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Claremont McKenna College

A Europe of Regionalists:

How has European integration impacted regionalist political parties' electoral support?

Submitted to
Professor Lisa Langdon Koch

by
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for
Senior Thesis
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Abstract

This study investigates the question: How has European integration impacted regionalist political parties' electoral support? European integration and regionalism are theoretically connected by Seth Jolly's viability theory which explains that supranational organizations, such as the European Union (and precursor organizations), make small countries more viable. Using the regions of Flanders, Corsica, Sardinia, Padania, Galicia, and Catalonia as case studies, this thesis identifies moments of European integration and then examines if regionalist electoral results match the expectations of viability theory. This thesis found support for the idea that European integration is positively affecting regionalist political parties in elections; however, there often exists other contextual factors that can modify or negate this effect. European integration is just one of the many issues that regionalists must address, but, as this thesis shows, it is an issue that deserves their attention and, if used wisely, their support. I conclude the thesis by considering the implications of the viability theory for different decision-makers within the European Union and its member countries, and I explore how regionalism needs a solution from supranational organizations because, as more countries join and spend longer in supranational organizations, regionalism should be expected become more widespread.

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First, I must thank my thesis supervisor the wonderful (in the modern-not-archaic sense) Professor Koch for all her guidance and support throughout this thesis-making process and my collegiate career. She helped me figure out what I wanted to say, how best to say it, and kept me optimistic and on track while saying it. Thank you.

Next, I want to thank my mother for so many things that are best summed up as being a good mother. You'll forever have my appreciation, love, and gratitude. Also, a shout out to my little brother cause I love that guy.

Next, thank you to all my friends that have helped me make the most of my Claremont McKenna experience. Especially those who have been with me since day one: Ally So, Adrienne Kafka, Lincoln Bernard, and Will Kimball. Whenever and wherever we may be, time spent with y'all is never wasted. I look forward to a future of adventures, drinks, and conversations.

Finally, I would like to thank all the people at Claremont that helped me and shared their valuable knowledge with me. I'd like to thank Professor Taw for her inspiring ability to take crazy complex IR subjects to town in the course of a single lecture, as well as her continued support for my various endeavors outside the classroom. I'd like to thank Professor Day for giving me the tools for self-growth and self-improvement. I'd like to thank Professor Locke for making philosophy a hobby of mine. Professor Lincoln for making econ intuitive. Professor Ferguson for her kindness. My advisors Professor Camp and Professor Valencia. Kristen Mallory and her staff at the Center for a Global Education for helping someone who wants to see all the world, see a great deal more of it. And, as I've always said to my friends, Evan Wollen is a homie. I couldn't have done it without all y'all.

As a quick aside, here is a bit I wrote about why I wrote this thesis:

As a child, I liked two things, though I did not like only these two things: world maps and world flags. When these are things you like, you spend quite a bit of time learning and memorizing them. Eventually, you get to the point where you can name every country on the map and identify each flag (granted you may still confuse Guinea and Mali). At this point, you want more. You can entertain yourself with country capital but those are less visually fun. Going down to the province level of every country of the world seems overwhelming and, if we are being honest, most province-level flags are pretty mediocre. Eventually, you realize the issue is that there are not enough countries in the world, and this informs you forming the belief that there ought to be more countries in the world. As you grow older, first this starts to guide your political beliefs and you desire devolution of power as, if more countries are better and we assume that all countries have a territorial component, and we assume that there is a finite amount of land then more countries necessarily mean smaller countries and therefore, if smaller countries are better, then so is more localized government. Your love of maps and flags enters its final evolution when you start to consider what allows there to be more countries. Trying to answer this question led me to this thesis.

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Introduction

To start, I think it is useful to explain my motivation behind this project. The question that started this research was what allows there to be more countries in the world. I was inspired to ask this question because it seems that, generally, since the World Wars, we have seen the creation and existence of more countries and fewer large empires. Reflecting on this question, my initial thoughts considered that globalization and higher levels of technology lower the likelihood of existential war and facilitate the ease of trade and communication. I also considered world accountability schemes or supranational organizations dedicated to preventing violent conflict and lowering trade barriers. With these elements in place, a group of people with a shared identity might feel more secure existing outside their previous larger country. If this is true, then that would allow for a more small-countried world.¹ Exploring the academic literature on this, I found that there did indeed exist similar theories that talked of balancing the advantages and disadvantages of different state (country) sizes, and one theory in particular that built on this, to test if supranational integration, specifically within the world's most powerful supranational organization the European Union, was making small counties more viable.

Viability Theory

Seth Jolly builds the arguments of viability theory by starting with the existing academic literature on the optimal size of a state.² The current consensus on this is that there are tradeoffs in favor of a smaller state vis-à-vis a larger one. Smaller states are considered typically to be composed of a more culturally homogeneous population, which typically leads to higher societal trust, a lower likelihood of rebellion, and a government that is more efficient at providing public

¹ There exist other elements, of course, that could push back against this, such as hegemonic or bi-polar world order where those in power mandate the continuation of borders drawn by European diplomats the century before in the name of "stability."

² Of this I consider, Alesina and Spolaore's *Size of Nations* to be the defining work.

goods for its citizens because its citizens' lives are more similar.³ Additionally, regardless of homogeneity, smaller governmental jurisdictions are considered to be more accountable and more efficient at identifying policy solutions and evaluating policy outcomes.

However, there are four serious advantages for large states.⁴ First, nonrival public goods (i.e. public television and radio, knowledge shared by television or radio, or street lighting) are less expensive per person as the number of people paying for each public good increases. Second, absent of a global free-trade-only world order, larger states have larger domestic markets and thus offer barrier-free access to a larger market for individual domestic economic actors. This larger domestic market, and the ability to allow or restrict access to it, provides greater leverage in international trade deals as well. Third, regional economic shocks are easier for a large state to handle, because they draw from a larger area and economy to redistribute from. Fourth, larger states have more resources (human, natural, and economic) to draw on when fielding an army, and thus tend to be better at guaranteeing their citizens' security.⁵ Now, by understanding the balancing act that is determining optimal state size, I can explain viability theory.

Viability theory is a theory that states that globalization and regional integration⁶ are providing, to a degree, the same advantages of a large state without altering the advantages of a small state, thereby, rebalancing the appeal of a small state. This provides political parties that promote territorial autonomy for a cultural identity, which I will call regionalists, with a stronger and more appealing argument for the viability of their proposed state. If this theory is true, we

³ Seth K Jolly, *The European Union and the Rise of Regionalist Parties* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 40.

⁴ The four following advantages come from Alesina and Spolaore by way of Jolly, *European Union*, 41.

⁵ A good way to think about this is the benefits of the Holy Roman Empire for its smaller members.

⁶ I believe technological advancement (besides just facilitating regional integration) is also an important part of this equation, but that is outside the scope of this paper. As I stated earlier, I believe this to be because higher levels of technology may lower the likelihood of existential war and definitely facilitate the ease of trade and communication.

should expect to see regionalist political parties do better in elections after European integration provides the large state advantages. Viability theory does not estimate the time it will take for these better election results to appear, but the increase should, outside of being caught in other political cycles, be relatively imminent and enduring.

Therefore, to clearly spell out the purpose of this research, I will first look for moments when European integration provides larger-state advantages to a smaller state, which I will label as triggering the mechanisms of viability theory. This will mostly occur through the ratification of new treaties that provide a public good (public goods benefit), lower intrabloc trade barriers or provide for greater leverage in negotiating international trade deals (market benefit), establish the provision of structural funds to help with negative economic shocks (structural funds benefit), or further guarantee collective security (security benefit). Each of these exactly correlates to one of the four advantages of a large state as explained above. Most treaties will do more than one of these things, but rarely all. At all such moments, I try to be explicit about which of these four viability mechanisms are being triggered.

I then comb through the electoral results of regionalist political parties in the aftermath of these moments and see if they make the expected gains. Finally, if the viability theory is true, then regionalist political parties should be pro-European integration or, at the very least, envision their proposed state within a European integration framework that preserves the provided large state advantage for themselves. To give an example of this distinction, a regionalist political party may disagree with how the European Union is handling certain issues such as immigration and refugees and still be benefiting from viability theory; however, if the regionalists' proposed state would exist outside the European Union's free trade zone, this position makes no sense within viability theory and thus any electoral gain coming from a position like this would present

a challenge to viability theory or be non-applicable. For this reason, I consider generally regionalist political party attitudes and messaging about European integration as well. And, now armed with a compelling explanatory theory and three key things to look for (moments of integration, electoral results, and attitudes towards integration), I seek to answer my research question: how has European integration impacted regionalist political parties' electoral support?

Preview of Findings

To support his proposal of viability theory, Seth Jolly did present evidence. He quantitatively examined all the data (in the form of electoral results and political attitude surveys) and found that European integration had a statistically significant positive effect on the emergence and support of regionalist political parties.⁷ He also found that regionalist parties are generally pro-European integration.⁸ Along with his statistical modeling, Jolly did a single in-depth case study of Scotland. He found Scottish regionalism to be consistent with his quantitative findings and in support of viability theory.⁹ While the Scottish case study is a good start, I will approach my analysis through a more thorough qualitative lens. Therefore, I selected six case studies. In a brief preview of what I have found from these case studies is that they generally match with the expectations of viability theory, which is as expected given Jolly's statistics, but, in context, there is often a lot more happening than a clean viability theory-induced increase of regionalist parties' success. Many times, regionalists explicitly use viability theory-based arguments, but sometimes they capitalize on anti-EU sentiment. Many times, the results increase as expected, but other times there are periods of limited success (which is sometimes explainable and other times not). Furthermore, fragmentation has hindered many

⁷ Jolly, *European Union*, 151.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

regionalist parties and movements, but, also despite fragmentation, the total regionalist vote share can continue to rise. All in all, I consider viability theory to be usable for understanding and explaining regionalist success, and, if used as a rule of thumb, viability theory will guide you well. However, since there are more considerations than just viability theory, for individual cases viability theory may be an oversimplification.

Case Studies and Their Selection

As for how I selected the case studies, I first had to start by figuring out the number of separate regionalist cases I could choose from. I found 21 different regions within countries engaged in European integration that had had a regionalist political party that at some point campaigned for more than just greater federalism. The reason for the greater-than-federalism qualifier is that there are countries like Belgium where parties with non-regionalist goals operate under a regionalist name by virtue of the electoral system and other places like Spain which, in response to certain bona fide regionalist demands, gave all its regions regional powers and thus created regionalists that just want to remain a part of Spain because they are from an area with no distinct regionalism. However, within the regions I did select, there are still periods when the main regionalist party desires only federalism. It is also important to note that there were significantly more than 21 regionalist political parties that I found (even with the greater-than-federalism qualifier) because often many were representing the same region (such as both *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* and *Coalicion Galega* represented Galician regionalism).

I then narrowed down the pool of possible regions by excluding regions from countries that had joined the European Union (EU) post-2004 enlargement. This is because there has only been one major treaty on EU integration since 2004, the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon, so that would present both a limited number of moments of integration to examine as well as a smaller time

frame of electoral results. However, and this is somewhat promising for viability theory, the post-2004 group represented only a small amount of the 21 regions, and I needed to narrow it down further.

At this point, I decided to focus my examination on the electoral results of national elections, as opposed to regional or European-level elections.¹⁰ The reason for this is that European elections are relatively new and few, compared to the complete timeline of European integration, plus it is unlikely that a regionalist party would partake in a European election and not a national one, so European elections would just be casting a smaller exploratory net. As for why I selected national elections over regional elections, well, I reasoned that, if a regionalist movement's aim was from greater autonomy up to independence, to do this democratically would require the complicity of the national-level government. Therefore, there is much more to be gained for the strongest (in center-periphery terms) regionalists by contesting national-level elections thus self-selecting for me those most likely to be using viability theory's arguments. Therefore, to ensure that searching the electoral records was not in vain, I chose only regions that had successfully elected at least one representative from a regionalist party to the national government.¹¹ This left me with 11 options. Jolly had already done Scotland, Bavaria had been but was no longer serious about the greater-than-federalism qualifier, Friesland had completely stopped competing in national elections and was mostly focused on the provincial level, the Basque Country is known for violent means, which disqualifies the case from a study of democratic means of secession, and finally, the Faroe Islands had a decolonization factor (in part

¹⁰ As you will see, I will from time to time in the case studies consider regional and European results as well, but the guiding focus is on national-level results.

¹¹ I acknowledge that these selection criteria might overlook cases of regionalist failure. However, my tasking is to determine European integration's impact on regionalist political parties, so it is best to examine the places where it most likely had an impact, as opposed to trying to figure out if or why in other regions it likely did not.

because of Greenland) that made it feel similar to the Curacao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten set up within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, albeit within the Kingdom of Denmark, and I sought to avoid conflating decolonization and regionalism. With those eliminated, I had my six case studies.

Road Map for Thesis

This Introduction has introduced viability theory and explained both my process for analyzing viability theory's veracity and my process of selecting the case studies. The following body chapter calls itself Chapter 1. All body chapters will go region by region, case study by case study, following a chronological review of the moments of European integration, regionalist party electoral results, and regionalist political party stances (especially with regards to pro-/anti-Europe and desired future outcomes such as more autonomy vs. complete independence). All region reviews end with a brief look to the future. The first half of Chapter 1 is on the Flanders region of Belgium, starting from the post-WWII era and continuing until the present day. This section is especially focused on the role devolution of power can play in placating regionalist demands. The second half of Chapter 1 is about the island of Corsica, currently within the nation of France. This is the section that is most tied to political violence, so this is where I briefly discuss the intersection between viability theory and regionalist-led violence. In Chapter 2, Italy is the country of focus, with the first half on the island of Sardinia, and the second half on the newest region of this study: Padania. Sardinia is an important section on the setbacks regionalists can face, including poor decision-making and unfair political systems. These setbacks provide a valuable test and moment of reflection for viability theory. Padania is one of the most successful regionalist movements of this study and is the first stop if you are interested in creating your own regionalist movement in the modern era or if you want to learn about how a regionalist

movement can be co-opted for other purposes. Finally, in Chapter 3 (the third and final body paragraph), the case studies are set in Spain. The first half of the chapter is focused on the Galicia region. This is a case of a regionalist movement that has benefited from sharing a country with more powerful and more organized movements. Finally, the last case study is Catalonia. Catalonia is a region where the regionalists dominate the electoral scene, so I use it as an opportunity to dive into the nuance of viability theory by focusing on the regionalists that desire complete independence (within the EU) and how they fare after moments of integration against more moderate regionalists. The last chapter is the Conclusion. Here I review in-depth what I have learned from my qualitative approach and grasp at the fumes of wisdom to offer advice to different actors for the future.

Chapter 1

Flanders and Corsica

In this chapter, I will examine the Flanders and Corsican regionalist movements under the lens of the viability theory. First, I will describe the Flanders region's territory and history, then I will give an overview of the political climate in Flanders prior to European integration. Next, for several EU treaties or integration moments, I will explain how EU integration triggered the mechanisms that support the viability theory and the subsequent electoral results and trends. I will do this for the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community, the Treaty of Rome, the Maastricht Treaty, and the Treaty of Lisbon. I will also provide historical background and ideological overviews where appropriate. I end briefly looking towards the future. I will then repeat this process with Corsica. I will be paying attention to external factors that constrain the Corsican regionalist movement such as population and economy size. Additionally, I will consider internal factors as well, such as the use of violence and the fragmentation of parties. Again, I will provide historical background and ideological overviews where appropriate, and I will end by offering some thoughts on the Corsican nationalists' future.

Flanders

The first region of this study is Flanders. Territorially, Flanders is the northern half of Belgium excluding the Brussels Capital Area. Because of the complexities of the Belgian political system though, the modern Flemish parliament is based in Brussels which is technically out of its jurisdiction besides cultural matters for the Flemish-speaking citizens. Another defining characteristic of the Flanders region is a shared language, Flemish (which is a dialect of Dutch). This contrasts with the French-speaking southern half of Belgium, known as Wallonia. Historically, Belgium came into existence in the 1830s after a revolt from the Netherlands and

international intervention by Britain and France. At the time of Belgium's independence, with the exception of a few key cities (such as the port city of Antwerp), Flanders was a poor agrarian economy and as such dominated economically by Wallonia.¹ Additionally, the elites of Flanders embraced French culture and spoke French, so, with a wealth- and tax-based suffrage system, there was little resistance to a French-language-dominated state, prior to industrialization.² All this is important in understanding how a bilingual country came to exist in the first place and what the current regionalist movement uses to define itself.

What followed Belgian independence was a century of industrialization. This greatly increased the wealth of Flanders and caused Wallonia and Flanders to switch roles in terms of economic prosperity. Belgium then experienced a series of national crises: an invasion by the Germans, the Great Depression, and another invasion by the Germans. Collectively recovering from these moments and slowly rebuilding the country under the reversal of new regional roles sets the stage for the first elections of the post-WWII landscape.

With regards to the Flanders nationalist political parties, the first was the *Frontpartij* (Front Party, 1919). The party formed out of networks created during the Great War to solve the communication problems created when the Flemish soldiers could not talk to nor understand their French-speaking commanding officers.³ The Great War had therefore highlighted the underlying disconnect and disparity between the two language communities. The *Frontpartij* wrangled 60,814 votes in the 1919 House of Representatives election which was good for 3.5% of the vote and 5 seats. This dropped to 2.8% (54,941 total votes/4 seats) in 1921 then climbed to

¹ Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen. *Political History of Belgium: From 1830 Onwards*. (Brussels: ASP, 2009), 56-59.

² Matthias Trefs, "Belgium," in *Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook*. ed. Dieter Nohlen and Philip Stöver. (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010), 270. There were a few writers in Flanders, such as Jan-Frans Willems, Hendrik Conscience, and Theodoor Van Rijswijck who continued to support the Flemish language, but their efforts were not aligned with the rural or laborer classes. (Witte, Craeybeckx, and Meynen, *Belgium*, 57.)

³ Tref, "Belgium," 275.

3.9% (80,407/6 seats) in 1925 and 5.9% (132,567/11 seats) in 1929.⁴ After the victory of getting Flemish recognized as a national language in 1932, party leader Staf De Clercq took the party to a far-right fascist stance and, after losing its liberal and moderate supporters, *Frontpartij* was dissolved into *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* (Flemish National Alliance; 1936). This party had encouraging initial success with 7.1% and 8.3% of the vote in 1936 and 1939, respectively.⁵ However, their collaboration with the Nazis during the German Occupation of Belgium (for which they were rewarded as the exclusive representative of the Flemish community under occupation but also led to the party assisting in the identification and capture of Jewish Flemings) made the party and its primary politicians deeply unpopular after the German defeat. The Flemish National Alliance would not recover, and no Flanders regionalist party would win a seat in 1949 nor even compete in the 1950 general election.⁶ This is the state of Flanders regionalism prior to the European integration that happened after the Second World War.

One of the key components recognized as playing a part in the First and Second World Wars was the hostilities between France and Germany and their competition for the resources of industrialization: coal and steel. On May 9th, 1950, French foreign minister Robert Schuman unveiled what would be later known as the Schuman Plan to place coal and steel under a High Authority, higher than any individual governmental authority, within the countries of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, and Belgium.⁷ With there being no exclusive access to coal and steel for any member country, this greatly decreased the need to go to war again with another member country. A treaty that accomplished this was agreed in 1951, and the

⁴ For the unmentioned 1932 election, the numbers remained constant at 5.6% or 130,755 votes, good for 8 seats. All election data here from: Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*.

⁵ In terms of total votes: 166,737 in 1936 and 185,470 in 1939 (Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*.)

⁶ Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*.

⁷ “The European Coal and Steel Community,” EU Learning, Carleton University Center for European Studies, accessed January 22, 2021. <https://carleton.ca/ces/eulearning/history/moving-to-integration/the-european-coal-and-steel-community/>.

European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) came into force in 1952. In addition to a High Authority, the institutions of the Assembly, the Council, and the Court of Justice were created. These are all precursor institutions for European Union institutions today. A common market, with free movement of products without taxes nor discriminatory measures, for coal and iron ore opened in February 1953 and for steel in May 1953.⁸

As the viability theory explains, regionalist movements should benefit when supranational organizations lower barriers to trade (market benefit) and provide public goods (public goods benefit). The ECSC clearly lowers the barriers to trade of key industrialization goods, and, by developing a common policy with a common monitoring and enforcement mechanism, the ECSC provided public goods as well. There a few more dynamics at play at the time as well. In 1949, in response to a coup by the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed.⁹ This military alliance, which included Belgium, provided collective security for all members (security benefit). Additionally, there was the Benelux Customs Union, a WWII government-in-exile deal among Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg to eliminate customs duties on trade among the three countries as well as impose a common external tariff. This took effect in 1948 and evolved into the Benelux union treaty of 1949 which eased quantitative restrictions (quotas, levies, etc.). Both of these treaties further lowered barriers to trade (market benefit) and further rebalanced the advantages of a large state versus a small state, in favor of the small state. All of these agreements were in place and in effect by the Belgian elections of 1954 and 1958.

⁸ “Text: Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, ECSC Treaty,” Summaries of EU Legislation, EUR-Lex, last modified December 11, 2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Axy0022>.

⁹ History.com Editors, “NATO.” History.com. A&E Television Networks, April 14, 2010, last modified June 7, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/formation-of-nato-and-warsaw-pact>.

While not without any historical legacy, Flanders as a post-WWII regionalist movement had to restart from ignominy and a period without an organized political party or any votes received. This presents a unique opportunity to investigate the viability theory for it is unlikely any new regionalist emergence or success can be attributed to a trend prior to integration. Enter the *Volksunie* (People's Union, 1954). Formed by seven Flemish nationalists, none of whom had been tainted by Nazi collaboration, *Volksunie* was primarily allied with Flemish farmers and the Flemish middle-class.¹⁰ Their platform, which was the solution proposed by a study group (that included the seven *Volksunie* founders and some Walloon counterparts) on European integration and its potential dangers for small language and cultural communities, was to federalize Belgium into two parts, based on language.¹¹ The *Volksunie* also demanded far greater rights for the Flemish language.¹² While not against European integration, just concerned by its potential effects, the origins of the *Volksunie* show that European integration restarted the Flemish regionalist conversation. With the difficult task of recovering in public opinion from the association of the Nazi collaboration of former Flemish regionalist parties and without a far-right stance (which makes it unlikely the party was recovering the far-right voters from before the war), in the House of Representatives election of 1954, *Volksunie* received 113,632 votes or 2.2%, good for a seat in the national legislature. This impressive feat (and the important seat) was replicated in 1958 with 2% of the total vote. *Volksunie's* emergence as a Flemish regional political force clearly coincided with the start of supranational integration of the country.

¹⁰ Lieven De Winter, "The Volksunie," in *From Protest to Power: Autonomist Parties and the Challenges of Representation*, ed. by Elias Anwen and Filippo Tronconi (Wien: Braumüller, 2011), 30.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kris Deschouwer, "The Rise and Fall of the Belgian Regionalist Parties," *Regional and Federal Studies* 19, nos. 4-5, (October – December 2009): 563, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597560903310279>.

When Belgium joined the European Economic Communities (EEC) through the Treaty of Rome in 1957, Belgium entered into a common market for goods, people, services, and capital (market benefit) with the same countries in the ECSC (the EEC went into effect in 1958).¹³ This further integration coincided with *Volksunie* getting close to doubling its number of votes in the next three consecutive elections: up to 3.5% (182,407) in 1961, 6.7% (346,869) in 1965, and 9.8% (506,697) in 1968.¹⁴ Flanders regionalism was no longer even on the fringes but a mainstream political party. Additionally, political parties that sought to represent Wallonia's interests emerged as a response to the Flemish regionalists popularizing an agenda that focused on securing benefits for one's own region. This Wallonia counter-regionalism focused on the sentiments of marginalization caused by the civil service requiring its employees to speak both Flemish and French which disqualified a large amount of people from Wallonia and French-speaking Brussels since only people from Flanders were typically bilingual.¹⁵ These Walloon and French-speaking Brusselian political parties aided the *Volksunie* in their regionalism goals of decentralization and federalism, as the party's leading politicians would enter positions of power within the government in the form of cabinet ministers as a reward for helping form coalition governments with the larger non-regionalist parties. These regionalist parties tended to be easy allies for bigger ideology parties as they were willing to compromise on other policy areas in exchange for a devolution of powers agenda. As the *Volksunie* and the other pro-federalism parties took part in sharing power in the 1970s, they slowly created national political support for regionalism. This created the phenomena of the non-regionalist large ideological parties dividing

¹³ "Text: Treaty of Rome (EEC)," Summaries of EU Legislation, EUR-Lex, last modified March 14, 2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0023>.

¹⁴ Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*.; There was a further increase to 11.1% (586,917) in 1971, before a leveling off at around 10% for the following two decades. (Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*.)

¹⁵ Tref, "Belgium," 278.

themselves into two parties, a French one and a Flemish one.¹⁶ This strategy undercut the electoral success of the strictly regionalist *Volksumie* but furthered their goals, as most major parties were now framed as belonging to one region (or community) or the other. Though the *Volksumie* was out of power, Belgian governments instituted a series of state reforms developing the unique devolution of power system used today by creating, evolving, and refining communities (Flemish, French, German-speaking) and regions (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels) until the fourth state reform in 1993 declared Belgium a fully-fledged federal state.¹⁷

This period (1971-1993) is a complicated moment of analysis for the viability theory because, while greater EU integration started up again under the 1987 Single European Act (public goods benefit and security benefit), electoral support for the Flanders independence political parties was remaining relatively stagnant.¹⁸ One explanation for this stagnation is that often concessions (i.e. language protections, power over cultural matters given to the communities, etc.) and decentralization can serve as an antidote or a soothing balm for separatism movements. Another explanation is the fracturing of the *Volksumie* between those who accepted the federalism antidote and those who did not, with the independence hardliners forming a new political party called *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Block, 1979). Ultimately, *Volksumie* was surpassed by *Vlaams Blok* and dissolved into a rebranding as the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (New Flemish Alliance, 2001). However, as political scientist Matthias Tref sums up after considering Belgian electoral politics as a whole, “[a]t the turn of the millennium, the VU

¹⁶ Tref, “Belgium,” 278-279.

¹⁷ “The Third and Fourth State Reforms,” Belgium.be, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/country/history/belgium_from_1830/formation_federal_state/third_and_fourth_reform_of_state.

¹⁸ And in fact, possibly decreasing. *Volksumie* vote share was decreasing but *Vlaams Blok* vote share was increasing to maintain a level amount of support for regionalist parties (Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*). However, it is unclear if *Vlaams Blok* was receiving support because of its regionalist stance or because of its right-wing populist stance. (Deschouwer “Rise and Fall,” 572-574)

[*Volksunie*] finally ceased to exist with virtually all of its goals achieved.”¹⁹ By this, Tref means that because of the federal system, while still Belgian citizens, the daily life of a Flanders resident is mainly governed by the Flemish government. *Volksunie*’s dissolution set up the current Flemish regionalist political party landscape in Belgium.

It is important to note that there was a flurry of integration throughout the 1990s that started with the creation of the European Union (EU) and its three pillars. Through the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, the EU sought to continue the ECSC and the EEC (pillar one, continuing the market benefit), form a common foreign and security policy (pillar two, public goods benefit and security benefit), and cooperate on justice and home affairs (pillar three, public goods benefit).²⁰ Pillar two further guaranteed the security of Belgium and the people within, while both pillar two and three can be seen as providing public goods for the EU citizenry as a whole, taking away the Belgian state’s individual responsibility for developing a foreign policy, border controls and laws, or asylum policy. The creation of the Euro as a common currency (market benefit) was also planned and, after a series of steps, put into place by 1999 and put into people’s wallets by 2002. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1999 further integrated the EU block with common visa and sanction policies. These are further public goods provided by the EU (public goods benefit).

Throughout all of this integration, the support of regionalist movements did not correlate in a manner similar to their success and the creation of the ECSC or the EEC. This challenges the viability theory. One way to view this challenge is that it is unknown how long or how effective the decentralization process (in general or the specific Belgian process) is as an antidote to regionalism. It is possible that the communities and regions system had still placated voters and

¹⁹ Tref, “Belgium,” 279.

²⁰ “Text: Treaty of Maastricht on European Union,” Summaries of EU Legislation, EUR-Lex, last modified March 21, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:xy0026>.

preoccupied the political parties through the 1990s. Additionally, further reforms occurred with more powers being transferred to the regional authorities through the fifth Belgian state reform in 2001.²¹ Thus, by 2009, scholars were declaring Belgian regionalist political parties “a victim of their own success” and, within this framing, writing of the decline and death (at least in terms of political relevance) of the Flemish regionalism movement, with *Vlaams Blok*’s perseverance being explained through its appeal as a far-right and populist movement that just also happen to want an independent Flanders.²² Though that was a logical way to construct a narrative on Flemish independence at the time, from the past decade, I think it is safe to say these claims were premature, as I will show after introducing the Treaty of Lisbon and examining the modern Flemish regionalist political parties.

The most recent incident of further EU integration occurred in 2009 through the Treaty of Lisbon. This treaty created the European Parliament which strengthened the democratic legitimacy of the European Union and the European Central Bank which strengthened the economic uniformity within the EU. The treaty also approved a new stronger trade policy that allowed the EU to conclude international agreements on foreign direct investment.²³ The Treaty of Lisbon also established a foreign service system and formally enumerated a mutual defense guarantee that was already largely implied but finally formalized.²⁴ This round of integration provided the EU with better leverage in trade situations (market benefit), which again rebalances the trade-offs between large and small states within the EU in favor of the small state.

Additionally, there was the Euro crisis that deeply impacted the finances of the EU but showed

²¹ “The Fifth State Reforms,” Belgium.be, accessed January 24, 2021, https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/country/history/belgium_from_1830/formation_federal_state/fifth_reform_of_state.

²² Deschouwer, “Rise and Fall,” 560, 566, 574.

²³ “Text: Treaty of Lisbon,” Summaries of EU Legislation, EUR-Lex, last modified December 15, 2017, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/LSU/?uri=celex:12007L/TXT>.

²⁴ Ibid.

that the European Union would provide funds to regions undergoing cyclical economic hardships. Structural funds to help with economic shocks (structural funds benefit) are another key benefit of large states that, when provided through integration, increase the perceived viability of small states. There are two tales to tell starting in 2010, one of *Vlaams Blok* and one of *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*, as Flanders regionalism proved it was far from over.

The name *Vlaams Blok* no longer exists. The party was forced into a name change in 2004 after several affiliate organizations were found guilty of racism.²⁵ However, the party cleverly persisted by renaming themselves as *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest, 2004) which allowed the party to keep the familiar abbreviation of VB. The ideology of *Vlaams Belang* on Europe and European integration is nuanced but unusual. As I explain in the Introduction, Jolly's research found that regionalist movements are typically pro-European Union. *Vlaams Belang* is often described as Eurosceptic which is hard to argue against considering the greater European Parliament party of which *Vlaams Belang* is a part lists, "the party [*Vlaams Belang*] is very reluctant and critical of the European Union with its bureaucracy and interference in areas where people's sovereignty should prevail" for its stance on Europe.²⁶ However, the party's definition of itself is pro-European and still in favor of the EU, though against any greater integration that would create an EU superstate.²⁷ Additionally, *Vlaams Belang* seeks to take back immigration controls, a reaction to the waves of immigration caused by the European migrant crisis, and to end the Euro thereby stopping the subsidizing of Southern European countries, a reaction to the Euro crisis.²⁸ An ideal Flanders for them would be friendly with its neighbors, maintaining

²⁵ Tref, "Belgium," 281.

²⁶ "Vlaams Belang – Flanders," Identity and Democracy Group – English, accessed January 26, 2021, https://www.idgroup.eu/vlaams_belang.

²⁷ "Programma: Een Vrij Europa," Vlaams Belang, last modified December 10, 2020, <https://www.vlaamsbelang.org/programma/>.

²⁸ Ibid.

cooperation and integration (likely through the EU), aside from border controls and economic and monetary policies that support economies other than their own. Interestingly this ideal scenario would likely undo some of the integration, specifically the provision of structural funds to help with cyclical economic shocks (structural funds benefit), that theoretically makes Flanders more viable as an independent state.

What this amounts to is a delicate balancing act in which *Vlaams Belang* still desires EU integration with the party favoring the economic benefits and security the EU provides, yet coming into conflict with the EU only when the party feels like it is losing out economically or when the identity and territory it claims to represent is under threat. To *Vlaams Belang*, European integration helps Flanders as long as it stays within bounds. These bounds support three out of the four mechanisms of viability theory, with the only objection to the provision of structural funds to help with cyclical economic shocks and certain, but not all and not even most, public goods. For this reason, *Vlaams Belang*'s ideology on European integration is mostly in line with the ideology expected by viability theory. The *Vlaams Belang* also desires Brussels as the capital of Flanders, which, with its large French-speaking population and its capital of the EU status, seems difficult to achieve.

Vlaams Belang received 7.8% (506,697) of the 2010 Chamber of Representatives vote.²⁹ This represents a decrease from the average of 11% the VB parties received throughout the prior decade.³⁰ This decrease does not challenge the viability theory because what likely happened is the voters that *Vlaams Belang* lost were due to *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*'s large electoral gains

²⁹ "Elections: Belgium Parl Jun 2010," IFES Election Guide, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/473/>; A further state reform by 2010 had changed the Senate into a body comprised of the regional parliaments, effectively making the Chamber of Representatives the only nationwide election.

³⁰ "Elections: Belgium Parl Jun 10 2007," IFES Election Guide, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/399/>; "Elections: Belgium Parliamentary May 18 2003," IFES Election Guide, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/311/>

(discussed below and shown in Table 1), therefore the regionalism movement as a whole gained support, just the right-wing form of it was less appealing for that election. This trend of decreasing support continued in 2014, with *Vlaams Belang* receiving only 3.6% of the vote while the more moderate Flanders nationalists made more gains, though not quite enough to offset *Vlaams Belang*'s losses.³¹ However, despite the slight decrease, Flanders regionalists as a whole were able to start consistently bringing in a quarter of all votes, which is higher than in any previous period. In 2019, the cycle of politics swung back to the right and *Vlaams Belang* captured 12% (810,177) of the vote, making them the second biggest party in the Belgian Parliament, only behind the other Flanders regionalists, *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*.³² Despite this success, *Vlaams Belang* has stayed part of the opposition instead of joining a coalition government.³³ A key point here is that there are greater trends at play with a rise in the right-wing and far-right populist parties in the second half of the 2010s which still affected Flanders regionalist voters, but overall the regionalism movement continued to gain support, especially through *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*.

One of the big differences between the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* and the *Volksunie* is that the *Volksunie*, while facing a much different governmental landscape, was willing to compromise on complete independence in exchange for federalism. However, *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* “believe[s] in a gradual development where increasingly more competences are transferred to Flanders and Europe and where the federal level gradually disappears. Our final

³¹ “Elections: Belgium Chamber of Deputies 2014,” IFES Election Guide, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/2404/>.

³² “Elections: Belgium Chamber of Deputies 2019,” IFES Election Guide, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/3150/>; “Chamber: Results in Figures,” Elections 2019, last modified June 24, 2019, <https://elections2019.belgium.be/en/results-figures?el=CK&id=CKR00000>.

³³ This is in part because there is an agreement to not form coalition governments with *Vlaams Belang*.

target is indeed an independent Flanders as a European Member State.”³⁴ On other issues, the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* is seen as center or center-right, with the occasional progressive stance.³⁵ *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*'s ideology aligns closely with what is expected of a regionalist movement seeking independence through increased supranational small state viability. This is because the party is clearly pro-Europe and explicitly buys into the logic of the viability theory, shown by *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*'s official position:

The N-VA wants a stronger Flanders in a stronger Europe. After all, more and more challenges are arising in this globalized world that we must deal with at a supranational level. The macro level for us is the European Union. Competences that require a supranational approach must therefore be transferred to the European level (i.e. currency, defense, migration, internal market, energy, etc.). Competences that must be exercised closer to the people must be transferred to Flanders, which is the appropriate micro level for the N-VA.³⁶

Specific reference is made to three of the four viability mechanisms I have identified as being competences for the supranational level. Common migration policy and common energy management would be the EU providing a public good (public goods benefit). The internal market is a direct reference to the lowering of trade barriers (market benefit). Defense is a common security provision guarantee (security benefit). There is the potential for the viability theory to be a self-fulfilling prophecy here, as *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* is keenly aware, through specific platform reference, of theory from the *Size of Nation* by Alesina and Spolaore which provides, in

³⁴ “Frequently Asked Questions,” *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA)*, last modified September 18, 2015. <https://english.n-va.be/frequently-asked-questions#ideology>.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

part, both the inspiration and theoretical underpinnings of Jolly's research on viability theory.³⁷ The *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* platform says, "It is often said that Flanders would be too small in a Europe that is only getting bigger... These processes aren't contradictory but complementary: globalisation precisely encourages localization".³⁸ While this speaks to the innately compelling logic of viability theory for regionalists, the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* would need to see electoral gains for Flanders regionalism to support its claim.

Starting as a splinter group, the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* had to rebuild its brand and popular appeal. While doing this through the 2000s and hindered by a new 5% threshold for Parliament Representation, the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* formed a Flemish center-right cartel with the Flemish Christian Democrats that put the Flanders autonomy and independence questions on the backburner.³⁹ Eventually, with too little progress on the regionalist front, the cartel was dissolved and the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* took part in the 2010 Belgium elections on its own. These elections were a huge success, with *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* winning 27 seats with 17.4% (1,135,617) of the vote, making them the largest party in the country.⁴⁰ However, after a long period of negotiation, the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* were left out of the new government. The next elections in 2014 built on the previous success, with 20.3% (1,366,414) of the vote and 33 seats going to *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*.⁴¹ This time they did form part of the government (the "Swedish" center-right government of Michel I).⁴² However, this period saw

³⁷ Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA), "Frequently Asked Questions." For more on the relationship between *Size of Nations* and viability theory, see the Introduction section of this paper.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "History," Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA), last modified December 17, 2020, <https://english.n-va.be/history>.

⁴⁰ IFES Election Guide, "Belgium Parl Jun 2010.;" One does have to remember that like-mind parties operate both a Flanders and a Wallonia branch leading to many different parties so, while still a large victory, 27 seats in a chamber of 150 is by no means dominating.

⁴¹ IFES Election Guide, "Belgium Chamber of Deputies 2014.;" *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* remained the largest party in Belgium.

⁴² Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA), "History."

little action taken towards their regionalist goals. This is in part because the need to build a coalition government required compromise with more moderate Flanders parties and like-minded French-speaking parties. This lack of progress on regionalism from the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* could explain some of the gains made by *Vlaams Belang* in the 2019 elections.⁴³ These elections in 2019, caused by the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*'s withdrawal from the government after disagreeing with Prime Minister Michel's handling of the UN's Global Compact for Migration, saw the *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* remain the largest party in the country but lose seats after only receiving 16% (1,086,787) of the vote.⁴⁴ However, the beautifully named Vivaldi government was formed from four different ideology groups (the "Four Season") which left both Flanders nationalist parties in the opposition.⁴⁵

Table 1:

Year	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie		Vlaams Belang		Combined	
2010	17.4%	1,135,617	7.76%	506,697	25.16%	--
2014	20.26%	1,366,414	3.67%	247,746	23.93%	-1.23%
2019	16.03%	1,086,787	11.95%	810,177	27.98%	+4.05%

Data from IFES Election Guide.

Going forward, the future looks promising for the Flanders regionalism movement. The December 2019 poll, if elections were to happen soon,⁴⁶ had *Vlaams Belang* seeing significant gains, while *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* is projected to experience mild losses, resulting in a 4 seat

⁴³ In addition to the wave of right-wing popularity mentioned earlier.

⁴⁴ IFES Election Guide, "Belgium Chamber of Deputies 2019.;" Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA), "History.

⁴⁵ Pauline Bock, "Why Did It Take so Long to Form Belgium's New 'Vivaldi' Coalition?" *euronews* (Lyon), October 7, 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/10/07/belgium-s-new-government-why-did-the-vivaldi-coalition-take-so-long-to-form>.

⁴⁶ This is unlikely given the need for stability because of the COVID-19 crisis, but possible in the short future given the amount of disagreement between each of the four ideological factions currently in government.

gain for Flanders regionalists in the national Chamber of Representatives.⁴⁷ So, should the European Union integrate more, or should the gradual increase caused by current integration continue, support for regionalism within Belgium appears to follow the expectations of the viability theory pretty dependably and therefore regionalism will likely continue to increase. There is little left in the way of decentralization before Flanders and Wallonia are de facto two separate EU member states, and the Flanders nationalists will not hesitate to formalize any de facto independence. The Brussels question looms large, but in the face of significant political pressure, politicians might have to finally come up with an answer.

Corsica

The next region that I will evaluate is Corsica. Corsica is the fourth largest island in the Mediterranean and currently a part of Metropolitan (European) France. By way of being an island, the boundaries of this regionalist movement are very clearly defined because Corsica's independence would mean independence for the entire island, the few surrounding islets, and nothing else. Corsica has ruled itself in the past, with an internationally unacknowledged independence in the mid-18th century, until the Genoese, who owned the island according to the European elite but exerted little real influence on it, sold Corsica to the French.⁴⁸ The de facto independent Corsica Republic was quickly defeated, and the island has been a part of France ever since. Culturally, after centuries of French rule and exchange, most Corsicans speak French, but there is a unique dialect of Italian known as Corsu that is widely used as well.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ David Coppi, "Grand Baromètre: à La Chambre, Vlaams Belang Et N-VA Majoritaires Dans Le Groupe Flamand," *Le Soir* (Brussels), December 14, 2019, <https://plus.lesoir.be/266872/article/2019-12-14/grand-barometre-la-chambre-vlaams-belang-et-n-va-majoritaires-dans-le-groupe>.

⁴⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Corsica," accessed February 5, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Corsica>.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

There are two factors that stand out when contrasting Corsica with Flanders: population and economic prosperity. Though Corsica is a relatively large island, its population density has remained consistently low, relative to Metropolitan France. Starting after World War II and obviously fluctuating over time, the total resident population has never surpassed 350,000 which means that all people in Corsica have never even made up 1% of the French electorate.⁵⁰ This means that the national-level democratic process has been and is a significantly less effective venue for Corsican regionalists. There is no chance at a democratic plurality like in Flanders unless Corsican regionalism started campaigning for support from regions outside Corsica. To do this, outside of diaspora votes, Corsican regionalists would have to convince voters of other regions that they represent those voters' interests while explicitly and publicly representing the interests of a different region.⁵¹ It seems this would be an unsuccessful strategy and, likely for that reason, has not been a priority for Corsican regionalists. Second, Corsica is not an economically prosperous region. Its economy has historically relied mainly on agriculture, and, in modern times, agriculture has remained but been supplemented with food processing and tourism.⁵² French historian Jean-Jacques Becker points out that being a part of France offers substantial economic benefit to the Corsicans. On Corsica, "no other French department receives as many subsidies, both legally and through back channels; and no other French department has a higher ratio of civil servants and welfare recipients."⁵³ While this means that there are more factors working against the regionalism movement, Corsica presents an opportunity to observe if

⁵⁰The electorate of Corsica is even lower because of children and unregistered adult voters; "Corse – Population," Eurostat, accessed February 5, 2021, https://circabc.europa.eu/webdav/CircaBC/ESTAT/regportraits/Information/fr83_pop.htm.

⁵¹ And, at times, representative of a region that ultimately would leave the country.

⁵² *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, "Corsica."

⁵³ Jean-Jacques Becker, "Corsica," in *Europe since 1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of War and Reconstruction*, ed. John Merriman and Jay Winter (Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2006), 724.

the viability theory's trends persist independent of demographics and relative economic prosperity.

The modern Corsican regionalist movement starts in the 1960s.⁵⁴ Several organizations merged to form the *Regional Front of Corsica* in 1966. These organizations were the Corsican Union (1960), the National Union of Corsican Students (1962), and the Committee for the Study and Defense of the Interests of Corsica (CEDIC, 1964).⁵⁵ The combined party did not last very long as only the CEDIC wanted to run in elections (the other groups were ideologically opposed) and thus after only managing 2.3% of the Bastia legislature vote, the CEDIC decided to break off and create their own party, the *Action Regionaliste Corse*.⁵⁶ They still had little success locally and no success nationally.

However, France has accompanied (some might say helped lead) Belgium through the same rounds of European integration as both are members of the original ECSC six. There is a point to be made here that might seem obvious but should be pointed out: viability theory is only in play when the region in question is able to be affected by one of the theory's mechanisms. The mechanisms triggered by the ECSC's creation in 1952 were the lowering of trade barriers on only coal, steel, and iron ore (market benefit) and the creation of public goods that affected these industries only (public goods benefit).⁵⁷ Corsica does not produce or significantly import any of these materials, so, with no economic reliance on coal, steel, or iron ore, Corsica was largely unaffected by the ECSC's creation.

⁵⁴ There was a brief regionalist movement in the interwar period, but it never participated in an election and was interwoven with Italian fascist irredentism (Luis de la Calle and Andre Fazi, "Making Nationalists Out of Frenchmen?: Substate Nationalism in Corsica," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics* 16, no. 3/4 (2010): 399, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2010.527228>.)

⁵⁵ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 399.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ For more on the ECSC and its relation to viability theory, see the Flanders section of this Chapter.

The existence of NATO did trigger the supranational guarantee of security (security benefit) mechanism, but it appears in this context that this was not enough for a regionalism movement to emerge. One possible reason for this could be that Corsica's status as an island makes the country feel more physically protected from external threats. Another is that the only nearby countries of France and Italy, both of which would highly object to Corsica falling under the rule of another global power, are perceived as friendly. There is the potential that security guarantees are a supplementary mechanism, not impactful enough by themselves. An analysis on how military alliances affect regionalist movements could be helpful in further exploring this mechanism. Rationally, since most military alliances are formed either for offensive endeavors or defensively in response to an active threat,⁵⁸ it seems unlikely that they correlate with or promote internal regionalism on their own. In 1958, the Treaty of Rome creates the European Economic Community and ushers in the removal of trade barriers (market benefit), a common market for goods (market benefit), a public good in the form of a common trade policy and a customs union (public goods benefit), and the European Social Fund (structural funds benefit). These forms of integration correspond with the mechanisms of viability theory and, as explained above, with the arrival of a regionalist movement in Corsica by the early 1960s.

Once the movement for an independent Corsica exists, it is faced with the population challenge described above. Not only is the Corsican electorate relatively small, but national legislative elections (as well as cantonal) follow the first-past-the-post rule, where the winning candidates must receive a majority after a second round.⁵⁹ The relatively new Corsican nationalists were not anywhere near getting a majority. In 1973, this led the leader of the *Action*

⁵⁸ Both of which are situations where the state security already seems tenuous at best and, therefore, are done to give a state better odds or more force in the coming violence, as opposed to preventing violence and maintaining citizen safety.

⁵⁹ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 399.

Regionaliste Corse (now called *Azzione per a Rinascita Corsa*), Edmond Siméoni, to refuse to field candidates in the legislative election and to, by 1975, turn to violence.⁶⁰ The famous initial incident that got the attention of the French national government was the armed occupation of a vineyard in Aléria.⁶¹ The vineyard was selected because it belonged to a French-Algerian immigrant, many of whom were resettled in Corsica after Algeria's independence. This highlights that there was a strong anti-immigrant sentiment, alongside the Corsican nationalism, at the core of the party's ideology. In the recapture, two of the French security forces were killed and *Azzione per a Rinascita Corsa* was banned.⁶² This launched the *Front de Libération Nationale Corse* which fought by means of a terror campaign of bombings and assassination until 2014.⁶³ Before diving into more election results for the nationalist movement, this persistent violence is important historical and political context and likely a crucial part of the governmental structure reforms that I am about to highlight.

In 1982, prior to anything that could be considered an electoral success for the Corsican independence movement, the French government passed a "statut particulier" (special status) for Corsica in an attempt to stop the violence.⁶⁴ This allowed Corsica to elect a regional assembly based on proportional party representation. *Unione di u Populu Corsu* (the successor to *Azzione per a Rinascita Corsa* and led by another Siméoni brother, Max) ran in these regional elections, while the *Front de Libération Nationale Corse* and its political affiliates did not. With 10.6% of the vote for the anti-violence *Unione di u Populu Corsu*, this was the first taste of

⁶⁰ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 400.

⁶¹ Cecile Rossi, "'There Was a Group of Capable People, but They Killed Each Other': The Corsican Struggle Forty Years On," *OpenDemocracy*, October 15, 2015, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/there-was-group-of-capable-people-but-they-killed-each-other-corsica/>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 400.

electoral progress for Corsican nationalism.⁶⁵ This is followed up with Corsican regionalists receiving 7.63% of the 1986 national legislative vote in Corse-du-Sud (the south and southwestern portions of the island) and 6.50% in Haute-Corse (the north and northeast portions).⁶⁶ These promising results seem to indicate that, as expected by viability theory, support for Corsican nationalism was growing since integration but had been hidden by pragmatic voters and a nascent regionalist movement's incompatibility with the majority-needed electoral system. Additionally, these results likely still underrepresent the Corsican regionalists because at least some of the pro-violence faction abstained from voting. However, there was also likely a boost from circumstances unrelated to viability theory such as excitement about the change in the electoral system and that the violence had actually been effective in forcing France to offer a concession. As these faded from voters' minds, their boost probably wore off because the regionalists lost votes in the 1988 national legislature elections, dropping to 4.03% and 6.55% in the two Corsican departments respectively.⁶⁷ Additionally, divisions between the regionalists left them fractured and thus still relatively unsuccessful and impotent despite proportional representation in Corsica until the regional elections of 1992, which marked the first election of the new "Collectivité Territoriale" level of autonomy for the island.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 400.

⁶⁶ Daniele Caramani, *Elections in Western Europe Since 1815: Electoral Results by Constituencies*, The Societies of Europe (London: Macmillan Reference, 2000), 365.; Since the French national government retained the two-round first-past-the-post system and this was not a majority in either department, this did not result in any nationally elected officials from a Corsican regionalist party.

⁶⁷ Caramani, *Western Europe since 1815*, 368.; This percentage of the vote is listed by Caramani as "other parties", however, all major positions on the left-right cleavage are accounted for individually with the largest and most successful parties listed by name and all other parties grouped together as "other extreme-left parties" and "other right-wing groups". Therefore, it is safe to assume that "other groups" receiving votes in Corsica are mostly, if not entirely, the regionalist parties.

⁶⁸ This new level of autonomy gave more powers to the regional assembly and designated an executive council. (de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 400.)

The Maastricht Treaty that created the European Union was officially signed in February 1992. It offered the benefits of common coordinated policies as a form of public goods (public goods benefit), greater security guarantees (security benefit), and the continuing of the common market (market benefit) to the people of Corsica.⁶⁹ In the regional elections in March 1992, the Corsican nationalists were boosted and captured 21.09% and 24.83% of the vote in the first and second rounds respectively.⁷⁰ The regionalist parties in the election were *Corsica Nazione* and *Corsica Demucrazia*. It is unclear if *Corsica Nazione* was in favor of the creation of the European Union because it was an amalgamation of five different Corsican nationalist parties which included both pro-violence-anti-immigrants views and much more moderate and consensus-seeking positions.⁷¹ For this reason, the party did not take a stance on much besides that they represented the nation of Corsica. If this party's increase in votes is, in part, because of the creation of the EU, it is unclear whether that would be voter enthusiasm for the possibilities opened by the EU or voter fears of Corsica ceding further sovereignty to the new institution. Since *Corsica Demucrazia* was anti-violence and seeking only greater autonomy for Corsica, it is likely they saw the new European Union positively because mainly pro-violence views were associated with the rhetoric of fearing the loss of Corsica's power (which helped justify the fight to regain it).⁷² The following national elections saw a significant increase for the Corsican regionalists with them receiving 25.5% and 20.7% in Corse-du-Sud and Haute-Corse, respectively.⁷³ However, going against the trend projected by the viability theory, the follow-up effort by the Corsican regionalist decreased in the regional election of 1998, down to 17.32%

⁶⁹ How the Maastricht Treaty triggers viability mechanisms is further explained in the Flanders section of this Chapter.

⁷⁰ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 406.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 402

⁷³ Caramani, *Western Europe since 1815*, 371.; Again, this is the total for 'other parties' but as explained in footnote 67, it is safe to treat these 'other parties' as mostly or entirely regionalist within the Corsica context.

(first round) and 9.85% (second round).⁷⁴ It seems that the strongest reason for this decrease is that, a month before the vote, Prefect Claude Erignac, the highest representative of the French government to the region of Corsica, was assassinated.⁷⁵ One can see how this might ostracize voters.

In 2003, then French interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy, who would later become President of France, had a plan to decentralize his country and save some money by cutting down bureaucracy along the way. He organized for a referendum to take place in Corsica that would let the Corsican people vote on if they wanted more autonomy for themselves. In a very close 50.98% to 49.02% vote, the referendum did not pass, and more autonomy was defeated.⁷⁶ It would be a mistake not to mention this referendum when analyzing Corsican regionalism because it is the one opportunity in which Corsica has had to make a decision unilaterally, and the Corsican public's decision against autonomy appears to be a major challenge to viability theory. A regionalist movement that is increasing in support should be expected to want more autonomy at every opportunity. Therefore, a defeat of the referendum would be a defeat to the movement. However, while undoubtedly a disappointment for the French government, it is unclear if this vote represents a defeat for the regionalists.⁷⁷ The campaigning was extremely muddled as French politicians indicated that a vote for more autonomy would also mean an affirmation of the island's attachment to France, so, while some regionalists supported more autonomy, others did not want to play into the government's hand.⁷⁸ As *The Economist* reported in the days following the elections, "the no vote, in short, was not a clear-cut rejection of the

⁷⁴ de la Calle and Fazi, "Frenchmen," 406.; There is a 1997 French general election that I have been unable to find a reliable data point on with regards to specifically the Corsican departments.

⁷⁵ Rossi, "Capable People."

⁷⁶ "Elections: Corsica Ref July 6 2003," IFES Election Guide, <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/102/>.

⁷⁷ "Europe: A Worrying Result; A Referendum in Corsica," *The Economist*, Jul 12, 2003, 33.

<https://www.economist.com/europe/2003/07/10/a-worrying-result>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

nationalist cause.”⁷⁹ The explanation for why it was not clear-cut is that there were French national factions and Corsican regionalist factions in support of each outcome. Also, to be fair to viability theory, it supposes that greater integration with EU (in the key identified areas) leads to more and greater success for regionalism movements but does not say that these movements will never suffer defeats because greater success does not necessarily mean a majority consensus.

Finally, following the most recent treaty of integration, the Treaty of Lisbon (market benefit), the Corsican regionalist movement has seen its greatest success. In the 2010 regional elections, the two regionalist parties *Femu a Corsica* and *Corsica Libera* received 27.8% (first round) and 35.7% (second round) of the vote.⁸⁰ These two parties teamed up to form *Pè a Corsica* for the 2015 regional elections and, for the first time ever, a regionalist party captured the highest vote share with 35.34% (second round).⁸¹ This was followed up by an outright majority for *Pè a Corsica* in the 2017 regional elections with 56.5% of the votes.⁸² The 2017 regional elections were called quickly after the 2015 elections because the regional assembly voted to combine powers of the “Collectivité Territoriale” of Corsica with the powers of the two departments of Haute-Corse and Corse-du-Sud and form one government for the whole island called a “Collectivité Territoriale Unique.”⁸³ This essentially worked out to be the same result as if the 2003 referendum had succeeded, albeit more than a decade later. Ideologically, since *Pè a*

⁷⁹ *The Economist*, “A Referendum in Corsica.”

⁸⁰ Florent Gougou and Simon Labouret, “The 2010 French Regional Elections: Transitional Elections in a Realignment Era,” *French Politics* 8, no. 3 (2010): 335, 337. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fp.2010.17>.

⁸¹ “Corsica,” Nationalia, last modified December 2019, <https://www.nationalia.info/profile/12/corsica>; “Régionales: Résultats des Élections Régionales 2015: Corse,” Ministère de l’Intérieur, [https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Regionales/electresult_regionales-2015/\(path\)/regionales-2015/94/index.html](https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Regionales/electresult_regionales-2015/(path)/regionales-2015/94/index.html)

⁸² “Nationalists Win Corsica Election in Challenge for France,” *BBC News*, BBC, December 11, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42307274>.

⁸³ “Nouvelle organisation territoriale: la Corse prend de l’avance,” *Le Parisien*, December 13, 2014, <https://www.leparisien.fr/politique/nouvelle-organisation-territoriale-la-corse-prend-de-l-avance-13-12-2014-4371413.php>.

Corsica is an alliance between two parties, it is focused on areas where the parties agree, namely mostly centrist or center-left policies politically and on greater autonomy for Corsica. It is important to note that *Corsica Libera* is staunchly pro-independence for the island while *Femu a Corsica* is only pro-autonomy.⁸⁴ The party is helped by the leadership of Gilles Simeoni, the son of prominent Corsican nationalist Edmond Siméoni and the defense lawyer for Claude Erignac's assassin.⁸⁵ He (somewhat surprisingly) represents the pro-autonomy faction within the party yet is clearly not a French apologist and has legitimacy with the pro-independence cause. In my research, I have not found a stance by *Pè a Corsica* on if Corsica would seek to remain in the European Union, likely because that question is only relevant if the party agreed on Corsica needing to exist as an independent country which they do not. This party is likely content or unconcerned with the European status quo and, outside of not wanting foreigners to be able to buy holiday homes on the island, not taking a stance on greater European issues, preferring to stay focus on the regional issues at hand.⁸⁶

This trend of electoral success regionally was repeated on the national scale. In the 2012 national legislative elections, the Corsican regionalists showing was in line with the results since the boost at the creation of the EU in 1993. As illustrated in Table 2 below, the regionalists saw an increase in success across the board in the national legislature elections of 2017. *Pè a Corsica* had three members elected to the French legislature, a first for the island's regionalists. While this boost does not align neatly with the integration of the European Union, as there has been no new integration since 2009, I will propose three reasons for this increase, all of which were

⁸⁴ Nationalia, "Corsica."

⁸⁵ Edmond Siméoni is mentioned in the 1970s part of this Corsica section and brother/uncle Max Siméoni is mentioned in the 1980s part of this Corsica section as well.

⁸⁶ Kim Willsher, "Corsica Calls for Greater Autonomy from France after Election," *The Guardian*, December 11, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/11/macron-corsica-dilemma-nationalists-election-gains-france>.

potentially acting as obstacles to Corsican regionalists receiving the boost from integration expected by viability theory.

Table 2:

Election:	2012 (R1% / R2% / Seat Won?)	2017 (R1% / R2% /Seat Won?)
Haute-Corse 1 st Seat	28.03 / 31.22 / No	30.42 / 60.81 / Yes
Haute-Corse 2 nd Seat	16.98 / ----- / No	36.44 / 63.16 / Yes
Corse-du-Sud 1 st Seat	15.63 / ----- / No	21.41 / ----- / No
Corse-du-Sud 2 nd Seat	29.27 / 46.91 / No	29.10 / 55.22 / Yes

Data from Ministère de l'Intérieur, “Législatives.”

The first is that the Corsican regionalists, after decades of fielding competing and everchanging political parties, finally presented a unified party to the region through the alliance party of *Pè a Corsica*. The reason this is impactful is that, as stated before, there is not proportional representation for these elections, so fractured movements and newly formed parties are at a disadvantage by being seen as not established enough to be first-past-the-post. The second reason is that the successes at a regional level, particularly the election of 2015 and the centralization of Corsican autonomy as a “Collectivité Territoriale Unique” translated into belief that the regionalism movement could be beneficial at the national level.⁸⁷ The final reason is the abandonment, widely if not completely, of the use of violence by the Corsican nationalists in 2014. Viability theory, with its focus on election results, is grounded in the assumptions of a democratic and mainly peaceful process and resolution for regionalist political goals. It is not a theory on rebellions, uprisings, or civil strife. For this reason, regionalist violence is not taken into account. Additionally, there is no claim made on how regionalist violence moderates the

⁸⁷ The law that formed the “Collectivité Territoriale Unique” was passed before the 2017 legislative elections but would only come into effect in 2018. Still, this move towards more autonomy would be viewed as a success for the regionalists from the time it was passed and that boost in belief or perception would not require implementation.

projected effects of integration. However, in the case of Corsica, it seems that violence was a significant part of the early movement as it brought attention to the cause and yielded an important early change in the regional-level electoral system. This was different by the 1990s, when, while prior Corsican nationalist violence had been mostly viewed as politically motivated, increasingly the Corsican nationalists who chose to use violence came to be viewed as common criminals and associates of larger organized crime rings.⁸⁸ Therefore, by the time violence stopped, it had been hurting the regionalism movement in perception as well as the human costs that come with members being killed or imprisoned.⁸⁹ Thus, the violence needed to end before Corsican regionalism could experience greater success.

Looking to the future with the Corsican independence movement, the most recent results (Table 2) give a reason for optimism for the future of Corsican regionalism. However, it will be interesting to see if the *Pè a Corsica* alliance will be able to continue. If it can, then *Pè a Corsica* will continue to negotiate with mainland France for greater power or further referendums. Eventually, France may give in to these demands by giving greater autonomy, and, by tactically doing so, could cause the collapse of *Pè a Corsica* as the *Femu a Corsica* party will be satisfied with the greater autonomy and *Corsica Libera* will continue to push for outright independence. A smaller Corsican independence party has already started campaigning for an independence referendum in 2032. This shows how far away an independent Corsica still is, even for its most ardent supporters, and, if the moment's violence and political fragmentation were to return, it could be even farther.

⁸⁸ Jean-Louis Briquet, "'Drift into Mafiadom'? Political Violence and Criminality in the Corsican Nationalist Movement," in *Organized Crime and States*, ed. Jean-Louis Briquet and Gilles Favarel-Garrigues (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 197, 199-200. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230110038_9.

⁸⁹ Rossi, "Capable People."

Chapter 2

Sardinia and Padania

In this chapter, I will examine the Sardinian and Padanian regionalist movements. I will start with Sardinia by, first, briefly discussing its composition and history and then reviewing the origins of the regionalism movement. I will then go through the European integration that occurs in Sardinia, explain how it triggers viability theory, and then analyze the electoral results that follow. Because of electoral reform in Italy in the 1990s that favored large nation-wide parties, I will pay special attention to Sardinian regional elections starting after the reform. I end the section considering the future of Sardinian regionalism. Then, for Padania, I first define the term Padania and the territory of Padanian regionalism. Next, I show the origins of the different regionalism movements that coalesced into Padanian regionalism. After that, I will focus on how European integration has impacted the primary Padanian regionalist party of *Lega Nord*. I end by offering some thought on the co-opting of regionalist parties for non-regionalist ends and finally, a look to the future.

Sardinia

Having just analyzed Corsica, I now transition to its southern island neighbor of Sardinia. Sardinia is bigger than Corsica, the second-largest island in the Mediterranean, and is west of the mainland of its current country, Italy. As an island, the Sardinian independence movement's territorial claim is easily defined as the island and the surrounding outlying islets. Italian is widely spoken, but Sardo, the Sardinian language with its two main dialects of Sard and Sardu, is the historical and cultural language of the island.¹ Catalan and Arabic are also spoken.² The

¹ "The Language Of Sardinia," Total Sardinia, last modified February 18, 2020, <https://totalsardinia.com/language/>.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Sardinia," accessed February 20, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sardinia-island-Italy>.

economy relies on agriculture and tourism, but is decently diversified; however, the population density of the island is quite low, compared to the rest of Italy.³ Historically, Italy is one of the most recently formed countries of western and southern Europe. In fact, the Kingdom of Sardinia was the leading power in the Italian unification process. However, the Kingdom of Sardinia is a misnomer because it was based in the city of Turin in mainland Europe. The island of Sardinia was only a periphery part of its eponym kingdom. This periphery status would continue as part of Italy.

The first modern era Sardinian regionalist movement was the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* (Sardinian Action Party, 1921). This party emerged through the leadership of a Sardinian section of the Italian army that had fought in the Great War, particularly the ex-soldier, Emilio Lussu.⁴ This section was composed of soldiers from all over Sardinia, and thus, when the soldiers returned, they now felt a commonality with their fellow soldiers and those soldiers' different island communities. This consciousness spread, and a subset of the population identified themselves with Sardinia as a whole, instead of solely identifying with smaller, more locality-based subdivisions. The initial platform of *Partito Sardo d'Azione* was that Sardinia needed autonomy within Italy, not independence, to protect the newfound Sardinian identity, the historic language(s), and the island's culture.⁵

This message was well received and in the Italian general election of 1921, *Partito Sardo d'Azione* received 28.76% of the vote in the voting district of Cagliari e Sassari, which encompassed all and only Sardinia.⁶ Cagliari is the island's largest city and now the de facto

³ "Sardinia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*.

⁴ Eve Hepburn, "Explaining Failure: the Highs and Lows of Sardinian Nationalism," *Regional and Federal Studies* 19, no. 4-5 (2009): 597, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597560903310378>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Daniele Caramani, *Elections in Western Europe Since 1815: Electoral Results by Constituencies*, The Societies of Europe (London: Macmillan Reference, 2000), 650.; Other sources report this number as high as 36% of the vote. I have not analyzed the reason for this discrepancy, but since, both, my focus is on integration through the EU, of

capital city, located along the southern bay, and Sassari is the second-largest city, near the northwest coast.⁷ This illustrates that the concept of a united Sardinia was yet to be reflected in the electoral naming division. Elections would stop under fascist Italy, but the electoral district representing Sardinia would be called Sardinia by the time elections are resumed after World War II, a small effect caused by the *Partito Sardo d'Azione*. In the last general elections of 1924 before Benito Mussolini took power and ended them, *Partito Sardo d'Azione* received 24,059 votes⁸ with netted them 4 seats.⁹ *Partito Sardo d'Azione* would have to stop competing as a political force for fear of violence, but ultimately, Sardinian regionalism has a strong initial showing to start from once Fascist Italy collapses, the Second World War ends, and elections resume.

Throughout Italy's fascist period, the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* essentially broke in two. The party had never taken an ideological stance, only uniting under the banner of greater autonomy. Therefore, the conservatives in the party decided to join the fascists in exchange for autonomy.¹⁰ What this "autonomy" amounted to was Mussolini rewarding the island with money, but no delegation of any autonomous powers to Sardinia.¹¹ Conversely, Lussu favored a socialist left stance, and, while underground, this faction of the party became a party of anti-fascism and labor rights.¹² Ultimately, this division, and partial association with fascism, hurt the

which there was none at this time, and the fact that the Italian political system was very volatile in the interwar years, the point that a significant part of Sardinia supported regionalism prior to any integration is conveyed with either percentage.

⁷ Cagliari would only become the capital city of the Sardinia region after the creation of regions by the Italian Constitution following the Second World War. It was however a historical capital of the Kingdom of Sardinia, prior to the Kingdom moving its capital to Turin.

⁸ As for what percentage of the vote that is, I could not find a reliable data point; however, it does appear that *Partito Sardo d'Azione* was the second most popular party in Sardinia.

⁹ Nohlen and Stöver, *Elections in Europe*, 1069.

¹⁰ Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 597.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 598.

¹² *Ibid.*, 598.

party in the 1946 elections to the Constituent Assembly. *Partito Sardo d'Azione* managed a still decent 14.89% of the vote, but nonetheless a decrease.¹³

The reason this result provides important context for analyzing Sardinian regionalism going forward is because the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* was working to get a Special Statute for Sardinia into the new Italian constitution, which would achieve their autonomist aims, but they were so hindered by the division and loss of support that the Italian government took over this initiative.¹⁴ The autonomists still technically succeeded in gaining special recognition but instead of gaining any devolved powers, they gained the right to financial considerations (again) from mainland Italy and Italian-directed help in achieving modernization.¹⁵ This did not satisfy the Sardinian regionalist supporters nor their own politicians, with Lussu saying of Sardinian autonomy, “this autonomy might as well fit into the family of federalism like a cat into the lion’s.”¹⁶ By this, he indicated Sardinia’s status was within the concept of federalism but not what one thought off or wanted when one did desire federalism or autonomy. To make matters worse, in 1948, Lussu started another party, *Partito Sardo d'Azione Socialista* (Socialist Sardinia Action Party, 1948) which got 6.6% of the vote that year and brought regular flavor *Partito Sardo d'Azione* down to 10.5% in the same election.¹⁷ Therefore, as Italy and Sardinia entered the first round of European integration, the Sardinian regionalism movement, due to division and lack of real achievement, was quickly losing momentum and entering a state of failure.

The first round of European integration in Italy occurred in 1952 with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community. I have discussed the reasons for this integration in the

¹³ Caramani, *Western Europe since 1815*, 653.

¹⁴ Hepburn, “Explaining Failure,” 599.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Giangiacomo Ortu, “Emilio Lussu, L'autonomia Come Valore Morale,” *La Nuova Sardegna* (Sassari), November 6, 2019, <https://www.lanuovasardegna.it/tempo-libero/2019/11/05/news/lussu-l-autonomia-come-valore-morale-1.37850286>.

¹⁷ Hepburn, “Explaining Failure,” 598.

Flanders section of Chapter 1, but here I will address Italy's motivation to join specifically. Since the country was seen as unlikely to be the aggressor or defender in a future war over these resources (like France, Germany, or the Benelux countries), the European Coal and Steel Community presented Italy with the opportunity of economic and regional prestige benefits.¹⁸ However, I argue that aside from the ability to purchase raw materials at a better price (market benefit), the effects of the ECSC were least impactful in Italy, as well as delayed because Italy requested and received a longer transitional period to attempt to help its affected industries prepared for greater competition.¹⁹ I have also speculated in the Corsica section of Chapter 1 that a lack of industries directly involved in this round of European integration might hinder the viability theory's effect. However, Sardinia does have a very large coal mine that is an important part of its economy.²⁰ For that reason, after the transitional delay, Sardinia was directly impacted by the ECSC. Also, NATO's 1949 creation would be triggering the guaranteeing of security mechanism (security benefit), and, by the Treaty of Rome in 1958, all three other viability theory mechanisms would be triggered in the form of a common market (market benefit), common trade policies and a customs union (public goods benefit), and the European Social Fund (structural funds benefit). Therefore, the following election results do not seem to correlate with this increased integration and therefore, bring into question at least the scope of viability theory's applicability.

¹⁸ "Reactions in Italy," From the Schuman Plan to the Paris Treaty (1950–1952), CVCE, last modified September 9, 2016, <https://www.cvce.eu/en/recherche/unit-content/-/unit/5cc6b004-33b7-4e44-b6db-f5f9e6c01023/c793e341-a1dd-4bf5-a6be-b317cb6a3eff>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Giuliana Rossi, "Seismic tomography in Monte Sinni (Sardinia, Italy) Coal Mine," *Bollettino di Geofisica Teorica ed Applicata* 51, no. 2 (June 2010): 224-225, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236269031_Seismic_tomography_in_Monte_Sinni_Sardinia_Italy_coal_mine.

Table 3: Electoral Performance of *Partito Sardo d'Azione* in Italian general elections

Year	Votes	Vote Percentage	Seats
1948 Chamber	61,928	10.26% (n/a)	1
1948 Senate	65,743	12.73% (n/a)	1
1953 Chamber	24,990	3.86% (-6.40)	0
1953 Senate	34,484	6.05% (-6.68)	0
1958 Chamber	None	N/A	N/A
1958 Senate	25,923	4.15% (-1.90)	0
1963 Chamber	None	N/A	N/A
1963 Senate	34,954	5.58% (+1.43)	0
1968 Chamber	27,228	3.61% (-0.25)	0
1968 Senate	25,891	3.87% (-1.71)	0
1972 Chamber	None	N/A	N/A
1972 Senate ²¹	189,534	26.83% (n/a)	3
1976 Chamber	None	N/A	N/A
1976 Senate	None	N/A	N/A
1979 Chamber	17,673	1.91% (-1.70)	0
1979 Senate	15,766	2.07% (-1.80)	0

Data from Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali.

What the table above shows is that the Sardinian regionalism movement saw no boost in its electoral performance in the three decades following the ECSC and two decades following the EEC. It was not completely defeated because *Partito Sardo d'Azione* found a little power once as

²¹ Coalition with PCI and PSIUP

part of a coalition in 1972 and was still able to get seats at a regional level, though never with more than 8% of the vote.²² Still, this Sardinian example needs to be explained. One might say that this proves that viability theory is wrong. I would argue that that line of reasoning should be phrased as this proves that viability theory is not always a sufficient explanation. However, since this study on how European integration has impacted regionalist political parties' electoral support uses the viability theory lens, I am going to consider some possible reasons why the Sardinian regionalist did not see the electoral boost they ought to be receiving underneath the surface.

The first possibility is that Sardinian regionalism was so damaged by pre-integration events that integration was doing its best to keep the movement on life support. One half of the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* was stained by its association with fascism, while the other half had had a shot to achieve promised autonomy and failed to achieve it during the creation of the Italian Constitution. The party leaders admitted this failure and so the former supporters could be forgiven for giving up hope or for believing that infighting would again bungle the next opportunity should that ever come around.²³

Another possibility is that European integration was not part of the Sardinian political discussion. Regionalism and independence movement expert Dr. Eve Hepburn, whose article on Sardinian nationalism's failure has been instrumental in my construction of the Sardinian regionalist history writes,

Since its inception, the Psd'Az [*Partito Sardo d'Azione*] has consistently adopted a pro-European attitude, envisioning Sardinian self-determination within a wider Europe of the

²² Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 599.; In other cases studies within this paper, I have chosen to dive into the regional level when it helps emphasize a trend that would otherwise be less clear at the national level; however in this case the regional level trend reflects the national level trend.

²³ Ibid.

Peoples. ... However, there have been some problems with the Psd'Az's use of Europe to find solutions to its territorial demands. First, during this period of direct Sardinian representation in Europe, all of the mainstream parties in Sardinia became pro-European. However, the difficulty here was that Europe also became unproblematic in Sardinian politics: party approaches to European integration were (and remain) reactive and uncritical, at least when policies do not affect Sardinian economic interests.²⁴

The pro-European stance aligns with viability theory's identified trend for regionalist movements to see and frame their future as within the EU. The second part of the quotation points out that European integration was a non-issue, so it did not enter the political conversation. Therefore, while *Partito Sardo d'Azione* was framing Sardinia's future as within Europe, so was everyone else. Conversely, this means there is no emergence of a Eurosceptic regionalist faction, which while often taking a more nuanced or antagonistic approach to greater integration, is often quite set on taking an in-your-face approach to constructing and promoting a nationalist identity.²⁵ It should be noted that the different factors presented are not exclusive (except when in contradiction) and therefore they could all be factors.

In 1980, *Partito Sardo d'Azione* adopted a pro-independence stance, moving away from decades of being an autonomist party, and also started campaigning in support of the official recognition and use of Sardo.²⁶ They received 9.5% of the vote in Sardinia in the 1983 general election, good for one seat plus a similar result gave them one seat in the senate as well.²⁷ This was a huge upswing for the party, but what is interesting is that no new European integration had

²⁴ Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 600-602.

²⁵ This is to say a nationalist identity for the region, not the larger nation-state.

²⁶ Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 600.

²⁷ Caramani, *Western Europe since 1815*, 666.

occurred. I believe that switching up the party's stance was the main reason for the increase in support.

They were further benefited from and by Europe through the start of elections to the European Parliament. Though grouped with the much more populous Sicily for their European representation district, *Partito Sardo d'Azione* got one representative elected in 1984.²⁸ This was the second-ever European Parliamentary elections and the first ones in which the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* took part. This success was followed up with an increase to 11.92% of the vote in the 1987 general Italian election, good for two representatives and the maintaining of one senator.²⁹

The start of European direct elections is not within the scope of viability theory because its implementation alone does not trigger any of the mechanisms. However, these European elections gave the Sardinian nationalists a stage and place where their message was amplified. The best illustration of this amplification is the *Partito Sardo d'Azione's* status as an early member of the European parliament political party, the European Free Alliance, which was comprised of other regionalist movements united in a belief in the rights of regions within the EU.³⁰ The party would retain its seat in the 1989 European Parliament elections.³¹ However, after spending some of the 1980s in power at a regional level and having little to show for it, support for the Sardinian nationalists would fade at the start of the 1990s and be existentially threatened in 1993.³²

In 1993, after a major corruption scandal brought down the major parties of the Italian political system, it was decided that the system need to be reformed. This reform created a mixed

²⁸ "European election results - 1984 - European Union," European Parliament, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>.

²⁹ Caramani, *Western Europe since 1815*, 668.

³⁰ Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 601.

³¹ European Parliament, "European election results - 1989 - European Union."

³² Similar to footnote 22, the trend of *Partito Sardo d'Azione* doing better in elections throughout the 1980s is reflected at the regional level.

majoritarian and proportional representation electoral system in place of the solely proportional representation system and was intended to reduce the fragmentation of the political system.³³ However, as the Sardinian regionalists were a smaller party constrained to a less densely populated region, they saw this as a threat to their existence and went to Rome to protest in the street against the change, to no avail.³⁴ The party was probably right about the threat this change presented as neither *Partito Sardo d'Azione* nor the other Sardinian regionalist parties that have formed since 1993 (which I will talk about more later in this section) have gotten a seat at the national level, aside from in 1996 when *Partito Sardo d'Azione* joined the alliance that won nationally thus receiving a senate seat.³⁵ Despite all the further integration started by the 1993 Maastricht treaty that created the European Union, in terms of percentage of the vote in Sardinia for the national level elections, Sardinian regionalists in the 21st century have not broken 4% when combined which falls to 3% since 2001.³⁶ Though I have critiqued other scholars in this study for losing faith in a movement too early, it appears at least for the moment the bipolar electoral system in Italy is proving an insurmountable challenge to national representation for Sardinian regionalism.

However, thanks to the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* getting special, if albeit disappointing, status in the Italian Constitution, there is one more place to look for the expected trends of viability theory for Sardinia: the regional council. Up to this point, Sardinia has provided little evidence for viability theory and some evidence against its universality. Therefore, the following trend, since the 1993 Maastricht treaty which triggered the providing a public good mechanism

³³ Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 608.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 609.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 602.

³⁶ "Archivio storico delle elezioni," Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, <https://elezionistorico.interno.gov.it/index.php>.

(public good benefit) and the guaranteeing security mechanism (security benefit) as well as creating the economic benefits that come with the Euro currency (market benefit) and continuing all previous integration, is intriguing.³⁷ To start Sardinian regionalists received 7.9% of the regional vote in 1994.³⁸ This is down from 1989, but there are two reasons for this. First, the electoral reform of 1993 and the damping of hopes and spirits that caused was likely lingering. Second, the Sardinian regionalism movement had fractured for the first time in forty-five years, and *Sardigna Nazione* (Sardinia Nation, 1994) entered the fray.

Sardigna Nazione was not happy with *Partito Sardo d'Azione* tendency to collaborate and enter alliances with the major ideological Italian parties without achieving tangible benefits for the Sardinian nationalist cause. *Sardigna Nazione* declared that they would not collaborate with any party, left or right, that was not committed to Sardinian self-determination, essentially rejecting the left-right axis of politics.³⁹ They would, however, form an alliance with *Partito Sardo d'Azione* from 2001 to 2004.⁴⁰ *Sardigna Nazione* represents the start of a trend of fragmentation and proliferation of political parties in Sardinia regionalist politics. In the 1999 Sardinia regional election, despite no Sardinian party getting more than 5% of the vote, four parties, including the two I have named, combined for 14.8%, an increase of about 7%.⁴¹ In the 2004 Sardinian regional election, seven parties together received 27.3% of the vote, though none received more than 8% alone.⁴² This is a 12.5% increase and a doubling in the number of seats

³⁷ For a further explanation of how these mechanisms were triggered, see the Flanders section of Chapter 1.

³⁸ "Sardinia," Parties and Elections in Europe, <http://parties-and-elections.eu/sardinia.html>.

³⁹ Hepburn, "Explaining Failure," 604.; This is not to say that the party did not have an ideological position. They did. It was vague socialist leanings, so left or center-left. They merely did not let their ideological leanings be a place for common ground without Sardinian nationalism.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 609.

⁴¹ Parties and Elections in Europe, "Sardinia."

⁴² "Elezioni Regionali: Anno 2004," Sardegna Elezioni. http://www.regione.sardegna.it/Elezioni-2004/risultati/Riassuntivo_def.htm.

for Sardinian regionalist parties. The 2009 Sardinian regional election was down to 21.9% for seven Sardinia regionalist parties.⁴³ This is still pretty good given the region's history.

The Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2009, giving the European Union more power to negotiate trade deals on behalf of the member countries. This further triggered the economic viability mechanism of having greater leverage in trade deals (market benefit). This strengthens regionalist arguments about maintaining larger market access or more favorable market conditions. The viability theory appears to be in play at the 2014 regional elections with a vote increase for, now, sixteen Sardinian regionalist parties to 33.69% total.⁴⁴ Finally, in the most recent regional election of 2019, nine Sardinian regionalist parties captured 30.13%.⁴⁵ This was a small 3.56% decrease in total vote percentage, but the seat total remained the same, and Christian Solinas, leader of *Partito Sardo d'Azione*, helped form a coalition government that made him the Sardinian President.⁴⁶ In the end, there is some evidence on the regional level for viability theory still being reflected in the Sardinia case.

Looking to the future, Sardinia still has three big issues standing in its path to attempting independence. This independence would likely be un-controversially within the European Union, in the minds of the Sardinian people at least. This is not certain though as the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* is currently in a coalition government, and has a history of past alliances with *Lega Nord*, a right-wing, regionalist, Eurosceptic party (which I will explain more on in the following

⁴³ "Elezioni Regionali: Anno 2009," Sardegna Elezioni.

http://www.regione.sardegna.it/argomenti/attivita_istituzionali/elezioni2009/risultatiriassuntivi.html.

⁴⁴ "Elezioni Regionali: Anno 2014," Sardegna Elezioni.

<http://www.regione.sardegna.it/index.php?xsl=2187&s=1&v=9&c=11988&t=1&tb=11625&st=20&opt=risultatiriassuntivi&t=1&tb=11625&st=20>.

⁴⁵ "Regionali 2019," Sardegna Elezioni.

<https://www.regione.sardegna.it/speciali/elezioniregionali2019/risultatiriassuntivi.html>.; Though I double verified the numbers, special thanks to the editors of https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sardinian_nationalism for doing the math on these regional election totals.

⁴⁶ "Sardinia," Nationalia, last modified November 2020, <https://www.nationalia.info/profile/41/sardinia>.

Padania section). The first issue is that Sardinian regionalists do not have a history of achieving substantive gains for their cause when they do come into power. This is best exemplified by the failure to achieve satisfactory autonomy in Sardinia's special statute within the Italian Constitution. They would obviously need to rectify this. The second is that Sardinian regionalism has become extremely fragmented in the 21st century. If the Sardinian independence movement could present as one unified voice instead of eight or sixteen different parties, they would be able to win pluralities at the regional level and negotiate with the national government with greater leverage. That brings up the third issue which is the inability to compete nationally. With the exception of overlapping with the goals of other Italian regionalist movements, there is no one advocating for Sardinian regionalism within the national government. The system setup, as explained, and the relatively sparse population make it hard for there to be a large or forceful Sardinian perspective in Rome. Additionally, national parties in Italy are adapting to the Sardinian parties' growth. The national parties now have branches of the main ideological party specifically tailored to different regions including Sardinia, so the Sardinian regionalist parties are not even the only promoters of their primary issue. This might actually work in favor of the Sardinian independence movement, but since no concessions or decentralization have been made by these parties, it is unclear if this stance is lip service or a genuine goal. Either way, it hurts the electoral prospects of the parties mainly focused on Sardinian regionalism. All in all, Sardinia has been a rough proving ground for the viability theory and its own regionalism movement.

Padania

Padania was a natural choice when choosing which regionalism movements to study because it is the home region of the most powerful regionalist party in Italy and among the most powerful in Europe, *Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania* (Northern League for the

Independence of Padania, 1991, commonly abbreviated to *Lega Nord* or just *Lega*). However, a definition of what comprises the region of Padania is the most unclear of any of the regions of this study. It is conceptually thought of as the northern part of Italy. There is a lot of ambiguity about where the north of Italy starts, as well as questions about northern parts of the country not along, or within the hinterlands of, the Po river from which the literal name of Padania derives meaning. Additionally, *Lega Nord* has been successful as a regionalist party at capturing votes in regions that are clearly not within Padania such as Sardinia or Sicily, so it is not just any area where the Padanian regionalists compete.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I am going to use the most restrictive definition of Padanian territory because it is the least controversial and, if one agrees that Padania exists, then it will always include the defined territories. Additionally, these territories were compiled by communist Guido Fanti in 1975 and were all represented by one of the six smaller regionalist parties in the first alliance that formed the right-wing *Lega Nord*, so there should be agreement across the ideological spectrum.⁴⁷ Without further ado, Padania is the Italian regions of Piedmont, Liguria, Lombardy, Veneto, and Emilia.⁴⁸ This excludes Aosta Valley, Trentino and South Tyrol, and Friuli Venezia Giulia in the geographic north of Italy. They have likely been excluded from the definition criteria above due to having strong regionalism movements not associated with Padania. Tuscany, despite being the location of the sixth founding *Lega Nord* political party, is borderline central Italy, and its inclusion would likely require the inclusion of

⁴⁷ “Addio a Guido Fanti, Inventore della ‘Lega del Po,’” *l’Indipendenza* (Online), February 12, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140413150402/http://www.lindipendenza.com/guido-fanti/>.

⁴⁸ Emilia is one half of the Italian administrative region Emilia-Romagna. For practical reasons, when considering electoral results, this study will use the results of Emilia-Romagna as a whole, as all regionalist parties within the region campaign within the whole region.

the other central regions of Marche and Umbria despite these being controversial and sometimes seen as an overreach of *Lega Nord*'s ambition.

Historically there is no past state or kingdom that serves as a legacy for Padania, but instead, Padania serves as a conduit for several historically independent regions to work together. These historical independent international actors include Cisalpine Gaul (loosely the whole region from a Roman point of view), the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia (for the Lombardy and Veneto regions), the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (for the Piedmont and Liguria regions), and the Most Serene Republics of Genoa (also for the Liguria region) and Venice (also for the Veneto region). Linguistically, Padania has a language or dialect for each of the five regions – Piedmontese, Ligurian, Lombard, Venetian, and Emiliano-Romagnolo.⁴⁹ These languages have a common Gallo-Italic language family which differs from the rest of Italy.⁵⁰ Finally, Padania (and northern Italy more generally) is the wealthiest part of the country, and therefore there exists a perception that the Padanian North subsidizes the South.⁵¹ This perception is often used in the construction of the Padania identity.⁵²

A challenge posed by Padania to this study is that it did not exist prior to European integration so there is no obvious pre-integration data point. However, viability theory projects the emergence of new regionalism movements, and Padanian regionalism's emergence would fit within this category. The way I am going to approach showing this initial data point is by working backwards a bit. The *Lega Nord*, which holds the mantle as the primary promoter of

⁴⁹ *Map of Italian Dialects*, FluentU, 2018, <https://www.fluentu.com/blog/italian/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/08/italian-dialects.png>.

⁵⁰ Technically Venetian is mostly classified as Italo-Dalmatian but occasionally grouped into the Gallo-Italic family.

⁵¹ "Income of households by NUTS 2 regions," Eurostat, last modified March 31, 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/nama_10r_2hhinc/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/nama_10r_2hhinc/default/table?lang=en;);

John Phillips, "The Struggle for 'Padania,'" *Maclean's* (Toronto), Oct 28, 1996, 30.

⁵² Benito Giordano, "A Place Called Padania?: The Lega Nord and the Political Representation of Northern Italy," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 6, no. 3 (July 1999): 219, <https://doi.org/10.1177/096977649900600303>.

Padania regionalism, began with five smaller regionalist parties within the Padania area.⁵³ I will then briefly continue backward from each of these five regionalist trajectories looking for each one's start. While not all of these movements will have started prior to integration, they almost all started before the late 1980s. This is good for viability theory. If integration is indeed linked with regionalist electoral growth, it would be strange for Padanian regionalism to come out of almost thin air after forty years of integration. A reasonable person would likely attribute that to another factor. I will show that this is not what happened, but in fact, the Padania regionalism movement's beginning is a pragmatic, yet unusual, step taken within the context of steady regionalist emergence and growth. As throughout this study, European integration will provide the context.

Veneto regionalism likely has the most clear-cut start. The Republic of Venice existed for 1100 years and was annexed by Italy fairly late in the Italian unification process. The first Veneto regionalist party appeared in the 1921 general election. It was called the *Leone di San Marco* (Lion of Saint Mark, 1921) after the famous lion emblem on the Republic of Venice flag. The party received 6.1% of the vote in the province of Treviso, a modest showing.⁵⁴ It was promptly suppressed by fascism. Starting in the 1960s, the *Movimento Autonoma Regionalista Veneto* (Venetian Regionalist Autonomist Movement), while not a political party, attempted to convince the public of Italy that all regions should have institutions at least similar to those with a special statute.⁵⁵ This development occurred shortly after the creation of the European Economic Community in 1958. The *Movimento Autonoma Regionalista Veneto* ultimately

⁵³ Apologies to Tuscany.

⁵⁴ Patrik Riondato, "Storia Autonomismo Veneto," *Etnie*, last modified February 13, 2005, <https://www.rivistaetnie.com/storia-autonomismo-veneto/>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; Sardinia was one of the regions that had this special statute since the creation of the Italian Constitution. The statute is explained more in-depth in that section.

succeeded in its goal, with all regions holding regional elections in 1970. They just no longer existed to partake in them.

It then takes ten years and until the third regional election for a full-fledged Venetian regionalist party to get votes, but that is exactly what *Liga Veneta* (Venetian League, 1979) does, receiving 0.47% of the vote in the 1980 Veneto regional election.⁵⁶ This is followed up with 4.3% of the vote in Veneto for the 1983 general elections, which yields the party one representative in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.⁵⁷ Various divisions and expulsions occur within the party following this first electoral success.⁵⁸ Because of the party infighting, the electoral numbers for *Liga Veneta* drop in the 1985 regional elections to 3.7%.⁵⁹ This was still acceptable to *Liga Veneta* because they received their first representation at the regional level in the form of two representatives.⁶⁰ The slight decline and the internal disagreements continue through the 1987 general election with *Liga Veneta* receiving 3.07% of the vote.⁶¹

This gradual declining trend and ambition for European representation leads *Liga Veneta* to strike up a deal with other regionalist groups within the Padania area to form an alliance (*Alleanza Nord*) for the 1989 European elections.⁶² The alliance works, and the regionalists secure two seats in the European Parliament.⁶³ It is important to point out that the reason for this alliance is the European Union elections. While this is not a mechanism for viability theory, it is

⁵⁶ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁵⁷ Giorgia Bulli and Filippo Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," in *From Protest to Power: Autonomist Parties and the Challenges of Representation*, ed. by Elias Anwen and Filippo Tronconi (Wien: Braumüller, 2011), 55.

⁵⁸ Riondato, "Storia Autonomismo."

⁵⁹ Emanuele Massetti and Arjan H. Schakel, "Between Autonomy and Secession: Decentralization and Regionalist Party Ideological Radicalism," *Party Politics* 22, no.1 (2016).; It is important to note that the splinter Venetian regionalist parties fail to get more than 0.2% of the vote. (Riondato, "Storia Autonomismo.")

⁶⁰ Riondato, "Storia Autonomismo."

⁶¹ Massetti and Schakel, "Between Autonomy."

⁶² Bulli and Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," 55.

⁶³ Ibid.

an example of European integration causing a regionalism movement to coalesce. This alliance quickly cements itself in a single political party with a “nation-level” branch for each comprising area. This is the emergence of Padanian regionalism as this political party is the *Lega Nord*.

The name of the next region, Lombardy, comes from the Late Antiquity kingdom of the Lombards. The region is centered around the city of Milan and is the most populous region in Italy. This region along, with Veneto are the two most prominent regions with regards to Padania regionalism. The first sign of a Lombardy regionalism movement is the *Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco* (Bergamasque Autonomist Movement, 1956). Originally, this movement just desired greater local autonomy and happened to be based out of the city of Bergamo.⁶⁴ Similar to the *Movimento Autonoma Regionalista Veneto* mentioned above, its main goal became to achieve regional powers that were at least equal to the special statutes issued to a few regions in the Italian Constitution.

The movement renamed itself *Movimento per l'Autonomia Regionale Lombarda* (Lombard Regional Autonomy Movement, 1957) and joined other regionalists in the *Movimento Autonomie Regionali Padane* (Padanian Regional Autonomy Movement).⁶⁵ The shift to a regional identity of the party coincides with the creation of the European Economic Communities and the public discourse on the conceptualization of a united Europe that came along with it. This potentially signals that instead of thinking on the scale of local autonomy within Italy, the Lombardy regionalists were now thinking on the scale of regional autonomy within Europe. However, the *Movimento Autonomie Regionali Padane* does not get any of its politicians elected in the 1958 election and does worse in total number of votes in the larger

⁶⁴ George Newth, “The Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco and the Lega Nord: Continuities and Discontinuities,” *Modern Italy* 23, no. 3 (2018): 237-238. <https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2018.4>.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 238.; Yes, this includes the *Movimento Autonoma Regionalista Veneto*.

Bergamo-Brescia electoral district when compared to how the *Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco* did in the previous Bergamo commune elections alone.⁶⁶ The movement ends in dissolution with the Lombardy-based faction giving up its regionalist identity and joining the mainstream Christian Democrat party.⁶⁷ Those that are not happy with this continue on as *Unione Autonomisti d'Italia* (Italian Autonomist Union, 1961) but would remain insignificant in elections and without a precise Lombardy or Padanian regionalist message, instead opting solely for the pursuit of decentralization throughout Italy.⁶⁸

Political scientist George Newth also points out that ideologically the *Unione Autonomisti d'Italia* (and its predecessor movements) were drawing favorably on European integration in their messaging which is to be expected within viability theory. He says, “In this sense, the UAI were talking of a Europe of the Regions even before the concept had officially emerged after the evolution of the European Economic Community into the European Union.”⁶⁹ This is important to show that even the EEC stage of integration was enough integration to start the conversation on the viability of regionalism at the regional level before the conversation makes its way up to the supranational level. The *Unione Autonomisti d'Italia* briefly revived its Padanian regionalist identity when it called its electoral list in the 1970 regional elections “Libera Padania” which means Free Padania in a hope to capitalize on past autonomist sentiment.⁷⁰ They received 0.06% of the Lombardy vote and would not partake in another election.⁷¹ The important thing to note here is that the *Alleanza Nord* for a united Padania was not an original idea and, though the *Lega Nord* is a not descendent of this movement, the

⁶⁶ Newth, “Movimento Autonomista Bergamasco,” 239.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 239-240.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 244.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 244.

⁷¹ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, “Archivio storico.”

groundwork was laid for the *Lega Nord* to come back to, for historical precedent, on Padanian regionalism.

The party that first came back to Lombardy regionalism was *Lega Lombarda* (Lombard League, 1984). This name was chosen by leader Umberto Bossi as a historical allusion to the Lombard League, an alliance that fought for Northern Italian city-states to maintain their autonomy from a centralizing Holy Roman Empire.⁷² Bossi was a charismatic left-leaning medical student inspired by a regionalist politician from the Aosta Valley to promote regional autonomy within Italy.⁷³ After starting a newspaper first, by 1984 he had founded a political party. The *Lega Lombarda* received 0.46% of the vote in the 1985 Lombardy regional elections.⁷⁴ This increased to 3.77% of the vote in Lombardy for the 1987 general elections, which was good for one seat in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.⁷⁵ This was the *Lega Lombarda*'s position prior to joining the *Alleanza Nord*.

Piedmont is the large northwest region of Italy centered around the city of Turin. Piedmontese regionalism follows closely with Lombardy regionalism. Piedmontese regionalism started in 1955, with the familiar naming structure of early Padanian regionalism (though it was the first), through the founding of the *Movimento per l'Autonomia Regionale Piemontese* (Piedmontese Regional Autonomy Movement, 1955). This movement did the best in elections, relative to other early Padanian regionalism movements, becoming the fifth largest political force in the region in 1956.⁷⁶ *Movimento per l'Autonomia Regionale Piemontese* joined the *Movimento Autonomie Regionali Padane* in 1958 but, like the other regionalists, was disappointed by the

⁷² It is interesting to consider that *Liga Veneta* used 'League' in its name without reference to the Lombard League and yet was founded first.

⁷³ Bulli and Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," 53.

⁷⁴ Massetti and Schakel, "Between Autonomy."

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ George Newth, "The MARP: Father of the Lega and Padania," *Reading Italy*, July 8, 2014, https://readingitaly.wordpress.com/2014/07/08/regional-tensions-voices/#_ftn3.

results that that alliance yields. The Padanian movement dissolves quickly and the Piedmontese movement slowly, but both are gone by 1970 and the first regional elections in Piedmont.⁷⁷

There are sporadic appearances of Padanian regionalism through the 1970s including Piedmontese support for Guido Fanti's Padanian proposal starting in 1975, but nothing of electoral significance.⁷⁸ The next Piedmontese regionalism party, *Union Piedmonteisa* (Piedmontese Union, 1981) used association with other Padanian regionalism movements from the start. Its founder, Roberto Gremmo, was an editor for Lombard Bossi's autonomist newspaper. *Union Piedmonteisa* took part in the 1983 general elections, winning 0.42% of the vote.⁷⁹ This increased in the 1985 regional elections to 1.13%, though this was under the name of *Liga Veneta*, likely as a favor of convenience by Venetian regionalists to work around signature requirements and startup regulations of brand-new political parties.⁸⁰ This was down to 0.9% in the 1987 general elections, yet general disagreements had fractured *Union Piedmonteisa* so that there was another Piedmontese regionalist party in *Piedmont Autonomista* (Autonomist Piedmont, 1987).⁸¹ Both parties were invited by Bossi to join the *Alleanza Nord* but, Gremmo did not want to partner with the splinter faction of his party nor was he in agreement with Bossi's *Lega Nord* plans.⁸² Therefore only *Piedmont Autonomista* joined the alliance.

Liguria is the four coastal provinces south of Piedmont and on the northwestern Italian coast. The region's principal city is Genoa and thus the region's historical past is closely linked to the Most Serene Republic of Genoa. There appears to be no early Ligurian regionalist movement. This can be explained as a factor of Liguria's geographic proximity to central Italy

⁷⁷ Newth, "The MARP."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Massetti and Schakel, "Between Autonomy."

⁸⁰ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁸¹ Massetti and Schakel, "Between Autonomy."

⁸² Newth, "The MARP."

(sharing a coast with Tuscany and Rome) and relative geographic periphery to Padania (the Apennines mountain range separating the region from the river Po heartland). Also, Liguria tends to be a political battleground on the left-right axis and so this likely occupied the time and space dedicated to politics within the region until regionalism entered the conversation from the surrounding outside. The first time Liguria is associated with Padanian regionalism is when it is included within Bossi's and the other Padanian regionalist leaders' definition of Padania. *Liga Veneto* did get 1.26% of the vote in the 1987 general election, so by then, there appears to be at least a little interest in Padanian regionalism.⁸³ The first party to present a Ligurian-specific regionalist agenda was *Uniuin Ligure* (Ligurian Union, 1987), inspired by the successful emergence of regionalists in the three regions covered so far. They are essentially immediately welcomed into the *Alleanza Nord*.⁸⁴

The final region on this tour of pre-Padania is Emilia. Emilia is the larger northern half of the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna. The area's primary city is Bologna. Bologna is known as a historical stronghold of the communists and socialists.⁸⁵ The most important figure in Emilian regionalism is Guido Fanti. He became the first regional president of Emilia-Romagna in 1970, from the Communist Party, not a regionalist party, but he began regularly promoting the idea of a united Padania comprised of the five regions I have defined it as.⁸⁶ Many sources and people credit him with popularizing the idea of Padania, though these sources tend to overlook the *Movimento Autonomie Regionali Padane*. However, it may be true that he was the first to include (and certainly the first to popularize the inclusion of) Liguria and Emilia into the

⁸³ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁸⁴ Riondato, "Storia Autonomismo."

⁸⁵ Christopher F. Roth, *Let's Split!: a Complete Guide to Separatist Movements and Aspirant Nations, from Abkhazia to Zanzibar* (Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books, 2015), 96.

⁸⁶ In fact, I am using his definition. (*World Heritage Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Padania," accessed March 1, 2021, <http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Padania>.)

proposal of Padania, as before him, Padanian regionalism was only found in Piedmont, Lombardy, and Veneto. It should be noted that his idea of Padania was not independent from Italy, only a form of federalized cooperation. The first Emilian regionalist political party was formed by *Lega Lombarda* members (Lombardy and Emilia are closely linked through proximity) as *Lega Emiliano-Romagnola* (Emilian-Romagna League, 1989) as an opportunity to get votes from Emilians for the *Alleanza Nord*. It would not exist without the other Padanian regionalists as it is much closer to central Italy and the anti-Southern sentiments based on relative economic disparity do not tend to play as favorably to a socialist and communist crowd.

Before turning the lens of the viability theory on the *Lega Nord*, there are two points I would like to make. First, how is viability theory playing out following the ECSC and the EEC? The first inklings of Padanian nationalism (outside of Veneto) are organized following the creation of the common market (market benefit and public goods benefit) and the security guaranteed by NATO (security benefit). So that supports viability theory. However, these movements fail to take off, even regionally, and it is not until other regionalism movements successfully finish the campaign for regional powers that enables the first regional elections that the movements are revived.

One way to view this is that regionalism has some sort of contagion effect, that movements with stronger substate identities campaign for the viability of their nation which in turn is compelling enough that other regions start to contemplate their own autonomy or independence. This could mean that viability theory only strengthens the arguments for regionalism but needs both the diffusion of the arguments and actors willing to promote the arguments. The second way to view this is that up until the *Movimento Autonomie Regionali Padane*, the regionalist movements were working and growing separately and that when they

combined their missions, in effect they created a restart of the regionalism movement. Too put it in other words, while there was growing popular support, fueled in part by European integration, for Lombardy nationalism, Venetian nationalism, and Piedmontese nationalism, there was none for Padania nationalism. Once Padanian nationalism became the cause, then it had to rebuild from nonexistence to a political electoral force. It seems this took about twenty-five to thirty years.

Second, Lombardy nationalism, Venetian nationalism, Piedmontese nationalism, Ligurian nationalism, and Emilian nationalism still exist. They did largely disappear as their supporters refocused on Padanian nationalism, but it is relevant to remember that all of these movements have also had political parties and varying degrees of electoral success separate from the Padanian nationalism in the 21st century, and should Padania ever come to exist as a country (especially within the EU), it would likely be immediately confronted with the need to address these factions.

The *Alleanza Nord* might have occurred within the perfect window for its electoral success. The Single European Act of 1987 had recently passed as the first significant piece of viability theory triggering integration. With the new common foreign, environmental, safety, and security policies which served as both EU-provided public goods (public goods benefit) and a further guarantee of citizen's security (security benefit), this act would be expected to encourage voters towards regionalism. Looking at the 1990 regional elections, though at this point all the *Alleanza Nord* member parties competed separately within their subregions but still with public association with each other, the results were an impressive uptick. The votes were 28.6% in Lombardy (up wildly from 0.46%), 5.9% in Veneto (up mildly from 3.7%), 5.1% in Piedmont

(up from 1.1%), 6.1% in Liguria (first time), and 2.9% in Emilia (first time).⁸⁷ Seeing the success of this collaboration, Bossi formed the alliance into a single political party, the *Lega Nord* in 1991.

The new party was then immediately aided by the news of a large corruption scandal that shook the established major parties and lent credence to the *Lega Nord*'s message of a Padanian economic identity, casting the politicians in Rome as corrupt and stealing Padanian money. The *Lega Nord* took part in the 1992 Italian general elections and saw a similar improvement of results. The new voter support was good for 23% in Lombardy (up from 3.8%), 17.3% in Veneto (up from 3.1%), 16.3% in Piedmont (up from 0.9%), 14.2% in Liguria (up from 1.3%), 9.6% in Emilia (first time) and 8.65% for all of Italy.⁸⁸ This got *Lega Nord* fifty-five seats in the Chamber of Deputies and made them the fourth biggest party in Italy.⁸⁹ They repeated this feat (specifically 8.36% of all of Italy) in the snap elections of 1994 that were called after the major corruption scandal had led to electoral reform.⁹⁰ The big difference is that, between the two years, *Lega Nord* had gone from refusing to work with any of the major parties due to the major parties being associated with corruption and Southern Italy governmental waste to being in a coalition alliance with the newly-formed party of Silvio Berlusconi that would win the new electoral system and thus see the *Lega Nord* enter government, hold power, and get 62 new seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁹¹

This is a moment to pause and examine a bit closer what I think is one of the best examples of viability theory. Because of what has happened since this pair of elections, the *Lega*

⁸⁷ Massetti and Schakel, "Between Autonomy."

⁸⁸ Massetti and Schakel, "Between Autonomy."; Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁸⁹ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁹⁰ For more on the details of the electoral reform, see the Sardinia section of this chapter, circa 1993. Italian vote percentage from Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁹¹ Bulli and Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," 56.; Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

Nord has a reputation as being a right-wing to far-right political party that capitalized on the wave of nationalism and nativism in Europe in the 21st century. This moment does not prove that reputation false, but it is important to point out that the wave had not yet started as we can look to the rise of *Vlaams Belang* in the Belgium section of Chapter 1 as coinciding with the far-right wave. The ideology of the party at the time is also relevant. Prominent leaders of *Lega Nord* including the face of the party, Umberto Bossi, were left-wing politicians on most issues. They were definitely anti-Southern Italian immigrants and thereby anti-immigration at large, but *Lega Nord* was truly an umbrella party on the left-right axis, and, as political scientists Giorgia Bulli and Filippo Tronconi point out, *Lega Nord* “was also able to attract voters from all the main parties, from the neofascist Movimento Sociale Italiano to Democrazia Cristiana, and from the parties of the left.”⁹² Their signature issue was federalism (especially fiscal federalism) on behalf of regionalism that could lead to separatism.⁹³ This is why this is one of the best examples of viability theory because, with as purely regionalist a political message as possible, the vote is as detached from the left-right cycles of politics as possible, and the elections followed shortly after new European integration. And in the aftermath of this first major integration since 1958, regionalism came up big.

The one quirk of *Lega Nord* is that is not in line with viability theory at this moment is that *Lega Nord* is still Eurosceptic, though mildly so because one of the biggest qualms the current *Lega Nord* has with the EU is the use of the Euro which has not even been approved yet.⁹⁴ Its Euroscepticism in this time frame was simply the idea that *Lega Nord* was not fighting for sovereignty and the greater autonomy that comes with that just to give it up without receiving

⁹² Bulli and Tronconi, “The Lega Nord,” 56.

⁹³ “Padania,” *World Heritage Encyclopedia*.

⁹⁴ Catherine Edwards, “Political cheat sheet: Understanding Italy’s Northern League,” *The Local* (Italy, Online), January 18, 2018, <https://www.thelocal.it/20180118/political-cheat-sheet-understanding-italys-northern-league/>.

sufficient benefits. The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 would introduce the Euro (market benefit), along with further cooperation on justice and home affairs (public goods benefit and security benefit) and the official creation of the European Union that would trigger viability mechanisms for the 1996 general elections. I consider these to be the second-best viability theory examples in the Padania case because they are only conflated with a new electoral system that favors large parties, and *Lega Nord* had just become a large party.

In 1993, Italy, along with the other countries of the EEC, signed the Maastricht Treaty and joined the newly created European Union. This is a big moment because it is a well-covered and symbolic moment of integration, but the new policy also contains integration that triggers several viability mechanisms.⁹⁵ Looking at the 1996 Italian general election, the Padanian regionalists gain further ground. *Lega Nord* receives half a million more votes than just two years prior, good for 10.07% in all of Italy.⁹⁶ On the regional level of that result is 29.3% in Veneto (up 11.5%), 25.5% in Lombardy (up 2.5%), 18.2% in Piedmont (up 1.9%), 10.2% in Liguria (down 4.1%) and 7.2 in Emilia (down 2.4%).⁹⁷ This is an amazing success when one considers that the party was competing against both a center-right and a center-left coalition in a system designed for two-party competition.⁹⁸ However, *Lega Nord* could not enter power because their exit of the 1994 center-right coalition caused the 1996 snap elections, and the emboldened party's double down on separatism, including the symbolic gestures of a Padanian

⁹⁵ I go over the three core pillars of the EU and how they are viability mechanisms in the Flanders section of Chapter 1.

⁹⁶ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

⁹⁷ Ibid.; I use the 1992 election as the comparison for change, instead of the 1994 election because in both 1992 and 1996, *Lega Nord* was running alone while in 1994 it was an electoral alliance partner.

⁹⁸ Bulli and Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," 57.

declaration of independence in 1996, made it hard to find any common ground with the center-left.⁹⁹ So it spent the next five years in opposition at the national and regional level.¹⁰⁰

The 2001 general Italian election was not a good result for *Lega Nord*. It managed to capture only 3.94% of the vote nationally.¹⁰¹ Is this a challenge to viability theory? On one hand, *Lega Nord* should be expected to grow or at least maintain its support. However, one narrative is that the five years in opposition had netted no tangible benefits for the *Lega Nord* voters from the *Lega Nord* and this caused their voters to sour on them.¹⁰² This could be true. My explanation is that the decrease is not only because of them being locked out (be it self-imposed) from the potential of governing, but when they decided to try to get back into positions of power, they took a step back from separatism. *Lega Nord* joined the center-right coalition with an agreement that government reforms would take place to give much greater autonomy to the regions and localities of Italy.¹⁰³ The *Lega Nord* shifted to a more moderate regionalist stance and a referendum on Italian governmental reform was hashed out and implemented by the next elections.¹⁰⁴

This represents a step back from the earlier more intensely Padanian nationalist message. Also, as I argue in Chapter 1, the devolution of powers can serve as an antidote to regionalism, so the promised reforms may be muting the power of the regionalists' message. Therefore, it makes sense that when the reform referendum fails after the 2006 general election, *Lega Nord*

⁹⁹ Bulli and Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," 57.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 58.

¹⁰¹ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

¹⁰² Bulli and Tronconi, "The Lega Nord," 58.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Christian Fraser, "Italy votes in reform referendum," *BBC News Rome*. BBC, June 25, 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5110326.stm>.

bounces back to its pre-compromise levels with 8.3% in the 2008 general election.¹⁰⁵ The idea that the failure of promised devolution yields a return of support for *Lega Nord* is further supported by electoral increases in the Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Liguria, and Emilia (all of the Padanian core) regional elections of 2010.¹⁰⁶

At this point, the Treaty of Lisbon is signed in 2009 and further viability theory relevant integration is on the way, so Padanian regionalism should be primed to take off in the 2010s. However, it is rocked to its foundations, and then evolves instead. Umberto Bossi had been the public face of *Lega Nord* and the structural leader as Federal Secretary for nearly twenty-five years, but, in 2012 while the *Lega Nord* treasurer is being investigated for money laundering, fraud, and embezzlement, documents in the trial reveal that Bossi misappropriated party and taxpayer funds for personal uses.¹⁰⁷ He is forced into retirement (he'll come back but in a much more marginalized role), and the Federal Secretary position passes to moderate Roberto Maroni.¹⁰⁸ This large corruption scandal hurts *Lega Nord* in the 2013 Italian election, as they get only 4.09% of the vote.¹⁰⁹ However, in the concurrent Lombardy regional elections, Maroni becomes President of Lombardy as head of a center-right coalition in the region.¹¹⁰ To focus on this he leaves the Federal Secretary position and, after internally defeating a resurgent Bossi, Matteo Salvini is elected the new Federal Secretary. Salvini takes the *Lega Nord* to the far right, adopts an extremely Eurosceptic stance, and eventually, drops the *Nord* (North/Northern) from *Lega Nord* and with it the separatism and Padanian regionalism, positioning *Lega* as an Italian

¹⁰⁵ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico.;" *Lega Nord* receives 4.58% in the 2006 general election which is consistent with the 2001 results, as the referendum has not failed until a few months after that vote.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ John Hooper, "Umberto Bossi Resigns as Leader of Northern League amid Funding Scandal," *The Guardian*, April 5, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/05/umberto-bossi-resigns-northern-league>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

nationalist and anti-immigrant (in the face of the European refugee crisis) party.¹¹¹ He kicks out pro-EU members such as Flavio Tosi and is heavily criticized by Bossi for the shifts to the right in the party. His message is well received by the voters as *Lega* gets 17.35% of the 2018 general election vote.¹¹² With this result, *TIME Magazine* called him the most feared man in Europe.¹¹³ He is still running the party in the manner described above, as of the time of writing.

What does this all mean for Padanian regionalism and viability theory? First, for Padanian regionalism, *Lega* has muddied the water. Padanian regionalism does not seem to be in Salvini's plans, so there is little progress on the national scale. However, there are still many regionalists within *Lega*. An example of this is Luca Zaia. He is currently *Lega*'s President of Veneto and the most popular regionalist in Italy with his personal electoral list getting 44.6% of the 2020 regional vote alone, and *Lega*'s combined lists receiving a resounding 77% of the vote.¹¹⁴ His continued support bodes well for viability theory's explanation of regionalism.

However, because of Salvini, I do not think the 2018 general electoral results fall within the scope of viability theory because *Lega* is frankly no longer a regionalist party when competing at the national level. If one wanted to attempt to observe viability theory in Padania in the past five years and going forward, one has to look at the prominent leaders of the regional branches of *Lega* and determine their position on the center-periphery cleavage. Even then, it would be difficult to filter out the increase in support that came from the right-wing shift versus viability theory, integration, and regionalism. Even Zaia is likely a beneficiary of both of these. The other option is to examine regionalist parties besides *Lega* (who, as I mentioned before, do

¹¹¹ Edwards, "Political cheat sheet."

¹¹² Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

¹¹³ Vivienne Walt, "Why Italy's Matteo Salvini Is the Most Feared Man in Europe," *Time*, September 13, 2018, <https://time.com/5394448/matteo-salvini/>.

¹¹⁴ Leonardo Carella, "Italy's 'election day': A preview," *European Politics and Policy*, London School of Economics and Political Science, September 8, 2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/09/08/italys-election-day-a-preview/>; Dipartimento per gli Affari Interni e Territoriali, "Archivio storico."

exist), but these are either regionalists of just Lombardy or Veneto or Piedmont, or Padanian regionalists who have not yet been able to take the title of Padanian regionalism away from *Lega* because of its history and remaining regionalist factions. These other options do not fit my study's selection criteria having never achieved anything on the national level.

All in all, the Padanian case study has shown how Padanian regionalism came into existence through an alliance of separate regionalists and politicians working to create a new uniting Padanian identity. The political parties of the Padanian regionalist alliance drew on the groundwork done by previous regionalists in the period following early European integration. Then *Lega Nord* offered several elections to best observe the viability theory by competing as a big-tent party ideologically and campaigning solely on regionalist issues in a time frame shortly following further viability-triggering integration. Finally, *Lega* has been co-opted, due to its populist origins, for right-wing populism and, as it stands now, is transitioning away from regionalism. This transition could be a signal that this is one of the ways that regionalist movements end.

Looking to the future, the big question is what is Salvini going to do? He wants to reform the EU from the inside, and this could mean regression on integration.¹¹⁵ If he does this before his right-wing surge declines, it could spell difficulty for the future of Padanian regionalism. If he proves long-lasting, it will be interesting to see how little or how many changes the regionalists within *Lega* are able to extract from him or if they splinter off. Finally, if he leaves power before he accomplishes his goals, then it will be interesting to see if *Lega* returns to Padanian nationalism, be it federalism or separatism, and, if so, what does the party do then?

¹¹⁵ Walt, "Matteo Salvini."

Chapter 3

Galicia and Catalonia

The case studies for this chapter will be Galicia and Catalonia. Since both are in Spain, I start by explaining how European integration for Spain was a slightly different process than the other countries of this paper. I then start with Galicia, first by briefly examining the territory claimed by and the history of Galician nationalism, then by reviewing the Spanish national elections from the end of the Franco dictatorship until the present day. Like the other chapters, I will focus on major moments of EU integration and how the Galician regionalist parties fared afterwards. It is often important to consider Galician regionalism as being connected to the other regionalism movements within Spain, so at various points, I will highlight this connection. This leads nicely into Catalonia, which is one of the most prominent regionalism movements in Spain and in Europe. First, I start with the history of Catalan regionalism. Then, since post-Franco Catalan elections are mostly dominated by regionalist parties, I use this case study to examine the potential implications of viability theory in an all-regionalist sphere. By this, I mean that I continue the chronological order of the review of the previous case studies, but I will focus on European integration's impacts on the Catalan regionalist parties that campaign for independence as opposed to the more moderate Catalan regionalists. I will end this section with a look to the future of the Catalonia independence movement.

Moving from Italy to Spain is a small but noteworthy change in the contextual timeframe of this study because, while all of the previous regions were part of the European integration movement from the beginning, Spain only acceded to the EU in 1986, eleven years after the death of Francisco Franco and the end of his dictatorship. This means two things: first, that instead of the major integration steps or moments and their sometimes gradual and sometimes

immediate implementation that occurred over thirty years, Spain had to undergo this process in a much shorter time frame (though, to be fair, the amount of integration that Spain underwent was significantly more modest than that of Eastern European enlargement in 2004 or the most recent accession of Croatia in 2013). Considering Spanish integration into the EU through viability theory, the accession of Spain could be expected to yield a sharper increase in regionalist electoral support because more viability theory mechanisms were triggered, some to a higher degree. Conversely, regionalist movements had less time to construct party structures and both educate and convince the electorate on the viability of their region existing as an independent yet EU-integrated state. So, in one sense, Spain's accession to an ongoing integration project gives regionalists a potentially stronger integration boost but leaves them potentially less prepared to utilize it. Second, since Franco allowed no elections in his 36 years in power, dramatically altered the Spanish political system, and actively suppressed regionalism movements, there is only a very small window of elections to use as a pre-integration data point, and these elections occur in an especially fragile democratic transition period. Keeping this in mind, let us now turn to the regionalism movements themselves.

Galicia

Portugal owns most of the west coast of the Iberian Peninsula and, aside from a less-extended bit owned by Spain's Andalusia region near the mouth of the Mediterranean, the rest of the western Iberian coast makes up Galicia. Therefore, besides being bordered by the Atlantic to the west, Galicia is bordered by the Cantabrian Sea to the north and Portugal to the south. Its eastern border with the rest of Spain roughly corresponds to a vertical extension of the Portuguese-Spanish border, with mountains along this border offering it some geographic isolation. The capital of the region is Santiago de Compostela while the largest and economically

most important city is the port city of Vigo. However, Galicia is economically less prosperous than much of Spain and relatively rural.¹ Historically, the region was a Celtic kingdom conquered by the Romans, before operating independently for centuries until its absorption by the Spanish precursor kingdom of Castile and Aragon.² There exists a unique Galician language, most similar to Portuguese, that is spoken by 90% of the population in Galicia.³

Historically, there is a strong record of support for Galician nationalism. In 1936, there was a referendum to pursue a statute of autonomy as then allowed by the Spanish constitution. It passed with 73.96% of eligible Galician voters supporting it and only 0.45% opposing (the rest did not vote).⁴ However, the outbreak of the Spanish civil war meant that the statute was never reviewed at the national level, never came into effect, and ultimately, was no longer an option under the Franco regime.⁵ It was symbolically confirmed by the Parliament in exile in 1938.⁶ However, as Franco worked to create a unitary state under his absolute power, he suppressed any institutions of Galician nationalism (i.e. political parties or newspapers) and, while logistically unable to be fully implemented, the Galician language was also suppressed. This meant the Galician regionalism functioned underground as a form of resistance, and even to consider oneself a member of the Galician nation was a small, subtle rejection of Franco.

¹ “The Galicians,” U.S. Library of Congress, accessed March 20, 2021, <http://countrystudies.us/spain/38.htm>.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Galicia,” accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Galicia-region-Spain>.

³ Though, in most cases, not the only language spoken by the population.; *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Galician language,” accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Galician-language>.

⁴ “Galizien (Spanien), 4. Juli 1936: Autonomiestatut,” Database and Search Engine for Direct Democracy, last modified January 24, 2019, <https://www.sudd.ch/event.php?lang=en&id=es011936>.

⁵ It is a fun little historical irony that Galician autonomy is stopped by one of its own- Francisco Franco was born in Galicia in the city of Ferrol. Considering this and Napoleon’s origin on the island of Corsica, there is at least an eyebrow raise at the possibility of geographically and economically isolated areas with a strong regional identity producing authoritarian centralizing leaders capable of constructing a more powerful and encompassing national identity.

⁶ F. J. Schrijver, “Regionalism and Galicianisation in autonomous Galicia,” in *Regionalism After Regionalisation: Spain, France, and the United Kingdom*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 122.

The legacy of Franco's suppression further meant that for the first election in democratic Spain in 1977, Galician regionalism only had small resistance-based political structures that coalesce into the *Bloque Nacional-Popular Galego* (Galician National-Popular Bloc, 1977). This party is a coalition party of groups from the extreme left to the center, but, importantly, advocating primarily for the restoration of sovereignty to Galicia. The more militant and more radical leftist (two separate but not immiscible groups) refused to join the party and continued their struggle elsewhere.⁷ *Bloque Nacional Popular Gallego* got 2.02% in Galicia of the 1977 Spanish constitutional election vote.⁸ This is not a particularly good result compared to having had decades to operate freely prior to the dictatorship, and it left the Galician regionalists with no representation in the constitution creation process. However, through the demands of Catalan and Basque regionalists, Galician regionalists would benefit from having passed that Statute of Autonomy in 1936 because all these similar statutes' regions are recognized as historic nationalities in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. This gave Galicia pre-autonomous status and kicked off a bizarre campaign for a second Statute of Autonomy.

At first, the Spanish central government wanted to give Galicia the minimal amount of autonomy it could get away with, fearing that since Galician nationalists were not as politically engaged as the Basque or Catalans, other less politically engaged regions would desire Galicia's outcome. This made almost every political party angry (as in taking to the streets to protest) in Galicia, so the central government backtracked and allowed Galicians a referendum for an autonomy on par with the other historic nationalities.⁹ What is humorous about this is that the

⁷ Schrijver, "Regionalism and Galicianisation," 124.

⁸ A smaller Galician regionalist party, *Partido Democrata Gallego*, also received 0.28% of the Galician vote.; "Consulta de Resultados Electorales," Ministerio del Interior, <http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es/infoelectoral/min/busquedaAvanzadaAction.html>.

⁹ Specifically, Catalonia.; Schrijver, "Regionalism and Galicianisation," 125.

central government created the pushback against itself because there was not widespread support for the level of autonomy given to the Basque and Catalan until the people of Galicia perceived themselves as being treated unequally to those other recognized groups. Even more so, the *Bloque Nacional Popular Gallego* was one of the few groups that did not protest the government's unfairness, as their message was one of independence, and so they rejected any form of autonomy within Spain. This is somewhat similar to the 2003 Corsica referendum where the Corsican nationalists that wanted independence encouraged their supporters to vote against more autonomy. Therefore, the Galician regionalists ended up campaigning against regional autonomy in the referendum and the Spanish state-wide parties campaigning for it. The regionalists lost and the statute passed in 1981.¹⁰

Galician regionalist parties would not get any elected representation in the 1979 or 1982 Spanish general elections. There is a small change to note in this period in that, similarly to Flanders in Chapter 1, nationwide parties start to operate a Galician-specific branch. For example, the *Partido Socialista de Galicia -PSOE* (Galician Socialist Party – abbreviation of the national socialist party) did well (almost 33% in Galicia) in the 1982 election.¹¹ On January 1st, 1986, Spain joined the European Community (EC), which means it entered into both the ECSC and the EEC.¹² This would have triggered all four viability mechanisms at once (public goods benefit, market benefit, structural funds benefit, and security benefit). As viability theory projects, Galician regionalists should see a boost in the June 1986 Spanish general election, and

¹⁰ For a greater breakdown on the political alignments of this referendum see: Schrijver, “Regionalism and Galicianisation,” 125-126.

¹¹ Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados Electorales.”

¹² “Spain and the European Community,” U.S. Library of Congress, accessed March 20, 2021, <http://countrystudies.us/spain/38.htm>.; To briefly go over the structure of the European Community (EC), it is just a larger grouping of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Economic Community (EEC), and the European Atomic Energy Community (which I believe to be marginally irrelevant to the purpose of this study and therefore is never mentioned aside from here).

they did. The moderate centrist *Coalicion Galega* (Galician Coalition, 1983) received 6.24% of the vote in Galicia, for which they received one, and therefore the first Galician regionalist, deputy in the Spanish Congress.¹³ I think it is important to point out that the party from Galicia that most quickly capitalized on European integration was the one with the platform most focused on the regionalist and nationalist position on the center-periphery cleavage. This supports viability theory even more because, while no party can be completely free of a left-right ideological position, *Coalicion Galega*'s success cannot be attributed to any left or right trends at the time.

Bloque Nacional Popular Gallego renamed itself as the more eloquent *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (Galician Nationalist Bloc, 1982) and received a further 2.11% of the 1986 vote in Galicia.¹⁴ This is a total regionalist vote share of around 9%, which only increases to about 10% in the 1989 Spanish general elections.¹⁵ However, Galician nationalists lose their deputy seat as *Coalicion Galega* and *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* split the vote more evenly and therefore neither (nor the smaller regionalist parties) met the threshold. In the June 1993 Spanish general elections, right before the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty and the creation of the European Union, the Galician regionalist total vote percentage increased slightly to 13%; however, *Coalicion Galega* had fractured (and was on its way to complete collapse), so *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* jumped up to 8.01% of the Galician vote but that was still not enough for national representation.¹⁶

In November 1993, the European Union came into existence through the Maastricht Treaty. This continued all existing integration and further solidified the guaranteeing security

¹³ Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados Electorales."

¹⁴ Ibid.; A further 1.14% went to a united Galician left party.

¹⁵ Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados Electorales."

¹⁶ Ibid.

mechanism through a common foreign and security policy (security benefit), as well as providing bloc-wide public goods through common cooperation in the areas of justice and home affairs (public goods benefit). The creation of the Euro, a common currency (market benefit), was started as well, though that would take nearly a decade to implement. But besides this delay, the other forms of integration happened quickly.

Bloque Nacionalista Galego became the premier Galician nationalist party and made an ideological transition that stands as a strong piece of evidence for viability theory. Prior to the 1996 Spanish general elections, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* was a Eurosceptic party, though this was based on economic consideration since the leftist part of *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* was concerned that joining the EEC would be joining a capitalist system that would further hurt Galician society.¹⁷ This is a different anti-Europe position than the right-wing anti-immigrant and pro-state (sometimes region) sovereignty typical of Eurosceptic parties. However, the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* started to seriously promote the idea of Galicia existing as a nation within the EU and thus adopted a favorable stance towards Europe. Political geographer Frans Schrijver clarifies this point through reviewing (and translating) the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego*'s official programs.

In the 1990s, the perspective on the European Union shifted towards a level of governance 'affecting the competencies for national self-government and the interests' of Galicia, in which Galicia would be represented by 'its own voice' (*Bloque Nacionalista Galego*, 1999). In the BNG's discourse, 'Europe' has become a framework for the recognition of the status of Galicia as a nation, next to that of the 'plurinational state'. In line with transformations of other regionalist parties, when expressed through the idea of

¹⁷The party was also transitioning to a more centrist position, which helps explain the willingness to devalue these economic considerations.; Schrijver, "Regionalism and Galicianisation, 155.

a ‘Europe of the regions’ or of the ‘peoples’, ‘Europe’ became an instrument to attack the existing state level. Those institutional opportunities out-weighed economic threats.¹⁸

This shows that the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* both conformed to the pro-EU position expected by the viability theory and was implicitly using the logic of viability theory in their official stance on the EU. By implicitly using the logic, I mean that the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* recognized that its arguments for Galician nationhood were strengthened if the Galician nation existed within the EU. Furthermore, the plurinational state that Schrijver is describing as the ideal Spain for *Bloque Nacionalista Galego*, comprised of four nations integrated into a multi-nation bloc, and thus, the ideal Spain for Galician regionalists in the 1990s, is essentially a smaller-in-scope European Union.

Now viability theory would project that a pro-EU regionalist party would see significant vote increases in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty and that is exactly what happens. In the 1996 Spanish general election, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* received 12.85% of the vote in Galicia and this was good for its first two elected deputies.¹⁹ These deputies were in opposition through the next election. In the Spanish general election of 2000, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* saw an even bigger gain, increasing its vote share to 18.62%, which netted the party an additional deputy, bringing their total to three.²⁰ The party stayed in opposition. However, this ideological shift and the accompanying vote increase is a strong piece of evidence in favor of viability theory.

It is important to note here that the Spanish electoral system functions as a two-party system, though with the potential for smaller parties. These two major parties are the Popular

¹⁸ Schrijver, “Regionalism and Galicianisation, 154-155.

¹⁹ Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados Electorales.”

²⁰ Ibid.

Party (center-right) and the Socialist Party (center-left).²¹ In Galicia, because of the early strength of the regionalism movement, these parties are named the Popular Party of Galicia and the Socialist Party of Galicia. Neither seems to advance a strong regionalist position. Now, in the 1997 Galician regional elections, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* becomes the second-largest party, overtaking the Socialists.²² This dramatically changes the objectives of the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego*. Before, they were advocating for Galician regionalism with little hope of ever governing, instead their mission was publicizing their Galician message and fighting to protect the region's language, autonomous powers, and culture. This is considered a policy seeking orientation.²³

After becoming the second-largest party, the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* shifts to an office-seeking orientation in hopes of governing, be it solely or as part of a coalition.²⁴ For this reason, in an effort to appeal more broadly, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* backed away from its regionalist message in favor of remaining in a Spanish state albeit one with institutional recognition of the Galician nation.²⁵ *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* become only moderate regionalists. This position is backing away from the state-size calculating that make viability theory's arguments compelling. When a regionalist party moves away from seeking more powers for its region (and this is different than accepting a compromise for the time being without changing the end goal of more autonomy or independence), viability theory will offer less support for the regionalists because those buying into a more viable independence or greatly autonomous end goal no longer have that to buy in to. Therefore, while a moderate regionalist

²¹ Here Popular means of or relating to the will of the people and of the general public.

²² Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, "The Bloque Nacionalista Galego," in *From Protest to Power: Autonomist Parties and the Challenges of Representation*, ed. by Elias Anwen and Filippo Tronconi (Wien: Braumüller, 2011), 126.

²³ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 142.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

party should expect a moderate boost from European integration, an independentist party that shifts to moderate regionalism should expect a decrease in the boost it had previously received. And that is what happens here.

Because of the veer away from a Galician regionalist message, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* suffers a moderate decline in the 2004 Spanish general election to 11.37% of the vote and back to two seats.²⁶ However, in 2005, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* enters government for the first time, forming the Galician regional government in coalition with the Socialist Party. This is despite a series of moderate declines in regional vote share since changing to an office-seeking orientation (25.1% in 1997 to 18.9% in 2005).²⁷ This Galician coalition government agrees to seek to reform the Galician Statute of Autonomy with the purpose of gaining more autonomy for Galicia. The *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* takes an extremely moderate regionalist and nationalist position in this reform negotiation process. Political scientist Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro describes the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* in this process as

The BNG quickly displayed a willingness to compromise on its territorial demands, for example by not insisting on the recognition of the ‘national character’ of Galicia in the reformed text. Throughout the negotiations, the BNG continued to assert that none of its positions were fixed and nonnegotiable.²⁸

Despite this willingness to hold a position only weakly, reform discussion fails and thus never happens. While the negotiation is still underway for the 2008 Spanish general election, which yields *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* a stagnant 11.5% of the vote in Galicia, by the 2009 regional elections, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* is seen as having failed to deliver on its regionalist

²⁶ Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados Electorales.”

²⁷ Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, “The Bloque Nacionalista Galego,” 126.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

promises and its vote share declines again.²⁹ This causes the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* to leave government. Under the lens of viability theory, while the increased integration did not continue to yield electoral improvement, the electoral decline is easily explained as a result of the shift away from a regionalist position. This is a first, with regards to the case studies of this research, as some parties have been willing to compromise for more autonomy on the path toward a strongly regionalist endpoint, but none have been willing to move that endpoint as far away from independence, nationhood, or sovereignty (and still consider themselves or fall within the realms of being a regionalist party) as the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* in the 2000s.

The most recent round of European integration occurred in 2009 through the Treaty of Lisbon. The viability theory mechanism trigger in this round of integration was the strengthening of the position of the EU to negotiate trade deals on behalf of the bloc (market benefit). The following table shows Galician regionalism electoral results in the Spanish general elections since this round of integration:

Table 4:

Year	Bloque Nacionalista Galego	Anova	Total Change	Total Seats
2011	11.18%	N/A	N/A	2
2015	4.32% - as part of <i>Nós</i>	25.01% - as part of <i>En Marea</i>	+ 18.15%	6
2016	2.89% with <i>Nós</i>	22.18% - as part of <i>En Marea</i>	- 4.26	5
2019	5.74%	14.46% - as part of <i>Galicia en Común</i>	- 4.87	2
2019	8.09%	12.65% - as part of <i>Galicia en Común</i>	+ 1. 35	3

Data from Ministerio del Interior.

²⁹ Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, “The Bloque Nacionalista Galego,” 144.

As one can see, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* is able to hold that 11% mark through another Spanish election since 2004, but this is seen as a lack of progress, and, coupled with the decline at the regional level, the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* starts to crumble internally. In 2012, former founder and longtime prominent figure of the Galician independence movement Xosé Manuel Beiras leaves his *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* party and forms a new party, *Anova* (Renewal, 2012).³⁰ This party declares itself in favor of Galician independence, presenting a new, stronger Galician regionalist option.³¹ The left-wing groups of *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* leave in the split as well, as they were unhappy with the party's shift to the center.³² This split ultimately destroys what had been a relatively unified Galician regionalist front.

By the 2015 elections, both *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* and *Anova* are in talks for the creation of a single Galician regionalist political party.³³ *Anova* joins with several grassroots Galician leftist movements known as 'the tides,' as well as the United Galician Left and the regional branch of a new nationwide anti-corruption left-wing populist party called Podemos. They call their electoral alliance *En Marea* (In Tide, 2015). This alliance performs very well in 2015 and the follow-up elections of 2016.³⁴ Then *En Marea* transitions to a political party run by previously independent judge Luís Villares (amid accusations of corruption) and essentially all the alliance members are unhappy with this, so they leave *En Marea* and reform their alliance

³⁰ The full name of the party is *Anova-Irmandade Nacionalista* which means Renewal-Nationalist Brotherhood.; Dick Nichols, "Galicia: Anova's bruising congress a 'collective apprenticeship,'" *LINKS International Journal of Socialist Renewal*, July 7, 2013, <http://links.org.au/node/3431>.

³¹ *World Heritage Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Bloque Nacionalista Galego," accessed March 21, 2021, http://www.self.gutenberg.org/articles/Bloque_Nacionalista_Galego.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Sara Torreiro, "Dos assembleas buscan los pilares para la confluencia en Galicia," *elDiario.es* (Spain, Online), August 23, 2015, https://www.eldiario.es/galicia/asambleas-buscan-pilares-confluencia-galicia_1_2513388.html.

³⁴ The 2016 Spanish general elections were called as a result of the failure to form a government on the national level following the 2015 elections.

as *Galicia en Común* (Galician in Common, 2019).³⁵ It appears this disorder and scandal hurts their electoral performance. Meanwhile, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* refuses to ally with the Podemos party, as it is not a Galician nationalist party, and is able to attract a few other Galician regionalist groups to their Galician electoral alliance of *Nós* (We, 2015, later as *BNG-Nós*). This alliance yields mediocre results, in fact leaving the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* without a national deputy for the first time in 20 years, and so the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* decides to continue on alone.³⁶ It appears that in light of the success of *Anova* and its partners, *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* has retaken, and thus decided to compete against *Anova* on, a stronger Galician nationalist stance and a more left-leaning platform.³⁷

What does this all mean for evaluating viability theory in Galicia since the Treaty of Lisbon? I think the answer is that this time period of this case study is inconclusive. In 2011, the main Galician regionalist party is in a state of decline, yet they do not perform worse on the national level, so it is possible that the expected effects of viability theory are keeping the movement afloat. Then, there is a massive boom in total vote percentage for Galician regionalists in the 2015 election (and the follow-up 2016 election) which would be helpful for advancing the believability of viability theory, if it were not for the fact that most of that increase came from *En Marea*. *En Marea* was competing on much more than Galician regionalism (such as the Podemos message and left-wing populism), so it would be incorrect to consider that a Galician regionalist victory only. Additionally, Podemos is a soft Eurosceptic party which means that some of the

³⁵ Cristina Huete, "Podemos plantea al sector crítico la ruptura de En Marea," *El País*, January 8, 2019, https://elpais.com/ccaa/2019/01/08/galicia/1546972699_904730.html.

³⁶ Redacción, "El BNG se queda fuera del Congreso por vez primera en 20 años," *La Voz de Galicia* (A Coruña), December 21, 2015, <https://www.lavozdegalicia.es/noticia/elecciones2016/2015/12/20/bng-queda-fuera-congreso-vez-primera-20-anos/00031450639144653630940.htm>.

³⁷ Bloque Nacionalista Galego, *En Bloque cara a un tempo novo.*, XVI Asemblea Nacional BNG. (A Coruña: 2017), <https://nube.bng.gal/owncloud/index.php/s/H6lnOwma8tw6qMu>.

votes for *En Marea* are actually votes against the arguments of viability theory.³⁸ Finally, it is extremely difficult to explain if the electoral alliance of *Galicia En Común*'s electoral performance decrease, despite being comprised of the same founding parties of *En Marea*, is because of a challenge to viability theory or a challenge to a different part of the alliance's positions. Therefore, my conclusion of inconclusiveness is based on the murkiness of both the reasons for the coalition's rise and the coalition's fall, which at both times were in part Galician regionalist parties. The fact that the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* has slowly been shifting towards the periphery again and regaining the votes it lost to the left-wing populism does hint that viability theory may find further evidence in the Galician case in the future.

With the future in mind, Galician regionalism is likely going to benefit from sharing the Spanish state with regions that are more combative with more urgency on regionalist and separatist issues. Pathways to independence or more sovereignty will be likely be opened up for them by these other regions. It is also hurt by the fact that there is a lack of center-right Galician regionalist parties, thereby leaving left-wing policies highly linked to a future Galicia and thus hurting the Galician regionalist message's broader appeal. Therefore, I think it is worth noting that in the 2020 Galician regional election, *Galicia En Común* lost all of its seats but the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* reemerged as the second biggest political party in Galicia.³⁹ This could mean that the turbulence of the 2010s is settling and that total support for Galician regionalism really did increase in that period. This could lead to further support and a second chance for the *Bloque Nacionalista Galego*. Finally, as the national two-party system in Spain seems to be

³⁸ Leandro Gago, "Is Podemos a Eurosceptic party?," *EuVisions*, September 10, 2017, <http://www.euvisions.eu/archive/is-podemos-a-eurosceptic-party/>.

³⁹ With a healthy 23.79% of the vote for *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* ("Junta Electoral De Galicia," Diario Oficial de Galicia, last modified July 29, 2020, http://www.juntaelectoralcentral.es/cs/jec/documentos/GALICIA_2020J_Resultados.pdf).

ending, and coalition governments might become the new norm,⁴⁰ there could be quite a few opportunities for a united Galician nationalist movement to compromise on left-right issues in exchange for advancements in their center-periphery pursuits.

Catalonia

Catalonia is home to undoubtedly one of the most well-known regionalist movements in the world today. Centered around the Catalan capital of Barcelona, Catalonia is comprised of four provinces (Barcelona, Girona, Lleida, and Tarragona) in northeast Spain. It is among the wealthiest most industrialized parts of Spain, and Barcelona is an important economic hub and port in Europe.⁴¹ Catalonia has its own language, Catalan. Catalan is spoken in a wider area than just Catalonia, including the other Spanish regions of Valencia and the Balearic Islands, Northern Catalonia in France, and the independent country of Andorra (Catalan is Andorra's only official language).⁴² Occasionally, there are calls for a greater Catalan unification within Catalan nationalism which includes these areas to various degrees. However, for the purpose of this case study, I will be using the results for only the Spanish autonomous community of Catalonia as Catalan regionalist parties typically only compete there. This is not to say there are no pan-Catalanists in these other regions, but there are strong unique regionalist movements (i.e., Valencian regionalism or Balearic regionalism) that differentiate them from the Catalonia case.⁴³

Historically, Catalonia was part of the kingdom of Aragon, prior to its merger with Castile that provides the origin of the united Spanish state.⁴⁴ Going even farther back, Catalonia

⁴⁰ Such as the current coalition government which is the first one since the end of Franco's dictatorship (Sam Jones, "Socialists and Podemos to rule together in Spanish coalition," *The Guardian*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/07/pedro-sanchez-spain-pm-government-vote-parliament>).

⁴¹ "Catalonia region profile," *BBC News*, June 11, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20345071>.

⁴² *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Catalan language," accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Catalan-language>.

⁴³ Obviously, there is no Andorra regionalism in Andorra as it is already its own country.

⁴⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Catalonia," accessed March 27, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Catalonia>.

spent significantly less time as part of the Islamic Al-Andalus, after being conquered and incorporated in the Frankish empire of Charlemagne.⁴⁵ This gives Catalonia strong historical links with its east as opposed to its current unification with its west. Catalonia also spent centuries as both a nominal and formally independent kingdom before being incorporated into Aragon through marriage.⁴⁶ Ultimately, there is a strong historical legacy and a distinct language and culture that forms the Catalan identity and its associated territory.

Modern Catalan regionalism existed prior to the Franco dictatorship. When Spain transitioned from a monarchy to the Second Spanish Republic, *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Republican Left of Catalonia, 1931) scored a major victory in municipal elections and declared the region as an independent Catalan state within a greater Iberian (Spanish) federation.⁴⁷ Representatives for the new Spanish republican government had to come from Madrid and negotiate with the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, and these negotiations led to Catalonia remaining part of Spain, but they were allowed to form their own regional government (called the Generalitat) and given significant autonomy and powers.⁴⁸ This agreement was formalized in the Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia in 1932. Since 99% of those who voted in the referendum on whether or not to support the statute (which was more of a poll to show a mandate than anything else) supported it, this shows that regionalism held significant sway in Catalonia way prior to integration. However, Catalonia would be one of the regions that fought most strongly against Franco in the Spanish civil war and was rewarded for this with a harsh

⁴⁵ Fodors.com, "Past & Present," *The New York Times Archive*, 2002, https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/fodors/fdrs_feat_23_2.html?module=inline.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "The contemporary Government of Catalonia," gencat, last modified November 19, 2018, <https://web.gencat.cat/en/generalitat/historia/generalitat-contemporania/>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

crackdown on the Catalan language and culture after Franco's victory.⁴⁹ Therefore, Catalan regionalism had to emerge again following Franco's death.

Franco died in 1975. Constitutional assembly elections in Spain were in 1977. Shortly after these elections, the Catalanian Generalitat, which had been in exile since the Spanish civil war, was invited and returned to Spain.⁵⁰ The Generalitat, with little formal power, formed a unity government to prepare another Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia that was approved in 1979 and led to the first Generalitat elections in 1980. In a show of the strength of Catalan regionalism, every party in Catalonia to receive elected deputies in the 1979 general Spanish election was, at a minimum, a regionalized branch of a national party and of course, some unique Catalan regionalists.⁵¹ This means that, at a minimum, all parties believed in, to some degree, Catalan autonomy and Catalan nationalism. I think this makes sense that, after having the Catalan language and culture oppressed for decades, there is pushback and a high degree of support for the repromotion of Catalan nationalism, and through this support, the region is relatively successful at getting itself recognition and autonomous powers. As for why Galicia (from the first section of this chapter) did not see quite the same resurgence, it is likely that this is because the Galician language and culture were significantly less repressed by Franco. The reasons for Franco favoring Galicia are that Galicia is more isolated from the rest of Spain and less important to the national economy than Catalonia, while, most importantly as mentioned above, Catalonia was one of the strongholds of resistance against Franco in the Spanish Civil

⁴⁹ Kate Keller, "Beyond the Headlines, Catalan Culture Has a Long History of Vibrancy and Staying Power," *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/beyond-headlines-catalan-culture-has-long-history-vibrancy-and-staying-power-180969294/>.

⁵⁰ gencat, "Government of Catalonia."

⁵¹ Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados Electorales."

War, while most of Galicia was conquered early on and remained relatively easy for Franco to control.

The state of Catalan politics after the 1979 general election, however, presents some difficulties for viability theory. Viability theory asserts that regionalist political parties will do better as their region is rendered more viable as part of an integrated supranational organization. However, it is hard for Catalan regionalists and Catalan nationalists to do better than they did in 1979, though they do lose some ground to the conservative Francoist Popular Alliance party in 1982.⁵² However, to properly analyze viability theory in Catalonia, it is not sufficient to look only for Catalan regionalism because it is so widespread and from this initial data point, any and all success of a national-level party is going to appear as a decrease in Catalan regionalism. Instead, I will be looking for the results of parties taking the viability argument forward and seeking to promote Catalan separatism and/or Catalan independentism. This is because, while all regionalist parties are expected to become more viable, once the system is all regionalist parties, independence parties now represent those most theoretically strengthened by integration. This is also an opportunity to evaluate if the expected voter thinking that underpins viability theory is that of ‘well my state (national-level) government does less for me so it is more important or more useful for me to vote for the regionalists and their platform that better corresponds to our regional level needs’ or ‘I am believing that my region could exist better as an independent state in an integrated bloc.’ Since typically both are working together, this is only an important differentiation in an all, or mostly, regionalist sphere. I believe the second line of thinking I presented above is the stronger form of the viability argument, so that is the link between

⁵² Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados Electorales.”

viability theory and separatism. This framework is also consistent with how the modern regionalism debate in Catalonia is often framed in terms of unionists versus separatists.

Starting with the Spanish general elections of June 1986 as the first elections since Spain joined the European Community (EC) earlier that year (all four benefits), *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* is the most voted party to not get a deputy with 2.67%. However, they are important to mention because they were a historical catch-all for Catalan regionalism and, after spending the first decade of restored Spanish democracy trying to find a unique identity in the face of the wave of Catalan regionalism, Jamie Lluch points out that *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* decides to capitalize on various grassroots pro-independence movements and adopt a harder Catalan separatist stance in 1986.⁵³ I point out that this shift occurred in lockstep with Spain joining the EC. In fact, now one of the three core values of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* is independence, specifically “the creation of an independent state for the Catalan nation as part of Europe.”⁵⁴

Another important party to highlight is *Convergència I Unió* (Convergence and Union, 1978). A strongly pro-European Catalan regionalist party that is an alliance between a liberal centrist ‘Convergence’ party and a Christian democrat ‘Union’ party (as in the official name for each party when translated from Catalan is Democratic _____ of Catalonia).⁵⁵

Convergència I Unió is strongly supportive of Catalan nationalism, but at this moment in time, the party is not in favor of independence, only for exploring options for greater autonomy for

⁵³ Jaime Lluch, *Visions of Sovereignty: Nationalism and Accommodation in Multinational Democracies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 57-58.; It does appear this was after the June elections of that year.

⁵⁴ “Esquerra’s Main Ideological Foundations – Independence,” *Esquerra Republicana*, last modified February 21, 2019, <https://en.esquerra.cat/en/esquerra-republicana-ideology-ideological-foundations#364>.

⁵⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica Academic*, s.v. “Convergence and Union,” accessed March 28, 2021, <https://academic-eb-com.eres.qnl.qa/levels/collegiate/article/Convergence-and-Union/389142>.

Catalonia within Spain.⁵⁶ They receive 32% of the 1986 vote.⁵⁷ The Socialist Party of Catalonia takes the plurality in the election but are only moderately Catalan regionalists, and the rest of the significant vote-getters are other moderate Catalan regionalists or national parties.

In 1989, the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* is still finishing up its rebrand towards independentism (which is in and of itself significant), and *Convergència I Unió* is happy to maintain a status quo, which sees them as the primary, and in-power, party at the regional Generalitat level, so electoral results hold almost perfectly consistent in 1989 Spanish general election.⁵⁸ The highlighted Catalan regionalist parties are highly supportive of European integration (especially the idea of a Europe of peoples) and likely welcome the coming Maastricht Treaty and the creation of the EU in 1993.

The Maastricht Treaty created the European Union and therefore represents the biggest moment of European integration for Spain since it joined the EC. It also triggered several viability mechanisms such as providing bloc-wide public goods in the form of common domestic policies (public goods benefit) and a common foreign and security policy that both provided greater international leverage (market benefit) and guaranteed greater security for all member states (security benefit). For a further breakdown of the new pillars of the EU and how they triggered viability theory, that can be found in the Flanders section of Chapter 1. Therefore, what one would expect to see after this increase of integration would be better results for the Catalan separatists.

The Spanish general elections of 1993 are a success for *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*. They receive 5.1% of the vote which allows them to have one deputy in the national

⁵⁶ Glen M. E. Duerr, *Secessionism and the European Union: the Future of Flanders, Scotland, and Catalonia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 102.

⁵⁷ Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados Electorales.”

⁵⁸ Ministerio del Interior, “Consulta de Resultados Electorales.”; Lluch, *Visions of Sovereignty*, 58.

Congress of Deputies.⁵⁹ It appears that in the face of integration, the independence message brought a vote increase. However, the increase does not continue in 1996, where *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* drops to 4.1%, yet they are still able to maintain one deputy.⁶⁰ This small decrease results in party reorganization, yet the party leadership and message remain pro-independence.⁶¹ The *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* recovers to 5.64% of the vote in the 2000 Spanish general election.⁶² Up to this point, the independence corollary of viability theory seems to only have provided a small and non-increasing boost to the Catalan independentists.

However, after a further increase at the regional level to 16.4 % in 2003,⁶³ saw the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* make a somewhat surprising move to transition the Catalan nationalists *Convergència I Unió* party out of power after two decades.⁶⁴ This is for two reasons: first, *Convergència I Unió* had slightly tarnished its centrist positionality by cooperating with the center-right Popular Party, and the new *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* coalition was united on the left of center economically. Furthermore, the partners of the Catalanian Socialist party and the Catalanian Greens, while lightly Catalan regionalist and therefore far more unionist than the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, agreed to undertake a reform of the Statute of Autonomy with the intention of creating more autonomy and recognitions for Catalonia.⁶⁵ Interestingly, this is something *Convergència I Unió* had been unable or unwilling to do. Though a compromise, the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* cast this reform as an important step on the path to

⁵⁹ Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados Electorales."

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Jordi Argelaguet, "Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya," in *From Protest to Power: Autonomist Parties and the Challenges of Representation*, ed. by Elias Anwen and Filippo Tronconi (Wien: Braumüller, 2011), 159.

⁶² Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados Electorales."

⁶³ This increase is not as drastic as it might appear because *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* was operating in the high single digits in terms of vote share percentage at the regional level throughout the 1990s, which is quite a bit higher than their Spanish general election results that have been reviewed thus far.

⁶⁴ Argelaguet, "Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya," 153, 164.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 164.

independence and was rewarded for their initiative with 15.89% of the vote in the 2004 Spanish general election.⁶⁶

The revised Statute of Autonomy went to referendum in 2006, and this is a pivotal moment for the Catalan independence movement. First, the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* felt that not enough progress was made towards independence in the revisions, specifically those coming from the Spanish national parliament. Catalonia-based political scientist Jordi Argelaguet expands on this, saying

Unhappy at the extent to which the proposed text had been revised during its passage through the Congress of Deputies, ERC [*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*] decided to vote against the Statute in the referendum held on 18 June 2006... ERC thus campaigned alongside its arch-rival, the PP [Popular Party], to reject the proposed Statute (with the PSC [Catalan Socialists], ICV [Catalan Greens], and CiU [*Convergència I Unió*] campaigning in favour)... ERC pursued a win-win strategy: demonstration of its prioritization of its ultimate goal – independence for Catalonia – whilst keeping open the prospect of being a key actor in governing Catalonia and implementing enhanced self-government within the framework of a new Statute of Autonomy.⁶⁷

The *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*'s leaders maintained the prospect of being a key actor by knowing that the Statute would likely pass either way and that their voter base was not going to abandon them for sticking to their principles, leaving them with enough seats regionally to be a coalition kingmaker. The fact that this is considered a win-win by the party is evidence for the independence corollary of viability theory (which I explained above). The *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* agrees with viability theory and expects to see a decrease in voter support if they

⁶⁶ Ministerio del Interior, "Consulta de Resultados Electorales."

⁶⁷ Argelaguet, "Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya," 165-166.

renounce their independence position, but they have to balance this with the desire to achieve more powers for the regional government and to stay in power to continue the pursuit of their goals.

The Statute ultimately did pass the referendum but was immediately entered into a legal challenge in the Spanish courts, on behalf of the Popular Party.⁶⁸ This irritated essentially all other political parties in Catalonia. It took four years for the Constitutional Court to issue a final verdict. In this time, the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* reentered the same regional government coalition as before despite being briefly kicked out due to their opposition to the referendum. Finally, the Constitutional Court's decision was announced in 2010 and, despite there only being 14 disallowed articles (and 27 more curtailed) out of 223 articles total, some of the most important clauses about Catalonia constituting a nation and the elevation of the Catalan language over Castilian Spanish were nerfed.⁶⁹

This sparked immediate protests and backlash throughout Catalonia, and most importantly for this study, caused the *Convergència I Unió* to decide that it had tried all the institutional and legal routes to further Catalan autonomy and Catalan nationalism; therefore it was now the time to pursue independence. Leader Artur Mas, who had been slowly taking a more separatist position since 2007, said that if his party won the regional election of 2010, he would hold a referendum on Catalan independence.⁷⁰ After a series of legal challenges that forced the referendum to be labeled as non-binding (and even then, was not recognized by the Spanish government), a vote was held in 2014. 80.75% voted in favor of independence but the

⁶⁸ Krishnadev Calmur, "The Spanish Court Decision That Sparked the Modern Catalan Independence Movement," *The Atlantic*, October 1, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/10/catalonia-referendum/541611/>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

turnout was only 41.6%, which is not enough for a mandate.⁷¹ This would not be the last referendum attempt, but before getting to that, there are a couple points to be made.

First is that, in this period from the Maastricht Treaty to the 2006 Statute of Autonomy pushback, viability theory seems to hold up well. The Catalan separatists get a small boost from integration that slowly grows. This subtle growth, especially on the regional level, leads to opportunities for governance. The *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* does not always make the most of these opportunities, but it does start a chain of events that directly leads to flipping a larger Catalan regionalist party toward favoring independence. Of course, this hurts them electorally because they are no longer the most prominent party in support of their main issue. Overall, though, this period as a series of small gains for Catalan independentism with the occasional setback that ends in a huge payoff that is directly linked to the smaller successes of the independence cause. While the unevenness of this upward trend is not projected by viability theory (though it is not not projected), the fact that there is an upward trend towards Catalan independence is strong evidence for viability theory. Next, following the most recent round of European integration through the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon, will the now multiple Catalan separatist parties continue to grow?

The Treaty of Lisbon was signed in 2009. The viability theory mechanism trigger in this round of integration was the strengthening of the position of the EU to negotiate trade deals on behalf of the bloc (market benefit). The following table shows Catalan independentist electoral results in the Spanish general elections since this round of integration. To note, the *Convergència I Unió* alliance dissolves in 2015 because the Union half becomes uncomfortable with the party's separatist stance. The Union half wins no further representation and is dissolved and bankrupt by

⁷¹ Duerr, *Secessionism and the European Union*, 108.

2017.⁷² This illustrates the power of the independence message with the voters in the 2010s. The Convergence half is refounded as *Partit Demòcrata Català* (later *Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català*, Catalan [European] Democratic Party, 2016). The renaming is specifically to further signify the pro-Europeanness of the party, which again is projected by and speaks to the assumptions behind the stronger version of viability theory.

Table 5:

Spanish General Election Year	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya	Candidatura d'Unitat Popular	Total
2011	7.07%	29.35% (Convergència i Unió)		36.42%
2015	15.99%	15.08% (Democràcia i Llibertat)		31.07% (- 5.35%)
2016	18.18%	13.90%		32.08% (+ 1.01%)
April 2019	24.61%	12.08% (Junts per Catalunya)		36.69% (+ 4.61%)
November 2019	22.57%	13.68% (Junts per Catalunya)	6.37%	42.62% (+ 5.93%)

Data from Ministerio del Interior.

As one can see, Catalan independentists have grown in electoral strength every election except 2015. The reason for the 2015 decrease is merely a factor of electoral vote share being a zero-sum game, and in the lead up to the 2015 election, the Podemos movement had just started and

⁷² Europa Press, “Unió inicia el proceso de liquidación del partido,” *El Mundo*, March 24, 2017, <https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2017/03/24/58d552d3ca47415a428b45c4.html>.

capitalized on anti-corruption and left-wing populism sentiment. All major parties in Catalonia saw their vote share decrease and ceded votes to the Catalan branch of this Podemos movement. Otherwise, Catalonia in the 2010s appears to be a model viability theory case.

Furthermore, on a regional level, *Convergència I Unió* governed until 2015 and pursued the referendum mentioned above. When the alliance collapsed in 2015, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (the Convergence half) was able to form an alliance with the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* for the 2015 regional election. This election was framed as another attempt to get a mandate for independence from the Catalan electorate.⁷³ This is why the two main pro-independence parties chose to run together (and why the *Convergència I Unió* alliance collapsed in the first place because the Union half had to get on board with independence, be it legal or not, or get out). The pro-independence alliance won the largest plurality of seats and by combining with a relatively new far-left pro-independence party that chose to run outside the alliance, *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (Popular Unity Candidacy, 2012), was able to form an all-Catalan separatist regional government majority.⁷⁴ However, this majority was only in terms of seats because the Catalan separatists were slightly short of 50% of the vote.⁷⁵ The pro-independence alliance did not continue for national-level elections.

In the regional government, the pro-independence forces worked together to attempt to hold another, this time legally binding, referendum. It was organized and held on October 1st, 2017. 90% of voters voted for independence, but the turnout was only 43%.⁷⁶ The low turnout is

⁷³ Tom Burrige, "Catalonia vote: Pro-independence parties win elections," *BBC News*, September 28, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34372548>.

⁷⁴ They chose to run outside the alliance because the party believes that Catalan independence needs to occur with a break from the capitalist system and therefore was not willing to compromise its economic position for the sake of the larger independence movement because, for *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular*, they are inseparable. ("What is the CUP?," *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular*, accessed on March 30, 2021, <http://cup.cat/what-is-the-cup>.)

⁷⁵ Burrige, "Catalonia vote."

⁷⁶ "Catalonia's bid for independence from Spain explained," *BBC News*, October 18, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29478415>.

in part because of unionists boycotting the vote, but also because the Spanish government and courts again declared the vote illegal and actually sent in police to stop people from voting. This erupted into violence, with police beating voters. Because of this interference and with a strong majority from those who did vote, the Catalan Generalitat unilaterally declared independence from Spain. Spain maintained its police in the region and, using emergency powers in the Constitution, declared direct rule over Catalonia, signaling that the Spanish government was not going to recognize Catalan independence. This led to pro-independence politicians being charged with sedition, among other crimes. Some were jailed and some fled the country into exile. The Spanish government then held new elections to reestablish the Generalitat in December 2017. The *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, *Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català* (under a coalition name of *Junts per Catalunya*)⁷⁷, and *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* were the three main parties responsible for the 2017 referendum and declaration of independence, and once again won a majority of seats, yet still stayed slightly under the 50% threshold in terms of vote share.⁷⁸ They formed a new pro-independence Generalitat, seeking to continue negotiations with Spain for Catalan independence.

To conclude this section, Catalonia, in my opinion, is an example of the later stages of viability theory. One of the big questions of viability theory is if integration is increasing regionalism, why do we not see more countries forming from within the EU? Part of this answer is that, as with most of the regions in this case study, independence is a long way off.

Regionalism would first need to dominate the region, and then, as Catalonia shows, the

⁷⁷ This is slightly confusing and an active subject of debate in Catalan courts because *Junts per Catalunya* is the name of the 2017 electoral alliance and also the name of a breakaway party formed from that alliance after the 2017 election. Therefore, at the current moment, there are two *Junts per Catalunya*, but in 2017, it was just one.

⁷⁸ Seán Clarke, "Catalonia election: full results," *The Guardian*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/dec/21/catalonia-election-full-results>.

regionalism needs to transition to separatism, and even then, a national government might use physical force and legal means to keep the region under its power. For the purpose of contrast, Flanders is likely the other region of this study closest to late-stage viability theory, yet they have been consistently receiving more autonomy which has tempered the greater demands for complete independence. Perhaps, Flanders illustrates the path of periodically ceding autonomy while Catalonia illustrates the path of what happens when the ceding of autonomy stops.

Finally, looking toward the future, in the 2021 Catalan Generalitat election, the same big three pro-independence parties have, for the first time, surpassed 50% of the vote, though the turnout was lower than normal due to Covid-19.⁷⁹ The Socialist prime minister of Spain has also taken a much more conciliatory stance with the Catalan independentists, promising a dialogue, though this has yet to produce any change or resolution and likely will not appease the Catalan politicians or general public for too long. If the trend of Catalan independence support continues upwards and the Spanish national politics continues to become more fractured, it is possible that the Catalan independentists might find themselves in a kingmaker situation, similar to the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*'s position regionally in 2003, though kingmakers that want to leave the country are a tough pill for politicians to swallow because, if they do leave, you've just lost your coalition partner. Another possibility is that years of continued unsuccess end the Catalan independence dream, and voters give up. However, the worst possibility is that a staunchly unionist party (say far-right Vox, which has been gaining seats in the Spanish Parliament since its 2013 founding) decides to take drastic measures to end or greatly set back the Catalan independence movement. If this were to happen in either a violent or an authoritarian manner (which seems the most likely way to do it), then one would have to hope that the

⁷⁹ Stephen Burgen and Sam Jones, "Catalonia election: pro-independence parties increase majority," *The Guardian*, February 14, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/14/catalonia-regional-election-covid-voting>.

European Union would stray from its uncommitted place on the sidelines and aid those who are expressly very fond of it.

Conclusion

In conclusion,¹ my research examined the relationship between European integration and the regionalist political parties of Flanders, Corsica, Sardinia, Padania, Galicia, and Catalonia. I started first, by introducing a theoretical framework for understanding this relationship called the viability theory. Viability theory projects that European integration should benefit regionalist political parties, in terms of electoral support. However, it is not all European integration but only specific triggers that lead viability theory to project this. These triggers can come in four different forms: public goods benefit, market benefit, structural funds benefit, and security benefit.² Therefore, after identifying major moments of European integrations that trigger viability theory, I looked at the electoral results in each regional case study to search for a noticeable positive impact.

I found this impact often, but not every time. By found, I mean that there was a correlation between integration happening and regionalist parties doing better in the subsequent elections. Since each individual voter makes his or her selection based on a variety of different criteria (and may not even be consciously thinking about European-level policy when heading to the national-level polls), it is impossible to have the certainty to say that European integration caused anything. Despite these constraints, I have found that viability theory is a compelling theory to explain a potential causal relationship, and I have provided an examination that most of the time shows the expected correlation. Additionally, viability theory was built on quantitative data that showed a general positive trend, my case studies match with this data, and both match with the theoretical expectations.

¹ I strongly prefer to start all my conclusions with ‘in conclusion,’ as to make everyone aware that this is a conclusion. I acknowledge that with the entire chapter named ‘Conclusion,’ it is a tad redundant.

² For greater details on why these are the four triggers, it is based on the optimal size of states literature from economics and explain in greater detail in the Viability Theory section of the Introduction.

My recommendation would be to take the idea that European integration makes regionalists more viable parties in elections as a general rule of thumb. Keep in mind that there are plenty of other contextual factors, as I have shown, such as governmental systems and reforms, regionalist party fragmentation, and populist co-opting that may also need to be considered when thinking about the past or the future of a regionalist party. Also, individual decisions and party-level decisions can, like a surfer, cause the regionalists to ride the wave or wipe out.

A quick breakdown of each case study illustrates this rule of thumb. In Flanders, we saw two periods of the expected integration-regionalist success correlation: the initial ECSC and EEC period and from 2009 onwards. These were separated by a long period of regionalist stagnation best explained by consistent decentralizing and federalizing reforms of the Belgian state. In Corsica, viability theory projects correctly since the Treaty of Rome in 1958. However, it was modified first by the electoral system and relative demographic concerns (somewhat overcome by violence) then by regionalist division and a shift to a negative perception of the regionalist violence. In Sardinia, we can only see a few small correlations with regards to national elections, but there is good evidence for viability theory on the regional level. In Padania, the existence and initial successes of Padanian regionalism correlate with integration, however, in the past decade, the movement's populist nature got it tangled up with right-wing populism. In Galicia, fragmentation and negotiable goals on regionalism have significantly hindered the regionalists there. There are periods of correlation with viability theory and other periods of inconclusiveness. Finally, Catalonia is one of the best case studies in support of viability but is struggling to figure out how to go from a strong regionalism movement to an independent state.

What does the viability theory rule of thumb mean for the future? I will offer advice to a variety of actors, focusing particularly on individuals and organizations that are necessarily engaged with understanding regionalism in their daily work. This advice will be for those who work for, or on behalf of, a regionalist movement, those who work against a regionalist movement, and those who work on European integration, including European Union officials.

First, for the regionalist supporters, organizers, and leaders, viability theory is a powerful tool in rallying voter support. Capitalize on it. Throughout my case studies, only two regionalist parties advocate for the regression of European integration (*Vlaams Belang* and *Lega*) and even then, these two parties have shown no desire to do away with all European integration. If regionalist parties are not yet explicitly making use of the rationale for why integration makes their regionalism movement (and eventual independence) more viable, then they should. They should also support European-level legislation that further provides one of the four benefits (like maybe an EU army), and they should frame Europe as an (potentially unwitting) ally in their quest for greater autonomy or independence.

Second, for those who are working against regionalists (looking at you, Mariano Rajoy),³ my findings mean that Euroscepticism is your friend. It means approaching the EU cautiously when it tries to take over authority on or further create any of the four mechanisms. Additionally, some of the best ways to undercut regionalists are to give them some decentralization or greater autonomy and, if you do this, seek to go right up to the point of disagreement between the regionalists, so that the more autonomous factions are satisfied and thus now at odds with the separatists. Internal regionalist division is one of the best ways to slow regionalism. I do believe however that this trend is stable and persistent, and so it is quite worthwhile considering and

³ Though technically Rajoy is already out of power, it is better said as looking at you, past version of Mariano Rajoy. This is much less catchy.

putting in place a non-violent satisfactory pathway for separatists, especially when you maintain the leverage to design and control this pathway. The Scottish referendum is a great example of this. However, because Brexit rebalanced the equation, the Scottish regionalists wanted their European integration back, and thus demands resurfaced for another referendum given the completely new playing field. The Scottish question was at a relatively resolved stalemate before that, which might be one of the best outcomes a unionist could hope for.

Third, and this is perhaps the most important takeaway, European Union officials need to realize their relationship with regionalists, specifically separatists,⁴ especially officials within the EU Parliament and the European Commission. The European Union shies away from taking any sort of stance on separatists, calling them national-level affairs outside its jurisdiction in an effort to not upset a national government. While this might be politically pragmatic as MEPs⁵ often share a political party interested in or running an entire EU member country (and within the European Council or the Council of Europe,⁶ the different leaders and ministers in power at the EU member country level are exactly the same people who run these EU institutions), it is wrong to not acknowledge the current passive effect the European Union is having. No acknowledgment means the EU is not contributing to a solution of the issues it is causing nor is it able to publicly discuss or plan for the effects that further integration could cause with regards to regionalism.

However, the EU has options in deciding how to address this. It could state its willingness to recognize the principle of self-determination and seek to mediate separatists' and unionists' disagreements in a way that maintains stability, harmony, and belief in the EU. This

⁴ Regionalists in search of only greater autonomy do seem to be only a national-level affair.

⁵ Members of the European Parliament

⁶ Among the most poorly named different institutions.

would likely entail the creation of a unique pathway for new countries coming from a current member state. Those in support of a federated states of Europe should like this idea. Conversely, it could definitively state that any breakaway region from a member state would have to exist outside the EU, thus completely invalidating the viability theory arguments. With this stance, if a breakaway region were to happen, it would instantly become a geostrategic liability for the EU, able to form partnerships with EU rivals, as well as a major inconvenience.⁷ However, this path would likely significantly dampen all forms of regionalism. The longer the EU waits to address this, the less effective the second option becomes (because the amount of support for regionalists will be higher and some will likely remain committed to their ideology even if part of the initial reason for it is no longer true) and the more likely the lack of the first option will lead to harm, as demonstrated by the headline-grabbing violence against voters in a peacefully intended illegal referendum in Catalonia. Also, it is important to keep in mind that 13 new countries have joined the EU since 2004. This means that viability theory is embryonic in half the bloc and regionalism movements are likely to become even more widespread. Either way, EU officials and decision-makers, the evidence has been presented, and it is high time to get off the fence.

Lastly, there are regions globally that seek to emulate or adapt the EU supranational model. The East African Federation, the African Union, and Mercosur are among the most famous examples of this. All I caution is that, while there are benefits to these kinds of organizations, it is important to be aware of the side effect of increased regionalism, or the drawback of increased regionalism for a country with low stability, when forging these pacts. No

⁷ This is a more pressing concern the closer geographically the new country would be to the EU. An independent non-EU Bavaria would be a much greater geostrategic liability and a bigger inconvenience than an independent non-EU Madeira for example.

matter where you are in the world, it is worthwhile to think about supranational integration using the viability theory rule of thumb.

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