to this point. Going forward, it is essential that we focus on how *Lega* and right-wing populism in general fits into this political history. Since *Lega* was the principle party espousing these populist discontents, this investigation will focus on its activities primarily. This final investigation will trace out how these political actors asserted themselves in a post-crisis political landscape. Rather than proceed in the historical manner of the previous chapters, this chapter takes a more theoretical approach to investigate how *Lega* constructs itself ideologically vis-à-vis the developments in Italian political history that confirm its worldview.

The Ideologies of Lega Nord

Lega cannot be seen as simply a right-wing or radical right-wing party. *Lega* represents a major rebirth of the politics of populism in Italy. Populism is a slippery concept in politics. It has been used to describe everything from Fascism to calls for direct democracy. The reason for this broad use of the term comes from its base referent. Ionescu and Gellner argue that all forms of populism are “characterized by an ideological referent to the ‘people’ as a homogenous entity with exclusive positive and permanent values.”²¹⁰ *Lega*’s efforts can be described as populist in this respect. For example, in its early years *Lega* built support through rudimentary tactics like leafleting football (soccer)

²¹⁰ Ionescu, Ghița., Gellner, Ernest.,. 1970. *Populism: Its meanings and national characteristics*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson pg. 1

matches and addressing relatively apolitical civil society associations in the north as a way of tapping into the people. But populism meant something different for Lega. Lega employed a more concrete form of populism based on contextual factors like regionalism. Roberto Biorcio used the term regional populism, which has since caught on, to describe Lega. His conceptualization was a fusion of both regionalism and populism that created a mutually reinforcing dialectic between the two terms. He included regionalism in the definition of populism because Lega arose in a specific political and socio-economic environment in which it could develop its themes with reference to the territorial context of its heartland areas. Furthermore, it was created as a fusion of regional groups, thus having an institutional history built on regional features.²¹¹ This regional populism is formulated against the backdrop of the major political issues that flow through the historical project of Italian politics.

Populism as an ideology, especially for right-wing parties, is more complicated. This complexity is evident in how Lega's regional populist identity emerged. Piero Ignazi argued that new right-wing parties like Lega were either parties with historical links to Fascism or a type of post-industrial extreme right defined by the fusion of anti-establishment values and neo-conservatism.²¹² Hans-George Betz and Paul Taggart elaborated on Ignazi's formulation by introducing populism into the fusion.²¹³ For these two scholars, populism meant mobilizing a people and resentments against the powers-

²¹¹ Biorcio, Roberto. 1991 a. "La Lega Come Attore Politico: Dal Federalismo Al Populismo Regionalista." In *La lega lombarda*, ed. Renato Mannheimer. Milano: Feltrinelli, 34-83 see also 1991 b. "The Rebirth of Populism in Italy and France." *Telos* 90 (4):430-57.

²¹² Ignazi, 1996, op. cit.

²¹³ Betz, Hans-Georg. 1993. "The Two Faces of Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe." *Review of Politics* 55 (4):663-85.

Taggart, Paul. 2004. "Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9 (3):269-88.

that-be. The essence of Ignazi's argument remained the same but now anti-establishment stances were mobilized masses confronting the powers-that-be. Because these masses are constituted through a regional space, Lega framed issues in terms of a "people" versus an "outsider." Specifically, Lega formed a discourse which pits a virtuous, homogenous people against a set of self-serving "poteri forti" (powers-that-be).²¹⁴ These *poteri forti* are embodied by the state the problems that arise out of it based on its centralization. The fusion of regionalism and populism creates an ambiguous form of populism that is ultimately defined by regionalism and a regionalism that gets its rhetorical force from anti-establishment populism.

This dualism has aided in their political project in ways that simultaneously rely on and expand on identity. Specifically, the geographical location of "North" allows them to create a pseudo-nation, which they have named Padania in reference to the Po river valley that all of the northern regions share. When their populism is combined with this "nation" the party constructs an identity based on an imagined nationhood. Cas Mudde argues that this construction allows right-wing parties like the Lega Nord to expound "Nativist Nationalism." He argues that this construction is an ideology that holds states should be inhabited by members of the native group (the "nation") and that nonnative elements like people and "foreign" ideas are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.²¹⁵ This formulation allows for the regionalist-populism to take

²¹⁴ McDonnell, Duncan,. 2006. "A Weekend in Padania: Regionalist Populism and the Lega Nord." *Politics* 26 (2):126-32. See also Cento Bull, Anna. 1996. *Ethnicity, racism and the Northern League*. In C. Levy, Italian regionalism, history, identity and politics Oxford; Washington, D.C.: Berg. 171–187 and Cento Bull, Anna,, Gilbert, Mark,,. 2001. *The Lega Nord and the northern question in Italian politics*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave.

²¹⁵ Mudde, Cas,. 2007. *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press. See also Zaslove, Andrej. 2009. "The Populist Radical Right: Ideology, Party Families and Core Principles." *PSR Political Studies Review* 7 (3):309-18.

on a dimension of nationalism. For Lega this nationalism stems from their construction of Padania. Lega's Padania becomes an anchor point for their ideology and a convenient reference point for constructing political debates in insider/outsider terms.

By rooting their demands in regional-populist manner, Lega stands against anything that threatens the cultural and regional identity of the Italians in the areas in which they are active. Specifically, this stand often manifests itself in calls for radical action ranging from secession from Italy or enhanced autonomous regional federalism to a general xenophobia of outside "others" like immigrants, the EU, and other forces of globalization.²¹⁶ Furthermore, this positioning allows Lega to practice various forms of exclusion and it allows them to incorporate other forms of exclusion quite easily.²¹⁷ This ability lends Lega a degree of ideological flexibility. For example, the party originally "othered" Southern Italians in order to oppose the social and economic support that the South received at the expense of the North. These rhetorical techniques did not fall on deaf ears considering the amount of Southern immigration that the north absorbed following the economic boom. Furthermore, the grievances over access to work and other economic strains introduced by the Southern immigrant resurfaced in this discourse focusing on the South as primarily parasitic in nature. During its peak years, Southern immigration was constructed as something that befell the North. It was not much of a stretch to expand this to development programs and the "Southernized" government, defined by corruption and inefficiency, itself as something that befell the North.

²¹⁶ Woods, Dwayne,. 2009. "Pockets of Resistance to Globalization: The Case of the Lega Nord." *Patterns of Prejudice* 43 (2):161-77

²¹⁷ Zaslove, Andrej. 2009. "The Populist Radical Right: Ideology, Party Families and Core Principles." *PSR Political Studies Review* 7 (3):309-18.

As globalization expanded, Lega shifted its discourse to attack immigrants, the EU, and other forces of globalization that they felt threatened their unique way of life.²¹⁸ Southern Italy no longer was the central focus although remnants of anti-southernism remained. This dexterity can be illuminated by critically analyzing perceptions of Lega. Observers of the Lega Nord comment that this xenophobia often manifests itself in directly racist or quasi-racist rhetoric. This perspective certainly has merit particularly surrounding their views on migrants but is often complicated by their populist character. Anna Cento Bull argues that the racism Lega employs rhetorically arises from a tightly communitarian society and economy.²¹⁹ Lega emphasized its regional ethnicity rather than a generic Italian ethnicity. Lega employs an "othering" and xenophobia based on cultural rather than biological differentiation. She cites the political program for 1992 when Lega would have espoused the most intense regionalism because it had yet to enter political power. The xenophobia is presented in cultural terms. The program states:

Our party's strongly critical attitude towards migratory policies stems from our specific concept of mankind. A human person is not simply an economic agent: he or she is made up of affections, cultural values and identities which can find their best expressions in separate historical and environmental communities. Immigrations, having a purely economic value, break up this equilibrium which forms a vital part of human nature.²²⁰

This stance allows them to direct the xenophobia towards whichever group suits their political and community needs. They can target groups related to issues they are combating to frame issues in relation to their territorial community and "people". The threat itself is unimportant, so long as whatever it is can be formulated as an outsider.

²¹⁸ Cento Bull, Anna,, Gilbert, Mark,.. 2001. *The Lega Nord and the northern question in Italian politics*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave,

²¹⁹ Cento Bull, 1996, *ibid*.

²²⁰ Quoted in Cento Bull, 1996, *ibid* pg. 174

Lega's views of Southern Italians illustrate this process of "people" definition. The most prevalent way in which xenophobia is articulated in what Lega terms the 'cultural' differences between the North and South of Italy.²²¹ According to Lega, the economic differences between North and South are ascribed to the alleged contrasts in culture, mentality and attitude on the part of the majority of people in the South of Italy. The South is consistently portrayed by Lega as an area in which the people have no real desire to work and are only interested in claiming state benefits, whereas the North of Italy, Lega argues, has a strong work ethic, which explains the dynamism of the economy. When they do work, Southerners are characterized as economically backward because of the agricultural nature of their work. In addition to these views about agricultural work, Lega's grievances against the state translate into an attack on southern Italians. The bureaucratic structure was mostly staffed with southern law graduates that looked to the state to provide employment and economic stability.

These sentiments create a powerful divide in Italian society, which Lega exploited rhetorically. For them, only the Northern regions were socially and economically healthy. Everything south of Rome suffered from a parasitic illness of crime, inefficiency, and backwardness. These conditions were intensified by the bloated public sector that relied on northern tax dollars to fund failed public works projects in the South. History suggests that this is not an inaccurate criticism. In fact, this ideological point transformed into one of the most recognized slogans of Lega Nord: *Roma Ladrona* or thieving Rome. For Lega, the solution was to stop the spread of the illness by cutting off the malfeasance before it spread. This message had deep salience for the Northern Lega supporters as they

²²¹ Giordano, Benito,. 2000. "Italian Regionalism Or 'Padanian' Nationalism - the Political Project of the Lega Nord in Italian Politics." *Political Geography* 19 (4). p. 458

watched the northern regions become embroiled in corruption scandals. Corruption was typically seen as a Southern phenomenon exerted by the interlocking of elites in the government and agricultural sectors. The flow of money to the South through development projects, projects that often languished in inefficiency and excess, only helped to confirm this viewpoint. When corruption broke through the northern power bloc, starting with Craxi's Milanese Socialists, it appeared as if the whole system had been infiltrated by the corrupt governance structures of Rome. Because the illness was embedded in the culture of the South, the only way to stop the spread was a complete separation. Thus, Lega began to advocate for the independence of their nation of Padania. When this dualism of North versus South was created, or rather reasserted, Lega could support it through employing its regionalist populism of "our people" versus an outsider to sustain momentum. This momentum coupled with the ability to define new enemies of Padania and its people, allows the Lega Nord to occupy a unique position in Italian politics.

This xenophobic rhetoric, espoused in culturalist terms, also allows Lega to occupy a theoretical space outside of mainstream politics. This anti-establishment populism allows for Lega to wield enormous political dexterity so long as the issue can be framed in an "us versus outsider" manner. A prominent example is their ambiguous anti-establishment stance expressed when the "other" is the Italian government itself. Lega rejects the centralized government, feeling that it simply drains their region of tax revenue and stifles their regional uniqueness. These vital resources are stolen from Padania. Furthermore, they coupled this slogan with their xenophobic views on Southern Italians to create a threat to their regional wellbeing around which they mobilized their

supporters. Lega's longevity derives from its combination of regionalism and populism which, respectively, give the party a unique identity in the northern Italian electoral market and the flexibility to adapt quickly to changing opportunity structures.²²² Without the ideological dexterity afforded by their nativist regional-populism, Lega would not be able to tap into political opportunities and construct their principle demand: a demand for regional autonomy guaranteed by federalism.

Especially in its early years, strong calls for federalism and autonomy defined Lega's political program. These calls came from all party leadership but the strongest call for federalism came from Gianfranco Miglio, the individual responsible for lending an academic voice to the demands of the movement and party. Miglio argued that the strong dissatisfaction of the Italian people with their government came from a "widespread revolt against the nation-state."²²³ This revolt arose from the way the nation-state was constituted. He argued that the political project of the modern nation-state, particularly one constructed in the manner of the *Risorgimento*, pursued a program of internal homogeneity. This internal homogeneity could only come through the construction of a national myth that was used to guarantee internal cohesion. As we have seen, this myth took various forms historically. During the *Risorgimento*, it was the myth of the nation itself. A unified Italy that transcended Italy as a geographic unit was the end goal. The problem with this myth construction was that it was intrinsically opposed to the particularisms over which it was trying to operate. This fact is striking in that the architects of the *Risorgimento* pursued centralized rule to help bring together these

²²² Albertazzi, Daniele, McDonnell, Duncan. 2008. *Twenty-first century populism: The spectre of western European democracy*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

²²³ Miglio, Gianfranco. 1992. *Come Cambiare: Le Mie Riforme*. Frecce. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori. In English see: Miglio, Gianfranco. 1993. "The Cultural Roots of Federalism." *Telos* 97 (3):33-41. p. 33

particularisms. For them, these particularisms were not thought of in terms of specific identities but divisions. And divisions were antithetical to a strong nation state that could compete on the international state. The particular languages, cultures, cults, and customs that constitute a people's concrete social composition could not exist within this nation-state. Furthermore, as the nation-state became associated with modernity, all of these particularities were at worst dismissed as "backward" or at best considered "folklore". This approach created dissatisfaction within the people because it engendered a fundamental contradiction into a state's nationalist project. These myths of national unity are meaningful abstractions for only a limited set of individuals, usually the creators of the myths. Fascism only intensified this push toward unity and homogeneity.

Miglio and the populists pushed for the exact opposite. Rather than create national abstractions, government should occupy itself with a focus on local particularities. For Miglio and the political project of Lega, authentic bonds are cultural and are only powerful at the micro-level. The central government had spent too much time and resources trying to forge something that only arises naturally through a process of localized community formation. Only through this "microculturalism" could an authentic sense of belonging arise. This focus on the micro also applied to the socio-economic background of the Lega electorate. The people that came out *en masse* for Lega were from the deeply Catholic Northern provinces dominated by small and medium dynamic industries that had been expanding since the economic boom.²²⁴ This fusion of traditional Catholic communities and economic dynamism fostered a strong sense of localism and exclusiveness of the northern small-town Catholic Italy combined with a focus on

²²⁴ Diamanti, Ilvo. 1993. *La Lega : Geografia, Storia e Sociologia Di Un Nuovo Soggetto Politico*. Roma : Donzelli,. pg. 31, 38-40.

networks built by those communities and the autonomous industries making up their economic base. These people felt, and with some justification, that they existed outside the realm of the state. Their projects were defined by independence rather than state dependence especially when compared to the Southerners who, in their view, relied on the state and other corrupt networks for subsistence. Their ethic of hard work, sacrifice, and self-sufficiency contrasted drastically with the images of excess and corruption emerging at the end of the First Republic.

For Miglio and other Lega Nord members, this microculturalism provided the cultural support for their calls for federalism. Miglio argued a federal constitution is meant to preserve and manage particularisms.²²⁵ Only through this federal model – which was to be supplemented with the right of secession – could a functioning national Italian government exist. The central model was far too divorced from the people it was designed to serve. This fact coupled with the highly legalistic nature of the Italian administration could only lead to the rampant inefficiencies and misbehavior that had brought down the post-war Italian order. The federal system was meant to allow for the functioning of differences between parts of the country that have differing cultures and want to be governed differently. This federalism would be Italy-specific, a neo-federalism, based on micro-regions that corresponded to local realities. This federalism would entail the dismantling of the central state in favor of the localities and their particularities. Crucially, Lega's federalism was built on its program regional populism that emphasized creating a new arrangement for politics in Italy. Paul Piccone points out that responses to wasteful, unresponsive, inefficient, and unaccountable central

²²⁵ Miglio, 1993, Ibid pg.35

governments typically call for a return to a mythical, pre-modern political organization predicated on ethnicity, religion, race, language, and other specific characteristics.²²⁶ Even though Lega bases its political ideology on preserving these elements as culturally important entities, their call for federalism represented the broader regional populism of their other ideological components. Piccone argues that Lega's self-reconfiguration from a limited ethnic formation into a broader Northern League calling for the federated regions encompassing relatively "organic socio-economic zones" represents an alternative to the pre-modern idealism. Lega made its regional populism the starting point to finding solutions to social problems rather than the ultimate solution itself. Only by focusing on the local could government adequately address the social and economic issues that faced the country.

One such example is Lega's ability to advocate for its particular brand of federalism to confront economic issues despite its constitution as a region-focused and anti-establishment force. In fact, Zaslove argues that going beyond the cultural issues of regional populism into the realm of economic grievances reveals a great deal about the party.²²⁷ These issues are especially important to consider as they often changed quite significantly in the context of electoral politics. Lega was one of the first political movements in Italy to warn policymakers that the international political-economic system was undergoing significant changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Lega made the case that Italy, particularly with its bloated public sector and weak production sector, was ill equipped to handle these changes.²²⁸ Rather, they argued Italy needed to decentralize

²²⁶ Piccone, Paul. 1991. "Federal Populism in Italy." *Telos* 90 (4):3-19.

²²⁷ Zaslove, Andrej. 2009. *op cit.* pg. 314

²²⁸ Woods, 2009, *op cit.* pg. 163

its administration system while building support for the small and medium sized firms like the ones that dominated the landscape occupied by Lega. Lega maintained that the traditional form of centralized and patron-client politics embodied by the ruling parties like the Christian Democrats did not represent the needs of most Italians and northern-Italians in particular. Rather than focusing on the small and medium sized firms that developed alongside the massive firms dominating the *boom economico*, Lega argued that the Rome and the central government was wasting valuable resources by supporting the Italian South. This waste was particularly egregious in the use of public money to build large conglomerates. In other words, the government was only contributing to excess and inefficiency in focusing on entities like ENI and Montedison, dominated by the state bourgeoisie, rather than on the many small and medium firms dominated by the *ceti medi*. Rather, Umberto Bossi, the party leader argued, the Christian Democrats favored large public and private entities that built “cathedrals in the desert” at the expense of local entities both public and private.²²⁹ This line was often used in Italy even before the crisis to describe the massive public works projects funded by the *Casa per il Mezzogiorno*. Bossi and other Lega politicians attacked high taxes, transfers of funds from the North to the South, inefficient bureaucracy and state services, arguing that these failings put the regions of Lega’s constituency at risk. This message was especially powerful considering the low job growth that these investment schemes produced. We have seen that the development investment was capital intensive in nature, particularly when it was focused on developing natural resources or agriculture in the South. Thieving

²²⁹ Woods, 2009, *ibid* 162-4. See also: Tambini, Damian. 1994. "Strategy Or Identity? the Northern League at a Crossroad - Two Interviews with Bossi and Rocchetta." *Telos* 99 (1):229-249.

Rome was going to bankrupt the country and the small and medium producers which Italy relied on already were going to end up footing the bill.

Crucially, Lega constructed this argument in a regionalist and populist manner. The actions of the central government were those of an outsider taking from the areas of Lega's support. The response to this theft (*Roma Ladrona*) and other threats to their "nation" created a distinct set of ideological characteristics, specifically its anti-establishment stance, based on perceived threats. Working off of the ethnographic study of "radical right" voters conducted by Jörg Flecker, Zaslove argues that three economic trends come together to produce an economic ideological profile of a populist right party like the Lega Nord. In terms of economic issues, supporters demonstrate intensive feelings of injustice from frustrations of legitimate expectations relating to various aspects of work, employment, social status or standard of living; (2) there was a sense of fear and anxiety that comes from a sense of powerlessness from economic decline, precarious employment, or the devaluation of skills and qualifications; and finally (3) there was a clear trend among those who had experienced 'occupational advancement' with a strong sense of attachment to the 'company and its goals'.²³⁰ Outsiders create uncertainties and threats, even abstract ones like economic changes, which the populist nation mobilizes against.

These sources of uncertainty and perceived threats to their world at the hands of existing socio-economic transformations and the seeming inability of existing government to respond adequately to absolute and relative levels of economic decline

²³⁰ Zaslove 2009 *ibid* pg. 315, Flecker, Jörg,, 2007. *Changing working life and the appeal of the extreme right*. Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co. pg. 60-1.

allow Lega to assume an anti-establishment stance regardless of its position in the government. Even when in power, federalism provided a universal answer. They could always fall back on their federalist program of politics because they argued that the problem itself arose from excessive centralization of the political system. The high levels of bureaucracy and taxation coupled with the growing problems of public sector debt created the problems in the economy. The federal model with its focus on particularities and local solutions could solve the problems created by a distant and homogenizing central government. This stance permitted Lega to incorporate autonomous constituencies within its regional populist federal model so long as they broadly fit Lega's conception of "microculturalism." Furthermore, this image of negligence and theft perpetuated by Rome put them in the position of uncertainty outlined by Zaslove and facilitated their turn inward towards regionalist populism. This turn is evident in that the same cultural "othering" that occupies their social thought also occupies their economic ideology. The fear and anger that Lega invokes at economic issues is made possible by this ability to pinpoint injustices suffered by their "people" at the hands of an outsider even if that outsider is Rome, the South, or later, the EU and migrants.

This shift to global issues marks an important turn for the Lega Nord. Before, their focus was on the internal social problems caused by the bloated public sector and high taxes. They also directed some attention toward migration but not on the scale they would adopt as migration to Italy increased during the 1990s and 2000s. Lega began to direct its vitriol towards the EU, migration and other forces of globalization particularly as it began to win electoral successes in coalition partnerships with other right wing parties. In its earlier years, Lega looked towards the European community with only a

moderate skepticism. They were hesitant to support it because of the threat it could pose to regional identities but for the most part their energy was directed at the failings of the Italian state. Furthermore, during these early years, Lega supported European integration to the extent that its leaders believed that the more the North was integrated into a broader European economy, the more autonomy the region could have from the government in Rome.

All of this changed in 1999 with the introduction of the Euro as the European single currency. The adoption of the Euro in Italy was not an easy process. Many blamed the euro for an increase in the cost of living. As merchants adjusted to the euro, they increased their prices; in other European countries as well, the euro was blamed for spiking inflation. As Italy's position relative to the rest of the European Union worsened, anti-globalization rhetoric increased. According to Lega leaders, especially the new Federal Secretary Matteo Salvini, the EU was not serving as a barrier against the negative effects of globalization. In fact it was accomplishing the exact opposite. By pushing for low tariffs, welcoming Chinese entry into the WTO, and sanctioning member states that hampered EU-wide competition the EU became a force of globalization and a threat to localized Lega interests.²³¹

The entry of these globalization forces put local, small and medium enterprises in a position of weakness relative to the cheap goods that flowed in from overseas. Local industries like textiles and other luxury goods declined in value because of this dual economic force of a weakening currency and cheap goods. This weakness became a

²³¹ Woods 2009 *ibid* and Woods, Dwayne 2010. "A Critical Analysis of the Northern League's Ideographical Profiling." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 15 (2):189-219.

central point of Lega's political program; the Lega Nord crystalized their attacks in anti-WTO and anti-import language. For Lega, the WTO symbolized unfettered global trade and the dumping of cheap products on to the Italian market. Woods reminds us that while the Lega's hostile attitude towards trade appears contradictory, since the movement is based in a region of small and middle-sized enterprises that rely on trade, many of these firms' owners believed that trade with Eastern Europe and especially China threatened their exports.²³² International trade became a threat to the localized interests of Padanian people even though their criticism fit into a much larger anti-globalization discourse.

Lega Nord's constitution as a regional populist party allows it to construct a discourse of "Us" versus "them" based on the particular set of political pressures available. They were able to take a stand on corruption in the 1990s because they could plausibly argue their people and their "nation" was being stolen from. They could just as easily switch focus and attack the forces of globalization, much like their left-wing adversaries, because of the negative effects of the Euro and the introduction of cheap Chinese goods to the market. Both situations created the opportunity for the Lega Nord to activate their regionalist populism rhetoric and mobilize to secure political representation. The Lega's populism allowed them to pull together small and medium industrialists as well as the workers within those firms, shopkeepers, and a section of the white collar working class all by focusing on issues of fiscal and political federalism often backed up by a rhetorical technique that established a powerful us/them binary to inform politics. These people, many of whom comprised the *ceti medi* who were historically either

²³² Woods 2009 *ibid* pg. 165 For a more localized discussion on textiles see also Agnew, John. 2007. "Remaking Italy? Place Configurations and Italian Electoral Politics Under the 'Second Republic'." *Modern Italy* 12 (1):17-38.

courted by the government or left to go about their business, found a powerful political organization through which they could relate to the Italian political system.

Populism Exploits the Political System

Populism's political prospects came to fruition during the 1990s period of scandals and legitimization crises. However it seems pertinent to ask why Lega? Italy is known for having many political parties and if the scandals truly opened up space for new players why did Lega do so well? The answer to this puzzle comes from their unique ideological construction of regionalism and most importantly populism. Lega was able to capitalize on the legitimacy crisis through offering its fluid program of populism and federalism discussed in the previous section.

Disgust and dissatisfaction with the central government was rampant during the period of crisis. As valuable as this information is for understanding the political opportunity structure at the time, it obscures the fact that dissatisfaction with the central government did not emerge overnight with the revelation of a growing number of dirty politicians and corrupt programs. Regular Eurobarometer surveys show a growing level of discontent from 1972 to 1994. This dissatisfaction is hardly surprising considering the uptick in conflict and visible corruption during this time period. In Italy, this discontent reached a percentage of the population almost double that of other European countries. The percentage of the population reporting of dissatisfaction never fell below 70 percent and occasionally swelled to approach 90 percent.²³³ The investigations revealed that the parties and other areas of public administration through their patron-client networks were

²³³ Morlino, Leonardo; Tarchi, Marco., 1996. "The Dissatisfied Society: The Roots of Political Change in Italy." *EJPR European Journal of Political Research* 30 (1):41-63.

directly responsible for the inefficiencies and separation of political elites and citizens. When the scandals broke and revealed the extent and depth of corrupt networks in these various areas of the public sector the underlying sentiments transformed into cries of protest. These protests found a willing audience among populist political parties like Lega which had long decried the inefficiencies and patron-client ties of the central government.

These political opportunities, as fruitful as they were also presented a challenge for Lega and its ideology. Lega's ideology and rhetoric hinged on its anti-establishment position. This anti-establishment populism presents a contradiction for parties wishing to enter government. These parties risk losing supporters as they decide to participate in the political system they decry.²³⁴ Their localized identities and needs face a threat of subservience to national political needs. This fear was especially important for Lega because of Italy's increasing participation in globalizing entities like the EU. Initially, Lega remained firm in its anti-authority and isolationist stance. Its populist voice was powerful enough for it to win representation because Italy's proportional representation system allowed Lega take an independent stance. In the old system, as long as a party received four percent of the electorate it could receive seats in parliament. Recognizing their strong position, they refused to join the coalitions they saw as the embodiment of the corrupt system they were decrying.

Lega used this outsider status to mobilize animosity against the government, sufficient to win representation in the 1992 and 1996 elections. Yet in 1993 Italy began to

²³⁴ Elias, Anwen, Tronconi, Filippo,. 2011. "From Protest to Power: Autonomist Parties in Government." *Party Politics* 17 (4):505-24.

reform its electoral system from proportional representation to a predominately majoritarian system. These changes took effect at the regional level but by 1994 these reforms had spread to the national level. This majoritarian system favored parties—unlike Lega—willing to form coalitions. Lega could not sustain its strictly anti-establishment stance because its electoral base could not compete with parties that formed coalitions.²³⁵ The risk of being left in the cold by its former supporters led to Lega's decision to form an alliance with Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia party. This alliance led to electoral success in the March 1994 general election but within months the alliance would fall apart, bringing down the government. Lega would not see widespread electoral success in general elections until 2001 when it struck a new alliance with Berlusconi and Forza which lasted until 2006.

For regionalist populists like the Lega Nord, participation in coalitions at the national level requires striking a delicate balance between being a party of government and a movement of opposition. Albertazzi & McDonnell argue that this balance characterizes the recent behavior of the Lega as it has pursued electoral politics, particularly is participation in coalitions.²³⁶ These coalitions allow Lega to access political power but still present a contradiction in that Lega maintained its regional stance. It was able to marshal its populism to secure power but focusing on national politics undermines its regional and nativist construction. Traditionally, autonomous and regionalist parties have no organization at a higher territorial level and only seek to mobilize electoral support at a national level in order to secure representation and self-

²³⁵ Tarchi, Marco. 2008. "Italy: A Country of Many Populisms." In *Twenty-first century populism : The spectre of western european democracy* ed. Albertazzi, Daniele.; McDonnell, Duncan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England]: Palgrave Macmillan.

²³⁶ Albertazzi, Daniele, McDonnell, Duncan. 2010. "The Lega Nord Back in Government." *West European Politics* 33 (6):1318-40.

determination for the “nation” that they claim to represent and defend. Autonomous parties usually are only willing to cross this threshold when a significant opportunity, like the ones in post-crisis Italy, arises. Once in government, parties come under pressure to set a legislative agenda and focus on issues that can be achieved. In this situation, parties, particularly autonomous ones, have two options. Elias and Tronconi argue they can re-brand themselves as credible mainstream political actors and responsible governing partners capable of undertaking the duties of government effectively or they can play the role of “opposition in government” in order to reassure their grassroots supporters that they have not “sold out” to the establishment.²³⁷

Lega Nord falls between these two positions because, on one hand, it exists to represent and fight for the self-determination of the Padanian people vis-a-vis the corrupt dependency inducing federal government. On the other hand, Lega strives to achieve legislative victories in its core issue areas. Lega’s ideological construction allows them to walk the line between these two options. Analyzing the political issues championed by Lega, namely anti-globalization and federalism, helps illuminate this positioning strategy. Federalism, which became a greater focus as Lega shifted away from its secessionist rhetoric, allowed the party to remain committed to the self-determination of Padania. Federalism represented a way of giving more autonomy to regions but in a way, as opposed to secession, that still occurred in the context of the state. Federalism can be a concrete legislative goal particularly if presented in the rhetoric of reform but international issues gave Lega even more options to make legislative demands. Globalization “threats” allow Lega to latch on to concrete issues, like the flood of cheap

²³⁷ Elias and Tronconi op cit.

textiles or increased clandestine immigration, and produce a legislative agenda. Lega could oppose the state as it stood through calls for more Federalism while simultaneously working towards legislative solutions to address problems facing the country.

Lega's dualism, which it obtains from its fluid ideological construction, found expression in the way Lega approached its role in government during the different times and structural positions of its power. Not only did it make the various demands outlined above it constantly negotiates its position within the coalition governments. When Lega came to power with Forza in 1994 it did so with a reduction in its overall vote share to levels below what it had achieved in the 1992 election.²³⁸ This development promoted fears of a vote shift towards Forza. Growing fears within the Lega of a weakening of its distinctive profile and the erosion of its electoral standing as a result of coalition participation led to its withdrawal from the government. This decision was controversial. An internal conflict ensued between those willing to exploit government office for policy gains, and a hardline faction led by Umberto Bossi that was willing to sacrifice government office in order to protect electoral standing. After intense internal strife, 62 of the 177 senators and about one-third of its deputies left the party, Bossi's hard-liner approach won out.²³⁹ Bossi's strategy was ultimately successful in terms of electoral results. In 1996 the Lega contested the election from the opposition, with a campaign that emphasized its original regional populist goals, most notably a renewed focus on

²³⁸ Ministero dell'Interno., Camera 27/03/1994., Archivio Storico delle elezioni available at: <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=27/03/1994&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

²³⁹ Elias & Tronconi op cit. p.517

secession. Lega polled an impressive 10.1 percent of the electorate which remains the best performance by the party to date.²⁴⁰

This strong showing by Lega positioned them to wield influence in the coalition arena rather than simply apply their brand of politics. Government incumbency can be both a positive or negative experience for anti-establishment and autonomous parties. Elias and Tronconi argue this experience is shaped by two factors: the relationship of the party to its potential coalition partners and the strength of the leadership.²⁴¹ By maintaining its distinctive ideological profile, the Lega Nord could maintain a hold on distinct sections of the electorate. Having this ideological strength with the electorate poses a threat to potential coalition partners. This strength gave the Lega Nord the ability to fend off competition from Forza Italia.²⁴² Their electoral strength also made them an indispensable electoral ally, without which most of the northern regions would have fallen into the hands of the center-left as in 1996 (and today) when there was no solid center-right coalition.²⁴³ This positioning changed the way Lega would interact with other parties. The new alliance represented a new pact with Forza Italia guaranteeing Lega certain policy concessions and freedom to move within the center-right government. This flexibility allowed Lega to continue to exercise its opposition stance thus pleasing its electorate while at the same time having the legislative benefit of being part of the ruling coalition.

²⁴⁰ Ministero dell'Interno., Camera 21/04/1996 ., Archivio Storico delle elezioni, available at: <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php?tpel=C&dtel=21/04/1996&tpa=I&tpe=A&lev0=0&levsut0=0&es0=S&ms=S>

²⁴¹ Elias & Tronconi, op cit.

²⁴² Albertazzi, Daniele, McDonnell, Duncan, Newell, James. 2011. "Di Lotta e Di Governo: The Lega Nord and Rifondazione Comunista in Office." *Party Politics* 17 (4):471-87.

²⁴³ D'Alimonte, Roberto, Bartolini, Stefano,. 1998. "How to Lose a Majority: The Competition in Single-Member Districts." *EJPR European Journal of Political Research* 34 (1):63-103.

Government participation also weakened its outsider status. Because the 2001 coalition emphasized collaboration, Lega had to tone down its anti-establishment program to avoid another failure of government like the one seen in 1994. Lega can only play its 'opposition within government' role by publicly fighting with its fellow junior coalition partners like Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance). Reflecting this internal division, Lega thus often portrayed itself as the defender of Berlusconi against the 'professional politicians' of other parties, depicted as plotting with an eye to a post-Berlusconi era in which they can reconstruct a 'broad center' along the lines of the corrupt First Republic.

These developments suggest that Lega still draws strength from its capacity to appear as a staunchly anti-establishment populist party. This role is certainly easier to play in a political field in which Lega is not part of the ruling government. This dexterity manifests in Lega's most recent electoral strategy. Lega has begun to expand outside of its traditional areas of influence in the north and has begun to go south to try to tap into new electoral bodies. By focusing on globalization pressures like increased immigration, the Lega Nord has begun to shift its policy agenda towards addressing these issues. The new party secretary Matteo Salvini has even tried to rally support in the South for the party.²⁴⁴ Arguing that the party represents the interests of Italy, the Lega Nord has shifted its "othering" to represent the forces outside of Italy. This move represents a shift away from its ideological construction as regionalist and moves it more towards nationalist. Lega now fights for Italy in the war on globalization. Its focus has moved away from the

²⁴⁴ La Stampa. "Speciali Elezioni Politiche 2013." La Stampa 26/4/2013

powerful regionalist critique of the Italian government. Although this shift in the party's ideological composition is significant, Lega retains its populist character.

This development can obscure the reality that politics in Italy remains remarkably spatial. Politics in Italy is built on regional differences in the electorate. These electoral zones continue to play a powerful role in politics. Despite the massive upset to electoral politics that occurred during the 1990s that fueled the rise of parties like Lega, these electoral blocks continue to shape Italian politics. John Agnew's work on the political geography of recent Italian elections shows a continuing lack of electoral bipolarity across geographical scales, such as the regional and the local. Italy remains politically a 'geographical expression' with little evidence of either emerging nationwide swings between party groupings.²⁴⁵ Historically, this division was made clear by the electoral patterns in Italy with votes nationalized around two major parties, the Christian Democrats and the Italian Communist Party forming the opposition to CD hegemony. These two primary ideologies, Catholicism and Communism, both formed and were fueled by functional and territorial cleavages and have acted as territorial political subcultures in several areas of the country. Following the lead of Italian scholars of this spatial division, Passarelli and Tuorto argue this division creates a system of electoral belts throughout the country.²⁴⁶ The "white-belt," where the influence of the Christian Democrats was dominant until the 1990s, contains the north-eastern regions of Italy (Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, and Trentino-Alto Adige). The "red-belt," where the Communist party represented the prevailing political tradition, includes portions of the

²⁴⁵ Agnew, John. 2007. "Remaking Italy? Place Configurations and Italian Electoral Politics Under the 'Second Republic'." *Modern Italy* 12 (1):17-38.

²⁴⁶ Passarelli, G., Tuorto, D., 2012. "The Lega Nord Goes South." *Political Geography* 31 (7):419-28.

regions in central Italy (Tuscany, Marche, Umbria and often Emilia-Romagna.) The presence of these two distinct territorial subcultures has allowed for long-lasting stability with regard to voting preferences in a large number of the territories since the Post-war period.

This electoral system became significantly stressed during the 1990s when the corruption scandals ruptured the ideological and political hegemony of these two groups. With the emergence of new political actors on both the right and the left, the relevance of territorial subcultures appeared to be waning.²⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the presence and rise of regional parties during the same time period, in addition to the rising visibility and eventual electoral breakthrough of Lega in the early 1990s, dramatically indicated that political subcultures were changing but had not vanished. This relevance of territorial subcultures was heightened when Lega has radicalized its appeal and demanded a transformation of the state along federal lines.²⁴⁸

This relevance of regionalism played out, and continues to play out in Lega's electoral politics. Not only is regionalism crucial for its ideological construction, but regionalism also provides pockets of electoral support. Lega became stronger in the territories where the former DC's implantation was more evident, such as in the Veneto region.²⁴⁹ But other scholars emphasize the fact Lega was initially successful in peripheral areas in Veneto and only later, although quite rapidly, did the League colonize the "heartlands" of the DC, namely the provinces of Vicenza and, more recently, Verona.

²⁴⁷ Ignazi, Piero., 1996. "The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties." *Party Politics* 2 (4):549-66.

²⁴⁸ Ignazi Piero., 2005. "Legitimation and Evolution on the Italian Right Wing: Social and Ideological Repositioning of Alleanza Nazionale and the Lega Nord." *South European Society and Politics* 10 (2):333-49.

²⁴⁹ Passarelli & Tuorto 2012 op cit.

However, after the political changes in the 1990s, a large portion of the electorate in the “white zone” viewed the Lega Nord as a new political entrepreneur able to represent the zone as a whole.²⁵⁰ It is for this reason that Forza Italia recognized Lega as potential legislative partner and possible electoral threat. The regional populism of the Lega has solidified in its political strategy as a mass party.

Towards a Conclusion on a Continually Changing Phenomenon

To conclude, the phenomenon of populism must be taken back to the theoretical level. The investigation has treated Italian populism, mostly through analyzing one of its most powerful practitioners, as a conjunctural phenomenon. The analysis shows that right-wing populism in Italy exists as a response to a “negative aggregation” of political, social, and economic conjunctures systemic to Italian politics since its formation as a republic in 1861. The reason for treating populism in this manner is to move beyond a descriptive account of populist personalities in order to understand the factors animating the populist phenomenon. It is clear that the Italian right wing populist attempts to create a discourse that pits its chosen virtuous homeland and people against a threatening outsider. This is why populism can be understood as a structural us/them binary. But treating populism as a conjunctural phenomenon permits these categories of “us” and “them” to take on analytical significance. In deploying the binary the populist responds to a specific moment in time often to show how far some “ideal” has gone astray. But both the referents – those exclusive positive and permanent values – and the “problems” they confront are historical in nature. The “people” as well as what threatens them have a

²⁵⁰ Agnew, John A. 2002. *Place and politics in modern Italy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

specific history and the populist often reaches for these histories to construct the binary itself.

This construction allows the total project of the Italian right-wing populist to assert itself as response to the “negative aggregation” that threatens harm to the homogeneous heartland of the “people.” This is clear in each of the elements of the negative aggregation. In the political element, Italian populism pushes back against the centralized state’s attempt to base its political projects on the consent of abstract citizens. Because the Italian state, since its formation in 1861, strove to create a national Italian identity, all local particularities and regional differences became subsumed in an abstract notion of nationalism. The regional populism analyzed here pushes back against this abstraction through championing federal devolution. Only through this federal model – which was to be supplemented with the right of secession – could a functioning national Italian government exist. The centralized model was far too divorced from the people it was designed to serve. In the post-fascist period, the legalistic nature of the Italian administration led to rampant inefficiencies. At the local level, prefects exercised great authority over the elected municipal councils.

Despite these regulations, the bureaucracy became a breeding ground for clientelism. Throughout Italian political history, the interests of faction and coalition were better represented in the bureaucratic entities than the needs of citizens. In the post-fascist period, designed to be highly representative, this stemmed from the open nature of Italian elections. When presented with an electoral list, Italian citizens express their preference not just for a party but for a specific candidate on the party list. This system encouraged infighting and often a cult of personality surrounding a candidate. Patronage

was the most effective way of developing that cult. In exercising significant power, mostly through their sheer ubiquity, these agencies circumvented the elected bodies of the republic, especially on the local level. The result was political fidelity could be traded for jobs, favors, expediting tasks, and anything that fell under the purview of the agency. This clientelistic behavior brought down the post-war Italian order and lent legitimacy to the populist's claims, especially since repeated corruption scandals showed how this practice had been normalized. Rather than rely on central parties, the federal system was meant to allow for the functioning of differences between parts of the country that have differing cultures and want to be governed differently by protecting these regions from the competing political interests of the central government. Thus federalism would be Italy-specific, a neo-federalism, based on micro-regions that corresponded to local realities. This federalism would entail the dismantling of the central state in favor of the localities and their particularities.

The economic conjuncture is similar to the political conjuncture. For one, the state itself grew through massive public works projects like the *Casa per il Mezzogiorno*. The bureaucratic apparatuses necessary to administer these funds were the site of the power relationships like those detailed in the growth of state political power. These arrangements led to a growth in the *mediatori*, the party bosses, the bureaucrats, the building speculators, lawyers, and other specialists who received development funds from the central government and who mediated between the state and the local communities. Under this scheme, local communities were forced to filter their needs through the state apparatus which functioned through the mobilization of clientelistic fidelity. Thus the calls for federalism also acquired a not-so-subtle air of fiscal federalism.

These forms of state permeations were not relegated to traditional bureaucratic apparatuses. Aided by access to easy capital under development funds, state expansion occurred through a growth in what during the 1970s became known as the “*borghesia dello stato*.” This state bourgeoisie was the actors of private sector or the business groups that ran public entities that nonetheless attached themselves to the state and its political power in order to increase their economic gain or manipulate competition. What this meant was economic growth in Italy, outside of exported manufactured goods, was largely self-generated through public projects. Italian capitalism developed in such a way that competing power interests became intertwined and dependent on each other. The entities that did not ascribe to this pattern of development, most notably a small business sector that profited from a lack of attention by the state, became dominated by conservative middle class, the *ceti medi*. These individuals found their political outlet in the center-right Christian Democrats but when that party lost its legitimacy through the political scandals, they shifted their allegiances to the right-wing populists, especially when they began to focus on economic protectionism for the small scale production of cultural goods.

The social conjuncture is both the most difficult and easiest piece of the negative aggregation to discuss in relation to the structural binary of populism. Easy because the us/them binary relies on xenophobia; difficult because it involves issues of cultural self-determinism. Historically, the xenophobia of the populist in Italy capitalizes on the anti-Southern sentiment that resulted from the southern development funding and the internal migration that resulted from imbalances in modernization in the south. The focus on agricultural and infrastructural projects froze the southern productive classes in place.

The public works program provided a staggering amount of jobs especially for a region that chronically suffered from inflated unemployment. But these jobs were temporary at best. Typically, laborers would be called on by the state to support construction projects and other temporary laboring positions. When this arrangement failed to resolve southern economic imbalances, many people moved northward to find employment in the North's industrial zones. The increased competition for work, coupled with barriers to integration like major linguistic differences led to a great deal of anti-southern sentiment. The populist capitalized on this sentiment by linking the "corrupt" spending in the south and other government waste in regions that were not their own to the anxieties of non-southerners. Rome was not only a thief; it was a thief that was redistributing the wealth to the "backward" south to further its own political project.

This social element sustains the us/them binary in a sense of cultural self-determinism. The "us", which is defined by virtuous and permanent values comes under threat from an outsider and in so doing undermines those values. This is perhaps best shown into the banalities of everyday existence. Knowing this, we can conclude this discussion in an area many people associate with Italy: food culture. In January 2009, the municipal government of Lucca, a medium-sized town in Tuscany known politically for continually asserting center-right values in left wing Tuscany, announced a ban on new kebab shops inside the city walls.²⁵¹ The motion underwent passionate debate but eventually passed with a large majority. The logic of the law was to "protect the culinary tradition and the architectural, structural, cultural, historic and decorative characteristics"

²⁵¹ Kebab, or more specifically Döner Kebab, is Turkish in origin but is common throughout the Southern Mediterranean and Middle East. It is often halal thus is enjoyed by many of the Muslim immigrants from North Africa and Albania, the two areas that comprise the vast majority of immigration to Italy. In addition to consuming it, many immigrants choose to open Kebab shops as their primary source of employment.

from “food and beverage establishments whose activity could be sourced to other ethnic groups.”²⁵² It also aimed to support the local culinary traditions of Lucca. The law required “at least one dish from Lucca’s culinary tradition, prepared exclusively with commonly recognized products of the region.” Supporters saw the law as a way of holding on to their local culture while opponents decried it as a way of closing the city off to diverse culture.

Unsurprisingly the Lega Nord was at the center of this debate. They supported the ban with gusto. For them it was an opportunity to defend their local culture against the invading outside other. They also supported the efforts of the local lawmakers to take matters into their own hands and regulate the issues that affected their daily lives. If the matter was left to the state, their fears would be realized and the historic centers would be filled with kebab shops. The children would be coming home with greasy fingers from Kebab rather than pizza. Many looked to these laws with alarm because Lucca’s law was the first of a handful of similar laws across northern Italy. Yet many individuals favored the law – unsurprising considering the never-ending battle to keep the older cultures flourishing. The xenophobia at the heart of Lega’s and perhaps populism’s political project in general informs these concerns, especially in the case of the cultural laws. The outside “other” of this cultural product undermines the position of the traditional cultural products easily recognizable, especially for Italy, in local cuisine. The populist rhetoric sustains this binary by offering to protect the virtuous, permanent, and well-known values

²⁵² Baracchi, Lisa, Niente più kebab nel centro di Lucca Il Comune stabilisce nuove regole *Corriere della Sera: Corriere Fiorentino* 26 January, 2009
<http://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/cronaca/2009/26-gennaio-2009/niente-piu-kebab-centro-lucca-comune-stabilisce-nuove-regole-150935189542.shtml>

while closing them off to the outside other. And here we see the difficulty of cultural self-determinism: If one culture has the right to exist why can't another?

When these conjunctures come together to provide the backdrop to the populist political project, it is clear that the issues raised by history are difficult to ignore. Not only do they inform the structural form of the populist project, the elements of the negative aggregation make populism a conjunctural phenomenon. This is clear in how the populist responds to history. Italy's political history is littered with examples of how the establishment of the state existed over and above the people it was designed to represent. As the years passed and one system gave way to another, it was clear that this pattern was not going to go away easily. In fact, as our investigation into post-war politics and political economy reveals, not only did the pattern persist, but it intensified.

At the same time, populism is a living phenomenon. The terms of the us/them binary are continually being redefined, even if along the same political tropes. Cultural self-determinism is a powerful force even when it extends beyond electoral politics. And electoral politics reminds us that populism continually adapts. Lega stumbled into the position of the party crying out for an alternative to centralization. Yet Lega also fell into the same pattern of *trasformismo* and coalition building, even if it did so to survive politically. The system itself absorbs opposition and reformulates it into a force that upholds the system of absorption itself. Only time will tell if the system will continue to persist. Experience suggests it will.

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