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“WE HAVE NO PRIDE LEFT IN EUROPE”

Italian Far-Right Discourse in Critical Time Periods

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Abstract

For a long time after World War II, far-right ideology was not favored in Italy until a sudden turn in the mid 1990s, which saw the collapse of the largest political parties at the time, creating opportunities for far-right influence in the Italian government once more. In this study, these critical time periods for far-right ideology are departing points for a discourse analysis of pivotal far-right works of the time to investigate whether there is a dominant narrative in far-right discourse over the span of time. Shedding light on a selection of works by the likes of philosopher Julius Evola and *Lega Nord* politician Umberto Bossi, pioneers of far-right ideology of their time, the study makes use of a theoretical framework of previous studies which account for the characteristics of far-right ideology, and some popular rhetorical themes. Using Italy as a case study for its historical relevance to far-right ideology, and the lasting impact of fascism in the country, the study aims to fill the research gap on the topic of far-right ideology and its discourse in Europe, which tends to not stretch further back than the past 20 years. The study's findings suggest a lasting narrative of moral decay and a longing to return to an idealized past which is enduring across the time periods regardless of specific party politics. Additionally, the dominant narrative is tinged with representations of national and European identity, but the study finds that these concepts are more fluid and not as enduring to the discourse.

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Introduction

After the death of Mussolini and the end of World War II, there was no doubt fascism had gone out of fashion once Italy was liberated.¹ However, many who had followed the fascist party now stood without direction as to where to go next, ideologically. Some regrouped with other former fascists to form political parties that were outspokenly ‘post-fascist’, others looked to philosophers who had traditionalist ideas to invoke a new era of neo-fascism, and some, fed up with the destruction caused to the nation, made an ideological u-turn.² After the war, Italy would not have a right-wing government again until after the events of the *Tangentopoli* political bribery scandal and the subsequent *Mani Pulite* investigations and legal hearings in the 1990s, which led to the collapse of the largest political parties in Italy and subsequent election of *Forza Italia*’s coalition with regionalist *Lega Nord* and post-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale*. One may ask: How did far-right movements motivate the need for their ideology even after the downfall of fascism in Italy, and how did their successors go on? Can something be learned from looking at past critical time periods of far-right ideology in Italy to learn something about patterns in discourse and rhetoric? The topic of this study stems from interest in the current right-wing wave in Europe, characterized by discussions of national identity, culture in an increasingly globalized world, and the burden of mass immigration commonly attributed to the 2015 refugee crisis³; against this background, the study is looking at representations in far-right discourse to discern if there is a throughline and subsequent dominant narrative between different critical time periods, and if patterns present in the discourse could be used to inform us on the popularity of current or future far-right politics.

Aim

The study aims to look at works by far-right authors and ideological or political figures whose works or careers have been of significance within the ideological landscape of Italy, in order to identify their view of reality which surrounds their ideology. Two critical time periods have been selected for further analysis of the ideological landscape, and the study looks at the continuities in discourse within ideologies such as fascism and ethno-nationalism through the years. The reason for this study is due to the lack of research done on critical time periods for far-right movements in Italy that precede the far-right wave in Europe that is seen today. By looking back one may discover reasons for ideological trends that are more complex than attributing them to singular instances of rapid social adjustments such as a crisis, using Italy as a case study as one of several European countries which has seen an upswing in popularity for far-right sympathy.

¹ Craveri, Piero (2016), *L'arte del non governo: l'inesorabile declino della Repubblica Italiana*, Venezia: Marsilio Editori, p. 33.

² Albanese, Matteo and Del Hierro, Pablo (2018), *Transnational fascism in the twentieth century*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, p. 65; 77.

³ Hawthorne, Camilla (2022), “ITALIAN ETHNONATIONALISM AND THE LIMITS OF CITIZENSHIP” in *Contesting Race and Citizenship: Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean*,. Cornell University Press, 27-60, p. 28.

Research questions

In the introduction, the following question is posed; Can something be learned from looking at past critical time periods of far-right ideology in Italy to learn something about patterns in discourse and rhetoric? This is the short version of the study design, and as such, the research question for the empirical material is;

In what ways has far-right discourse in Italy changed or stayed consistent over time as the ideological framework itself has changed? Is there a dominant narrative which is continually used across time periods?

Theory and previous research

Previous research

The study interlinks a variety of research areas, and these are predominantly: the increasing presence of far-right ideology in Europe and in Italy specifically; discourse analysis of Italian politics; the historical presence of fascism in Europe; and the interweaving of far-right ideology with populism.

Much of the research done on the characterization of the European far-right ideology of our current times has been carried out by Jens Rydgren and Gabriella Elgenius, and therefore their studies constitute a large part of the theoretical framework of this study. This is specifically in regards to their linking of ethnonationalism and populism as a defining phenomenon of the ‘new’ far-right, and is of interest when it comes to identifying evolving characteristics of ethnonationalism in older time periods. Rydgren’s study from 2007 maps out European countries who have had a strong far-right electoral presence since the 1980s, with Italy standing out as a country where a far-right political party made it into government as early as the 1990s.⁴ This study also points to the difficulties of finding common characteristics of post-war far-right ideology, even when there seems to be an overarching agreement on which groups are in fact far-right. The study largely points to European far-right groups as being ethno-nationalist and populist, two concepts which will largely feature in most previous research. Another study by Rydgren from 2005 accounts for the post-war stigmatization of elements associated with fascism and nazism, making it impossible for far-right groups to overtly make use of racism or antisemitism as part of their discourse, but also point to the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) as an outlier in these circumstances, as a well-established far-right group.⁵ Rydgren ultimately argues that although the popularity of far-right groups may differ between

⁴ Rydgren, Jens (2007), “The Sociology of the Radical Right”, in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 241–262, p. 242.

⁵ Rydgren, Jens (2005), “Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 44, 413-437; p. 414.

countries, research done on this can not be exclusively theorized within singular countries, and that results must be compared between case studies in order to establish a grander theory.⁶ However, none of the studies handle Italy as a specific case, and are either handling other cases such as France, as in the aforementioned study, or are focused on the scope of wider-spanning results dealing with Europe as a whole, such as in studies from 2007, 2017 and 2022 respectively.⁷

The closest one gets to this type of study done on the new populist far-right in regards to the case of Italy is done specifically on the ideological evolution of *Lega Nord*, written by Stefano Braghiroli and Andrey Makarychev. The study chronicles the party's turn from regionalism to a more open populism after Umberto Bossi's departure and compares it to similar political turns taken by an Estonian far-right party.⁸ The main theme of their study is the transformative nature of a party's rhetoric with the aim of attracting a larger electoral support from groups that historically may have been categorized as the 'other' by the party leaders. This study is however concentrated to a more recent time period, and does not cover rhetoric and discourse used within the LN from the time of its conception. In general, *Lega Nord* is the subject of much of the research done on the far-right and its rhetoric in Italy, and the same is also true for the discourse of the current coalition government led by Giorgia Meloni as in a study by Pamela Pietrucci⁹ - studies which may be used to further contextualize the results of this study - but much of this research lacks a historical link which could explain the far-right's popularity. Pietrucci's study establishes the current government's ability to perform a balancing act of not publicly endorsing nor condoning far-right ideology outright¹⁰, and reaches a conclusion also reached in a separate study done by John Agnew; that what correlation there is between the two is largely a nostalgic component¹¹. In either case, there is research lacking on the evolution of the discourse adapted by Italian far-right movements. Nor does a study exist which links several time periods to one another for the purpose of observing the evolving discourse of these groups. A purely historical overview of far-right movements in Italy can be found in a study by Anders Bergman¹², which is more of a compilation in nature and does not offer further analysis on the groups' activities, or on the transnational movement of fascism in Europe as studied by Matteo Albanese and Pablo del Hierro¹³, a study which chronicles fascist collaboration perhaps most notably between Italy

⁶ Rydgren (2005), p. 414-415.

⁷ Rydgren, Jens (2017), "Radical Right-Wing Parties in Europe: What's Populism Got to Do with It?" in *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16:4, 485-496; Elgenius, Gabriella, and Rydgren, Jens (2022), "Nationalism and the Politics of Nostalgia", in *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 37, No. S1, 1230-1243.

⁸ Braghiroli, Stefano & Makarychev, Andrey (2023) "Conservative populism in Italy and Estonia: playing the multicultural card and engaging "domestic others"" in *East European Politics*, 39:1, 128-149; p. 134.

⁹ Pietrucci, Pamela (2023), "Neofascist "Thugs," Pandemic Protests, Populisms: Giorgia Meloni's Cerchiobottismo and the Rise of Fratelli D'Italia During the Pandemic" in *Javnost - The Public*, 30:1, 51-66; p. 51.

¹⁰ Pietrucci (2023), p. 58.

¹¹ Agnew, John (2023), "Is Fascism really back in Italy?" in *Human Geography*, Vol. 16(3), 307-312; p. 311.

¹² Bergman, Anders (2010), *Italiens svarta hjärta : Fascismens återkomst*, Lund: Sekel Bokförlag.

¹³ Albanese, Matteo and Del Hierro, Pablo (2018), *Transnational fascism in the twentieth century*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

and Spain, but these do not focus on the discursive aspect. Albanese and del Hierro's study defines MSI as a key actor in facilitating the post-war fascist network and its continued collaboration across European nations, and similar organizations in countries such as Spain as enablers of neo-fascism in Italy through offering safe-housing for the movements' members.

In regards to studies done on ethno-nationalism in Italy, much of it revolves around the concept of racism and the inability to conceive of an 'italian-ness' that isn't white as in a study by Camilla Hawthorne¹⁴ - and although this is a prevalent component of ethno-nationalism - this study focuses particularly on the concepts of 'culture' and 'identity' which are sometimes so narrowly determined to be legitimate that it must be kept regional or local, for which reason racism as a whole is a much larger historical subject that permeates Italian society beyond far-right ideology. However, the creation of identity through representation in discourse is very relevant to the topic.

This being said, studies on the topic of modern ethno-nationalism again typically lack a historical perspective, especially in regards to lacking studies which could look specifically at the continuity of post-war neo-fascism as an ideology and an influence on the far-right in Italy on a more detail-oriented level, and study its internal workings and discourse. One of few such examples is a study by Paula M. Salvio on the lasting memory of fascism in Italian ideology, and the remnants of fascism in the Italian landscape which aren't yet denounced.¹⁵ She accounts for fascist tropes that live on specifically in the politics of Lega Nord, and discusses the 'omnipotent' thinking of the far-right, which is to say rhetoric which effectively distracts from criticism through self-promotion and appeals to emotion over logic. This is a forceful tactic found in fascist propaganda which essentially infers the ability to be 'always right' or capable of giving a solution to any problem.¹⁶ This study of discourse is an excellent springboard for other studies on the same theme to identify rhetorical tactics and representations used by the Italian far-right against the background of fascism.

Theoretical framework

Ideology

Ideology is constituted by a frame of values which indicates core characteristics of a movement. For example, traditional fascism as it existed under Mussolini's reign was characterized by its militaristic, industrial, ethno-nationalist tendencies. Rydgren argues that many modern far-right groups in Europe are not so far removed from the original master frame of fascism, but that the

¹⁴ Hawthorne, Camilla (2023), "Toward a relational theorization of racisms", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 0:0, 1-9; p. 5.

¹⁵ Salvio, Paula (2022), "Teaching Against Omnipotence: Mussolini's Racial Laws and the Ethics of Memory in Times of Neofascism" in *Educational Theory*, Vol. 72, Issue 5: 575-593.

¹⁶ Salvio (2022), p. 580.

differences that do exist are noteworthy.¹⁷ For example, a key difference is the focus has moved from biological racism to cultural racism, or ethno-pluralism, and a desire to preserve national identities. He also touches on the ability of ideological movements to influence one another's ideals and values depending on the success of previous movements, leading to modifications in ideology.¹⁸

Much of the ideology in Italy is rooted in the unification of the country in 1948, as well as the intellectual traditions and shared culture which existed before the war, and much of it is defined by theorists such as Benedetto Croce or Antonio Gramsci, defining the relationship between elites and masses, and the distribution of power.¹⁹ In this study, authors will often call on or condemn the *Risorgimento*'s ideals depending on their ideological conviction, and whether they find their ideals in the unification of Italy or in something much more distant such as the imperial ideal of ancient Rome. This tendency to look to the past for established values will come into play very frequently throughout the conducted analysis.

Defining the Far-Right

In terms of understanding the concepts “far-right” and “right-wing”, one may start by defining them from left and right. If we operate under the assumption that the general distinction between the left and the right is that the left is egalitarian whereas the right is not²⁰, we may also look at the analysis of the source material to find that this definition is enforced. Without intending to forgo the analysis section of this study; this is generally true. In a differentiation between left and right, one would also consider policy issues such as economics, however, this does not come up as frequently or blatantly in far-right ideology; generally, the focus lies on sociocultural issues such as identity, often related to the nation or to ethnicity.

Applying these differentiations within the historical context of Italy's politics is an additional dimension of defining left, right and far-right in this study. To briefly summarize the historical background of the political landscape: The unification of Italy in the 1800s consolidated the underdeveloped southern regions with the more developed and industrialized northern regions into the Kingdom of Italy.²¹ The intellectual and political movement known as the *Risorgimento* struggled to establish a national spirit out of regions that had previously been ruled locally in terms of economics, politics, tradition, and even language, and the integration of the north and south regions would continue to tinge the political landscape far into modern-day politics. The Left and Right of the new parliament were not organized properly, and would fall victim to

¹⁷ Rydgren (2005), p. 428.

¹⁸ Rydgren (2005), p. 429.

¹⁹ Bellamy, Richard (1987), *Modern Italian social theory : ideology and politics from Pareto to the present*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 2-3.

²⁰ Rydgren (2007), p. 243.

²¹ Bellamy (1987), p. 4-6.

trasformismo, the process of turning one's allegiance to whoever offered the most money. After the bribery and corruption of this period, the National Fascist Party was finally introduced as a cohesive political party after the first world war, and offered promises of modernity and structure.²² In the decades after the fall of fascism, up until the 1990s, far-right politics were strongly out of fashion following the devastation and loss of the second world war. In the 1970s and 80s, Italy also suffered political tensions and acts of domestic terrorism both from the far-right and the far-left, which may have contributed to the centrist, traditionalist preference in government elections. In the introduction I claim the Berlusconi's 1994 coalition government was the first right-wing government in Italy since the war, and this is because *Democrazia Cristiana*, which had largely dominated the elections in the in-between period, was officially regarded as a centrist party in Italy despite it perhaps aligning more right-wing by liberal standards due to its traditional and conservative overtones. From such a perspective, one might instead more clearly view the 1994 coalition as the first inclusion of a far-right party in government since the war. Positionings such as these may differ when distinguishing between left, right and far-right in European countries, depending on historical context. For the purpose of this study, themes that are defined as far-right are topics of nationalism, national and regional identity, sociocultural issues rooted in ethnicity (especially in regards to ethno-pluralism), et cetera. Political figures who are solely right-wing are also represented in this study in the form of Silvio Berlusconi, and it should not be inferred that he is categorized as far-right; however, his coalition encompassed far-right parties for whom his party made it possible to enter government alongside him.

Ethno-nationalism

Ethnic nationalism, referred to in this study as Ethno-nationalism, is motivated by the idea of ethnic identity and culture (or, plainly, ethnocentrism) as opposed to civic nationalism, which is motivated by defending a nation's freedoms and institutions.²³ In this study, figures representing many different ideological and political movements are all characterized with the common trait of ethno-nationalist ideas. Whether their ideological conviction is that of conservatism, federalism or even fascism - they all feature, to some extent, expressions of ethno-nationalism per the following definition;

“The idea of the nation-state holds that each nation should have its own state and, although this is often left implicit, each state should have only one nation.” For ethnic nationalists of the radical right, this principle is sacred because the nation can achieve its destiny only through a state that represents and ultimately favors the dominant ethnic group. To advance a liberal multicultural perspective is to be a “traitor” to one's people and the single nation [...]²⁴

²² Craveri (2016), p. 20-21.

²³ Elgenius & Rydgren (2022), p. 1235.

²⁴ Bar-On, Tamir in Rydgren, Jens (2018), *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 21.

That is to say, their politics reflect the notion of putting the needs of the ethnic demographic of the nation before others'. This features to a greater or lesser extent among the texts analyzed, depending on whether the ideological stances are motivated by ideas of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, or more liberal, constitutional concerns such as the economy or democracy. The notion of 'ethnicity' may also be defined as more or less detailed, ranging from meaning ethnic Italian to meaning someone who is morally and spiritually superior to his countrymen in his conviction of the nation's value.

Ethno-pluralism

Ethno-pluralism is defined by Rydgren as;

“Departing from the left's notion of différence - on which the doctrine of multiculturalism (that is, the idea that migrants should have the right to preserve habits and traditions of their home countries) is largely based - the notion of ethno-pluralism states that, to preserve the unique national characters of different peoples, they have to be kept separated [...] ethno-pluralism, as such, is not hierarchical: Different ethnicities are not necessarily superior or inferior, only different, incompatible, and incommensurable. Hence, whereas old racism, common in colonial settings, aimed at subordination, the ethno-pluralist doctrine basically aims at expulsion.”²⁵

This concept can be pushed to mean continental, national, regional or even local. The idea of ethno-pluralism is one that promotes ethnically homogenous communities with the motivation of preservation of cultures with the belief that they would not be able to co-exist; however, in practice, ethno-pluralism is rarely as non-hierarchical when it becomes blatantly xenophobic or accusing other cultures of being lesser than.²⁶

Populism

Populism is perhaps most easily explained as the ideology of 'the people', often those who may feel set aside or 'left behind'²⁷ by a political elite. The common narrative is that globalism and internationalism is given a higher priority than that of the nation state²⁸, and in that nation state, the uneducated, low wage working, unemployed, and rural living are amongst the people most forgotten about. Populism as an ideology can in theory exist across the ideological spectrum, but gathers the totality of the political sphere into one homogenous elite which 'the people' wish to separate themselves from. What specifically characterizes the populist far-right is its politics that focus on the restoration of a nation's traditional values and culture (as a solution to removing

²⁵ Rydgren (2007), p. 244.

²⁶ Elgenius & Rydgren (2022), p. 1234.

²⁷ Elgenius & Rydgren (2022), p. 1234.

²⁸ Rydgren (2007), p. 242.

themselves from the establishment's decline - this is also presented as being 'losers of modernization'²⁹), and often ties in with the concept of ethno-pluralism. This is to say, in the context of this particular study, that external cultures are perceived as a threat to Italian culture and identity. The presence of other cultures is of course directly related to immigration, the question of which is a central focus of the far-right and often ties in with xenophobia and racism. The phenomenon of what is seen as mass-immigration is often attributed to the regulations set in place by either a distrusted government or a supranational organ such as the European Union, circling back to populism's disdain for the elite.³⁰ Because this argument is not strong if the people do not identify strongly with their culture, the nation or with Europe, there are other arguments against immigration supplied by the populist far-right; by effectively claiming that there is a correlation between a societal problem (criminality, welfare abuse, unemployment³¹) and increased immigration, it is argued that the immigrant cannot adequately adapt to the culture of the nation. The populist strategy of these politics is effective because it creates an 'us versus them' narrative.

Fascism and Neo-Fascism

Some definitions of the distinguishing features of the old master frame of fascism and the divergent branches of neo-fascism are required to properly account for the changing ideological characteristics and representations put forth in this study. To begin with, we may define Mussolini's Italian fascism by the following characteristics as put forth by James Gregor; that Italian fascism is institutionally totalitarian, nationalistic, and militaristic.³² When framed in the context of other ideologies, it may also be characterized as capitalist or industrialist, but according to Gregor, despite Mussolini's will for 'rebirth' through enhanced national production³³, this is sometimes an argument that stems solely from placing fascism as a polar opposite to communism or Stalinism and may not be all-encompassing in its description.³⁴ What dates the ideology, and accounts for the decay of the old master frame, are aspects that we now historically condemn, most notably those of racism, xenophobia, or anti-semitism.

Neo-fascism is perhaps more useful as an umbrella term to cover multiple movements, as it can be difficult to find properties which define all ideologies which are deemed neo-fascist. This includes Italian movements such as: those who were former fascists who simply re-organized (an example being the political party *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI)³⁵; those which aligned with the International Third Position who historically placed themselves between the Eastern and Western bloc and invoked the teachings of then (post-WWII) unpopular figureheads like Julius

²⁹ Rydgren (2007), p. 248.

³⁰ Rydgren (2007), p. 244.

³¹ Rydgren (2007), p. 244-245.

³² Gregor, Anthony James (2006), *The search for neofascism : the use and abuse of social science*, Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 3; 8-9.

³³ Gregor (2006), p. 40.

³⁴ Gregor (2006), p. 24.

³⁵ Gregor (2006), p. 58-59.

Evola and Corneliu Codreanu; and those who later on would inherit the ‘post-fascist’ legacy of the former movements, such as *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), MSI’s successor.³⁶ Although fascism isn’t a prevailing characteristic of most modern far-right groups, it is still invoked by them in terms of hailing fascist intellectuals or having an affinity for aspects of the ideology.³⁷ This study identifies all these movements as ethnonationalist to some degree, per the previously accounted for definition, but distinguishes fascism and neo-fascism as separate ideologies pertinent to the study for their cultural and historical legacy in Italy.³⁸

Politics of Nostalgia

The concept of nostalgia as a political tool of any ideological or political movement is pertinent to the analysis carried out in this study. Defined by Elgenius and Rydgren as a particularly favored rhetoric by populist right-wing sympathizers for its ties to ethnic and civic nationalism, it is used against the background of uncertain times³⁹ and the desire to return to a previous point in time - or to recreate a new, not previously achieved, constructed culture and identity which harkens back to a perceived ‘golden age’.⁴⁰ Another definition of Nationalism put forth in a study by Cheng Xu which furthers this portrayal is that of a nation’s ‘founding narrative’⁴¹ which establishes an ethnic inheritance that requires preservation. This is pointed out to be a particularly defining characteristic of the Italian nation and culture; that ‘Italian-ness’ is largely unattainable unless one meets certain requirements.

Method and material

Method

The study analyzes the contents, discourse, narrative and argumentation of multiple published works by far-right ideological figureheads. Because much of the material can be categorized as propaganda or propaganda-adjacent biographies, the motifs described in the works cannot be taken as an objective truth, for which reason the study is more concerned with the representations⁴² given by the authors. A representation, in this regard, is a normalized concept within an ideology - an example of this would be the representation of immigrants as criminals in ethno-nationalist ideology. Representations can also be less blatant, depending on to which

³⁶ Gregor (2006), p. 66-67.

³⁷ Rydgren (2007), p. 246-247.

³⁸ Gregor (2006), p. 53.

³⁹ Elgenius & Rydgren (2022), p. 1232.

⁴⁰ Elgenius & Rydgren (2022), p. 1231; 1240.

⁴¹ Xu, Cheng (2018), “Nationalism, Necessary and Sufficient for Genocide? A Counterfactual Account through a Comparative Case Study of Nazi Germany, Shōwa Japan, and Fascist Italy.” in *Genocide Studies International* 12, no. 2, 234–52; p. 241-242.

⁴² Neumann, Iver in Klotz, Audie, and Prakash, Deepa (2008), *Qualitative Methods in International Relations : A Pluralist Guide*, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 71.

degree they dominate the discourse. It may be elements such as metaphors, implications, and the linking of certain subjects that may not have obvious connections⁴³; but also the patterns or discrepancies in an established narrative.⁴⁴

The analysis is carried out per the description of discourse analysis as described by Neumann; it searches for dominating representations of the authors' realities⁴⁵, in more or less pivotal works of far-right ideologists - a collection of works which fit the allowed timeframe of the study. There is then a subsequent comparison made between the discourse in the texts in this study that could present a dominant narrative that one can trace the origin, or continual use, of.⁴⁶ A dominant narrative may come out of pivotal works for authors as the dominant presentations are usually the loudest; which is to say, the popularity of a work may determine the popularity of the discourse.⁴⁷

The operationalization of the method is identifying representations which constitute the narrative, and at the end, compile the results to see which representations and narratives are dominant and enduring between the time periods analyzed. Questions posed to the texts are; What presentations of power are being portrayed? What ideas about the nation and the self versus 'the other' are being portrayed? What motivations are given for the need for ideological change within the nation? Are there representations that are more dominant in the discourse through the years?

Material

The study will utilize material from two time periods in order to present a contrasting dimension to the already existing research field on modern far-right politics and the causes for its popularity. These two time periods were chosen for their relevance to the far-right ideologies, namely the post-war years of 1945 to 1953, culminating in the creation of the first republic of Italy, as well as the years of the *Tangentopoli* scandal and its subsequent fallout from 1992 to 2001, with the collapse of the previous *Pentapartito/Quadripartito*; that is to say, the coalition government consisting of the biggest political parties in Italy at the time. Both of these time periods featured critical moments in time for far-right ideology, the first for the enduring existence of post-fascism after the war, and the second for the re-entry of far-right forces into government for the first time since the war.

⁴³ Fairclough, Norman (2010), *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, Second Edition, London: Routledge, p. 57-60.

⁴⁴ Neumann (2008), p. 71.

⁴⁵ Neumann (2008), p. 63; 70.

⁴⁶ Milliken, Jennifer (1999), "The Study of Discourse in International Relations" in *European Journal of International Relations*, 5:2, 225-25; p. 233.

⁴⁷ Neumann (2008), p. 66.

The material chosen is a selection of texts that can represent the main positions of far-right ideology in Italy for the time periods analyzed, and is believed to be a sufficient basis for a study of this scope within its intended time limit. Many of the texts are so-called ‘pioneer texts’⁴⁸ of their era or for their ideology specifically, and should represent the main narrative adequately. Of course, these texts cannot reflect all of the existing ideological discourse attached to their respective movement, and therefore the material is of interest to the study for its qualitative dimensions and not for a quantitative content analysis. Similarly, as the popularity of the publication may also affect its influence on the discourse, the results of the analysis may identify one of several dominant discourses. The selection of sources was chosen in such a way that it would be spread out across the spectrum of ideology; for example, had it all been works by political party founders, one would have had to consider to what degree some discursive representations are a product of political rhetoric or tactics and not a direct ideological representation. The selection of the material is of course also dependent on factors such as availability during the time of the study being carried out. Many of the publications were not available through the university libraries, nor were they readily available online or through other means, and some had to be purchased privately and shipped internationally. For the same reason, additional material which may have fit the study was considered for analysis but was ultimately not accessible within the timeframe.

Additionally, the time periods selected for analysis were picked not only for being critical to the popularity or unpopularity of far-right movements, but also because of the time gap between them. Even though there are certainly years of interest between the two selected periods that can also be argued to have been critical for far-right movements, continuities between them would have been more expected due to their historical proximity. The immediate postwar era was of more interest to the study than any following years due to curiosity for the possibility of survival of an ideology which had suffered such a massive defeat and loss in the war. The 1990s era was chosen due to it coinciding with a larger European trend of far-right influence, even though the Italian far-right had been picking up popularity even in the 1980s.

1945-1953: The End of Fascism

The study analyzes four books from the specified time period; two by fascist Romanian Iron Guard leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, one by far-right philosopher Julius Evola (plus additional articles by Evola, found in one of Codreanu’s books), and one by fascist-turned-revolutionary Curzio Malaparte.

Curzio Malaparte is the moniker of Kurt Erich Suckert, an intellectual who started as a follower of the fascist party in Italy but was exiled from the movement in the 1930s for his criticism of the ideology. In 1949 he published one of his more famous books, *La pelle*, an autofictive work

⁴⁸ Neumann (2008), p. 72.

which chronicled the post-war period based on his own lived experiences in Naples⁴⁹; an account which was lauded for presenting the war in a way that historians or journalists could not and had not done previously. Malaparte's works are not direct retellings of events, but they are tinged by ideology nonetheless, and contain discourse and representations from real life worth analyzing, certainly to the same degree as some of the autobiographies analyzed in this study. He published accounts of the war long before it was socially accepted to do so, even as an active (albeit controversial) member of the fascist party.⁵⁰ In modern critiques, much of his jargon is dismissed as being typically fascist and 'of its time', typically exemplified in the dichotomy of bourgeois morality and socialist sexual freedom.⁵¹ For this time period, he is of interest to the study for his point of view as both having previously been an active member of the fascist party as well as a critical revolutionary later in life, and for his socio-political commentary which were unique for the time.

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was the leader of the Romanian fascist movement, the *Iron Guard*, between 1927 and 1938. Codreanu's works are not post-war; as a matter of fact, they are pre-war, as Codreanu died in his home country of Romania in 1938 after being imprisoned there.⁵² For this reason, his works are not ideologically of interest to their time period - they are largely written within the old master frame of anti-semitic nationalism and fascism - nor are they of interest in understanding Italian society at that time. Rather, they are of interest for the Iron Guard's influence on Julius Evola in his time as well as on neo-fascist movements in Italy after the war⁵³, specifically that of *Terza Posizione* (from the group of ideologies known as Third Position), founded by Roberto Fiore and Gabriele Adinolfi in 1979.⁵⁴ The translation of Codreanu's final published work also includes six articles by Julius Evola, containing correspondences with Codreanu, through which one can understand the ideological likeness of the two authors as well as the impact of Codreanu's works on post-war neo-fascist movements through the eyes of Evola.

Traditionalist author Julius Evola published his works throughout the reigns of both Mussolini and Hitler, even attempting to influence their politics with his writing but ultimately failing to do so as he was seen as having too much of a corrective tone on the ideologies of fascism and nazi-socialism.⁵⁵ Much of Evola's writing hinged on ideas of transcendence and purity as

⁴⁹ Malaparte, Curzio (2013), *The skin (La pelle)*; Translation to English by David Moore, New York: NYRB (originally published in 1949), p. ix.

⁵⁰ Guerri, Giordani Bruno (2010), via *Il Giornale*; "Curzio Malaparte, un italiano vero (malgrado l'Italia)" retrieved 2024-11-05 from <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/curzio-malaparte-italiano-vero-malgrado-litalia.html>

⁵¹ Contarini, Silvia (2013), via *Nazione Indiana*; "L'italiano vero e l'omosessuale" retrieved 2024-11-05 from <https://www.nazioneindiana.com/2013/08/10/litaliano-vero-e-lomosessuale-2/>

⁵² Nagy-Talavera, Nicholas Miklós (2001) *The Green Shirts and the others: a history of Fascism in Hungary and Romania*, First Edition, Iași; Portland, Oregon: Center for Romanian Studies, p. 421.

⁵³ Bergman (2010), p. 24.

⁵⁴ Bergman (2010), p. 22; 36.

⁵⁵ Hakl, Thomas, "Julius Evola and Tradition" in Sedgwick, Mark (2019), *Key thinkers of the radical right : behind the new threat to liberal democracy*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 64-65.

alternatives to biological factors that determined ideological teachings; this is to say, that anti-semitism as well as sexism in particular were movements determined by man's spiritual superiority. After the fall of the Salò republic, Evola became less read due to his connotations with fascism and nazism, but continued to influence neo-fascist movements with works that are seen by some to be largely misinterpreted in the sense that they are seen to inspire violence, where Evola had claimed that the books "[does] not concern the ordinary man of today".⁵⁶ This is due to the fact that as Evola got older, he became more and more focused on the idea of traditionalism and the devotion to such, to the degree that it could be likened to the concepts of the *Übermensch* or the Aryan master race, concepts which Evola had opposed early in his career⁵⁷, seeing his own definition of this phenomenon as much more spiritual.⁵⁸ In this study, the English translation of Evola's book *Gli uomini e le rovine* from 1953 is analyzed as a political manifesto which expresses the need for a new radical right-wing movement in Europe.

The works analyzed in this time period inform one another in a linear fashion. Codreanu's work in the Iron Guard was a big inspiration for Evola, as we will see in his dedicated articles, and they both laud the success of fascism at this time, before Codreanu's death in 1938. Meanwhile, for the duration of the war, Malaparte chronicles his lived experiences in his two main works, *Kaputt* and *La Pelle*, the latter being a dramatization of the liberation of Italy by the United States. Malaparte contextualizes the fall of Mussolini and the end of popularity of fascism in Italy, which helps contextualize how Evola continues his publishing career. When Evola continues his writing after the end of the war, it is far more esoteric yet still true to his focus on the spirit and moral of man. His anti-semitism is reframed after his criticisms of Mussolini's fascism, but he remains firm that there is an innate trait which defines the Jewish people, and we find that his hatred for them may be linked to his disdain for industrialisation and modernisation like many other far-right traditionalists.⁵⁹ Ultimately, Codreanu and Malaparte are perhaps more interesting in that they further the stream of ideas that comes out of Evola's writings, for which reason the analysis spends less time on the aforementioned two's works, and more on the ideology which is forwarded.

1992-2001: Tangentopoli and Mani Pulite

The study additionally analyzes three books from another specified time period, all by different political figures of the 1990s, who were tied to ethnonationalist movements in one way or another. These books are by *Lega Nord* leader Umberto Bossi, *Forza Italia* leader Silvio Berlusconi, and *Forza Nuova* leader as well as *Terza Posizione* figurehead Roberto Fiore.

⁵⁶ Sedgwick (2019), p. 65.

⁵⁷ Sedgwick (2019), p. 55; 60.

⁵⁸ Evola, Julius (2002), *Men among the ruins (Gli uomini e le rovine)*, Translation to English by Joscelyn Godwin, Rochester: Vt. Inner Traditions (originally published 1953), p. 11.

⁵⁹ Evola (2002), p. 11.

The time period in question requires some context. In 1992, *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI) party member Mario Chiesa was arrested on some lesser bribery charges, and was subsequently condemned by party leader Bettino Craxi as a ‘splinter’ in the party, leading to Chiesa implicating multiple other politicians in corruption charges. Upon investigation, many politicians from several different parties came to be charged with similar crimes.⁶⁰ This scandal came to be called *Tangentopoli*; *Tangente* meaning kickback/bribery, and the *-(o)poli* suffix (from the Greek *polis*; *city*) being the Italian version of the English practice of attaching *-gate* to political affairs, and the subsequent judicial investigation being referred to as *Mani Pulite* (lit. ‘clean hands’). Among those accused were politicians from all of the *Quadropartito* - all four parties of the 1992 government; *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI), *Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano* (PSDI) and *Partito Liberale Italiano* (PLI); parties which, despite being the largest and longest supported parties in Italy up until the scandal was uncovered, all dissolved eventually following the scandal. At the height of the commotion, accused PSI politician Sergio Moroni committed suicide, followed shortly by Gabriele Cagliari, the president of *Eni S.p.A.*, an Italian energy company which was implicated in the bribery scandal.

Also amongst the politicians accused of corruption was Umberto Bossi, party secretary of *Lega Nord* (LN), who had originally founded the regionalist party *Lega Autonomista Lombarda* in 1984 which was later usurped into LN after the merging of other autonomous region and province parties. In 1992, Bossi’s party was already on the rise as a party which disrupted the old order of party majority⁶¹, which may have spared him from being distrusted in the upcoming election of 1994, or possibly even granted him a better opportunity for winning.⁶² For this election, media mogul Silvio Berlusconi announced he would join the political field with his new center-right party *Forza Italia* (FI), which allied itself with LN as well as the post-fascist party *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN); formed out of neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). FI took home the election with 21% of the national vote; LN joined them with 8,36%. The coalition was the first right-aligned alliance to win since the end of World War II. However, LN left the coalition in December of the same year following disagreements as well as *Mani Pulite* investigations into Berlusconi and his businesses, which ultimately felled the entire coalition government. FI regained power alongside LN again in 2001.

In this study, Umberto Bossi’s memoir from 1992 was chosen as empirical material because of its ideological nature, as well as serving as a document from before the *Tangentopoli* scandal (although published the same year), which otherwise is likely to have dominated the narrative. Instead, the study seeks to identify Bossi’s ideological motivations represented against his personal background, and what motifs he may present as central to his politics. Bossi is an especially central figure to the far-right ideology of the 1990s because his movement was given

⁶⁰ Craveri (2016), p. 451.

⁶¹ Craveri (2016), p. 446.

⁶² Bergman (2010), p. 10.

such a unique opportunity to enter government upon the collapse of all the large political parties whom he all publicly opposed.

The second publication analyzed from this time period is Silvio Berlusconi's 2001 memoir, chosen because of its recollective perspective on his first election alongside *Lega Nord*. Many believed at the time that Berlusconi had entered into politics with the intention to take focus away from potential *Mani Pulite* investigations into his businesses. His book is mainly of interest to contextualize the early 1990s period in terms of ideology and politics, especially surrounding his coalition with far-right LN and AN.

The third book for this time period is *Noi Terza Posizione*, the self-explanatorily titled book by Roberto Fiore and Gabriele Adinolfi, which chronicles the idea of the Italian branch of the neo-fascist Third Position movement that particularly adapted the teachings of Evola and Codreanu. The book was published in 2000, three years after the establishment of the political party *Forza Nuova* (FN), founded by Fiore alongside Massimo Morsello.⁶³ This book is of interest as an ideological manifesto that directly continues Evola's and Codreanu's teachings, with much of the same esotericism but warped into a new movement with separate political priorities, unlike the two other texts representative of this time period which are not directly associated with fascism, and even directly oppose it.

In this section, the three works representing the time period differ slightly in terms of thematic focus, but nonetheless the structure of the analysis is similar to the previous time period in that one of the works is more central to the analysis, and the other two will contextualize the surrounding events of that book. Umberto Bossi's book is the main focus for this time period because of this stand-out role in the collapse of the Italian government in 1993 and the subsequent election in 1994 where his *Lega Nord* made it into government for the first time. Bossi signified Italy's return to far-right, ethno-nationalist sympathy for the first time since the war, especially as he was accompanied into government with post-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale*, with center-right *Forza Italia* leading the coalition to victory. In this analysis, Bossi will constitute the main narrative, and Berlusconi and Fiore will add context on two different sides of him, ideologically.

⁶³ Bergman (2010), p. 24.

Analysis and Results

Post-War (1945-53)

Curzio Malaparte

Malaparte chronicles the liberated city of Naples after the war with disdain veiled as humility for the American troops. *La Pelle* is a fictional account as far as we are concerned, but most of the references are in regard to Malaparte's lived experiences - his exile from Italy after being kicked out of the fascist party, his many arrests, and his time stationed in Ukraine. It gives an interesting look at the image of fascism just as Italy is liberated, and everyone who fought for fascist Italy is left as losers. The core of *La Pelle* is the story of the defeated people, as Malaparte is the liaison officer for the US soldiers in Naples, and each chapter details one vulgar post-war reality after another. Malaparte begrudgingly accepts defeat for Italy, but looks at all other main actors of the war with heavy irony. He spends a significant amount detailing the characteristics of liberal Americans - joyful, brave, loud, rich, naive - and those of the marxist youth, who are all identified as plotting homosexuals.⁶⁴ There are not only strong representations of national identity but also of multiple 'others', whether it is Americans, the British, the French or just young marxists within the nation - who are consistently characterized as promiscuous, volatile and self-obsessed. However, there's also a European identity which is displayed to the Americans, but it is not cohesive and is not as strong as Malaparte's Italian or even Neapolitan identity. To some degree, this comes to be reflected in Malaparte's fascist past, and again when he happily mocks Mussolini for the American troops' amusement, but finds himself unable to do it once a few Italian spectators arrive, feeling shame for the wretched state they're in as a result of Italy's defeat.⁶⁵ When speaking to an American general, Malaparte states, "we have no pride left in Europe."⁶⁶

Malaparte spends large swaths of the book trying to contextualize Europe to the American soldiers, explaining over and over again that an American 'hero' can not find any reward beyond the valor of a war won in Europe, which is proved to them by the fact that there is no food, no money, no friendship and no romance to be found in Italy. When at a dinner, expected to be served a dinner of grand proportions worthy of their guest of honor, a general's wife, they're served a boiled 10-year-old girl for lack of fish in Naples.⁶⁷ When they refuse to eat, Malaparte insists she is a fish; she is as close to a fish as one can find in Naples. When they want to bury the girl, Malaparte informs them that there is unfortunately no graveyard for fish in Naples. Ultimately, one of two things are true: Either Naples is so war-torn that they'll happily serve a

⁶⁴ Malaparte (2013), p. 90.

⁶⁵ Malaparte (2013), p. 184-185.

⁶⁶ Malaparte (2013), 191.

⁶⁷ Malaparte (2013), p. 220.

human to the heroes when there's nothing else left, or the guilt the soldiers feel after Malaparte's speech about the defeated Italy leaves them so depressed that they perceive the fish to be an Italian girl.

At large, Malaparte depicts 'liberation' as decay, constantly reiterating that there is now an 'other' Europe and an 'other' Naples, one in which people die or become otherwise subservient in that they are defeated, which is also likened to death.⁶⁸ The representation of the Italian nation as 'the conquered' is a constant in *La Pelle*, although this is not necessarily a negative - it is simply a distinguishing of power relations. When the American soldiers refuse to acknowledge themselves as conquerors instead of liberators, Malaparte reminds them that it is the only way to be sure that a war has been won.⁶⁹

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu

Codreanu's seminal work *For my legionaries (Pentru legionarii mei)* is a political manifesto previously likened to Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.⁷⁰ Additionally, it is claimed that the translations of the Romanian version of the book are heavily censored, with the most antisemitic content being taken out. This is because the book goes into grave detail on what Codreanu believes to be a Zionist conspiracy in 1930s Romania, a rhetoric which historically is matched with rhetoric from SS-Germany. This rhetoric is a prime example of - and a pioneer text of - the old master frame of fascism which would become largely unused after World War II. For this reason, analyzing the book page by page would give quite a monotonous and predictable outcome. In this sense, the ideological motivations expressed in Codreanu's biography are not of interest to this study for how they are contextualized in the time period of him writing it, but rather how his ideas were later applied and contextualized within the post-war Third Position movement, among others. Therefore, it is rather the interpretations of Codreanu which are of interest, and we may return to these in the sections regarding Evola and Fiore.

In *For my legionaries*, the core message is quite clear, especially in a historical context; the decay of morality and loss of racial structure in the nation is seen as imminent, and the national identity is believed to have been disfigured and warped by a Zionist agenda, which can only be resolved by a complete re-schooling of the Romanian individual to instill proper values in him, which would make him a proper addition to the army of Codreanu's *Legion of the Archangel Michael* (the Iron Guard).⁷¹ As a result, the ideology of the Iron Guard builds largely on the organization of the military-style nationalist group. What the core values of nationalism are, is hardly a point that needs repeating at this stage. In Codreanu's prison notes, *Însemnările de la*

⁶⁸ Malaparte (2013), p. 322.

⁶⁹ Malaparte (2013), p. 49-50.

⁷⁰ Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea (2018), *Fängelsedagbok (Însemnările de la Jilava)*, Translation to Swedish by Lennart Svensson, Helsingborg: Logik Förlag (originally published 1942), p. 149.

⁷¹ Codreanu, Corneliu Zelea (2007) *Till mina legionärer (Pentru legionarii mei)*, Translation to Swedish by Unknown, Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, Second Swedish Edition (originally published 1936), p. 226-228.

Jilava, to which extent he recounts his trial and subsequent prison sentence, he often repeats his ideological points. He despises the political parties, as he also mentions in the manifesto, blames the supposed ‘judeo-politicians’⁷² for hounding him and slandering him in the press.

Julius Evola

The long introduction to Evola’s *Gli Uomini e Le Rovine* gives the translator’s notes on contextualizing Evola; his artistic and philosophical influences, his spiritual interest, his political involvement as well as his criticisms on fascism. Empirically, there is no doubt that Evola largely supported fascism whilst also having priorities of esotericism and ritualistic spirituality that did not find its place in Mussolini’s Italy, making it a complicated relationship in which Evola ultimately realized the movement could not sustain his ideas for rebirth of man.⁷³ As such, we do not need to speculate whether Evola was or wasn’t a fascist; he is quite outspoken on the matter before the war, lauding its successes, and continues to align himself far-right after it, having abandoned Mussolini’s specific brand of fascism long before its downfall once it stops being able to adapt to his corrections of traditionalism. It is also not a new endeavor to try to define Evola’s concepts - the translation of the book spends about the first 100 pages doing exactly so - for which reason, it is more interesting to contextualize his ideas within what we know is to follow. The translator claims Evola has had little influence on far-right groups after the war⁷⁴, but the existence of movements who attribute their ideology solely to him are clearly exemplified in this study. Therefore, the analysis will take into account past interpretations of Evola’s theories, but still aim to find what specific similarities and differences there are between his rhetoric and that of far-right movements in other time periods.

Evola starts the book lauded as his most political work⁷⁵ with definitions of conservatism versus traditionalism; conservatism aims to preserve something that is about to be lost, but to Evola, there is nothing left in Italy worth preserving for the future. Instead, he urges that a true form of conservatism should aim to discard ideas which do not serve society - in this sense, one might regard that Evola is not moved by politics of nostalgia, but this topic will come up again. Traditionalism, on the other hand, is devotion to something which is not determined by time or history, but rather, Evola claims this to be the true spirit of conservatism, which preserves “principles from above”⁷⁶, that is to say, spiritual principles which man has carried since the dawn of time. To decipher the meaning of this, one may be interested in the basis of the spirituality which is central to Evola’s ideology, but this is no easy feat.

⁷² Codreanu (2018), p. 69.

⁷³ Evola (2002), p. 129.

⁷⁴ Evola (2002), p. 91; 93.

⁷⁵ Evola (2002), p. 89.

⁷⁶ Evola (2002), p. 115-116.

Evola is early to introduce the central idea of meta-history as a non-changing principle to which his idea of tradition also aligns itself. There is a fundamental ideal in man and in nature to which one can aspire by this idea; Evola also continuously denounces giving validity to the arguments of ‘history’ or ‘empiricism’ and calls them ‘deviant mindsets’ which belong to the revolutionary spirit (revolution, as one may guess, is not a favored approach by Evola).⁷⁷ As far as the spirit of revolution signifies progress, Evola opposes this idea and rather attributes crisis and destruction to the process of revolution; a failure to preserve that which is essential (tradition).⁷⁸ Similarly, he views the liberation of Italy after the war to be a ‘regression’.⁷⁹ The inherent esotericism of the ideal which Evola describes, which is supposed to have sovereignty in regards to power, politics, ideology, et cetera, makes it difficult to specify, nor can one truly understand its origin - it is just ‘there’, by Evola’s account. However, he defends his ideas with arguments that amount to not much more than statements about the futility of counter-arguments, but the basis for these claims are not explained further.⁸⁰ Many of the explanations offered by Evola are grounded in ideas that he vaguely attributes to an ‘old view’ or ‘the origins’, i.e. the traditional past, which is not historically specified.⁸¹

Evola differentiates between state and nation, and opposes the inversion of the term as caused by democracy, because according to him, the state should by default be sovereign⁸² and thus the people cannot participate lest they are part of the elite capable of leading. One can see how these values seem ripe for fascism⁸³, but as this book is published after Mussolini’s fall, it becomes clear that fascism was not a successful means to an end for Evola, nor does he seem pleased at the time with the political endeavors that are following Italy’s liberation. However, as much as Evola claims state institutions do not have right of power solely due to how long they’ve lasted throughout history, he still cares about imperial history; especially in regards to established orders and aristocracies, and the inherited power present in such a state, whether it is “the divine right of Kings”⁸⁴ or power acquired through rites belonging to these classes. In this sense, he doesn’t favor the state either, and only really romanticizes the feudal system when he is not going as far back as referencing the Roman Empire in terms of success.

One can construe that Evola would not align himself with civic nationalism, but ethno-nationalism may come into play, and certainly ethno-centrism once he crosses over into discussions on spirit and race. But first, Evola dismisses the individualist essence of liberalism, as well as the notion that liberalism is in any way a right-aligned political ideology.⁸⁵ On this

⁷⁷ Evola (2002), p. 117.

⁷⁸ Evola (2002), p. 121.

⁷⁹ Evola (2002), p. 191.

⁸⁰ Evola (2002), p. 117.

⁸¹ Evola (2002), p. 124.

⁸² Evola (2002), p. 127.

⁸³ Evola (2002), p. 129.

⁸⁴ Evola (2002), p. 126.

⁸⁵ Evola (2002), p. 133.

principle, he also regards the fight for equality and justice to be futile, as they are not naturalistic - people are bound to be unequal by several measures. One could interject at this point that ideology and politics are not commonly defined at their core by what is 'natural' or 'biological', but it is clear that Evola finds that the core spirituality of man which guides his beliefs is *highly* natural. This is also what separates spirituality and religion in Evola's writings, where modern religion is separate from scholasticism and feudal era theology, which he regards as a 'golden age'.⁸⁶ Evola means that a hierarchical system of people aligned by titles and ranks, not by their individual existence, is the only possible formation of a successful state.⁸⁷ Then, the argument circles back to the infamous 'absolute person'/*Übermensch* likeness; this, which is supposedly entirely different from any sense of individualism, is determined by;

“The atomic, unqualified, socialized, or standardized unity to which the individual corresponds is opposed in the absolute person by the actual synthesis of the fundamental possibilities and by the full control of the powers inherent in the idea of man (in the limiting case), or of a man of a given race (in a more relative, specialized, and historical domain): that is, by an extreme individuation that corresponds to a de-individualization and to a certain universalization of the types corresponding to it. Thus, this is the disposition required to embody pure authority, to assume the symbol and the power of sovereignty, or the form from above, namely the imperium.”⁸⁸

This is the second mention in the book of a 'symbol', which is sometimes vaguely described and can thus be interpreted as a spiritual phenomenon (as in esotericism or magic, both of which Evola studied extensively⁸⁹), one which Evola has previously claimed is lacking in Italian tradition but has not defined the characteristics of⁹⁰, but later in the book Evola makes mention of the symbol of the Roman Empire multiple times⁹¹, which also clarifies the meaning of this quote. The characteristics of 'absolute man', are - besides descriptions of ancient primitive spiritualism - one who leads other, inferior men.⁹² The rankings of these men would then surmount to an analogical political order within a state.⁹³ Totalitarianism, however, would not define this system, as totalitarianism is defined by Evola as an order imposed on individuals who are not capable of aligning themselves by this hierarchy.⁹⁴

When Evola discusses the economic drive of the individual, and ultimately demonizes modernization, he paints a picture of absolute freedom as the opposite of individual wealth -

⁸⁶ Evola (2002), p. 138; this is further discussed in Evola's articles regarding Corneliu Codreanu, see next title section.

⁸⁷ Evola (2002), p. 139.

⁸⁸ Evola (2002), p. 140.

⁸⁹ Evola (2002), p. 30.

⁹⁰ Evola (2002), p. 117-118.

⁹¹ Evola (2002), p. 185; 191.

⁹² Evola (2002), p. 142.

⁹³ Evola (2002), p. 143.

⁹⁴ Evola (2002), p. 144; 148.

which seems as a quite Marxist idea - but he quickly establishes that Marxism replaces the social hierarchy that Evola prefers with socioeconomic interests.⁹⁵ Additionally, he characterizes Marxists as well as Bonapartists as simpleminded and prone to the concept of revolution simply due to the subordinated nature of the ideology's followers.⁹⁶ However, despite Evola's disdain for the materialistic economy he does not seem to care for the collective good either. He depicts all hegemonic economies as equal, meaning that Marxism and capitalism are ultimately one and the same, and depicts this in an analogy;

“An ancient image, taken from a Buddhist text, is that of a man running breathlessly under the burning sun. At a certain point this man may ask himself: "Why am I running? What if I were to slow down?" and then, walking more slowly, he asks: "Why am I walking in this heat? What if I paused under a tree?"—and in doing so he may come to see that his previous running was caused by a foolish and feverish state of mind. Such an image indicates the inner transformation, or metanoia, required to strike at the heart of the "hegemony" of work and to regain inner freedom: this, however, not in order to shift to a renunciatory, utopian, and miserable civilization, but in order to clear every domain of life of insane tensions and to restore a real hierarchy of values.”⁹⁷

What a “real hierarchy of values” entails, specifically, is the removal of the economic drive from man (as established by capitalism, thus destroying the old values and traditions), to realize one's freedom. If we circle back, at this point, to Evola's traditionalism, one can begin to dissect his choice of tradition. Having established the disdain for capitalism and industrialization, which is synonymous with members of the Allied powers, specifically England and the US, one can infer that the preferred tradition comes from the Axis powers. However, Evola knows not to define it as such; instead, he refers to the ‘Germanic-Prussian tradition’, and establishes this as the opposing force.⁹⁸ The ideal which he is invoking looks farther back, to the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, which he characterizes as ‘anti-revolutionary’.⁹⁹ This representation of an imperialist ideal makes more sense for Evola than a nationalist one; he seems to favor any system over a nation-state, whether this is an empire, a feudal system or a transnational alliance.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, he infers a sort of European tradition and identity, but one which is very selective. It becomes clear then, that Fascism was favored by Evola as an ideology that upheld tradition. He also rejects the accumulative terms of ‘mediterranean’ or ‘latin’ culture as a descriptor for Italy amongst other countries, emphasizing instead the similarities between Italy and Germany once more.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, he invokes the words of Mussolini in response to the theory that the Mediterranean people would be descended from Africa; that the civilizations

⁹⁵ Evola (2002), p. 165-166; 176.

⁹⁶ Evola (2002), p. 161, 217.

⁹⁷ Evola (2002), p. 175-176.

⁹⁸ Evola (2002), p. 193.

⁹⁹ Evola (2002), p. 190.

¹⁰⁰ Evola (2002), p. 277.

¹⁰¹ Evola (2002), p. 252.

such as Levantines or Phoenicians that are linked to Italic people are rather their ‘bastard brothers’.¹⁰² However, he still favors the general concept of ‘Europe’ to the influence of the US or the USSR, as evidenced not only by his blatant distaste for both capitalism and communism, but for the influence of the two nations at large.¹⁰³

If one is interested what is supposedly an ‘external other’ which threatens Evola’s idea of Europe, one will see this in the subsequent Codreanu articles written by Evola, but *Gli Uomini e Le Rovine* is not completely void of accusations of a Zionist conspiracy in Europe despite its post-war publishing. Evola outlines the document *The Protocols of The Learned Elders of Zion*, which he believes “allegedly reveals a plan that was devised and implemented with the subversion and the destruction of traditional Europe in mind”, and although the document had already been debunked as fabricated, anti-semitic propaganda at this time, Evola denounces this and opts for the possibility of it being a truthful document.¹⁰⁴ He also adds, that even if it were to be a false document, that the text has still acted as a ‘prophetic premonition’¹⁰⁵, essentially attributing the rise of capitalism, the development of industry over agriculture, and the fall of the feudal system to this conspiracy - much like what Codreanu preached in Romania before the war. Additionally, when Evola accounts for the ideological trends that would have made this conspiracy possible, he inserts:

“Thus, we can never emphasize too much that unconditioned loyalty to an idea is the only possible protection from occult war; where such loyalty falls short and where the contingent goals of "real politics" are obeyed, the front of resistance is already undermined. The ricochet should be seen in an analogous context, in the case of "peoples' right to self-determination." This principle, after having been employed by modern democracies as an ideological instrument during World War II, eventually affected white peoples [sic], thus putting an end to Europe's prestige and preeminence.”¹⁰⁶

This is the first evident display of racism in Evola’s book, which otherwise skillfully avoids outright mentioning race or ethnicity (with the exception of the concept of Aryan-Romans and Jewish people; however, in this book he always weighs his statements carefully). Evola looks quite far back in the past when establishing a hierarchy for race - initially, he is more concerned with separating ‘degenerate civilizations’ such as Etruscans or Cretans from civilizations of ‘solar spirituality’ such as Spartans.¹⁰⁷ One familiar with ancient history may be well aware of the reminiscent qualities of Spartan culture and militarism in fascism, so this comes as no surprise. But he then goes on to identify what he believes to be superior race qualities; the Nordic

¹⁰² Evola (2002), p. 260.

¹⁰³ Evola (2002), p. 274.

¹⁰⁴ Evola (2002), p. 239.

¹⁰⁵ Evola (2002), p. 240.

¹⁰⁶ Evola (2002), p. 247.

¹⁰⁷ Evola (2002), p. 254.

element in Germans, and the Roman element in Italians.¹⁰⁸ Again, these representations are hardly new to anyone in the time period. He separates these values from a civic nationalism built on the idea of the ‘state’ with a unified history and identity.¹⁰⁹

It is not difficult to understand why *Gli Uomini e Le Rovine* is so politically important; many of the concepts and representations that Evola introduces inform one another in a very omnipotent way of arguing, lined up to appear to be resolved only by the solution granted by a return to a past ideal. Evola ultimately expresses that the West is in decline as a result of the economist and modernist focus of the world, and because it has failed to be reborn through fascism, it must be reborn through traditionalist values upon which his philosophy is built¹¹⁰; and to which neo-fascist organizations would also come to adapt their ideology in the future. At the end of Evola’s book, he encourages ‘young militants’ to organize themselves in this manner, in a hierarchy consisting of elite bloodlines at the lead, and with numerous ‘warriors’ secondary to them.¹¹¹

In an appendix to the book, one can read Evola’s statement of defense given upon an arrest in 1951 on charges of being the mastermind of a neo-fascist group of young men. In this statement, he denounces leading any such movements, but acknowledges his intellectual influence on multiple post-fascist groups such as *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), amongst others.

Evola on Codreanu

In the translation of Codreanu’s prison notes, six articles written by Evola on Codreanu are included as an appendix. This is a brief overview of them, as they express a support for fascism and the Italian nation which is more toned down in Evola’s *Gli Uomini e Le Rovine* which was written after the war, and they may offer more insight into Evola’s political rhetoric.

In the first article, Evola interviews Codreanu, who states the difference between Italy and Romania given their shared legacy from the Roman Empire; that Italy is destined to rule with superior political organization, whereas Romania and the Legion of the archangel Michael has spirituality and religion at its core.¹¹² This article focuses strongly on the spiritual practices of the Iron Guard, to which Evola passes no significant comment, other than the introduction of the interview where he takes note of Codreanu’s ‘Aryan-Roman’ appearance.¹¹³ Codreanu, on the other hand, expresses gratitude to receive a visitor with an interest in the ‘soul’.

¹⁰⁸ Evola (2002), p. 257.

¹⁰⁹ Evola (2002), p. 258.

¹¹⁰ Evola (2002), p. 15; 39.

¹¹¹ Evola (2002), p. 284-286.

¹¹² Codreanu (2018), p. 118.

¹¹³ Codreanu (2018), p. 117.

In the second article, Evola recounts the spiritual and ritualistic practices of the Iron Guard, identifying them as ‘living orthodoxy’ as opposed to the official national religion of Romania which he sees as a shell of its intended purpose.¹¹⁴ He ties this to the concept of morality, making it clear that there is contrast between the decaying nation of Romania and the attempted rebirth of the Romanian individual through the Iron Guard’s practices.

In the third article, published shortly after Codreanu’s death, Evola takes a much clearer ideological stance and praises Codreanu’s legacy for having fought against ‘judeo-communism’ and condemning political dealers (whom he also identifies as jews). A phrase that stands out is Evola’s claim that Romania is enslaved under ‘those without motherland’, as this representation will come to be repeated in neo-fascist groups later on.¹¹⁵

The fourth article goes back to the interview from the first article, but this time, includes statements about bloodlines and race, and the school of thought previously accounted for by Codreanu in his manifesto; that Romanians may be schooled in the Iron Guard into becoming religious, ascetic, heroic soldiers, differentiating them from the ‘dominant’ type of the world.¹¹⁶ Finally, Codreanu accounts for what he believes to be the zionist conspiracy to overthrow the church and the state to pave the way for communism, and further what he sees as a Jewish colonization of Romania.¹¹⁷ Article five (as well as article six which is such a brief summary of previous articles that it’s hardly worth mentioning for its repetitive character) summarizes this interview once more, then gives a review of the Italian translation of Codreanu’s book, and features an excerpt which details the idea of the Zionist conspiracy, going into ideas of freemasonry and secret societies.¹¹⁸ Some other new points of interest to Evola’s discourse are 1. Definitions of mysticism as given by Codreanu; that Christian mysticism is man’s connection to god, whereas National mysticism is man’s connection to the Volksgeist¹¹⁹, and 2. That democracy is wrong because it ultimately grants Jewish people the right to be Romanian citizens.¹²⁰ Here we see an evident display of the nationalist ‘founding narrative’ which has been categorized by previous studies as necessary to incite not only ideological willingness for totalitarianism, but also for genocide.¹²¹

At this point, the collection has run into a few contradictions. For example, it’s insisted upon by Evola (and Codreanu himself¹²²) that Codreanu is in fact a monarchist¹²³, where the translator¹²⁴

¹¹⁴ Codreanu (2018), p. 124; 127-128.

¹¹⁵ Codreanu (2018), p. 130.

¹¹⁶ Codreanu (2018), p. 140.

¹¹⁷ Codreanu (2018), p. 143-144.

¹¹⁸ Codreanu (2018), p. 154-155.

¹¹⁹ Codreanu (2018), p. 159.

¹²⁰ Codreanu (2018), p. 160.

¹²¹ Xu, Cheng (2018), p. 241-242.

¹²² Codreanu (2018), p. 161.

¹²³ Codreanu (2018), p. 134; 144.

¹²⁴ The section that accounts for Codreanu’s death bears no signature in this edition of the book.

of the prison diaries has previously stated the Romanian king's disdain for Codreanu and vice versa¹²⁵, even claiming that Codreanu's assassination happened in accordance with a "Talmudian ritual"¹²⁶ implied to be carried out on orders from the king. We are to infer from Evola's context, given later, that it is not the monarchy which is at fault but the (at the time) current king of Romania, Carol II, who is seen to be corrupt - the reason for this being given as him having eloped with a woman of Jewish origin.¹²⁷ Secondly, where Evola previously mentioned Codreanu's strong orthodox faith, it must be mentioned the condemnation from the orthodox church which was issued against the Iron Guard, with Codreanu even acknowledging so himself.¹²⁸ Evola defends this by pointing to the modern church as a hollowed out institution, separated from spirituality.

Many of the letters lead to a foregone conclusion. Evola continuously raises the point of Italy's success in establishing a nationalistic, totalitarian rule, which was of course true in 1938, and he admonishes that Romania would do well to follow Codreanu's ideas into a similar fate. But these points aren't worth much to ideology shaped by Evola's or Codreanu's thinking after the end of the war.

Summary 1945-1953

The three texts analyzed in this section have overarching similarities; they all advocate, to some degree, for an idealized past and a return to a European tradition. The idea of tradition, among the three, is defined either by a return to the post-war past as idealized by Malaparte; a set of values based in religion and militantism as put forth by Codreanu; or a hierarchy of natural power as accounted for by Evola. Codreanu mainly contextualizes Evola's beliefs; some of them latent, as *Gli Uomini e Le Rovine* was written in 1953, when some of his previous opinions may have been toned down. We can see examples of these, instead, in the articles written on Codreanu by Evola, which help contextualize Evola's choice of traditions. Malaparte mainly depicts the immediate post-war reality and discourse, and contextualizes the old master frame of fascism as well as potential criticisms of it, but his work can perhaps not be used to say much about subsequent post-fascist rhetoric. Evola is thus the main character of this portion of the analysis, as his book is also widely claimed to be his most political work. We can find much of his discourse matches up in the other two authors' works, however. For example, Evola's disdain for the liberation of Italy matches up with Malaparte's, as a representation of an interruption in the continuity of the Italian national identity. All three authors clearly depict an 'other', not only in terms of race or ethnicity but also in terms of a political other, representing marxists and communists as unintellectual or spontaneously violent.

¹²⁵ Codreanu (2018), p. 38.

¹²⁶ Codreanu (2018), p. 110.

¹²⁷ Codreanu (2018), p. 175.

¹²⁸ Codreanu (2018), p. 70-71.

Mani Pulite (1992-2001)

Umberto Bossi

Umberto Bossi's ideological memoir from 1992 makes it clear that his focus and vision for Italy is one based in regionalism and federalism, wanting to 'send southerners back to their homes'¹²⁹ and dealing with the 'southern question'¹³⁰ which encompasses the politics of immigration, religion, economy, and other areas. Due to these types of statements, Bossi has often been accused of racism, due to his party's ethnonationalist or at times even ethno-regionalist views, which is a topic in both the book as well as in the immediate foreword, signaling its relevance, but beyond these accusations of general xenophobia, Bossi is incredibly concerned with the particular division of the north and south. However, he expressly claims to have distaste for the ideologies of Nazism and Fascism - in part perhaps because Mussolini's fascism had focus on the rapid industrialization of Italy to the point that modern conservatives believe it to be what destroyed their traditional countryside, which is central to Bossi's idea of culture and identity. In accordance with previous studies on the nativist meaning of concepts such as 'authenticity' and 'tradition'¹³¹ as used by *Lega Nord*, the focus on this can mean that something has interrupted the continuity of national identity, which we realize throughout the book is the presence of immigration, globalization, individualist economics, etc. We can contextualize this with Rydgren's theoretical claim that old far-right ideology (in this context, fascism) focuses on the future, whereas more modern far-right ideology (populistic far-right) longs for the past, or in the least the idea of the past.¹³² LN are extremely concerned with immigration policy and the question of refugees who come across the external border. For example, Bossi would later make a comment in 2003 asking the Naval defense to open fire on refugee boats on the coast of Italy.¹³³ Despite these rather blatant expressions of xenophobia, Bossi's rhetoric seems to often get a pass in politics because despite it being ethno-nationalist in nature, it is not directly fascist.¹³⁴

In Bossi's biography, his family must move away from his home village due to being indebted after a vehicle accident, and when he returns years later, the village has been industrialized and modernized, much to his chagrin. He mourns the loss of his home, and laments the modern person's strive for individual economic fortune, at the cost of the community.¹³⁵ One could argue this is quite a socialist thought for Bossi to have, but in modern times we may as well identify

¹²⁹ Bossi, Umberto, and Vimercati, Daniele (1992), *Vento dal Nord, La mia Lega, la mia vita*, Milano: Sperling & Kupfer, p. XI.

¹³⁰ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. XVIII.

¹³¹ Iocco, Giulio, Lo Cascio, Martina, and Perrotta, Domenico Claudio (2020), "'Close the Ports to African Migrants and Asian Rice!': The Politics of Agriculture and Migration and the Rise of a 'New' Right-Wing Populism in Italy", *Sociologia Ruralis*, 60: p. 738; 746-747.

¹³² Rydgren (2007), p. 246.

¹³³ BBC News (2003), "Transcript: Bossi's Alleged Comments" retrieved 2024-02-19 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2995084.stm>

¹³⁴ Elgenius & Rydgren (2022), p. 1233.

¹³⁵ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 5.

this as populist - the common man is not included in the fast-moving pace of globalization. As a matter of fact, the book retells that when Bossi was a university student, he considered himself left-wing, although his political interest was not that great at that time, by his own admission.¹³⁶ At this time, he seems to experience his worlds clashing, as his rural upbringing meets the modern world, and he describes an interesting strategy;

“Those who manage to emerge in the chaotic and competitive society of post-industrialism but keep in their hearts the principles and balance that characterizes agricultural life have an edge, they can draw on a precious historical memory that allows them, when the problems seem insurmountable, to trigger the redoubt, like a jeep [sic].”¹³⁷

Bossi's conservative ideals make themselves known as he navigates the contrasting life of a medical student; inferred from the above-mentioned quote is that Bossi means to say that one who has these principles and values can fortify their character through not straying from them. We may not only compare this to Evola's ideas of a traditionalist spirit, but can also infer that Bossi is hinting at moral decay in modern society, as well as thus idealizing the past. Although Bossi has described his childhood with a heavy nostalgia throughout the entire book up until this point, this is the first time it becomes a tool for him. Similarly, at this time, he teaches math to middle school students for extra income and remarks that this is the start of what would come to be his political rhetoric; he seeks to simplify concepts and draws his arguments to their clearest conclusion.¹³⁸

Bossi's subsequent political interest is motivated by the 1968 movement *Sessantotto* and occupation of Italian universities, which he denounces, even though his recruitment into the federalist movement does not occur until some 10 years later.¹³⁹ He motivates this with 'the failures of mass-immigration' connected to the economic industrialization of Italy, which puts him on the right-wing side of politics in connection with the 1968 protests, as left-wingers protested the economic shifts but with motivations that opposed capitalism and the patriarchy. Historically, the protesters were of either political conviction, but Bossi refers to the protests at large as 'years of terrorism'.

When Bossi recalls establishing the *Lega Lombarda*, he expresses two previous ideas that are at the core of the central concept for the party; that he wants to simplify the concept of federalism so that it is more direct and easier to grasp - and that it can speak to the masses. This is an

¹³⁶ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 26.

¹³⁷ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 28.

¹³⁸ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 30.

¹³⁹ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 33.

evident display of populist rhetoric, which Bossi means is even sometimes purposely given a vulgar or crude overtone, to clearly distinguish the party from the elite in power.¹⁴⁰

In one of Daniele Vimercati's many vivid chapter intros he makes an unfortunate comment on the frugal lifestyle of Bossi, despite the party having a well-established income and being "the man someone tried to bribe with fifty billion [lira]"¹⁴¹ - in the forthcoming *Mani Pulite* inquiries, Bossi was indeed found guilty of accepting illegal funding to LN.¹⁴² Vimercati goes on to say that this refusal of illegal funds holds value in understanding the extent of Bossi's federalist mindset - his disdain for an economic elite - but if they knew then what we know now, this would not hold as much weight. It is clear to the reader that the fight which Bossi is fighting, is for the people in terms of class, as he openly despises not only the supposed elite but the old aristocracy as a whole¹⁴³, and is recorded as living in 'squalid'¹⁴⁴ conditions as a convincing display of this.

Bossi first touches upon the allegations of racism made against him in a paragraph about his wife, who is from Sicily. For this reason, he means he could not feasibly be racist towards southerners.¹⁴⁵ His gripe with southerners, however, is not resolved by this and seems to be generational, as he describes occurrences of mass-migration with negative connotations during his grandfather's life. He blames this on rapid industrialization yet again, which is supposedly the doing of the political elite in Rome, and on southerners' will to work for a lower salary than Lombardian workers would.¹⁴⁶ Another point of contention in the regional split is the taxation versus electoral representation of north and south.¹⁴⁷ Regardless, Bossi denounces that the negative attitude towards southern Italians or immigrants is the driving force in assembling LN from multiple regional leagues, and rather, that the possibility of LN in parliament is due to the desire for a federal system of Italian regions.¹⁴⁸ He argues that LN is the only group that can successfully implement this, as when other political parties offer regionalist interests, it is seen as empty words with the sole intention of funneling votes away from LN.¹⁴⁹

A large portion of the book is dedicated to the alleged shortcomings of other political parties from the perspective of Bossi, however, a year after the book's release these parties were

¹⁴⁰ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 42.

¹⁴¹ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p.51.

¹⁴² Biondani, Paolo (2022), via *L'Espresso*; "Il tesoriere della Lega confessa la tangente Montedison. E Umberto Bossi risarcisce la Procura" retrieved 2024-02-26 from

<https://lespresso.it/c/archivio/2022/2/15/il-tesoriere-della-lega-confessa-la-tangente-montedison-e-umberto-bossi-rcisce-la-procura/13030>

¹⁴³ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 61.

¹⁴⁴ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 53.

¹⁴⁶ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 65.

¹⁴⁷ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 127.

¹⁴⁸ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 72.

¹⁴⁹ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 115.

effectively rendered null by the fallout of the *Tangentopoli* scandal. Bossi often accuses them of being part of a detached elite, the obliteration of which is the main driving force of his own ideology. He claims that socialism and communism are impotent ideological frames in Italy at this time, and that identifying as such doesn't mean anything, and that its followers can not make any real change for the people.¹⁵⁰ Bossi also accuses Bettino Craxi and the DC party of having carried out a 'fascist coup'¹⁵¹ when suggesting an electoral reform; we must assume that 'fascist' in this regard is to say, a top-down decision with the purpose of shutting out smaller parties of the opposition from coming into government. Interestingly, Bossi comes to the conclusion that Italy has never completely abandoned the ideology of fascism - however, his rendering of this does not lie in the political survival of outspokenly post-fascist or neo-fascist parties, but rather that the centralization of economic power lives on since the fascist era, pointing out the *Fiat*-founding Agnelli family as one of the main benefactors of this system.¹⁵² Another is of course the centralization of power to the nation's capital, Rome.¹⁵³

The financial aspect is a key point for Bossi in describing what, according to himself, is wrong with Italy. Returning to what first upset him as a young man leaving his home village, he despises the aspiration for private wealth. He makes it clear that LN advocates for public ownership and public companies, as well as investments into such through stock exchange. This is due to Italy's public debt at the time, which Bossi attributes to Rome's failures, which can only be resolved through 'fiscal revolution'.¹⁵⁴ This is the first time in the book that Bossi seems to identify a real crisis in the Italian government, and it seems to be a strong driving force for what he perceives as the need for ideological and political change.

Despite Bossi's previous claims that racism and xenophobia are not present in his ideology, the image of an economic disaster quickly takes a turn into these sub-categories. Although the chapter dedicated to the subject starts out with one of Vimercati's speeches on Bossi's empathy for all people suffering a faulty political system - in this instance, the mistreatment of Albanian refugees in Puglia - the book quickly devolves into proudly stating that one of the main concerns of LN is to "take the defense of every neighborhood or town contaminated by a black ghetto"¹⁵⁵, with Vimercati describing immigrants as "people beyond any control who dramatically aggravate the social problems" and "dedicated to begging and delinquency".¹⁵⁶ This is the first clear representation of immigrants and refugees as beggars and/or criminals, a dominant representation in far-right discourse. Bossi's own claim is that although all humans should have equal rights, they also have equal duties to contribute to society *before* asserting their rights.¹⁵⁷ At last, Bossi

¹⁵⁰ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 120; 124.

¹⁵¹ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 126.

¹⁵² Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 126-127.

¹⁵³ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 163.

¹⁵⁴ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 137.

¹⁵⁵ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 142.

¹⁵⁶ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 143.

¹⁵⁷ Bossi & Vimercati, (1992), p. 143-144.

arrives at the conclusion that there is no political will in the government at the time to prevent immigration to any degree. He paints a picture of the future of Italy as a ‘multiracial, multiethnic and multireligious society’ driven by ‘the pro-communist left’. About this, he goes on to say;

“The multiracial society is more like hell than heaven.”¹⁵⁸

It is evident that Bossi believes in an ethno-pluralist Italy, specifically in the case of Northern Italy, but if this had not been made clear enough, he goes on to explain in what ways he believes different cultures and identities are incompatible;

“I am convinced that non-Europeans who come from certain areas of the world - in particular Middle Eastern and Maghrebians - have no intention of integrating and accepting our customs. They are therefore a triggered social bomb, they create tension and hostility. They demand a thousand rights but show no tolerance, they don’t accept our way of life.”¹⁵⁹

There is no mistaking the clear ‘other’ that he depicts in this section of the book, and the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ narrative established. He is also touching upon something beyond national identity, which is a European identity, a concept which is otherwise typically lacking in the discourse with the exception of the previous reading of Evola who prefers an overarching, imperialist identity to a national one. Add to this, that Bossi’s regionalist views also makes him subject to accusation of racism from *within* Italy, from Sicilian voters who themselves side with neo-fascist MSI and critique Bossi despite having ethno-nationalist views of their own, but don’t appreciate being shut out of Bossi’s narrow definition of ‘European’ or ‘Italian’.¹⁶⁰

The reason for why federalism and regionalism are needed, according to Bossi, is that the reunification of post-war Italy failed from the very beginning, with uneven development throughout the country and unfair distribution of labor and taxes.¹⁶¹ In this sense, the catalyst for Bossi’s perceived need for an ideological shift is a long-established reason, as the movement is nostalgic for a Lombardian nationalism that can be traced back to before the first republic, before fascism, before the establishment of the kingdom of Italy in the 19th century.¹⁶² In Bossi’s view, north and south would benefit equally from federalism, as long as power was no longer centralized to Rome and one region was not made to carry all others - he deems the north to have paid for the south ever since the end of World War II. However, he is ultimately motivated by an ideology that can be boiled down to ideas of ethno-regionalism in the sense of an exclusionary culture and identity. The motivation for this is hardly only economic; that is simply an

¹⁵⁸ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 148.

¹⁵⁹ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 149.

¹⁶⁰ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 171.

¹⁶¹ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 176-177.

¹⁶² Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 160-161.

accelerating cause. Bossi links this phenomenon not only to migration from external countries into Italy, but to the specific migration from south to north; this is the crisis facing Lombardy and the north, against the backdrop of the idealized past.

Silvio Berlusconi

Berlusconi's book is a largely self-congratulatory publication, and as such, one may extract from it the portions that are specifically ideological or political. The book features documentation of both the 1994 election as well as Berlusconi's second win in 2000 where his coalition once again gained the support of *Lega Nord*.

Berlusconi's book starts by giving us the context of him being a small child during World War II, with his father being an Italian soldier who was 'hunted' by Germans after Mussolini's fall.¹⁶³

From the politically centered sections, there is only an inferred system of values; for example, Berlusconi seems to peddle conservative virtues, as he portrays himself in his youth as a 'good kid' in multiple instances.¹⁶⁴ This becomes clearer in his campaign speeches in 1994 where morality is stressed as a key factor to "opposition to communism, [their] love of freedom and democracy".¹⁶⁵ This also reflects his entry into politics which was motivated in 1994 as having been due to 'communists destroying Italy'.¹⁶⁶

Addressing the Tangentopoli scandal which brought on the early elections which would be won by *Forza Italia* and the coalition with LN, Berlusconi's book is quite vague in its wording compared to where Bossi would give out specific names of politicians who he deemed untrustworthy or corrupt. Berlusconi instead groups together the old parties as 'the left' and successfully establishes the entire previous party system as 'the other'.

"I don't want to live in an illiberal country, governed by immature forces and by men closely linked to a politically and economically bankrupt past. And I also have the reasonable hope of being able to achieve it, in sincere and loyal alliance with all the liberal and democratic forces who feel the civil duty to offer the country a credible alternative to the government of the left and the communists. The old Italian political class has been overwhelmed by facts and surpassed by the times. The scuttle of the old rulers, crushed by the weight of public debt and the illegal financing system of the parties, leaves the country unprepared and uncertain in the difficult moment of renewal and the transition to a new Republic."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Berlusconi, Silvio (2001), *Una storia italiana*, Roma: Mondadori, p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ Berlusconi (2001), p. 9-10.

¹⁶⁵ Berlusconi (2001), p. 79.

¹⁶⁶ Berlusconi (2001), p. 10.

¹⁶⁷ Berlusconi (2001), p. 76.

Besides using words like ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ frequently, as well as stressing the necessity for a free market and the possibility of success for the individual¹⁶⁸ (we may do well to recall that Berlusconi was a businessman for his entire life up until 1994), he occasionally throws in a mention of tradition or morality as a staple of his politics.

“But for the new system to work, it is essential that the left-wing cartel is opposed by a center of freedom that is capable of attracting the best of a clean, reasonable, modern country. All the forces that refer to the fundamental principles of Western democracies must be part of this hub of freedom, starting from that Catholic world which has generously contributed to the last fifty years of our united history.”¹⁶⁹

Forza Italia generally presents more center-right than other movements represented in this study, which is also reflected in their party program.¹⁷⁰ They advocate for “freedom of worship, of all religions” as well as believing that “the state should be at the service of the citizens, and not the citizens at the service of the state”, which are quite liberal values, whilst still expressing somewhat contradictory, conservative views such as “the values of our Christian tradition”.¹⁷¹ Berlusconi is also much more focused on the concept of Italy in Europe, and on European collaboration, separating him from his more far-right leaning, populist peers.¹⁷²

Berlusconi makes no mention of Bossi or LN by name throughout the recollection of the election period, nor at the end of 1994 when LN left the coalition. The only time Bossi’s name comes up is in a later section regarding the regained support of LN for the coalition in 2000, whilst also stressing Forza Italia’s anti-elite characteristics.¹⁷³ This is perhaps motivated by Berlusconi’s ‘crossing of the desert’, which is to say, the aftermath of Mani Pulite in which a judicial investigation was made into Berlusconi’s businesses.¹⁷⁴ Berlusconi ends his book with a letter to the Italian people in which he details his policy changes, ensuring he will deal with ‘the South’, finally tying his interests together with Bossi’s.¹⁷⁵

Roberto Fiore

Noi Terza Posizione is a manifesto which chronicles the origins of the neo-fascist *Terza Posizione* (TP) movement in Italy and claims to be less affiliated with the ideological conviction of the founder, rather claiming to exist to represent the entire movement. It originates at the

¹⁶⁸ Berlusconi (2001), p. 77.

¹⁶⁹ Berlusconi (2001), p. 76.

¹⁷⁰ Berlusconi (2001), p. 78.

¹⁷¹ Berlusconi (2001), p. 78.

¹⁷² Berlusconi (2001), p. 87.

¹⁷³ Berlusconi (2001), p. 101.

¹⁷⁴ Berlusconi (2001), p. 94.

¹⁷⁵ Berlusconi (2001), p. 124; 126-127.

office which published Evola's works until his death in the 1970s.¹⁷⁶ This connection becomes clear as the book distinguishes TP from other organized far-right groups such as Pino Rauti's defunct *Ordine Nuovo* or MSI by characterizing their ideology as especially spiritual and metaphysical.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, they place importance on being strongly opposed to both capitalism and communism, of which the US and Russia are the respective figureheads, seeing Russia as a neo-colonial empire and the US as a puppet state led by a Masonic congregation.¹⁷⁸

TP describes its organization as following models exemplified by Codreanu¹⁷⁹, in terms of 'nests' or *cuiburi*, meaning a group of 3-4 people respectively that make up a larger network. They also emphasize following the mystic aspects of fascism per Evola and Codreanu's tradition, and separate this idea from Mussolini's fascism. However, TP also spend a significant amount of text referring to physical altercations with other organizations, both far-left and far-right, both with pride for what damage they cause as well as downplaying the incidents by mentioning them as 'skirmishes' or the like¹⁸⁰ - one with knowledge of TP's activities would know they've been implicated in acts of terrorism, namely the bombings in Bologna in 1980.¹⁸¹ However, TP is adamant they are not an armed force, claiming that despite their abstinence from weapons they have been "condemned when she [TP] would have instead deserved medals".¹⁸² They do, however, admit to having weapons in circulation among the younger members, but deflect from this by saying they've been acquired fairly, unlike the weapons used by left-wing groups.¹⁸³ After the more significant attack in Bologna, Fiore fled to London, where he was active in the international Third Position movement, before returning to Italy in 1999 and joining the newly founded *Forza Nuova* (FN) party, a continuation of TP.¹⁸⁴ FN split from *Fiamma Tricolore*, Pino Rauti's new party which was founded after his exit from MSI as he refused to join its party successor, *Alleanza Nazionale*; the party which found itself in the 1994 coalition with *Lega Nord* and *Forza Italia*. Fiore's exile to Britain is another example of cross-European neo-fascist collaboration, as exemplified in the theoretical portion of this study in the publication by Albanese and del Hierro, and demonstrates the importance of a transnational network for neo-fascist groups.

Fiore and Adinolfi also systematically account for all TP members who have been apprehended or even died whilst in action for the movement. One may see this as an act of martyrdom, but they express a distaste for this phenomenon¹⁸⁵, and instead we can contextualize these lengthy

¹⁷⁶ Fiore, Roberto and Adinolfi, Gabriele (2021) *Noi terza posizione*, Roma: Settimo Sigillo-Europa Lib. Ed., Third Edition reprint (originally published in 2000), p. 13.

¹⁷⁷ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 30.

¹⁷⁹ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 35.

¹⁸⁰ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 37-38.

¹⁸¹ Bergman (2010), p. 22; Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 75.

¹⁸² Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 66.

¹⁸³ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 106.

¹⁸⁴ Bergman (2010), p. 24.

¹⁸⁵ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 42

passages by another characteristic of Evola as well as Codreanu; that one must not be afraid to die in order to further one's cause. This characteristic of the book is also comparable to Codreanu's initial manifesto, which also accounts for ill-fated ends of Iron Guard members in a way which implies martyrdom, despite the willingness of death within the movement.

This is further reflected in the ideological manifesto presented which details the characteristics of the 'Third Position revolutionary', for the purpose of transitioning from one ideology to that of Third Position. The core message of this is a concept which "aims at the realization of man inserted into the reality and tradition of his own people", along with "joyful sacrifice".¹⁸⁶ 'Tradition' in this context is defined by TP as "the reconquest of the Mediterranean and European lineage"¹⁸⁷, displaying ideas beyond national identity that tie in closer to a concept of European identity, similar to ideas presented by Bossi, which may be more tied to race than an actual shared identity or culture when put against other statements. Finally, the manifesto invokes Codreanu's values and methods of acquiring power through military organization.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, TP calls for hierarchical arrangements in society, similarly to Evola. The representation of TP members as militaristic 'warriors' lives on in this manifesto, emphasizing their spiritual devotion, as evidenced by this quote;

"The hierarchical structure of Third Position, the careful selection of militants before accessing a position of responsibility, required respect for the old Nazi motto "our honor is called loyalty", thus creating the militant of sure obedience ready to carry out the tasks entrusted from the organization."¹⁸⁹

Regardless of this statement, TP stands firm in that it differentiates from "neo-fascist armed groups".¹⁹⁰ In general, it seems that what Fiore paints as the core values of TP are in fact quite dissonant with the reality of the actions carried out by the group. But interestingly, Fiore does not mind comparing TP to Mussolini's Black Shirts, stating it would be foolish to ignore their similarities.¹⁹¹ Fiore does not establish any gripes with an 'other' past those which are ideologically different, and so there are no blatant xenophobic representations in the book. Instead he focuses on the image of the left as the global elite, and on other far-right movements as anti-intelligent and degrading.¹⁹² *Mani Pulite* is explained by Fiore as a foreseeable event, and he briefly mentions ANs entry into government as a 'significant paradox'.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 95.

¹⁸⁷ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 99.

¹⁸⁸ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 102.

¹⁸⁹ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 106.

¹⁹⁰ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 125.

¹⁹¹ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 128.

¹⁹² Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 129.

¹⁹³ Fiore & Adinolfi (2021), p. 137-139.

Much of the book is spent creating diversion from accusations made against members, by attacking the judicial system or the police force. Also, much of the reasoning for why the group believes they've been wrongfully indicted is only traced back to their ideological manifesto, and not to actual actions or events, making their ideals much more esoteric. However, this makes the manifesto all the more discursively important; the representations conveyed in the group's language clearly holds a lot of power to TP, to the point where they can justify any action through it.

Summary 1992-2001

The discourse of this time period is more uneven, and often defined by what party politics lead each author's ideology. One may find that the discourse has become more divided internally, for example, attacks on other movements or parties as the 'other' are more frequent whereas the national identity has taken a backseat to these topics. Additionally, Bossi leads this time period's rhetoric with anti-elite sentiments and depictions of centralized power as a criminal structure, which is putting the common man at a disadvantage, a representation utilized by Berlusconi equally to propel his election campaign. Fiore's discursive representations consist mainly of morality and tradition, and although this doesn't quite add up with what he then details the TP movement to be doing, the rhetoric still matches up with Bossi's mentions of an inner moral compass which maintains one's traditional values. Berlusconi also does this when talking about a 'Christian tradition', however, the context has much more to do with a liberal worldview. The defining representation of this time period is the narrowness of identity and the specific characteristics of each ideology despite the potential likeness of adjacent movements, which also opens up to restrictive and often xenophobic measures within the movements' policies.

Comparing Ideological Rhetoric

After the analysis of the ideological works of six different authors, from two time periods separated by some 40 years, one may look not only at similarities or differences, but also on the developing or continuing characteristics of the discourse used.

In the texts, some dominant representations are identified;

	Malaparte	Codreanu	Evola	Bossi	Berlusconi	Fiore
Representations of a xenophobically motivated 'other'	x	x	x	x		

Representations of a political 'other'	x	x	x	x	x	x
Representations of an 'elite'		x	x	x	x	
Representations of moral decay/ present-day crisis	x	x	x	x	x	x
Representations of the past as an ideal	x	x	x	x		x
Representations of national identity	x	x		x	x	
Representations of European identity	x		x		x	x

The overarching themes of the first time period analyzed are simpler to compare; the representations put forth by Codreanu and Malaparte all fit quite well into the pivotal work of Evola. The fascist and neo-fascist perception of reality is interwoven by ideas of societal and racial hierarchy, and of traditional values. It also clarifies 'the other' as those who 1. Do not abide by this hierarchy and 2. Are in other ways not understood with the system previously imposed by the fascist ideal of imperialism.

For example, a concept first mentioned by Codreanu - that the Legion of the Archangel Michael's ideology is not one that recruits nor has a definitive political program, because the

legion has no interest in the men that may align themselves with a *program*; because the men in Romania are already corrupted morally and politically, what Romania needs is not programs, but men of the same spiritual conviction as that of Codreanu and his legionaries.¹⁹⁴ This mystical angle is of course not only reminiscent of Evola's ideas, but the unwillingness to recruit is also found with Bossi, who frequently returns to the topic of the politically corrupt elite and the differentiation between the *Lega Nord* and traditional political parties, as well as the expunging of members who support the party system.¹⁹⁵ Fiore and Adinolfi's book on *Terza Posizione* also expresses similar discern, that TP is separate from even other far-right or neo-fascist movements, and that weight is put on the personal suitability of the members.

Evola expresses ideological conviction removed from politics and history, saying only those who endure modernity and "remain firm in their principles"¹⁹⁶ in regards to the concept of traditionalism can carry on 'truth' into the future. Although the core message is different, the approach or mindset is quite similar to that expressed by Bossi, about carrying your principles in your heart in the midst of post-industrialism. In regards to thoughts expressed about disdain for modernity, the rhetoric here matches up quite well; it just happens to be motivated by entirely different ideological frames. They agree on their dislike for the pursuit of individual wealth as well as lamenting the industrialization and marketization of Europe.

Codreanu's legacy is really only acknowledged past the war-time period by TP, who uphold the tradition of referring to their gatherings as 'nests', and maintaining certain Romanian terms - these traditions in neo-fascism is acknowledged once in Bossi's book, where Daniele Vimercati claims the press is depicting LN as 'racist fanatics'¹⁹⁷ and refers to accusations of "writing '*föra i terün*' on the walls" (trans. from Romanian, 'without land') - we can recall Evola's description of Codreanu's war against Romania controlled by 'those without motherland'.¹⁹⁸

Something which is consistent across all six authors' publications is the golden age rhetoric, which stretches as far back as the Roman empire or the feudal system of the middle ages. Because the representation of the idealized past is so popularly featured, one may also ask; is this really a far-right theme, or can it be attributed to something else? Could it rather be a political rhetoric, used across the spectrum when debating against a ruling opponent to recall a better time?¹⁹⁹ What might set apart nostalgia in far-right discourse is perhaps specifically the urging to return to a set of traditional values. Although tradition and nostalgia might not be right-wing exclusive concepts, and may be a form of longing as well as a disgruntlement in politics, it is nostalgia as a defensive tactic which shuts out others that constitutes the specific golden age

¹⁹⁴ Codreanu (2007), p. 227.

¹⁹⁵ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 86.

¹⁹⁶ Evola (2002), p. 93-94.

¹⁹⁷ Bossi & Vimercati (1992), p. 95.

¹⁹⁸ Codreanu (2018), p. 130.

¹⁹⁹ Note that since the study has not analyzed the discourse of other ideological or political organizations or groups, it cannot speak on the full extent of their discursive themes.

rhetoric which is prescribed to far-right groups. The nostalgia identified in the texts analyzed wishes to remove a modernity from the time period they live in - whether this is industry, immigration, moral decay, or globalization. Several of the authors feel that something has been taken from them, often by an “other” such as freedom of speech being taken away by a liberal or socialist society as in the case of Fiore, or tradition and culture being taken away by a Jewish population as in the case of Codreanu, or economic benefits and job opportunities being taken by non-northern immigrants as in the case of Bossi. By removing these factors, the authors perceive that they could return to a harmonious period.

In regards to differences in representations, Evola stands out quite a bit in his time period due to his esoteric tendencies. For example, both Codreanu and Malaparte resign themselves to nihilism in one way or another, albeit for different reasons, whereas Evola insists nihilism is a futile endeavor.²⁰⁰ Despite this, Evola and Codreanu share a view on the nobility of militarism and honor in battle.²⁰¹ Where Codreanu speaks specifically about the will of man to sacrifice himself for the cause, Evola stresses that one should not apply militaristic ethics to any perceived need for war, or dying for one’s country. He differentiates strongly between a ‘warrior’ and a ‘soldier’, where the latter is simply performing a civic or economic duty, which he dislikes - whereas Codreanu and Malaparte were quite literally soldiers for Romania and Italy respectively.

There are also aspects that completely contradict one another, which reminds the reader of the ideological differences within the right. Where in the first time period analyzed, Evola is largely anti-marketization, both in terms of capitalism and Marxism, and opposes the pursuit of wealth, we on the other hand have Berlusconi in the latter time period who leads the right wing coalition to victory with complete conviction in the free market and uses his background as a businessman to effectively convey a believable political image.

Another large contradiction, interestingly, happens between Evola and the very movement he inspired, Fiore’s *Third Position* (TP), on a number of key points. First of all, TP is consistently caught up in violent bursts with other movements as well as being indicted for domestic terrorism. Evola consistently condemned violence and the unnecessary exertion of power against political opponents²⁰², especially in the context of ideas of revolution, claiming it to be a ‘stifling of higher sensibilities’.²⁰³

In terms of populist tendencies such as opposing the elite, this is another representation which recurs in the selected texts. Codreanu and Evola both completely oppose an economic as well as political elite, and tinge this representation quite strongly with anti-semitic ideas. The differentiation here, however, is that Codreanu expresses the need for an elite; it’s just that this

²⁰⁰ Evola (2002), p. 213.

²⁰¹ Evola (2002), p. 213; Codreanu (2018), p. 229.

²⁰² Evola (2002), p. 36.

²⁰³ Evola (2002), p. 159.

elite would not be political by nature, but rather, consist of people with particular talents and inclinations for valuing the nation as a separate entity.²⁰⁴ This elite would therefore be destined to rule, rather than any political congregation, or the existing elite of the monarchy at the time. Similarly, Evola stresses the positive qualities of the aristocracy as people with traditional values, and presents the benefits of a return to a societal hierarchy. Whereas Bossi seems to have gripe with not only the Italian political elite but also with the economical elite and the upper class, Berlusconi tends to flatter the public rather than outright condemn anyone else - he only does so with the already indicted politicians of the *Tangentopoli* scandal. The common theme is the representation of the elite as thieves, who have in one way or another rigged the system to benefit them monetarily.

In terms of European thoughts, the author who spends the most time on this concept is Evola; he details potential plans for a European empire, not driven by a shared culture or ideology but as a defense against the ideologies of the US and the USSR. Most interesting to him is a potential alliance with European countries such as Germany and Austria for their supposed shared traditions, where he disregards many other countries such as the larger Mediterranean nations. Malaparte, on the other hand, only really depicts the allied powers of France and Britain as fellow Europeans, despite differentiating between them with Italy as the 'loser' and the others as 'heroes'. In the latter time period, we have Berlusconi who gives quite generic statements on European cooperation which would put Italy as a driving force within the EU; Fiore, on the other hand, only details the network of *International Third Position* as spread out between Britain, France and Spain. We can infer that the far-right idea of Europe is selective, and depends on the opportunities at hand for ideological collaboration. Interestingly, the European identity appears more frequently across the texts than the national identity does, but the European identity is not cohesive across the texts, nor is it a European identity which entirely believes in a united Europe (with the exception of Berlusconi).

Evola and Bossi share a similarity that does not appear as frequently across other texts; the concept of a toned down national identity in favor of being defined by something else. In Evola's case it is rather the characteristics of man, such as values or morals, whereas for Bossi it is a regional identity over anything else. This is quite unique compared to other far-right depictions of the good of the nation, although Bossi does touch upon the concept of the nation with positivity as long as power is divided accordingly between north and south - unlike Evola, who is more interested in the 'empire' and the possibility of transnational alliances across Europe. Although the representation of national identity is often disregarded in favor of a regional or local identity, as is extremely prevalent with Malaparte and Bossi, this identity still expresses ethno-nationalist characteristics such as ethno-pluralism and xenophobia. In this sense, the national identity is also very selective - one might even say elitist.

²⁰⁴ Codreanu (2007), p. 311.

Conclusion

In this study, seven works by six authors have been subjected to a discourse analysis of Italian far-right discourse, compared between two critical time periods for far-right movements in Italian history, with the goal of answering the questions; In what ways has far-right discourse in Italy changed or stayed consistent over time as the ideological framework itself has changed? Is there a dominant narrative which is continually used across time periods?

The results of the analysis carried out in this study suggests a dominant narrative in Italian far-right discourse which is tinged by specific dominant representations - of moral decay, a longing for an idealized, traditional past, and ideas of regional, national, and/or European identity which is contrasted by a negative, often xenophobic representation of an 'other'. This is exemplified by Evola's lengthy descriptions of disruption in identity and ideology by Jewish people, the Mediterranean at large, the US, the USSR, or any of the Allied powers. Similarly, Bossi will go on to point to immigrants to the South of Italy from former colonies and the Mediterranean at large, as well as from the Middle East, as disruptors of Italian culture and tradition. In the discourse, the most enduring representation is that of the past as an ideal, and the study posits that any past time period can be used to employ this 'golden age rhetoric' as long as it is contrasted with the depiction of decay or loss in the current time period. This may be in relation to tradition, moral, ethnicity, culture or identity. The representation of the 'other' which has brought this change about is also a key factor in the discourse, and is either represented by a different identity in terms of race, nationality or ethnicity, or it may be as simple as an ideological opposition in the form of a movement or political party, which causes the disruption in continuity of the ideal.

The representation of identity, be it national or European, is also predominant across the texts. These are more fluid in character, and differ in characteristics between authors, but are united by the fact that they are clearly particular and require some sort of 'deserving'; for example, Evola's depiction of Europe is limited to the Catholic tradition and to the Aryan-Roman race characteristics, and Bossi's national identity only encompasses the North of Italy; perhaps even only Lombardy. Other dominant representations are those of an economic and political elite which is cheating the common man out of opportunity, a representation which is not only commonly repeated but evidently long-lasting in Italy.

Between the time periods, one can discern that certain representations are popular but less enduring. In the 1945-1953 period, all authors invoke an image of the 'other' as an overarching threat of communism, which is of course not as current in the later time period. Although Berlusconi frequently identifies his opposition by this word, the trend for this time period in general is more sprawling, as the ideological/political 'other' is often party or movement specific, sometimes even with a specific leader in mind. These are also themes that by nature are not enduring, as people do not typically last on their political posts through decades.

Ultimately, the study finds that far-right discourse in Italy has something to gain from the use of rhetoric which indicates moral decay which can be resolved with a return to conservative ideals, and that these representations are what continued to constitute the dominant narrative even 30-40 years after the end of the war. This matches up with studies done on modern populist far-right rhetoric, which also identifies these representations, and indicates a long-standing tradition of using such themes. The study finds patterns which could likely to be found in additional studies, and the design could be utilized in a similar case study done on a different European country in order to map trends in discourse of far-right ideology and for an expanded research field on far-right politics in Europe as suggested in a previous article by Rydgren. This study also adds to already established research such as the work done on the ideological evolution of *Lega Nord* by Braghiroli and Makarychev, or the study on the survival of fascist tropes in Italian politics by Salvio, and strengthens the suggested theories of politics of nostalgia as a favored tactic by the far-right. Furthermore, this study sheds light on material which has previously not been subject to analysis such as the works written by Berlusconi, Bossi and Fiore.

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